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Sheriff Idleburg introduces newest K9

Lake County Sheriff John D. Idleburg is proud to announce that K9 Lux, a direct offspring of the late K9 Dax, has officially joined the Lake County Sheriff's Office as its newest police canine.

K9 Dax, a highly decorated member of the Sheriff's Canine Unit, was injured in March 2024 while apprehending a fleeing felon. The severity of his injuries led to his early retirement, and he sadly passed away on April 12, 2024.

Before his passing, K9 Dax fathered a litter of puppies. Among them, Deputy John Forlenza—Dax's longtime partner—recognized that one stood out with the potential to follow in his father's footsteps. That puppy, K9 Lux, was

selected as the top candidate for future law enforcement training.

Deputy Forlenza was one of two deputies selected this winter to be a handler of one of the sheriff's office next two canines. Upon receiving this opportunity, he donated K9 Lux to Tops K9, the training facility responsible for preparing the Sheriff's Canine Unit. K9 Lux and Deputy Forlenza have been officially partnered, to be the newest Lake County Sheriff's Office Canine Team and the two will begin training together this spring.

Deputy John Forlenza said, "I would like to express my profound sense of gratitude and happiness that the Lake County Sheriff's Office has officially named K9 Dax's

son, K9 Lux, as my new partner. Dax was remarkable and always did his duty with great courage and dedication throughout his career. I am honored and grateful for the opportunity to continue as a member of the Lake County Sheriff's Office K9 Team, and to serve the citizens of Lake County with K9 Lux."

"We are proud to introduce K9 Lux as the newest member of our K9 Unit," said Sheriff John D. Idleburg. "Lux carries on an incredible legacy, as a direct offspring of our beloved K9 Dax. We have no doubt that Lux, alongside Deputy Forlenza, will continue to serve and protect the residents of Lake County with the same dedication and bravery."



SUBMITTED PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN
From far left: K9 Lux as a puppy. Lux has grown and is ready for training so he can follow in his father's footsteps and serve as a member of the Lake County Sheriff's Canine Unit. K9 Dax and Deputy John Forlenza, holding K9 Lux as a puppy, pose for a photo before Dax passed away in April of last year.

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Pritzker calls \$55.2 billion budget 'responsible and balanced' - but warns Trump policies could upend it

Proposal shaves \$1.2 billion from November spending estimate, doesn't include new income or sales tax

CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

An improved revenue forecast is helping ease pressure on state finances as Gov. JB Pritzker calls for tightened spending to balance the budget without tax increases on everyday Illinoisans.

During his annual state of the state and budget address last week, Pritzker called for a roughly 3 percent spending increase to \$55.2 billion in fiscal year 2026 that will be supported by a similar increase in state revenue to \$55.5 billion. The plan factors in a better-than-expected economic outlook for the coming fiscal year after the governor's office originally projected a multi-billion-dollar shortfall in November. Pritzker also proposed a significant spending reduction compared to the November estimate while still increasing spending over current-year levels.

But administration officials also warned that the state is in large part at the whim of President Donald Trump's onslaught of federal policy changes.

The governor's plan assumes a \$173 million increase in federal funding, though Pritzker named several enacted or feared Trump policies that could alter estimates, including tariffs, food safety deregulation and potential health care cuts.

"Let me be clear, this is going to affect your daily lives," Pritzker said, citing the efforts of Trump advisor Elon Musk via the federal Department of Government Efficiency. "Our state budget can't make up for the damage that is done to people across our state."

The governor called his proposal "responsible and balanced," pointing out that it doesn't raise taxes on Illinoisans, though he did propose a tax hike on certain casino profits.

"If there's one thing I've learned as governor, there are no magic bean fixes," Pritzker said. "And each year there's some difficulty that requires us to work hard to overcome it."

Part of the spending plan includes significant changes to immigrant health care programs, including eliminating a program for low-income noncitizens living in the U.S. without legal permission between ages 42 and 64.

Ultimately, lawmakers and the governor will have

to come to an agreement on a spending plan by the end of May. But the governor's opening salvo could meet opposition from Democratic lawmakers in the General Assembly—especially members of the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus—due to what it doesn't fund.

"All of us have been hearing that it was going to be a tough budget year. I think that we expected there to be some things in the budget that we weren't going to be happy with," Sen. Karina Villa, D-West Chicago, said. "But I think completely removing a program is not anything that we were expecting."

Tightened spending

Despite the roughly 3 percent spending increase, most areas of the state budget would see little growth under Pritzker's plan. About 75 percent of the spending increase comes from increased funding for education, pensions and growing health care costs.

Outside those areas, spending is up just 1 percent across the board.

The most notable spending change is the elimination of the Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults program that provides Medicaid-style benefits to certain low-income noncitizens ages 42 to 64. Pritzker proposed leaving the Health Benefits for Immigrant Seniors program intact to serve certain low-income noncitizens age 65 and older, which will cost the state \$132 million.

The programs unexpectedly stretched the state budget in spring 2023 when costs were projected to potentially reach \$1 billion. Lawmakers gave the governor authority to control costs by pausing enrollment and enacting copays, and projected program costs are now at \$558 million in the current fiscal year. Enrollment in the programs, meanwhile, has remained paused.

Eliminating the program for middle-aged adults is projected to save the general revenue fund about \$330 million, according to the governor's office. Pritzker told reporters he expects the federal government will stop reimbursing states for costs associated with programs providing services to noncitizens.

While Pritzker signified he's open to working with lawmakers on what programs

will ultimately be funded, he said his overarching goal is a balanced budget.

