

Hi-LITER

~ including McHenry County News

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Forest Preserves offer abundant winter activities

Experience the magic of winter in the Lake County forest preserves. From ice skating and sledding to peaceful cross-country skiing, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Before heading out, check our winter sports webpage at LCF-PD.org/wintersports for the latest updates. Step into your preserves and make this season unforgettable.

Solar-lit Evening Hikes

With small solar lights to guide their way, hikers, skiers and snowshoers can get some brisk evening exercise along the 1.3-mile fitness trail at Old School Forest Preserve in Libertyville, and along a 1.65-mile hilly section of the Millennium Trail adjacent to the Winter Sports Area at Lakewood Forest Preserve in Wauconda.

Though regular preserve hours are 6:30 am to sunset, the illuminated trails and adjacent parking lots will remain open until 9 pm, daily through Sunday, March 9. Bicycle and equestrian traffic is not permitted on the lighted trails after sunset. The solar lights serve as a guide along the trails. It is recommended to bring a flashlight or headlamp along for additional illumination.

To access the lighted trails, park at Lakewood's Winter Sports Area, located on the east side of Fairfield Road just south of Route 176, or at Old School's main entrance lot, located on the east side of St. Mary's Road just south of Route 176. Rangers from the Lake County Forest Preserves regularly patrol the areas.

Sledding

Sled hills are located at Lakewood in Wauconda and Old School in Libertyville. The Lakewood hill is part of a dedicated Winter Sports Area at that site and is lighted, allowing for

winter fun until 9 pm, when conditions allow. The Old School hill is open until sunset when conditions allow sledding. Snowboards, metal runners or toboggans are not permitted.

Cross-Country Skiing

Cross-country skiers can enjoy nearly more than 200 miles of trails at forest preserves throughout Lake County. At the Ryerson Conservation Area in Riverwoods, a 4-inch snow base is required before opening trails for cross-country skiing. Groomed trails are available at Lakewood's Winter Sports Area to Ray Lake Forest Preserve in Wauconda and the Yellow Trail Loop at Old School. The Des Plaines River Trail is groomed from Rockland Road south to the Route 60 underpass in Vernon Hills. Grooming is typically done one day after a heavy snow using new equipment, partially funded by a Preservation Foundation grant, that grooms the trail for both traditional and skate-style skiing.

Snowmobiling

Snowmobilers can use 21 miles of designated trails within the preserves, all of which connect to other area snowmobile trails. Forest preserve snowmobile trails are open through March 31 and when conditions allow, which include frozen ground and a 4-inch snow base. Snowmobilers should use caution and watch for trail route signs along all forest preserve snowmobile trails.

The Des Plaines River Trail from Russell Road to just south of Wadsworth Road provides the longest stretch of trail for snowmobilers. Parking and trail access are

See **ACTIVITIES**, Page 5



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES PHOTO
Hi-Liter/MCN



JUSTINE NESLUND PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN

Above: Cross-country skiing is permitted in all forest preserves, with groomed trails available at select locations, including the Winter Sports Area at Lakewood Forest Preserve in Wauconda.

Left: Ice fishing is permitted in five designated areas, including at the south bay at Independence Grove in Libertyville.



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SUBMITTED PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN

On Dec. 6 law enforcement from across the county joined as Nunda Township dedicated Rawson Bridge in honor of Deputy Jake Keltner, who was killed in the line of duty in 2019. On Jan. 11 the sixth annual Jake Keltner Memorial Blood Drive also took place in his honor.

MCDH offering rapid point-of-care testing

Beginning January 6, through the end of respiratory season (typically late March or early April), the McHenry County Department of Health (MCDH) will offer free rapid point-of-care testing for symptomatic individuals for respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19, Influenza A & B, and if eligible, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).

Testing will be available Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. and Tuesdays/Thursdays from 1-4 p.m. for individuals aged 2 and older by appointment only. To schedule an appointment, individuals can visit the MCHD's Respiratory Illness webpage at <https://www.mchenrycountyil.gov/departments/health-department/public-health-nursing/communicable-disease-program/respiratory-illness> and use the self-scheduling link. Walk-ins will be directed to our webpage so they can self-schedule for the soonest available appointment. This service is designed to help residents take appropriate actions such as staying home from work or school if ill during the peak respiratory illness season. Testing is offered to McHenry County residents only at no cost. The clinic will be closed on County holidays.

COVID-19 and Influenza A & B testing will be available for anyone aged 2 and above. For those who test negative for COVID-19 and flu and meet the established criteria, RSV testing will also be available. RSV testing will be available to individuals aged 2-10 years, adults aged 60-74 with an increased risk of severe disease (e.g., chronic heart or lung disease, weakened immune system, diabetes, obesity, or living in a nursing home), and adults aged 75 and older.

Testing will be performed by a nurse and take place in a heated trailer located at the southeast corner of the MCDH parking lot outside Building A at 2200 N. Seminary Avenue in Woodstock. There, participants will find two parking spaces designated for clinic patients. Registered participants who are not immediately greeted by the clinic nurse should call (815) 334-4500 to notify MCDH staff of their arrival.

Testing results are not considered an official diagnosis, nor is treatment available. Individuals who are found to be experiencing signs of severe illness such as extreme shortness of breath, chest pain, or difficulty walking will not be tested and will be directed to seek a higher level of care.

For more information, visit MCDH.info or call (815) 334-4500.

MCCD upcoming events

Stories and Explore: Winter Magic

Monday, Jan. 20, 11 a.m. to noon, Lost Valley Visitor Center, Glacial Park, Ringwood.

