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Forest Preserves expand with two land acquisitions

On March 12, the Lake County Forest Preserves Board of Commissioners approved the purchase of two land parcels—55 acres in Fremont Township and 34 acres in Antioch Township.

The larger of the two, known as the Steffenhagen property, will cost \$1.4 million and will extend Lakewood Forest Preserve in Wauconda. Located on Gilmer Road, it sits less than a mile north of Route 176.

Last spring, the board approved two other acquisitions at Lakewood: about 74 acres on Gilmer Road southeast of Fairfield Road and a 1.6-acre parcel on the west side of Fairfield Road between Bonner and Route 176. Lakewood is the largest forest preserve in Lake County, covering more than 2,900 acres with miles of trails, woodlands, prairies, wetlands, and scenic lakes.

“We’ve been eyeing this property for years, and we’re excited to finalize the deal,” said Executive Director Ty Kovach. “The property is critical to future restoration plans in the area.”

The board also agreed to buy 34 acres for \$960,000 to expand Lotus Country Conservation Preserve. The land, known as the Elliott W. Frank LLC property, is on Rena Avenue, about a quarter mile south of Grass Lake Road.

The Forest Preserves acquired Lotus Country last summer because of its valuable ecological features, including important wetlands, wooded areas and the largest heron and egret rookery in Lake County. This latest acquisition will help further conservation efforts by protecting additional rookery habitat.

“Acquiring more of this large rookery is incredibly exciting,” said Forest Preserves President Jessica

Vealitzek. “This addition will not only preserve critical wildlife habitats but will also ensure that these unique and fragile ecosystems continue to thrive without disturbance. It’s a crucial step forward in our commitment to protect Lake County’s natural resources for future generations.”

Designated as a “conservation preserve” rather than a “forest preserve,” the site will be owned and managed for its rare ecological significance. Public access would harm the fragile ecosystem and disrupt the rookery. Protecting this land ensures these vital natural resources remain undisturbed.

Forest Preserves commissioners approved the purchase of two new parcels. Right: One will expand Lotus Country Conservation Preserve. Below: Over 74 acres will be added at Lakewood, the largest forest preserve in Lake County.