"If you come to the table looking to spend more—I'm going to ask you where you want to cut," Pritzker said. "I have made difficult decisions—including to programs I have championed, which is hard for me, just as I know some of the difficult decisions you will have to make will be hard for you."

One of the priorities Pritzker put on hold is an increase in spending on the state's Early Childhood Block Grant program. In the past two years, the state has helped more than 11,000 children access child care as part of a multi-year plan. But the governor did not request another \$75 million increase this year that would have helped add more.

Pritzker also proposed redirecting funds previously appropriated for asylum seekers to other services. That includes reducing funding to \$40 million from \$139 million for "welcoming centers" that helped the state handle migrants bused here from Texas and other states.

Pritzker proposed allocating \$282.7 million for Home Illinois, a program that provides services for the homeless and also provided assistance to new arrivals, keeping the program relatively flat from a year ago despite advocates' calls for \$100 million in new funding. The governor's office said funds that were previously directed toward asylum seekers in Home Illinois would be redirected to homeless shelters and other services for Illinois' homeless populations.

Pritzker's proposal calls for allocating \$2 million toward maintenance in the Department of Corrections, the minimum amount recommended. The move comes a year after the state allocated \$900 million to rebuild the Stateville and Logan prisons after years of deterioration and behind-schedule repairs.

Pritzker also proposed increasing the "rainy day" fund by \$154 million, bringing its balance to \$2.5 billion at the end of FY26.

Notably absent from the proposal, however, was any new funding for public transportation. Chicago-area transit agencies face a more than \$700 million shortfall in the

coming year. Pritzker told reporters there still needs to be negotiations with the agencies about reforms before the state commits to new funding.

Education and human services

One of the few areas of the budget targeted for a substantial increase is PreK-12 education.

Pritzker's plan includes the statutory minimum increase of \$350 million for the Evidence-Based Funding formula, a plan lawmakers enacted in 2017 to focus new education spending on the neediest districts.

That would bring the total funding under the EBF formula to \$8.9 billion, a \$2.1 billion cumulative increase since the program began. Pritzker credited that funding for helping raise student test scores and improving graduation rates.

"I believe in building on what works," he said. "So, despite the challenge we are facing this year, my budget proposal increases our commitment to Evidence-Based Funding for public education so that we put new resources in underfunded schools first."

His plan also calls for adding \$1.3 million for career and technical education and maintaining spending of \$3 million next year to implement the state literacy plan.

But it also calls for flat funding of \$748 million for Early Childhood Block Grants, which help subsidize the cost of preschool for at-risk and low-income children. All told, Pritzker's plan would bring total general revenue fund spending on PreK-12 education to just under \$11.2 billion, or about \$200 million less than the Illinois State Board of Education had requested.

State Rep. Will Davis, D-Homewood, who chairs the House appropriations committee that deals with public schools, said after the speech that he thought Pritzker's plan was insufficient, "for the simple fact that I think we can be better at EBF."

"Last year, I wanted to argue for \$450 million," he said in an interview of the standard yearly increase in EBF funding. "I think that's doable. I mean, if we're ever going to have a real conversation about getting to full funding in K-12, we're going to have

to increase the EBF allocation more than what it is right now."

The governor is also continuing his effort to increase the number of employees at the Department of Children and Family Services. Pritzker proposed adding 100 new employees to increase staffing to 4,100 at the department, the most since 2002. Under his proposal, overall funding for DCFS will have increased by 100 percent since Pritzker took office.

The Department of Human Services would receive \$7.9 billion, including \$20 million to fund 50-cent-per-hour wage increases for direct service providers.

With most of the state's federal pandemic relief funds now spent, Pritzker proposed allocating some state funding to keep up affected programs. That includes appropriating \$40 million from the state's general fund to implement the Reimagine Public Safety Act, a program designed to reduce gun violence.

Revenue changes

The governor's budget office typically makes conservative estimates about revenue. The November forecast from the Governor's Office of Management and Budget had projected revenues to remain flat, driving a deficit of \$3.2 billion.

But it relied on a September economic forecast from the financial services company S&P Global. The governor's office says S&P has since revised its forecasts, leading the GOMB to increase its estimate by \$1.6 billion. Pritzker's office also now expects strong personal and corporate income tax growth next year in addition to limited sales tax growth.

The revenue outlook for the current FY25 budget was also revised upwards by \$421 million thanks to personal income growth, consumer spending and a stable job market. The governor's office plans to use the extra revenue to introduce \$550 million in additional spending for the current fiscal year.

But Pritzker also proposed spending about \$1.2 billion less than what the GOMB projected in its November estimate.

Another \$469 million in revenue would be raised through other changes to law,

including adjusting tax rates on electronic gambling and table games at casinos to generate \$100 million in revenue. The plan also calls for pausing the transfer of \$171 million in sales tax collected on motor fuel to the road fund and raising \$198 million by providing temporary amnesty for individuals making delinquent tax payments.

But much uncertainty still surrounds how much federal funding Illinois will receive going forward as the Trump administration pledges to cut federal spending. "Only an idiot" would think cutting off critical federal funding is a good idea, Pritzker said.

His proposal still anticipates roughly the same level of federal support in FY26 as the state currently receives. Pritzker's office stressed it's impossible to predict what Trump's administration will do, but they believe the federal government must honor longstanding agreements.

State government efficiencies

Pritzker also emphasized making state government more efficient to save costs during his speech.

The governor announced new site readiness and surplus property programs that are designed to spark economic development, which ultimately could also amount to savings for the state. Pritzker proposed allocating \$300 million to the Illinois Department of Central Management to repurpose five shuttered state prisons and developmental centers to ultimately attract new private economic development at the sites.