Enjoy stories about the season while relaxing inside the warmth. We will read books about winter life and snowflakes. Bring a blanket or a pillow to relax on while you listen to the stories. Ages 2-6 with adult.

to 1 p.m., Crystal Lake main beach, Crystal Lake.

Receive instruction, safety tips, see demonstrations and try your own luck ice fishing on Crystal Lake with representatives of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Crystal Lake Park District Police and McHenry County Conservation District Police. Hot coffee and hot chocolate provided. Bring your own snacks and a chair to sit on if desired.

For this event please RSVP by January 25 to police@mccd.org.

mccd.org. Provide your name, phone number and number of attendees.

Scat Science

Saturday, Feb. 1, 2-3 p.m., Lost Valley Visitor Center, Glacial Park, Ringwood.

Come learn the science of 'scat', the scientific word for animal poop! Learn how it can teach us about the animal it came from and "make" your own scat with oatmeal, cocoa powder and water. Ages 6+

In Search of Eagles

Saturday, Feb. 1, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., drop in, no registration required, at various locations.

Representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Friends of Hackmatack Wildlife Refuge, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, McHenry County Audubon and Lakeland Audubon Society will be on hand at the McHenry, Algonquin, and Carpentersville dam sites along the Fox River in Illinois

See **EVENTS**, Page 3

2025 Ice Fishing Clinic

Saturday, Feb. 1, 9 a.m.

For this event please RSVP by January 25 to police@mccd.org.

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Annual 'People in Need' Forum set for Jan. 25

McHenry County College welcomes the public to attend its annual People in Need Forum to learn about the abundance of resources and support available for county residents needing assistance.

The forum takes place from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 25, at the college, 8900 Route 14, Crystal Lake.

Exhibitors and speakers will cover issues such as immigration, senior care, caregiver resources, food insecurity, mental health, employment and many more. Besides helping people seeking assistance, the forum is an excellent resource and networking opportunity for social service agencies, faith-based organizations, civic groups, law enforcement, elected officials and others.

Registration is encouraged, but not required; you can visit www.mchenry.edu/pin to do so, and agencies looking to set up an exhibitor space can visit the website and sign up as well.



Hemp regulation bill stalls amid Democratic infighting

Pritzker 'tremendously disappointed' bill wasn't called for vote; blames Speaker Welch

By Peter Hancock
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

A bill that would have imposed regulations on new types of intoxicating substances derived from hemp stalled in the Illinois House last week, dealing a political setback to Gov. JB Pritzker after he strongly supported the legislation.

"I was tremendously disappointed," Pritzker said at an unrelated news conference Jan. 7 after it became clear the bill would not be called for a vote in the House. "This is a demonstration, from my perspective, of the power of special interests and the money that they spread around to thwart health and safety of the public."

But the bill also created rifts within the House Democratic caucus. According to several sources, the hemp regulation bill was the focus of a three-hour closed-door caucus meeting Monday that some House members described afterwards as "spirited" but others described as "raucous."

Pritzker also called Democratic House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch's decision not to call the bill "irresponsible," saying he believed it would have passed with a bipartisan majority had he done so. And he criticized House Democrats for the treatment of members of his staff who appeared at a Jan. 6 caucus meeting.

But Welch's spokesperson noted that he is a cosponsor of the bill and would continue

working to pass it in the new legislative session that began Jan. 8.

"A lengthy caucus discussion found that the bill in its current form did not have enough support within the House Democratic Caucus," the spokesperson said. "He is committed to continuing discussions so that when the bill ultimately passes, it is the best possible piece of legislation for the state of Illinois."

'Intoxicating' hemp

The bill targeted a new category of products that have so far been able to bypass the regulatory framework Illinois set up when it legalized industrial hemp in 2018 and recreational marijuana the following year.

The two crops are closely related biologically. Both are classified as a form of cannabis but the major distinction between them is the amount of the intoxicating chemical THC they contain.

Hemp is defined as having a THC content not more than 0.3% by weight. It is primarily used to make a variety of consumer products, such as CBD oils, that are thought to have health benefits. The plant can also be used to make a variety of industrial products such as textile fabrics and building materials.

Both the hemp and marijuana industries are heavily regulated by the state, from the planting and growing of the crops to the transportation and processing of plants into various products. In addition,

marijuana and related cannabis products can only be sold through licensed dispensaries. In recent years, however, a new category of intoxicating products has emerged in what some people call a "gray market" that lies just outside the existing regulatory framework. Those products are made using THC that is extracted or synthesized from hemp plants and are often sold in gas stations and convenience stores, sometimes in packaging that closely resembles candy, snacks or other products commonly sold to children.

"And I talked to a mother of a daughter who took one of these packages, didn't understand how intoxicating the package was, and ended up passed out, ended up in the hospital, has been in and out of the hospital now for eight months as a result of just this product that looked, in all respects, as if it were candy," Pritzker said.

House Bill 4293, known as the Hemp Consumer Products Act, would have closed the existing loophole by defining any product meant for human or animal consumption with a THC content greater than that of consumer CBD products as "cannabis." It would have done so regardless of where the THC came from or how it was derived, and it would have subjected those products to all the regulations that apply to the cannabis industry.

That bill passed the Senate during the regular 2024 ses-

sion in May by a vote of 54-1. But the House did not consider the bill during the final days of the spring session, nor did the bill come up for a vote during the fall veto session in November.