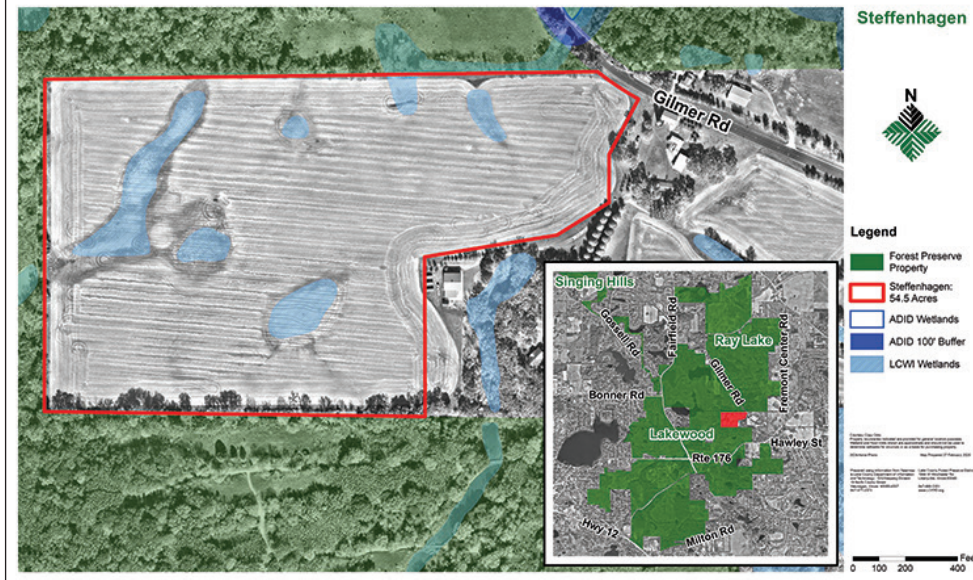
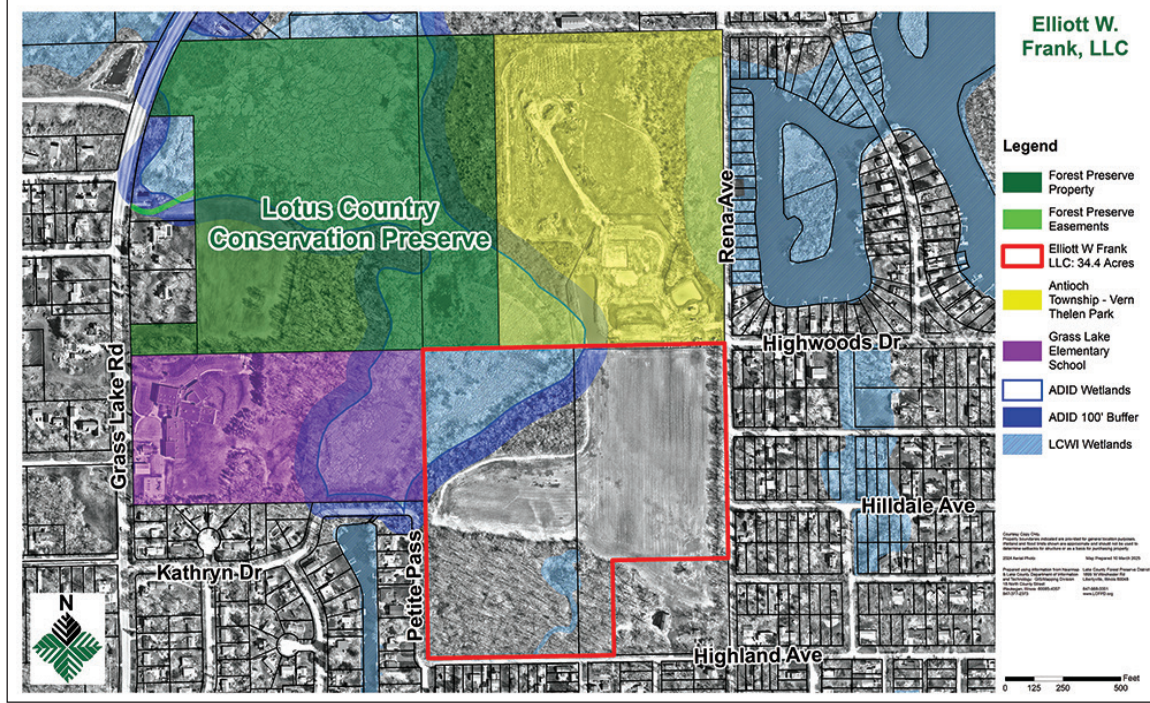


PHOTO COURTESY OF THOMAS G. WILSON Hi-Liter/MCN
 One of the expansions will include Lotus Country Conservation Preserve, home to the county’s largest heron and egret rookery. This will help further conservation efforts by protecting the rookery habitat.

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Want to pick up information! Antioch's Community Guides and local information may be found at the Antioch Chamber office in our foyer for your convenience. We are located at 822 Main Street, next door to the Village Hall. You can also find information at Lovin' Oven Cakery, located at 455 Lake Street. Both are located in the heart of Downtown Antioch, IL.



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Illinois' child welfare agency failed to produce critical reports after child deaths

DCFS is supposed to make the reports public after examining what went wrong

By Peter Nickeas
ILLINOIS ANSWERS PROJECT

The state agency responsible for keeping Illinois' most vulnerable children safe has failed to produce legally required public reports after examining what went wrong in hundreds of cases of child deaths and thousands of serious injuries, the Illinois Answers Project reports.

More than 1,200 deaths and more than 3,000 other cases of serious injury have met the criteria for incident-specific reports since July 2018, according to data DCFS provided under an open records request. The case-specific reports are required when a child dies by suspected abuse or neglect, or dies or suffers a serious injury when they are in the state's care.

The failure spurred blistering criticism from child welfare advocates and prompted the Cook County public guardian to call for an investigation.

Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart, who sponsored the legislation requiring the reports in the late 1990s when he was a state lawmaker, called the failure "reckless."

"To know that they aren't even issuing the reports ... is stunning, stunning. Just so reckless. So irresponsible," Dart said.

"You know what, we're all busy. So don't give me your story. ... I can't conceive of any scenario where this isn't at the front of people's lists, you know, we have a child in our care that died. What happened?"

The reports are required by the state's Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, providing the framework for the system of investigating abuse and neglect of children. The portion of the law regard-

ing the reports went into effect in 1997. State lawmakers added language to strengthen the public disclosure of the reports in 2008.