"This proposed budget enacts cost-saving operational efficiencies, improves productivity, curtails new hiring at agencies, consolidates unnecessary segregated funds, eliminates dormant boards and commissions, and overhauls state purchasing to save taxpayers money," Pritzker said.

This includes studies of CMS and the Department of Transportation to identify better hiring and contracting practices, merging the mental health and substance abuse divisions at the Department of Public Health and reviewing potentially overlapping responsibilities between townships and other units of government.

Volunteers needed for Birds in My Neighborhood program

Birds in My Neighborhood® is a volunteer-led, science-based program for grades 2–5 that encourages students to explore nature in their community through bird observation.

Volunteers coordinate with teachers to schedule two classroom visits and a field trip to a local natural area. New volunteers must complete training to participate.

Volunteer Instructor

Commitment: 15-20 hours per season

Responsibilities:

- Attend 2 training sessions
- Set visit and field trip schedules with teachers
- Lead 3 student visits: in-class lesson, schoolyard birding, and a field trip to a local nature area

Field Trip Support

Commitment: 5-10 hours per season

Responsibilities:

- Attend the Field Trip Tutorial
- Chaperone at least one field trip, assisting with bird identification and student support

Spring 2025 Volunteer Training Schedule for Lake & McHenry County

- Wednesday, March 5, 9:00 am - 2:30 pm Classroom & Schoolyard Tutorials at Volo Bog
- Wednesday, March 19, 9:00-11:30 am: Field Trip Tutorial at Rollins Savanna (rain date, TBD)

For more information, contact Stacy Iwanicki at dnr.volobog@illinois.gov or 815-344-1294.

Second '50501' protest held outside Illinois Capitol

Protestors take aim at Trump, call for 'No Kings on Presidents Day'

CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

A second protest against the Trump administration took place in front of the Illinois Capitol Feb. 17, less than two weeks after the first such protest was held.

The protest was part of the "50501 movement," which calls for 50 protests in 50 states on one day. This is the same entity that put together a similar protest Feb. 5, which was one of dozens of protests that took place across the nation that day.

Build The Resistance, one of the main websites being used to organize these protests, called it the "2nd National 50501 Day of Action," and started the protest's slogan of "No Kings on

President's Day."

The 50501 Reddit account posted the initial protest posters Feb. 10, which were pictures of President Donald Trump wearing a crown next to the words "President not King," "President not God," and "President not Führer."

Organizers of the Illinois-based protest issued a statement for the Feb. 17 protest, calling it "No Kings" Day. The statement included several national and Illinois-specific requests that revolved around issues including diversity, equity and inclusion programs, LGBTQ+ rights, citizenship rights, immigration, Elon Musk, and the Department of Government Ef-

iciency.

Tristan Sites, a Lincoln resident who identified himself as one of the organizers of the Springfield rally, said the protest was not simply about Trump.

"We have no kings in this country," Sites said. "This isn't about Trump as a person anymore. This is about the fact that Trump and his people are currently trying to systematically destroy the government that makes us allowed to be free in this country."

As protestors began to arrive around noon, organizers played music from speakers, including a song by Woody Guthrie, titled "All You Fascists Bound to Lose." They also set up a

table displaying copies of the national movement's press release, a list of chants to be used, markers and cardboard to make signs. By 1 p.m., hundreds had gathered in front of the statehouse.

At 1:30 p.m. they embarked on a 6-block march through downtown Springfield. Afterwards, event organizers gave speeches and started chants in front of the Capitol.

"I know a lot of people are of the opinion that standing out here with a sign and yelling into the void really doesn't do much," Sites said. "I disagree. And the reason I disagree is because it gets people talking about it. The fact that so many people are now involved in this

movement and so many people are aware of what's happening is because one person on Reddit made a post and then it happened."

The 50501 movement has labelled itself as a grassroots movement with no single organizer. Sites said he heard about the movement on Reddit and joined the Illinois-based chat on a Discord server, which he said seemed to "blow up overnight."

"Myself and a few of the other organizers have a long history in event organization," Sites said. "We run several small-scale convention events throughout the Midwest. We're not affiliated, really, but we used that experience as trans-

ferable skills in order to make sure that we were able to put this event together in a way that would keep people safe."

He said Gov. JB Pritzker is doing an "incredible job" handling and criticizing the actions of Trump and his administration and called Pritzker the Illinois-based movement's "MVP."

"We also know that our other representatives and our other politicians could be doing more to vocally support the people of this state," he said "Gov. Pritzker, like I said, his office is doing an incredible job. We want to hear more from the other people in positions of power in the state of Illinois. We want to hear that you are on our side."

Regional Office of Education seeking sponsors for 2025 Scripps National Spelling Bee

The McHenry County Regional Office of Education is seeking generous, community-minded sponsors to help send the winner of the McHenry County Regional Spelling Bee to the 2025 Scripps National Spelling Bee.

This year's McHenry County Regional Spelling Bee will take place at 1 p.m. Wednesday, March 19 at Bernotas Middle School, in Crystal Lake. The champion of the local competition will represent McHenry County in the Scripps National Spelling Bee, which takes place May 27-29 in National Harbor, Md. The Scripps National Spelling Bee celebrates its 100th birthday this year.

Sponsors who are interested can contact Hartmann at 815-334-4055, or at DKHartmann@mchenrycountyil.gov.

MCCD events

Primitive Sports: Archery and Tomahawk Throw

Saturday, March 1, 10:30 a.m. to noon, Prairieview Education Center, Crystal Lake.

Test your primitive outdoor survival skills and try your hand at shooting archery and throwing tomahawks. Ages 7+.