Industry concerns

In December, Pritzker held a news conference and issued a news release announcing his support for the bill while urging lawmakers to pass it during the upcoming lame duck session in January. But the bill ran into stiff opposition from some hemp-related businesses argued the bill would cast too wide of a net over the industry, putting small, independent businesses and farms at risk while cutting off consumers' access to health products like CBD oil. "This bill, as currently written, would wipe out thousands of jobs and criminalize CBD products to the benefit of billion-dollar cannabis corporations," the lobby group Illinois Healthy Alternatives Association said in a statement Jan. 5.

But other industry advocates disagreed, arguing the new regulations were needed to close a regulatory loophole in Illinois law that allows certain businesses to sell products that are essentially cannabis, without going through the state's cannabis regulatory process.

"What these guys are trying to do is that they're trying to cement themselves in a separate category that allows them to sell the exact same

product at a whole different rate because they don't have to follow any of the regulations," Ted Parks, a licensed cannabis transporter and executive director of the Illinois Third Party Carriers Association, told Capitol News Illinois in an interview.

Democratic rift

Speaking to reporters Jan. 7, Pritzker openly complained that officials from state agencies that would be involved in the regulatory process were verbally abused by Democratic lawmakers, and he specifically blamed Welch for not intervening.

"There was a raucous meeting of the Democratic House caucus, in which there was a lot of yelling at staff by people who were opposed to the bill that the speaker did not intervene about," Pritzker said. "And you shouldn't let staff get berated like that. You just shouldn't."

A spokesperson for Welch issued a statement later Jan. 7 saying he expects House members to conduct themselves with "proper decorum and respect, especially on contentious topics amidst tight deadlines."

"Speaker Welch spoke individually with certain members immediately following the discussion, as well as to the entire Caucus today, reiterating these expectations," the spokesperson said. "It is his understanding that at least one member has reached out to offer an apology to the Governor's staff, and has also

apologized to members of the Democratic Caucus."

The bill did not come up for a vote Jan. 7, the final day of the lame duck session, due to an unwritten procedural rule in the House commonly known as the "rule of 60," which says no bill can advance to final action on the House floor unless at least 60 members of the majority caucus have signed on to support it.

Sixty is the minimum number of votes needed to pass legislation in the House. Democrats currently hold 78 of the House's 118 seats.

"It came up a few votes short," Rep. Bob Rife, D-Blue Island, said in an interview. "We're in the lame duck (session) and this is a time when there are a lot of things going on, but it's a measure that we need to address as we go into the 104th General Assembly. I believe this is going to be at the forefront of one of the agenda items."

Chicago concerns

Some House members speculated that Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson, who was known to oppose the bill, may have been a factor in some Democrats' refusal to support the bill, but Pritzker said he doubted that was the case.

"My impression is he didn't have much to do with this," he said. "There's a powerful lobby that has been working against this bill for quite some time. This was not an easy bill. If it had been, it would have passed last May."

Task force recommends tornado shelters in warehouse following deadly 2021 storm

6 people were killed when tornado hit Amazon warehouse in Edwardsville

By Ben Szalinski
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

A task force created in the wake of a deadly Metro East tornado has issued recommendations for better protecting warehouse workers.

Six people were killed when an EF3 tornado with 150 mph winds struck an Amazon warehouse in Edwardsville on Dec. 10, 2021. The incident raised questions about the safety of warehouses in severe weather, including if warehouses are designed to withstand extreme winds and if warehouse operators are properly prepared for severe weather.

Illinois lawmakers established the Warehouse Safe-

ty Standards Task Force in January 2023 to study warehouse safety in response to the Edwardsville tornado, and it issued its final report last month.

Among its recommendations was that building codes be amended to require tornado shelters in warehouses. The International Building Code became Illinois' statewide building code on Jan. 1 after being approved by the legislature in 2023. The task force recommended shelters be added to that code.

The IBC doesn't have specific requirements for severe weather because threats vary around the world, Tim Schmitz from the International

Code Council told the task force. However, communities can adopt their own codes specifically to meet the needs of natural disasters in their area.

Providing the right shelter from tornadoes can save lives, Greg Bryant from the Masonry Structural Coalition told the task force. He pointed to a 2004 F4 tornado in Woodford County that destroyed a manufacturing plant, but all 140 people in the building made it out alive after taking refuge in a designated safe area of the building.

The six people killed in Edwardsville were not in a safe area of the warehouse, Edwardsville police said after

the tornado.

The 2021 tornado hit around 8:30 p.m. as the facility was bustling ahead of the holidays. According to the National Weather Service, the tornado touched down near I-270 and Illinois Route 255 southwest of the warehouse and traveled through the south half of the building. The tornado first impacted the west-facing wall, causing it to collapse. That caused other structural failures, including the roof to collapse. The tornado was on the ground for just five minutes, but debris from Amazon was found miles away from the warehouse after the tornado lifted. An Occupational Safety and Health Administration investigation into Amazon did not find any violations, according to the task force report.

OSHA recommended the company review its severe weather procedures, ensure employees are provided training and participate in drills, have site-specific information about severe weather plans, and ensure audible warning devices are accessible. The warehouse was rebuilt and reopened in September 2024.

The task force also recommended requiring site-specific emergency plans based on OSHA's guidelines for employers to prepare for tornadoes. The plans would be shared with local first responders and would include floor plans and details about what is stored in the warehouse.

Illinois saw a record of 142 tornadoes in 2024, according to the National Weather Service. The state has aver-

aged 60 tornadoes each year over the last 10 years. But the number of tornadoes in the state could be increasing as technology to detect them improves, according to data compiled by The New York Times. Most Illinois counties saw an increase in tornadoes in the 20 years from 2002 to 2022 compared to the previous 20 years.