"There shall be a presumption that the best interest of the public will be served by public disclosure of certain information concerning the circumstances of the death," according to the law, which later states the agency "shall" release the reports to the public with some permitted redactions.

DCFS said in a statement that other reports that the agency prepares satisfy legal requirements but declined to answer additional questions from Illinois Answers or to comment on the call for investigations.

Heather Tarzan, a spokeswoman for DCFS, declined to answer most questions about the death-and-injury reports. It's not clear when the agency last completed one of the legally required incident-specific reports. An open records request for the agency's most recent report—whenever it was completed—was denied, with DCFS saying no reports exist. The agency fought in instances for months on releasing any records or acknowledging that the reports don't exist.

DCFS says it does conduct reviews when deaths or serious injuries happen. But there's little recourse for the public to learn the results, since state law forbids the release of most child welfare records to protect the privacy of children and families who are investigated or who get help from the state. The reports that DCFS has failed to produce are meant to give public officials insight into what may have gone wrong.

Tarzan said other forms of review by DCFS—by the agency's inspector general, by child death review teams and by the agency's crisis intervention team—satisfy reporting requirements under the state law. But those reviews are subject to different rules, with some having a narrower focus or not considered public records. The inspector general reports, for instance, capture fewer deaths and don't include information about hundreds more serious injuries each year. The crisis intervention team reports aren't public.

And the most recent child death review team annual report covered deaths that occurred five years ago. New reports haven't been published in years. Tarzan declined to say why, but said the agency had been operating with the "understanding" that these satisfy the death-and-injury reporting required in the law. Tarzan would not say how the agency came to that understanding.

The Cook County public guardian, Charles Golbert, who is responsible for representing 6,000 children in abuse and neglect cases in juvenile court, has asked the state's auditor general and DCFS' inspector general to investigate the agency's failure to comply with the law.

"These reports, which are required by law, are critical to protect children, and to prevent deaths and serious injuries to children in DCFS care or who are reported to DCFS as abused or neglected," Golbert wrote in his request for review.

Dart said he sponsored legislation requiring the reports because of "one horrific DCFS case after another," and cited the death of 3-year-

old Joseph Wallace as one that still stands out more than 30 years later.

Joseph's mother hanged her son with an electrical cord, his mouth stuffed with a sock and taped shut. The boy had been put into foster care just after he was born and returned to his mother only months before his death, despite warnings she was dangerous. The case became a catalyst for reform.

Dart said as a young legislator he'd been "jerked around" by DCFS for so long that he anticipated resistance to the law and wrote it in a way where they "could not not do it."

"You have to do it and you need to move expeditiously. Because I mean what if you find out like a vendor or something that was working with that child is the problem? ... What, you're gonna, what, let 10 more kids be subjected to the vendor in the meantime just because, you know, we didn't get around to it yet? No, we need to move rather quickly on this stuff."

When DCFS is involved with the families

The reports are supposed to include general information about the death, consider the previous five years of social services that may have been provided to the child's family, and then make policy recommendations where appropriate. In September, Illinois Answers sought these records from two murders in central Illinois where DCFS investigated the victims' families before their deaths.

In one 2022 case, 8-year-old Navin Jones died after paramedics found him in a bathtub in his home, the shape of his bones visible through his skin, his body cut

and bruised. He weighed 30 pounds—a typical weight for a 3-year-old boy. Police officers found a note on Navin's door, forbidding his older brother to give him food.

A DCFS investigator had visited the family about a month earlier and found the boy emaciated with discolored skin but didn't seek medical care for the boy. His father was charged with murder. In court testimony the DCFS investigator said she didn't believe she could have the child taken to the hospital.

In another case about 22 miles away in 2019, three toddlers and two adults died in a midnight mobile home fire whose origin remains in dispute. A 9-year-old boy, whose care had been the subject of DCFS investigations since the day of his birth, was charged with murder in their deaths. The boy and his mother, who survived the fire, were related to the five victims.

That criminal trial is ongoing and raised questions of whether DCFS did enough to help the 9-year-old in the years before the fire. He'd been accused of starting other fires, and his parents had been investigated for physically abusing him, neglecting him and failing to take him to school.