Festival of the Sugar Maples

Friday, March 8, Saturday, March 9, Friday, March 15 and Saturday, March 16, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Coral Woods Conservation Area, Marengo.

Learn how maple syrup was first made hundreds of years ago and how we collect sap from the trees today! Try your hand at using tools to tap trees and watch as it is boiled in our evaporator house. You'll even get a chance to taste pure maple syrup! This event is free and for all ages, but registration is recommended.

Basecamp Basics: Firebuilding and Safety

Thursday, March 20, 6:30-8 p.m., Prairieview Education Center, Crystal Lake.

Learn basic camping skills like how to safely build a fire. This program focuses on teaching adults camping skills, with activities and hands-on practice. Ages 14+

Animal Tracks Detective School

Friday, March 21, 10-11 a.m., Pleasant Valley Conservation Area, Woodstock.

Use magnifying glasses and your detective skills to find and study the tracks of local creatures like deer, raccoons and coyotes! Ages 2-6.

Grounding Yoga & Meditation

Saturday, March 22, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Prairieview Education Center, Crystal Lake.

Join us for a gentle flow yoga practice inside the Prairieview Education Center with a view of the prairie. Please

bring your own mat. Ages 14+.

Spring Break Camp

Tuesday, March 25 - Thursday, March 27, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Lost Valley Visitor Center, Glacial Park, Ringwood.

Looking for something fun to do over spring break? Join us for three days of team-based outdoor activities, nature exploration, campfires and much more! Ages 8-11.

Paddling McHenry County

Tuesday, March 25, 7-8 p.m., Lost Valley Visitor Center, Glacial Park, Ringwood.

Learn everything you need to know about paddling in McHenry County in this informational presentation including how to dress, how to plan your shuttle, how to read the USGS water level website and more. Ages 14+.

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



SUBMITTED PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN

Lake County Board recognized February 11 as 211 Day in Lake County. In attendance for the event were, from left: J. Kevin Hunter, Lake County Board, Lori Nerheim, Vice President of Marketing and Communications for United Way of Lake County, Gale Graves, Vice President of Community Impact for United Way of Lake County, Kristi Long, President and CEO of United Way of Lake County, and Sandy Hart, Lake County Board Chair.

Help is a call or text away with 211

The Lake County Board recognized February 11, 2025, as 211 Day, celebrating a vital resource that has connected hundreds of thousands of residents to critical services since its launch.

By simply dialing 211 or texting a ZIP code to 898-211, residents of Lake County can connect with live, highly trained experts who navigate callers to the help they need. These services range from addressing food insecurity and housing challenges to finding health care, behavioral health services and much more.

"Help is just one phone call or text away," said Lake County Board Chair Sandy Hart. "211 is here, 24/7, for residents who are facing life's challenges. Whether it's putting food on the table, finding a safe place to live or accessing critical health

services, 211 is there to guide and support our community."

Since its inception in 2019, 211 has facilitated more than 375,000 connections for people in Lake County. The service is free, confidential and accessible in every ZIP code across the county. The 211 team can interpret more than 150 languages.

"We deeply appreciate the unwavering partnership and generous support from Lake County since the launch of 211 in 2019," said Kristi Long, President and CEO of United Way of Lake County. "211 Day serves as an excellent opportunity to spotlight this essential resource that uplifts individuals, enhances lives and fosters a stronger, more connected Lake County."

Operated by United Way, 211 represents a partnership dedicated to improving lives and building a stronger community. Lake County plays a key role in raising awareness of 211 and provides financial support to sustain its services.

"211 is helping people get connected to resources they may not even know exist," said J. Kevin Hunter, Lake County Board representative on the 211 Advisory Council. "We encourage everyone to tell their friends and family about 211. It could just change someone's life."

Today, 211 is available to 99 percent of America's population, offering a lifeline to those in need. To learn more about 211 and the resources it provides, visit 211LakeCounty.org.

Correction

A story that ran in the Feb. 19 edition 'Nonprofit readies connection kits for March distribution to Illinois schools' contained an incorrect email and web address.

The correct web address is: icare4aaff.org, and the email address is: laura@icare4aaff.org.

The Hi-Liter apologizes for the error.

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SUBMITTED PHOTO HI-Liter/MCN

Scenes from past Festival of the Sugar Maples events. This year's activities will take place on March 8, 9, 15, and 16 at Coral Woods Conservation Area in Marengo.

Registration isn't required, but is recommended, to avoid long wait times. Online registration is available at MCCD.me/FSM.

MCCD hosts annual Festival of the Sugar Maples

McHenry County Conservation District is hosting its annual Festival of the Sugar Maples event on Saturday and Sunday, March 8 and 9 as well as Saturday and Sunday, March 15 and 16

from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at Coral Woods Conservation Area, 7400 Somerset Drive in Marengo. This event introduces visitors to the process of turning sap from maple trees into maple syrup

through hour-long tours and hands-on demonstrations and activities. Attendance is free and all ages are welcome. No pets, please.

Tours begin every 15 minutes. Participants can

expect to learn the history of maple sugaring and the evolution of the sap collection process. They can even purchase a spile to try their hand at tapping their own trees at home. Maple syrup

and other maple products will be available on site for purchase.

This year's event is made possible in part by support from Lakes Realty Group, Thelen Sand and Gravel and

Suburban Propane.

Pre-registration is not required, but to avoid longer wait times, registration is recommended. Register online at MCCD.me/FSM.

Black, Latino lawmakers criticize Pritzker's proposed budget

Republicans take issue with governor's rhetoric, spending growth

CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

Majority Party Democrats had mixed reactions to Gov. JB Pritzker's budget address last week, with leadership in the General Assembly offering praise amid criticisms from members of the legislature's Black and Latino caucuses.