Most tornadoes are not as powerful as the Edwardsville tornado, Marc Levitan from the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Project told the task force, but warehouses are more vulnerable because they're tall and supported by heavy walls that rely on the roof for stability.

Levitan told the task force it is better to design buildings

See **TASK FORCE**, Page 6

•Events (Continued from page 2)

and at the Williams Bay boat launch on Lake Geneva in Wisconsin to help you search for eagles. There will be scopes and binoculars available for use at each location, along with guided activities for children. Visit the site closest to you or visit them all! All ages welcome.

Tree and Shrub Bud ID

Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2-3:30 p.m., Lost Valley Visitor Center, Glacial Park, Ringwood.

Enjoy an indoor presentation on tree and shrub identification and hands on learning from Research Ecologist Tom Simpson, then head outside to ID tree species in Glacial Park, if weather permits. Ages 14+.

Natural Valentine

Saturday, Feb. 8, 9:30 - 11 a.m., Lost Valley Visitor Center, Glacial Park, Ringwood. Do you need a Valentine's

Day gift idea? Have your family's picture taken outdoors in beautiful Glacial Park and then make a "natural" picture frame to complete your Valentine's Day gift. All ages.

Winter Sowing

Saturday, Feb. 8, 1-2 p.m., Prairieview Education Center, Crystal Lake.

Winter sowing is a low maintenance seed starting process. We will go step-by-

step and create gallon jug greenhouses. We have MCCD native seeds for you to choose to sow and we will supply the soil, tools, tape and plant markers. Please bring one clean gallon jug to use during the program. All ages.

For more information or to sign up for programs please visit the McHenry County Conservation District website at MCCDistrict.org.

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SUBMITTED RENDERING Hi-Liter/MCN

Village of Fox Lake receives state grant for local park development

The Village of Fox Lake announced that it was selected to receive a \$600,000 Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant from the State of Illinois. This generous funding will significantly support the Village of Fox Lake's efforts to continue to develop its Lakefront Park with an ADA-compliant pier and boardwalk.

Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) awarded a total of \$55.2 million to 100 communities for local park development projects as part of the latest round of OSLAD grants.

"Since I became Governor, it's been my mission to build stronger, healthier communities across Illinois," said Governor JB Pritzker. "Through the OSLAD program, we're bringing that vision to life by awarding over \$55.2 million to local park projects, expanding green spaces, and creating new recreational opportunities for all."

Established by the Illinois General Assembly in 1986, OSLAD is a cost-sharing program between state and local governments that helps communities fund land acquisition and development for parks and out-door recreation projects.

It's become one of the most popular grant programs in Illinois. Since its establishment, OSLAD has awarded \$640 million for park projects throughout Illinois including the \$600,000.00 state grant for local park development.

"This grant is a game-changer for us," said Donny Schmit, Village of Fox Lake Mayor. "It allows us to enhance the park and provide greater accessibility to families and community members who will benefit from water-based recreation and various special events and program offerings. We are incredibly grateful for the support and encouragement from Illinois State Representative Tom Weber and every member of our community who made this possible."

This project is proposed to transform the Village into a sought-after tourist destination within the Chain O' Lakes region, boosting visits to the park and local businesses due to its close proximity to the Village's downtown business district. Additionally, it is conveniently located within walking distance of the Village's Metra train station. The estimated target date for completion is spring of 2026.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN

County employees came together to help make sure local families and children had a happy holiday season. The Sheriff's Office, with the help of police departments countywide and generous donors, continued their participation in the Shop with a Cop program. County employees used their annual holiday luncheon to give back by filling boxes with non-perishable food for area pantries and collected donations for the county Animal control and Adoption Center.

New General Assembly sworn in as House, Senate take different tones

Lawmakers face potential budget shortfall as new legislative term begins

CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

A new Illinois General Assembly was sworn in for the next two years last week, with the House and Senate ceremonies taking two starkly different tones.

The House inauguration ceremony, conducted in an auditorium on the University of Illinois Springfield campus, was at times boisterous, featuring speeches that were more politically divisive and sometimes led to jeering.

House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, who was reelected to his third term leading the chamber, tried to strike a chord of unity as he exhorted his colleagues to work together to meet the challenges of what he called a unique moment in history.

"The urgency of this moment shows that unity is our power," he said. "Members of the 104th General Assembly, let's rise to meet this moment together. Let's use this time and all that has been given to us to do the work and move Illinois for-

ward. Winners do the work."

But there was less talk about unity and cooperation from Republicans who spoke at the ceremony.

Rep. Steve Reick, R-Woodstock, spoke to nominate Republican Tony McCombie as speaker. He said he agreed that cooperation and compromise are needed to solve the state's problems. But he also criticized "people on both ends of the political spectrum" for pushing "ideas on which there is nothing resembling a social consensus."

"What results are laws that offend the heart-felt beliefs of people whose voices are not being heard and toothless resolutions that call for us to separate this state from a world class city that's being driven into the ground," Reick said.

Meanwhile, McCombie, of Savanna, who was reelected to her second term as minority leader, used her speech to vent some of the frustration she and other Republicans have felt at being locked out of negotiations with majority party Democrats on major legislative issues.

"I, like many, were disappointed with our election outcomes and the ability for us to secure more Republican seats to bring some balance to the General As-

sembly," she said. "However, this was not due to a lack of good candidates or hard work, but due to special interest in Illinois' gerrymandered maps, the most outrageous maps in the nation."