In both cases, DCFS had been involved in the lives of the children since their births. In both cases, the agency said the death reports weren't public before acknowledging to the Illinois attorney general's office that DCFS "had not been creating such reports so there were no reports to disclose."

For months after that, the agency would not say whether it had produced the death or serious injury reports in other high-profile cases—and only did so after intervention by

the attorney general's office in early February.

In the case of a boy whose death led to criminal charges against an investigator, in another case where a 7-year-old drowned in the pool of a Springfield aldermanic candidate, and in a case where 10 children died in a house fire in Chicago, DCFS would not say whether it had produced the lawfully required reports.

The law also requires the agency to produce cumulative reports based on the incidents, so that legislators and other experts can use the information to better care for children. The incident-specific reports are supposed to be shared with legislators and the governor's office when they're done.

Though DCFS has given legislators quarterly reports listing the dates and locations of deaths and serious injuries, they appear to have never complied with the legal requirement to include "findings and recommendations" in those reports. The law says they're to be based off of the incident-specific reports that were never done.

Golbert wrote to the agency's inspector general that "if DCFS is not consistently completing these reports about individual children, the required cumulative reports ... will be incomplete and erroneous."

DCFS was audited for compliance soon after the law was passed and notified it was failing to meet the requirements.

The state's auditor general, which checks state agencies for their compliance with laws related to their work, hasn't tested DCFS on this section of the law since 1999. *Contributing: Meredith Newman*

Experience the possibilities at CLC Open House, Maker Faire

Only at College of Lake County's (CLC) Open House can you kick down a door, operate a robot, enjoy a free massage and read to a dog—all in one day.

Mark your calendar for 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 12, and get ready for a hands-on, interactive experience across all five CLC campuses. Tour cutting-edge labs, engage with inspiring faculty and dive into the potential of a CLC education.

"We're excited to welcome everyone back to our Open House," said Jason Sarna, As-

sistant Director of Outreach and On-Campus Experience. "Meet our faculty and staff, experience live demonstrations and explore interactive activities. Plus, connect with our many support departments to get all your questions about CLC answered."

Step inside CLC's campuses in Grayslake, Vernon Hills and Waukegan, as well as the Advanced Technology Center in Gurnee and the student-managed Prairie Restaurant at Brae Loch in Grayslake. Visit and walk through the college's modern labs and facilities.

With more than 170 degrees and certificates across nine career fields, CLC offers something for everyone. Discover financial aid and scholarship options, flexible online programs, dual credit opportunities and exciting student life activities. Engage with faculty and college and career navigators who can help map out your next steps.

Drop by Open House at any time. The Welcome and One Stop Center will be open to answer any questions. Financial aid presentations also will take place during Open

House.

More fun can be had at CLC 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the same day at Maker Faire Lake County. Witness some of Lake County's brightest creators and tinkerers during this free event, dubbed "the greatest show and tell on Earth," held in CLC's gymnasium.

Walk-ins are welcome, or register at www.clcillinois.edu/news-and-events/events/open-house.

Support the Village of Antioch Police Department at the Cop on a Rooftop event

The Village of Antioch Police Department will again be participating in Cop on a Rooftop fundraiser for Special Olympics.

The event will take place on Friday, May 16 from 5 a.m. to noon at Dunkin' Donuts, 434 Orchard St., Antioch.

This annual event of the Illinois Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olym-

pics is to support the athletes of Special Olympics Illinois.

Stop by to make a donation and eat donuts. There

will be merchandise available such as the Dunkin' coffee mugs and this year's Torch Run swag.

HI-LITER

~ including McHenry County News

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As of Feb. 9, 2022 Hi-Liter is the successor publication to McHenry County News

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Local court reporter earns National Certification

The National Court Reporters Association (NCRA), the country's leading organization representing stenographic court reporters, captioners, and legal videographers, has announced that member Larie Kuzma from Gurnee, Ill., has earned the nationally recognized Registered Professional Reporter (RPR) certification, having demonstrated her ability to produce a high-quality verbatim record. RPR certification distinguishes stenographic court reporters as being among the top contributors to the profession in terms of reporting skills, transcript production, reporting and operating practices, and professionalism.



Larie Kuzma

Earning RPR credentials is quite an accomplishment given the amount of preparation and knowledge that successful candidates must possess to pass. Those who hold RPR credentials are not only among the top stenographic court reporters in the profession, but they also embark on a path of lifetime learning with continuing education requirements.