The governor's budget speech—which outlined a \$2 billion spending increase without new taxes on everyday Illinoisans—also drew

immediate criticism from Republicans, some of whom left the House floor as he drew parallels between the Trump administration and Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus and Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus together include about a quarter of all lawmakers in the General Assembly. Several of them pushed back on the governor's proposal, which he called “responsible

and balanced.”

“This is not a time for celebration,” Sen. Willie Preston, D-Chicago, said at a news conference. “Budgets reveal the morals and the values of our state. In Illinois, Black communities contribute significantly to the economy, yet when the budget is finalized, those contributions are not flowing back into our community.”

At least two Black Caucus members said they

wouldn't vote for Pritzker's proposal as it stands today—though the February budget proposal only kicks off negotiations each year, with a budget vote coming generally in May after lawmakers make changes.

Sen. Javier Cervantes, D-Chicago, said the Latino Caucus was “profoundly disappointed” in Pritzker's proposal to eliminate a health care program for many immigrants.

Republicans, meanwhile, took exception to the governor's tone during his address, accusing him of using the opportunity to further his rumored ambitions for higher office. Still, several Republicans suggested there is room for collaboration on some of Pritzker's policy proposals relating to economic development and prescription drug affordability.

Black Caucus reaction

Black Caucus members said the governor's proposed budget does not adequately address “historical disparities” within the state's Black communities and does not reflect the priorities of Black Illinoisans.

Preston said Black taxpayers are not getting their “fair cuts” of state aid. Rep. Carol Ammons, D-Urbana, said she will not vote for the budget until the Black community receives more resources.

As hundreds gathered around the podium on the Capitol rotunda where the caucus gave its response, Rep. Will Davis, D-Homewood, asked for the crowd's opinion on the proposal.

“Did you hear something that applies directly to you?” he asked. “Did you hear something in that budget speech that talks about you? And your priorities? And your family? And your employment? And your community? Did you hear it? I didn't.”

Davis later said he would vote “present” on the budget as of now.

Other Black Caucus members were more supportive. Sen. Elgie Sims, who has led budget negotiations for the Senate Democratic caucus for the last several years, said Pritzker's proposal is a “great first step.” The Chicago Democrat said he doesn't have any major issues with

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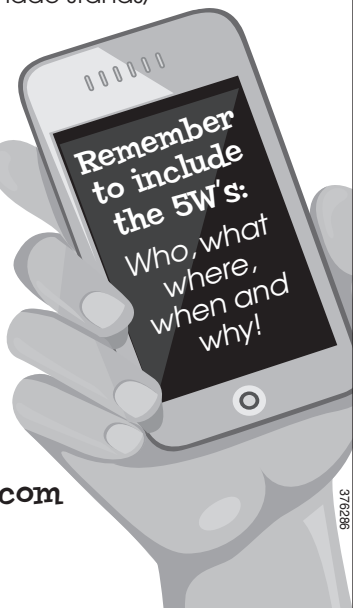
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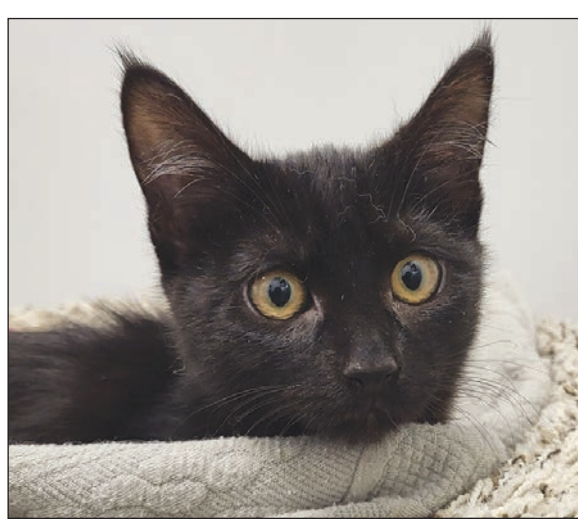


3/7/2025

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Pet of the week

Dorito, is about 3 months old, neutered, up-to-date on shots, tested negative for FIV, 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.

Annual Point-in-Time Homeless count conducted in Lake County

More than 100 volunteers worked overnight into Thursday, January 30 to conduct the 2025 Homeless Point-in-Time (P.I.T.) Count. Led by the Lake County Coalition for the Homeless, in collaboration with Lake County Community Development, the P.I.T. Count is a vital initiative that measures unhoused individuals and families across the community on a single night

every January. Volunteers teamed up in groups of two to five to search Lake County for individuals living in places not suitable for habitation. They drove within designated areas while searching on foot, giving out care packages with hats, gloves, blankets, hand warmers and protein bars to those they encountered. Teams also offered transportation to a lo-

cal shelter and a resource to follow up to provide further assistance.

"I want to thank the overwhelming number of Lake County residents who volunteered last night—they left their warm homes to seek out our unhoused neighbors to help them find permanent shelter," said Lake County Board Chair Sandy Hart. "Family homelessness is in-

creasing around the country, and Lake County is no exception. The data we gather tonight will help us target resources for the greatest benefit of those who are suffering."

Lake County is firmly committed to addressing homelessness. The rising cost of housing has significantly contributed to the growing number of people experiencing homelessness in the

county and across the country, especially for families. The County's Strategic Plan prioritizes increasing the supply of affordable housing in support of fostering a healthy and inclusive community.

The P.I.T. Count takes place nationwide and is reported into the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Data from this count helps guide

the work needed to effectively address homelessness not only in Lake County but across the country.