Senate inauguration

Senators from across Illinois were sworn in Jan. 8 in the newly renovated Senate chamber. The room had been closed for 2 1/2 years while the Senate conducted business in a modified auditorium in a separate building on the capitol complex.

Sen. Don Harmon, D-Oak Park, and Sen. John Curran, R-Downers Grove, were reelected by their colleagues to their positions of Senate president and Senate minority leader, respectively.

The mood in the chamber, where bipartisan engagement has been more common in recent years, was far more reserved than in the House.

"While they may not always see eye-to-eye, they share a mutual respect for each other, our caucus and the constituents that allow them to work together for the good of Illinois," Sen. Sue Rezin, R-Morris, said of the two leaders in her nominating speech for Curran. "This calm dialogue may not be the exciting drama that you see in D.C."

Harmon is beginning his fourth term as the chamber's leader after being elected by his caucus in January 2020 and serving in the Senate since 2003. His 2020 opponent in that contest, Sen. Kimberly Lightford, D-Westchester, gave the nominating speech for Harmon, saying the suburban Democrat has proven to be an effective leader.

"In an era of deeply political division, Don stands apart through his remarkable ability to unite people," Lightford said.

Harmon's acceptance speech had one overarching message: be kind. He asked senators to work across the aisle, including on behalf of their constituents who didn't vote for them.

"Remember that your neighbors in this chamber are some of the only people in Illinois who can relate to what you're going through," Harmon said. "The Senate is an active laboratory for



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Pet of the week

Warrick, is about 13 years old, neutered, up-to-date on shots, tested negative for feline leukemia and heartworm and microchipped.

While walk-ins are welcome, adoptions are by appointments only to ensure we have the staff available to help adopters. For information and/or to complete an online application, please visit www.saveapetil.org/adopt.

You ought to be in pictures!

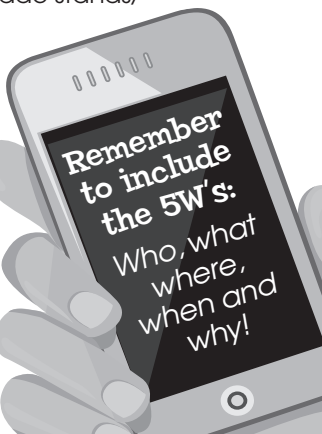
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PHOTOS MAY ALSO APPEAR ON OUR WEB SITE,
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•Activities (Continued from front page)

provided at the Van Patten Woods Canoe Launch on Russell Road east of Route 41 and at Sedge Meadow Forest Preserve located on Wadsworth Road just east of Route 41 in Wadsworth.

When conditions allow, snowmobile trails are open 6:30 am–11 pm, Sunday–Thursday, and 6:30 am to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. The following snowmobile trailer parking lots are open extended hours for snowmo-

bilers: the Van Patten Woods Canoe Launch parking area on Russell Road east of Route 41, the Sedge Meadow parking area on Wadsworth Road east of Route 41, and the Lakewood parking area on Brown Road near Route 12. All other parking lots close at sunset.

Ice Skating

Lace up your skates and head to the lake at Independence Grove in Libertyville or the rink at Lakewood's Winter

Sports Area. The shallow rink at Lakewood, open 6:30 am–9 pm, typically freezes earlier in the season than the lake at Independence Grove, open 6:30 am–sunset, where a 4.5-inch ice layer is required.

Ice Fishing

Five locations have been designated as ice fishing areas: Banana Lake at Lakewood, Sterling Lake at Van Patten Woods, Hastings Lake Forest Preserve in Lake Villa,

Lake Carina Forest Preserve in Gurnee, and the south bay at Independence Grove. Ice fishing is free and at your own risk. Ice conditions are not monitored, so anglers should check ice thickness before going out on any frozen body of water. A minimum of 4 inches of solid ice over the entire waterbody is recommended before individuals attempt ice fishing. Bring your own gear.

Temporary shanties and shelters are permitted but must

be removed by the end of the day. Only two poles are allowed, or tip-ups with no more than two hooks on each line. Holes must be six inches or smaller in diameter. Van Patten Woods is open weekdays from 6:30 am until one hour past sunset for ice fishing, and on Saturdays and Sundays from 6:30 am to sunset. Other sites are open daily from 6:30 am to sunset for ice fishing. All Illinois fishing regulations and licenses apply.

“The Forest Preserves provides countless ways for individuals and families to connect with nature, no matter the season,” said Jessica Vealitzek, president of the Lake County Forest Preserves. “These treasured spaces offer the perfect backdrop for winter adventures, helping visitors stay active, recharge and find joy in the beauty of the outdoors.”

For a full list of winter activities, visit LCFPD.org/winter-sports.

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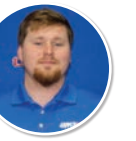



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Court & crime news

Two offenders charged in 2023 carjacking

Following an extensive and detailed investigation, Lake County Sheriff's Detectives have identified two teens involved in the violent carjacking of a woman in unincorporated Libertyville in early 2023. During the incident, the woman's two-year-old son, who was in the back-seat of the car, was taken.

The investigation spanned several months due to the complexity of the case and the thorough work required to build a strong evidentiary foundation. Detectives pursued dozens of leads, meticulously reviewing hours of video surveillance, physical evidence reports, and cellular tower data. They also conducted multiple interviews with witnesses and persons of interest, and obtained subpoenas and search warrants to access critical information. Each step was crucial to ensure all findings were verified and could withstand judicial scrutiny.