To be recognized as an RPR, candidates must pass a written knowledge test on industry best practices and a skills test that combines a challenging threshold of both speed and accuracy. RPR-certified court reporters are in high demand among the nation's premier law firms, courthouses and other scenarios in which a reliable, accurate transcript of proceedings is required.

"Membership in NCRA is extremely important to me because having a strong community behind you is im-

portant. As I start my career, I want to have the strong foundation that NCRA provides," Kuzma said. "The journey to get here was not an easy one but has been so worth it. I feel proud to have completed my certification with NCRA. Being a certified member gives me credibility and accountability. I look forward to my future and this new chapter as a registered court reporter."

Court reporters and captioners rely on the latest technology to use stenographic machines to capture the spoken word and translate it into written text in real time. These professionals work both in and out of the courtroom recording legal cases and depositions, providing live captioning of events, and assisting members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities with gaining access to information, entertainment, educational opportunities, and more.

If you're looking for a career that is on the cutting edge of technology, offers the opportunity for work at home or abroad, like to write, enjoy helping others, and are fast with your fingers, then the fields of court reporting and captioning are careers you can explore at NCRA/discoversteno.org.

The NCRA A to Z® Intro to Steno Machine Shorthand program, a free online six-week introductory course, lets participants see if a career in court reporting or captioning would be a good choice for them. The program is an introduction to stenographic theory and provides participants with the opportunity to learn the basics of writing on a steno machine. There is no charge to take the course, but participants are required to have access to a steno machine or an iPad they can use to download the iStenoPad app.

Registration open for 'Let it Bloom' Human Resources Workforce Conference

People Architectural Group is presenting "Let It Bloom", Lake County's premiere 2025 Human Resources Workforce Conference.

The event will be held Wednesday, April 16 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Bernie's Book Bank, 917 North Shore Dr.,

Lake Bluff.

People Architectural Group LLC headed by Sarah Mital, CEO and founder, using her life experiences and human resources background to bring a premiere outstanding opportunity for business leaders to expand their toolbox to improve their relationship with their team.

Leadership, on-boarding, benefits, performance reviews, company cultures, employment laws are among topics to be discussed. There will be opportunities to network and connect with some of the top human resources minds in the country.

Attendees are encouraged to bring book donations and a portion of the proceeds will be donated to Bernie's Book Bank.

For more information and to register visit www.peopletugroup.com or call 847-338-8326.



PHOTOS COURTESY JOE CICERO Hi-Liter/MCN
Families await the start of the 2024 Bremer Team Easter Egg Hunt. This year's festivities take place Saturday, April 12, again at the McHenry Outdoor Theater. Gates open at 10 a.m., and for the first time will include an adult component with prizes.

Bremer Team hosts Easter Egg Hunt April 12

Second annual event takes place at McHenry Outdoor; adult hunt, prizes added

Cynthia Wolf
CONTRIBUTOR

Get ready, young hunters: A sea of bright pink, green, blue, yellow, orange and purple ovals soon will dot the grass at the McHenry Outdoor Theater, with a few special Easter eggs promising bonus prizes for those lucky enough to find them.

The second annual Bremer Team – Keller Williams Success Realty Easter Eggstravaganza gates open at 10 a.m., with the hunt starting promptly at 11 a.m. Saturday, April 12, at the McHenry Outdoor Theater, 1510 Chapel Hill Road, east of McHenry. For added fun, each adult in attendance will receive a raffle ticket good for a chance to select an egg containing one of several donated gift certificates.

"More than just an egg hunt, the free family fun will include a visit from the Easter Bunny as well as opportunities for young attendees to test their building skills at a Home Depot Kids' Workshop, and the concessions will be open at the Outdoor Theater," said Dawn Bremer, owner and president of the McHenry-based Bremer Team. "Plus, we've added some extra excitement for the adults this year.

"This is a ginormous, fun-filled community event designed to bring families

together to create lasting memories," she continued. "We put out 10,000 eggs last year, and we'll do it again."

Bremer noted the hunting grounds will be divided into categories for those 3 and younger, 4 to 7 and 8 to 10. Children should bring their own baskets. After collecting their eggs, participants will receive a candy bag put together by McHenry Villa residents.