Last year, the P.I.T. Count saw a 50 percent increase in unhoused individuals in Lake County compared to 2023. Data from 2023 also showed 85 percent of the homeless

See **HOMELESS COUNT**, Page 7

LYNCH BURLINGTON AUTO SHOW SALES EVENT*

P16344A

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P16510A

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\$14,990

P16544

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250051A

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\$17,790

P16541

 2022 VW PASSAT SE
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P16588

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\$20,490

P16604

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P16595

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\$22,490

P16369A

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250243A

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P16597

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250272A

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P16492A

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P16500

 2022 CHEVY BLAZER RS
\$33,490

P16438

 ONLY 11,000 MILES
 2022 CHEVY COLORADO ZR2
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P16481

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\$37,990

P16565





















 2021 GMC SIERRA ELEVATION
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 2021 CHEVY SILVERADO LT TRAILBOSS
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P16474

 2023 CHEVY TAHOE Z71
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 Chris Kahlmorgan	 Thomas Gier	 Craig Roffers	 Pete Manos	 Donna Janz	 Dan Dotzler	 Evan Richter	 Pedro Perez	 Joe Zubarik	 Alfredo Morales

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Court & crime news

Man charged with murder stemming from Beach Park homicide investigation



Cyncere L. Tillman

Lake County Sheriff's Detectives have been investigating this homicide since it occurred. Their investigation revealed that Cyncere L. Tillman, 24, of the 300 block of Green Bay Road, Waukegan, arranged to meet with the victim, Tavontee Fox, an associate of his. The meeting took place near Tillman's friend's house in the 39300 block of Melbourne Court, Beach Park.

degree murder against Tillman.

Tillman was being held in the Lake County Jail pending an initial court hearing.

While Tillman has been charged, sheriff's detectives continue to investigate.

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "Our detectives have been investigating this homicide nonstop since it occurred. Because of their dedication and tenacious investigative work, the man responsible for this crime is in custody and charged with murder. We are also thankful for the ongoing collaboration with the Lake County State's Attorney's Office."

All defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

Beach Park Homicide Investigation

Lake County Sheriff's Deputies are investigating a Sunday afternoon homicide that occurred in Beach Park.

On February 9, 2025, at approximately 12:10 p.m., Lake County Sheriff's Deputies responded to 39300 block of Melbourne Court in Beach Park, for a report of shots fired. A 911 caller reported they heard several shots and saw two African American men, aged 20-25, running from the scene.

Sheriff's deputies arrived and located several spent

shell casings on the roadway, along with shattered glass from a car. A short time later, sheriff's deputies learned a vehicle was driven to Vista East Medical Center in Waukegan, and a gunshot victim was dropped off from the vehicle.

The gunshot victim, a 24-year-old Waukegan man, was pronounced deceased shortly after arriving.

Sheriff's detectives are actively investigating. Anyone with information is encouraged to call the Lake County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigations Division at 847-377-4000.

Three vehicle crash ends in one fatality and five seriously injured

A 33-year-old Elgin man was pronounced dead, and five others were injured following a three-vehicle crash on US Route 14 west of Dean Street, in unincorporated Woodstock.

On Sunday February 16, at 3:13 p.m., members of the McHenry County Sheriff's Office, Woodstock Police Department, and Woodstock Fire & Rescue District responded to the crash scene. Additional rescue services were requested from Crystal Lake Fire Rescue Department, Wonder Lake Fire Protection District, Huntley Fire Protection District,

Marengo Fire and Rescue District, Union Fire Protection District, and McHenry County Emergency Management Agency.

Preliminary investigation indicates that a 2018 Mercedes-Benz was traveling eastbound on US Route 14 and a 2017 Toyota 4 Runner was traveling westbound on US Route 14.

The Mercedes attempted to pass a vehicle pulling a trailer in a no passing zone and then collided with the 4 Runner head-on in the west-bound lane.

A 2018 Jeep, traveling westbound behind the Toyota, struck the left rear of the Toyota while attempting to avoid the initial crash. The Jeep sustained minor damage, and no one was injured in that vehicle.

The driver of the Mercedes, a 33-year-old Elgin man, was pronounced dead at the scene. A 6-year-old male passenger was air lifted from the scene and with life-threatening injuries. The driver was not believed to be wearing his seatbelt at the time of the crash, but the passenger was. Airbags did deploy in the car.

The driver of the 4 Runner, a 43-year-old male of Cross Plains, WI was transported to a local hospital with life-threatening injuries. A 43-year-old female

passenger, also of Cross Plains WI, was transported with non-life-threatening injuries. Two passengers, an 11-year-old female and 13-year-old male were both transferred to local hospitals and later airlifted with life-threatening injuries. All were wearing their seatbelts at the time of the crash and airbags did deploy.

The Mercedes is believed to have been involved in a crash on US Route 14 near the intersection with Kishwaukee Valley Road prior to this crash. All events are part of an ongoing investigation by McHenry County Sheriff's Office Major Traffic Crash Investigation Unit and the McHenry County Coroner's Office.

Man sentenced to 18 years for unlawful possession of a controlled substance

The McHenry County State's Attorney's Office announced that Jose Zuniga-Olivas, 55, of Rockford, Illinois, was sentenced to eighteen years in the Illinois Department of Corrections. The sentence was handed down on February



Jose Zuniga-Olivas

18, by the Honorable Tiffany Davis, after Zuniga-Olivas entered a negotiated plea of guilty to one count of Unlawful Possession of a Controlled Substance, a class one felony.