The investigation ultimately identified two 17-year-old males—one from Waukegan and one from Lindenhurst—as the individuals responsible for the crime. Both offenders, now 19 years old, are in custody on unrelated charges.

Because both offenders were juveniles at the time of this crime, they were referred to the juvenile court system on the following charges: Aggravated vehicular hijacking and vehicular hijacking.

The Lake County State's Attorney's Office is currently working to have these charges transferred and tried in adult court. Until this process is completed, the Illinois Juvenile Court Act prohibits the release of the offenders' identities.

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "When this crime occurred, nearly every division of the sheriff's office was involved in trying to locate the child and identify the offenders. Our detectives continued the investigation, working tirelessly, with the state's attorney's office, to hold the offenders accountable and provide the initial steps of justice for the victims. Complex investigations like these require time and precision to ensure justice is served and I am very proud of everyone involved in this investigation."

State's Attorney Eric Rinehart said, "The thorough and determined work of our prosecutors, in collaboration with sheriff's detectives, reflects our commitment to holding violent offenders accountable. This long-term investigation demonstrates the dedication of our office to pursuing justice for victims and ensuring that those responsible for such heinous acts are brought to justice. We will continue to priori-

tize the safety and well-being of our community."

Original release: Offenders batter, run over woman, steal her car with two-year-old inside (issued 2/23/2023)

On February 23, 2023, at approximately 3:35 p.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies responded to a residence in the 16000 block of Route 137, Unincorporated Libertyville, for a vehicular hijacking with a two-year-old child still inside the vehicle.

Preliminary investigation shows the 34-year-old victim just returned to her residence. She pulled into her driveway and brought one of her children inside. She came back to her car to retrieve her other child, her two-year-old son, when a white BMW (2000's model, black bumper, and loud exhausted) pulled into her driveway, behind her car (she was driving a 2021 Volkswagen Atlas).

A man (described as being tall, thin, wearing a grey zip-up hooded sweatshirt, and a light green facemask) exited the passenger side of the BMW and struggled to get into the victim's Volkswagen, as she tried to keep her two-year-old son safe. The offender battered the woman, knocking her to the ground. He then stole her car with the child inside. He and the driver of the BMW fled from the scene. One of the drivers ran her over as they fled, causing serious injuries to her extremities. The victim was still able to call 911 and sheriff's deputies immediately responded.

Knowing a child was inside the vehicle, sheriff's detectives immediately responded to the scene and the general area to search for the Volkswagen.

A short time later, a person working at a business in the 2200 block of Lakeside Drive, Waukegan, called 911 to report they just saw two vehicles enter the parking lot, and the driver of one of the cars abandoned a small child. The drivers of both vehicles then fled. The 911 caller at the business rescued the child from the parking lot, before the child wandered onto the busy roadway. Waukegan Police Officers and sheriff's deputies responded to the scene. Sheriff's personnel confirmed the found child was the abducted child.

While searching for the stolen vehicle and endangered child, sheriff's detectives immediately called Volkswagen Car-Net, in an attempt to track the vehicle. Unfortunately, there was a delay, as Volkswagen Car-Net would not track the vehicle with the abducted child until they received payment to reactivate the tracking device in the stolen Volkswagen.

Sheriff's deputies located the stolen Volkswagen in a parking lot near Casmir Pulaski and Route 43. The vehicle will be thoroughly processed for trace evidence.

The woman who was battered and run over remains at an area hospital in serious, but stable condition.

Sheriff's detectives continue looking for the BMW. The BMW was stolen in the past week from a car dealership in Waukegan. If you see the stolen BMW or have any information about this incident please call the Lake County Sheriff's Criminal Investigations Division at 847-377-4000 or contact Lake County CrimeStoppers at: www.lakecountycrimestoppers.org

Woman arrested for September fatal pedestrian crash

A McHenry woman was arrested Jan. 6 in connection to the pedestrian crash that killed Austin Stanek on Roberts Road in September.

On Friday, September 27, 2024, at 10:48 p.m., members of the McHenry County Sheriff's Office, Island Lake Police Department, and Wauconda Fire District responded to a crash in the 4300 block of Roberts Road involving a pedestrian and one vehicle. The vehicle failed to stop after the crash.

The pedestrian, later identified as Austin Stanek, a 24-year-old Island Lake man, was transported to Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital in Barrington where he was pronounced deceased.

Through the course of an almost four-month investigation by the McHenry County Sheriff's Major Crash Investigation Unit, evidence was collected to identify the suspect who left the scene of the fatal crash. Various types of evidence were collected, including the involved vehicle, which was found in a garage in Lakemoor.

Through the investigation, deputies identified a 50-year-old McHenry woman, Christine S. Eilers (Pine) as the suspect. Warrants were obtained for her arrest and on January 6, Eilers was arrested without incident and transported to the McHenry County Jail, where she remains in custody.

Charges filed include: Leaving the scene of a crash involving death (Class 4 felony), and Failure to comply/report crash involving death (Class 1 felony).

Sheriff's Special Investigations Group arrests drug traffickers

On January 8, at approximately 6:20 p.m., members of the Lake County Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Group (SIG), a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HID-

TA) funded task force, conducted a traffic stop near I-94 and Route 22 near Lincolnshire.

During the traffic stop, Lake County Sheriff's K9 handler, Deputy Dwight Arrowood, and his K9 partner, Duke, assisted. K9 Duke conducted a 'free-air sniff' around the vehicle's exterior and alerted to the presence of narcotics. A subsequent search of the vehicle uncovered over



Melissa M. Coquillard



Martin Gonzalez

half a kilogram, approximately 578.5 grams, of powder cocaine.