"We'll have some bags that contain candy and others that contain trinkets like temporary tattoos and small toys — for kids who may be allergic," Bremer said. "Each child will receive the same amount. It's important to us that no child feels left out."

After the eggs have all been found, the kids will turn them in and receive their candy or goody bag. Those who found one of the special eggs also will be identified. Rare eggs will afford their discoverers prizes like free popcorn or a night at the movies at the Outdoor or even a special gift donated by the McHenry Meijer store.

Bremer said the first Bremer Team egg hunt last year was a terrific success, and she and her team look forward to greeting families for this year's holiday fun.

"We love to give back," she said. "We are committed to supporting lo-

cal families, building relationships and making a positive impact in the area, and this is another way that we do that."

McHenry Outdoor Theater owner Scott Dehn said he, too, looks forward to the spring family fun.

"All the kids love going to an Easter egg hunt, especially the ones that are run well, which this one is," he said. "Plus, this is a little more special because of the setting it's in. You see the big screen as the backdrop and all these kids hunting for eggs. It's kind of unique."

Prize donors to date for the newly added adult component include the McHenry Outdoor Theater, Worldwide Traveler, Meat & Potato Eatery, Brunch Café, D.C. Cobb's – McHenry, Jexal's Pizza & Wing-Zeria, Green Peapod Thai Restaurant, Foxhole Pizza and Pub and Binny's Beverage Depot

The Bremer Team – Keller Williams Success Realty is a real estate brokerage with offices at 1218 N. Green St., McHenry. The firm is known for charitable endeavors such as diaper drives, supporting Kids in Need of McHenry County, and its 30 Days for 30 Vets initiative, which, in conjunction with the support of numerous sponsors, is providing 30 home renovation projects free of charge to 30 U.S. military veterans.

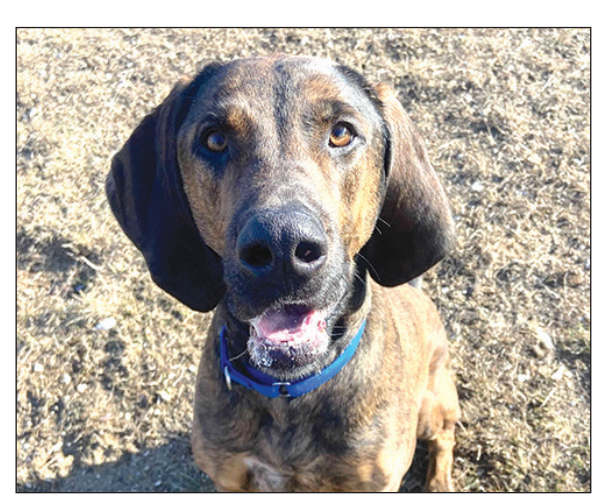
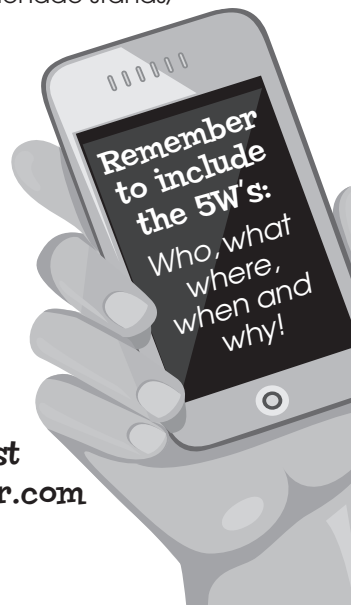
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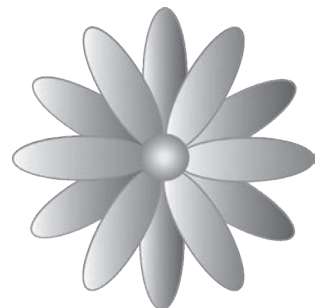


SUBMITTED PHOTO Hi-Liter/MCN

Pet of the week

Bubba, a Plot Hound mix, is about 4-1/2 years old, neutered, up-to-date on routine shots (incl. rabies), tested negative for heartworm and on preventative 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.