On August 2, 2023, the McHenry County Sheriff's Office conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle that Zuniga-Olivas was traveling in. A McHenry County Sheriff's K-9 alerted on the vehicle indicating the presence of narcotics, and a search of the vehicle resulted in deputies finding approximately three kilograms of heroin. Throughout the course of the investigation, it was discovered that Zuniga-Olivas had planned on delivering the heroin in Crystal Lake.

McHenry County State's Attorney Randi Freese extends her commendation to the dedicated members of the McHenry County Sheriff's Office, including Sheriff K-9 Jett and handler Caitlynn Kelly, as well as the exceptional team within the Sheriff's Office Intelligence Led Policing Unit on their diligent and effective investigative efforts in combatting illegal drug sales and distribution in our county.

This case was successfully prosecuted by Assistant State's Attorney Shelby Page and Matthew Brodersen.

•Budget (Continued from page 4)

the proposal but wants additional details on a few items.

"I often say—and I've said this to our caucus on a number of different occasions—there are infinite needs with finite resources," Sims said. "From our perspective, that's why these next couple of months, as we go through negotiations, we're going to have to match those infinite needs to the finite resource we have."

Sims said members need to be responsible and prudent on this year's budget due to "so much unpredictability coming out of D.C."

Latino Caucus reaction

Pritzker's proposed budget would eliminate the Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults program that provides coverage to low-in-

come people between ages 42 and 64 who would qualify for Medicaid if they were citizens. Pritzker's office projected the cut would save \$330 million in general fund spending. Its sister program, Health Benefits for Immigrant Seniors, was not cut from the proposed budget.

Pritzker said he'd work with lawmakers on his proposal but urged them not to come to negotiations empty handed.

"If you come to the table looking to spend more, I'm going to ask you where you want to cut," Pritzker said.

Members of the Latino Caucus said they were going to go through the budget "line-by-line" to try and keep HBIA on the table.

"We will be talking about other options, revenue op-

tions, and other options that could be on the table to make sure that all of our programs are preserved," Rep. Lilian Jiménez, D-Chicago, said.

Caucus members said Pritzker did not inform them before the budget address that HBIA was on the chopping block.

"All of us have been hearing that it was going to be a tough budget year. I think that we expected there to be some things in the budget that we weren't going to be happy with," Sen. Karina Villa, D-West Chicago, said. "But I think completely removing a program is not anything that we were expecting."

Republicans criticize message

Republicans reacted angrily to the speech, especially Pritzker's criticisms of the Trump administration and frequent references to Nazi Germany.

Near the end of his speech, Pritzker used the recent conviction of former Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan on federal corruption charges to call out Republicans who have remained largely silent about actions of the Trump administration that have been challenged or even reversed in federal courts.

"If you applauded that (Madigan) decision like I did, then I expect you to defend and applaud those same federal courts as they check this president in his quest for unrestrained power," Pritzker said.

He wrapped up his speech with a warning about the dangers of neo-Nazis, com-

paring the rise of Trump's Make America Great Again movement with the rise of fascism in Germany in the 1930s.

"The seed that grew into a dictatorship in Europe a lifetime ago didn't arrive overnight. It started with everyday Germans mad about inflation and looking for someone to blame," Pritzker said. "I'm watching with a foreboding dread what is happening in our country right now."

Some Republicans walked out.

Deputy Minority Leader Ryan Spain, R-Peoria, accused Pritzker of delivering a campaign speech by "playing to what he believes is a national message and feeding his presidential ambitions."

"That was appalling to sit there," House Minority Leader Tony McCombie, R-Savanna, said during a news conference after the speech. "It was, it was hard to sit there through that."

On the substance of the governor's budget plan, however, House Republicans said there appears to be some areas for potential for bipartisan agreement, such as calls for lowering the cost of prescription drugs and investing in economic development initiatives.

"There were things that are opportunities for collaboration in government, which is what we'd like to see more of," Spain said. "But we're going to have to put aside the insulting national rhetoric in order to do so."

Democrats have

questions

Democrats applauded Pritzker's invocation of Nazi Germany.

"I thought it was a speech for our moment," Senate President Don Harmon, D-Oak Park, said in a statement. "The governor recognizes that our budget doesn't exist in a vacuum and is subject to the economic winds in Washington and our place on the greater world stage."

Other Democrats said they wanted to know what the governor's contingency plans are if there are major cuts to federal funding.

And while members of the Latino Caucus are looking for ways to save HBIA, other Democrats said the governor made the right call in cutting it.

Speaking as the chair of the "New Democrats" caucus, a recently rebranded caucus of roughly two dozen moderate Illinois House members, Rep. Terra Costa Howard, D-Glen Ellyn, said HBIA's elimination should tell Democrats to think differently about funding requests.

"It's a positive step toward acknowledging that the accountability of programs and the programs needs to be better before we pass the law," she said.

Crespo continued his criticism of Democrats for passing bills that are "subject to appropriation" yet not funded in the budget — creating future-year spending pressures and giving "folks a false sense of hope."

"When we pass legislation or appropriation bills, we need to do a better job on the front end to make sure

that we understand potentially how much it's going to cost," Crespo said.

Both Costa Howard and Crespo were among a group of Democrats who opposed elements of the FY25 budget last spring, in a rare dissent from Pritzker and their caucus' leadership.

They both agreed that they'd like to see a return to empowering appropriations committees to better police funding requests. House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, D-Hillside, has increasingly relied on internal working groups composed of House Democrats to craft major legislation on key subjects, rather than allowing them to come together through the committee process.

"If we don't go back and start using our aprops (appropriations) committees, then what is the point?" Costa Howard said. "It's a waste of everyone's time."