The driver, identified as Melissa M. Coquillard, 33, of Hampshire, Illinois, and the passenger, Martin Gonzalez, 36, of South Elgin, Illinois were arrested and transported to the Lake County Jail.

After reviewing the facts and circumstances of the case, the Lake County State's Attorney's Office approved the following charges:

- Melissa M. Coquillard: Unlawful Possession of a Controlled Substance with Intent to Deliver (Class X Felony), Unlawful Possession of a Controlled Substance (Class 1 Felony) and Speeding.

- Martin Gonzalez: Unlawful Possession of a Controlled Substance with Intent to Deliver (Class X Felony) and

Unlawful Possession of a Controlled Substance (Class 1 Felony).

The Lake County State's Attorney's Office filed petitions to detain both Gonzalez and Coquillard in custody while awaiting trial.

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "This case demonstrates the effectiveness of our specialized teams, including our K9 Unit, in intercepting dangerous drugs before they reach our communities. I commend the collaborative efforts of our deputies and our Special Investigations Group for their dedication to keeping Lake County safe. Drug traffickers pose a serious threat, and we will continue to aggressively pursue those who bring these substances into our community."



SUBMITTED PHOTO HI-Liter/MCN

Auditions will be held on January 30 for the Fear No Art Festival at College of Lake County.

Auditions for 2025 Fear No Art Festival set for Jan. 30

Students and community members are invited to audition for the CLC Dance Department's 2025 Fear No Art Festival on Thursday, Jan. 30 in the Experimental Theatre of the James Lumber Center for the Performing Arts, 19351 W. Washington St., Room P103 on the Grayslake campus. Fear No Art celebrates diverse voices in the arts and is an inclusive space where every voice finds its place and every perspective shines.

This unique festival plays a vital role in supporting the artistic development of both our college students and community artists at large. This lively celebration featuring a variety of emerging choreographers, dancers, musicians, singers, actors, photographers, artists, graphic designers, poets and more.

Fear No Art Auditions/Submissions Jan. 30:

5:30-6 p.m. for Visual Artists. Bring samples of work: painting, pencil, animation, etc. Completed works are not

needed by the submission date.

6-7:30 p.m. for Musicians/Poets/Actors/Other Artists. Be prepared to sing, play, speak or play a recording. A piano will be available.

7:30-9:30 p.m. for Dancers. Come dressed and ready to dance. No prepared dance necessary.

Please note that dance rehearsals have a minimum commitment of 2 hours a week for one piece. Rehearsal days and times vary and depend on the choreographer and dancers' availability. All other artists may work at their own pace, with mentoring.

Fear No Art Festival performances are Friday, April 25 at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, April 26 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on the JLC mainstage. For information, contact Valerie Alpert at valpert@clcillinois.edu or (847) 543-2432.

Follow the College of Lake County Dance Department on Facebook and Instagram @collegeoflakecountydance. Visit clcdance.blogspot.com for information on performances, events and classes.

• Task force

(Continued from page 3)

to withstand the more common modest tornadoes, and buildings should be constructed either with a shelter inside or with a more wind resistant exterior structure. The National Weather Service in Chicago reported all but one of northeast Illinois' 63 tornadoes in 2024 had winds of 110 mph or less.

First responders also need more assistance responding to tornadoes, retired Edwardsville Fire Chief James Whiteford told the task force.

The task force agreed with his recommendation that the General Assembly provide regular funding to the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System. MABAS is a series of intergovernmental agreements between Illinois fire

departments to bring additional or specialized support to major incidents. MABAS calls range from dispatching additional units to a structure fire to long-term disaster response missions, including outside Illinois. The system received a \$200,000 grant from the Office of the State Fire Marshall in fiscal year 2024.

Lake County Sheriff's arrest bulletin — • Sworn in (Continued from page 4)

The Lake County Sheriff's Dept. reported the following arrests in Lake County. Suspects are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Dec. 7

Cedric D. Brown, 33, Waukegan, was cited for a warrant arrest: driving while license suspended;

Daniel D. Tuholski, 45, Lake Bluff, was cited for battery;

Allison M. Mainhart, 33, Palatine, was cited for a warrant arrest: operating watercraft under the influence of alcohol;

Ismael Garcia Suarez, 26, Beach Park, was cited for DUI – alcohol, driving while license suspended, and leaving the scene of an accident;

Cameron A. Connard, 28, Round Lake Beach, was cited for aggravated Dui, and driving while license revoked;

Dec. 8

Maria De Lourdes Aguilar Montalvo, 49, Round Lake Beach, was cited for DUI – alcohol;

Dec. 9

Willie K. Lewis, 48 Volo, was cited for a warrant arrest: driving while license suspended (DuPage County);

Antonio M. Calderon, 34, Waukegan, was cited for a warrant arrest: home invasion;

Dec. 10

Sandy L. Harris, 31, Waukegan, was cited for a warrant arrest: domestic battery;

Buda Grzeorz, 55, Chica-

go, was cited for no driver's license;

Anthony Kirrell, 22, Gurnee, was cited for trespassing, resisting arrest and obstructing a peace officer;

Dec. 11

Erin T. Seals, 25, Matieson, was cited for a warrant obtained: retail theft;

Tairra T. Lewis, 28, Chicago, was cited for a warrant obtained: retail theft;

Mikkell D. White, 27, Zion, was cited for a warrant arrest: criminal trespass to vehicle;