Welch didn't issue a statement himself, though his spokesperson sent one on behalf of his four-person budgeting team.

"Governor Pritzker shared his vision of ways to continue strengthening our state and uplifting working people," Reps. Robyn Gabel, Kam Buckner, Will Guzzardi and Eva-Dina Delgado said in a statement. "Now the work of creating a budget that invests in Illinois families begins. We know the most important goal is to continue our work of helping people make ends meet, but we also know the biggest challenge in that work will be the chaos and uncertainty in Washington."

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ITEMS MAY BE SENT TO
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PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND A PHONE NUMBER SO WE CAN CONTACT YOU IF NEEDED.

Lake County Sheriff's arrest bulletin

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.

Jan. 17
Ryan G. Douglas, 22, Zion, was cited for criminal trespass to property;

Kamar R. Steward, 19, Round Lake, was cited for reckless driving;

Gregory Domenico, 41, Wauconda, was cited for a warrant arrest: theft;

Noah D. Jackson, 25, Waukegan, was cited for driving while license suspended;

Michael Gareiss, 55, Antioch, was cited for unlawful possession of a controlled substance;

Luis A. Colon, 40, Johnsbury, was cited for DUI – alcohol, open transportation of alcohol, and aggravated speeding (76 mph in 45 mph zone);

Jan. 18
Tanya R. McWilliams, 46, Zion, was cited for criminal trespass to vehicle, and unlawful possession of drug paraphernalia;

James R. Fitzgerald, 61, no permanent address, was cited for criminal trespass to

vehicle, unlawful possession of a controlled substance, and unlawful possession of drug paraphernalia;

Marco A. Morales, 53, Waukegan, was cited for leaving the scene of a traffic crash with injuries, and failure to report a crash with injuries.

Jan. 20
Felipe A. Ruacho, 29, Arlington Heights, was cited for a warrant arrest: traffic offense (DuPage County);

Jan. 21
Dragan Mamlic, 64, Cicero, was cited for criminal trespass to residence;

Jan. 22
Jada D. Kirksey, 28, Wadsworth, was cited for a warrant arrest: theft;

Daniel Flores, 22, Waukegan, was cited for driving while license revoked, and no insurance;

Andy E. Mendoza, 26, Zion, was cited for driving while license revoked and leaving the scene of an accident;

Jacob A. Anderson, 22, Ingleside, was cited for DUI – alcohol;

Jan. 23
Anthony Figueroa, 40, Tacoma, WA, was cited for a warrant obtained: aggravated

criminal sexual assault, and criminal sexual assault;

Jan. 25
Tikori D. Garland, 43, Waukegan, was cited for DUI – alcohol, and open transportation of alcohol;

Michael Barkus, 37, Lake Villa, was cited for endangering the life/welfare of a child;

Zachary J. Barcott, 30, North Chicago, was cited for a warrant arrest: violating an order of protection (Kane County);

Angelica Juarez, 39, North Chicago, was cited for DUI –

alcohol;
David Hoff, 60, Wadsworth, was cited for a warrant arrest: retail theft;

Jan. 26
Jerry E. Dickens, 54, Palatine, was cited for a warrant arrest: unlawful possession of a controlled substance;

Corey J. Smetters, 40, Antioch, was cited for domestic battery, and endangering the life/welfare of a child;

Jose Antonio Aponte, Jr., 28, Evanston, was cited for DUI – alcohol, open transportation of alcohol, and no

insurance;
Patience J. Cedzidlo, 40, Spring Grove, was cited for a warrant arrest: unlawful possession of a controlled substance;

Jan. 27
Nicholas G. Soteras, 54, Chicago, was cited for a warrant arrest: burglary.

Andrew S. Radomski, 34, Palatine, was cited for criminal trespass to vehicle, and driving while license revoked;

Ian A. Miller, 43, Aurora, was cited for DUI – drugs;

Johan Vanegas-Rodriguez, 21, Waukegan, was cited for possession of child pornography;

Jan. 29
Stephen C. Dolly, 37, Lake Bluff, was cited for a warrant arrest: grooming;

Terrance D. Smith, 40, Waukegan, was cited for a warrant arrest: assault (DuPage County);

James C. Lauder, 36, Fox Lake, was cited for unlawful possession of cocaine and a warrant arrest: aggravated DUI (DuPage County).

• Homeless count (Continued from page 5)

were unhoused for the first time, and a 75 percent increase in family homelessness.

“The benefits of the P.I.T. Count are two-fold. It serves as an opportunity for the public to focus on the overwhelming housing needs here in Lake County and it provides the data necessary to design solutions appropriate to the size and scale of the County’s need,” said Dominic Strezio, Lake County Community Development Administrator.

Following the P.I.T. Count, volunteers and staff will conduct further interviews and pull additional information from local shelters and agencies. The data collected helps to demonstrate the County’s need for federal resources for assistance through the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program.

Full data and information from this year’s P.I.T. Count will be available in the late spring.

“Homelessness can im-

pact anyone at any time because either we become homeless, or someone we care about does,” said Eric Foote, Lake County Coalition for the Homeless President. “When that happens, a community’s resources are called upon to assist. The P.I.T. Count is an excellent example of the community coming together to help make a difference for those experiencing homelessness.”

For over a decade, Lake County has conducted a

Point-in-Time Count with the help of dedicated local volunteers. The Lake County Coalition for the Homeless and Lake County Community Development work throughout the year on multiple projects and initiatives to aid the homeless.

Volunteer opportunities are available year-round to assist the County’s fight to end homelessness. Visit the Lake County Coalition for the Homeless website at www.lakecountyhomeless.org to learn more.

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