Dec. 12

Brittany J. Walker, 27, Lake Zurich, was cited for a warrant obtained: harassment through electronic communication;

Elaquim Morales-Garrido, 46, Chicago, was cited for a warrant arrest: retail theft;

Masaru Arakawa, 50, Schaumburg, was cited for DUI – alcohol;

Parker B. Rhode, 58, Grayslake, was cited for disorderly conduct, and criminal damage to property;

Dec. 13

Kevin V. Beckman, 29, Waukegan, was cited for disorderly conduct;

Dec. 14

Mario J. Morales, 35, Waukegan, was cited for DUI – alcohol, driving while license suspended, and unlawful possession of controlled substance;

Anthony B. Cuccieri, 44, Lake Villa, was cited for driving while license suspended, and no insurance;

Carolyn A. Castic, 48,

Volo, was cited for domestic battery and possession of drug paraphernalia;

Julio C. Barroso, 36, Waukegan, was cited for DUI – alcohol, and no insurance;

Patience J. Cedzidlo, 40, Lake Villa, was cited for a warrant arrest: unlawful possession of a controlled substance;

Dec. 15

Albert Smith, 60, Milwaukee, WI, was cited for unlawful possession of a controlled substance, and obstructing justice;

Joseph S. Cali, 39, Twin Lakes, WI, was cited for battery and disorderly conduct;

Anthony Allen, 35, Gurnee, was cited for domestic battery;

Taylor Skewes, 31, Lake Villa, was cited for DUI – alcohol;

Dec. 16

Dayna Melgola, 21, Zion, was cited for no driver's license;

Dec. 17

Iesha Z. Winfrey, 31, Waukegan, was cited for driving while license revoked;

Volodymyr Voloshyn, 36, Hallandale Beach, FL, was cited for operating a commercial vehicle without a CDL, and overweight on registration;

Dec. 18

Josiah J. Giles, 20, Waukegan, was cited for a warrant arrest: driving while license suspended;

Diego Sanchez, 26, Round Lake Beach, was cited for improper transportation of cannabis.

coalition-building. Forge those bonds and look out for one another."

The messages from Harmon and Curran stood out in a week when the House has grabbed headlines for a caucus meeting that left a governor's office staffer in tears while three of Welch's senior staff members announced plans to resign.

Curran is beginning his second term as Senate minority leader after being elected by his caucus in 2023. A former Cook County prosecutor, Curran was elected to the Senate in 2016.

"It's easy to insulate ourselves with people who look, live and think like us," Curran said. "But if American democracy has taught us anything, it is that real progress comes from stepping outside of your comfort zone and building a coalition of different viewpoints to craft policy for the greater good."

Of the 59 Illinois senators, three sworn in Jan. 8 were non-incumbents: Graciela Guzmán, D-Chicago, Liandro Arellano, R-Dixon, and Chris Balkema, R-Channahon.

Pritzker on upcoming challenges

The 104th General Assembly has a lengthy to-do list, ranging from eliminating a

projected \$3.2 billion budget deficit to reforming transit in the Chicago area.

In a news conference following inauguration, Gov. JB Pritzker spoke about the budget challenges he faces this spring ahead of his late February budget address.

"When we talk about priorities, prioritizing the fiscal health of the state has been, you know, among the most important things that I've, I think, achieved and will continue to prioritize," Pritzker said.

Pritzker also faces a re-emerging challenge from his first term as governor: a Donald Trump presidency.

Pritzker said he has general concerns about Trump's plans, particularly as they pertain to health care. But he is taking a wait-and-see approach before deciding specific actions to counter the Trump administration's initiatives.

He noted Trump is often "unpredictable."

"There's not a specific thing that I can point to though because he hasn't taken office yet," Pritzker said, adding he'd remain "on guard" for what actions may be needed in the future.

Capitol renovations

Last week's inauguration also served as the reopening

of the Illinois Senate chamber following renovations to the space that began over two years ago.

The north wing of the Illinois Capitol remains in the middle of an expansive \$350 million renovation that began in 2022.

Much of the project on the interior of the Capitol is designed to restore the building to how it looked centuries ago. The building was constructed in the late 1800s in the decades after the Civil War and has undergone numerous renovations that have changed its appearance and layout.

In the Senate specifically, construction included restoring the room's original laylight and making safety upgrades. The stained glass laylight is designed to resemble the chamber's original look before it was damaged by fire decades ago. Renovations also added more stalls to the women's restroom to make it comparable to the men's bathroom.

The project is also aimed at modernizing the capitol complex and includes construction of a new public entrance and visitor center on the north wing. The addition is also designed to improve security at the complex and funnel visitors in through a single space.

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TWIN \$1049 FULL \$1349 KING \$1999

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Only Verlo guarantees you'll be comfortable for the lifetime of your mattress.

Since we build your mattress in our local factory, we can easily adjust it for you throughout the years. A little softer here...a little firmer there. With Verlo's Lifetime Comfort Guarantee, you can just get comfortable – and stay comfortable.



vMotion

ADJUSTABLE BED BASES

Starting at **\$399***

Relieve pressure by raising your head or feet. Enjoy a relaxing massage at the touch of a button with Verlo's adjustable beds.

Great for watching TV or reading in bed | Reduces snoring & acid reflux effects
Alleviates lower back, knee & leg pain | Aids in circulation

*With Verlo mattress purchase. See store for details.

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\$200 OFF
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*On set purchase with factory select covers. Not applicable on previous purchases. One coupon per set purchase. See store for details. Offer ends 12-31-2024.

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