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P16558A
2019 CHEVY TRAVERSE LT
LEATHER

\$16,390



250045A
2022 KIA SPORTAGE LX

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P16616
2022 CHEVY MALIBU LT

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P16512A
2020 CHEVY EQUINOX PREMIER

\$18,490



P16710A
2020 BUICK ENCLAVE ESSENCE

\$19,490



P16699
2021 CHEVY EQUINOX LT

\$19,890



P16683
2021 CHEVY TRAILBLAZER LT

\$21,490



P16659
2022 CHRYSLER VOYAGER LX

\$21,490



K250289A
2023 CHEVY TRAILBLAZER LT

\$23,890



250357A
2020 CHEVY SILVERADO LT

\$24,790



P16735
2024 CHEVY TRAX 2RS

\$25,488



P16597
2021 VW ATLAS SE

\$26,290



P16687
2024 BUICK ENVISTA SPORT TOURING

\$26,390



240889A
2017 CHEVY SILVERADO LT

\$26,990



P16593
2024 CHEVY EQUINOX RS

\$28,890



P16717
2022 GMC CANYON DENALI
ONLY 16,800 MILES

\$39,788



P16565
2021 GMC SIERRA ELEVATION

\$42,590



P16603
2021 CHEVY SILVERADO LT

\$42,890



P16736
2022 FORD EXPLORER ST

\$43,290



250245A
2022 MERCEDES-BENZ GLE350

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P16651A
2021 FORD F-150 LIMITED

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250428A
2024 CHEVY SILVERADO 1500 LT

\$45,590



P16602
2023 CHEVY SILVERADO RST

\$48,190



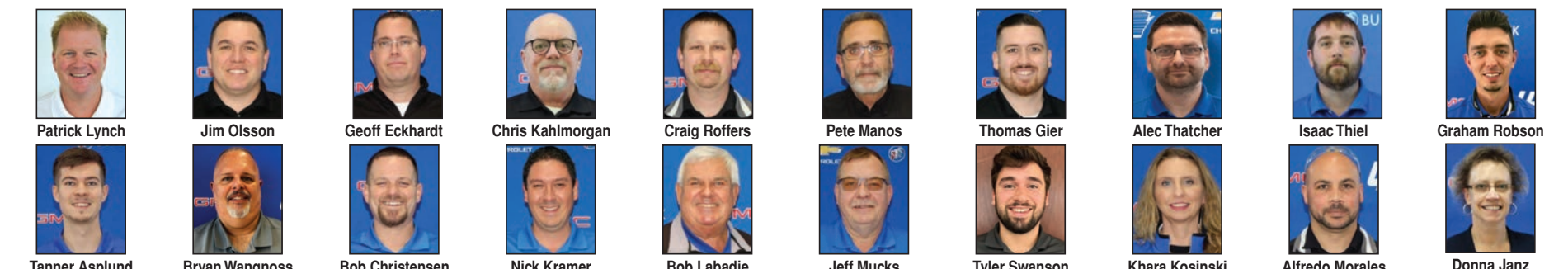
P16582
2023 FORD F-150 LARIAT

\$50,788



P16722
2023 GMC YUKON XL DIESEL

\$68,691



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Court & crime news

Man charged in human trafficking investigation

The Lake County Special Investigations Group, in collaboration with the Chicago Field Office of the FBI, continued their efforts to expose those involved in this human trafficking operation. As the extensive investigation progressed, new evidence and witnesses came to light. These developments provided investigators with enough proof to link Jose Puga, 51, of the 3000 block of Schuette Dr, Wonder Lake to the crimes committed against the 15-year-old girl.



Jose Puga

The case, along with the newly uncovered evidence, was then presented to the Lake County State's Attorney's Office, which approved the following charges: Three counts of Involuntary Sexual Servitude of a Minor (Class X Felony), Three counts of Trafficking in Persons (Class 1 Felony), and six counts of Aggravated Criminal Sexual Abuse (Class 2 Felony).

An arrest warrant was issued for Jose Puga and on March 25, he surrendered himself to the Lake County Jail. A detention hearing was scheduled for March 25.

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "This case is yet another example of the outstanding results that can be achieved through the partnership between the Lake County Special Investigations Group and the FBI. While the investigation was lengthy, the relentless dedication of the investigators ensured that those responsible for victimizing this child were brought to justice."

Round Lake Beach Woman Arrested for Sexual Trafficking of a Juvenile (issued 07/13/19)

The Lake County Sheriff's Special Investigations Group concluded a long-term investigation into the sex-trafficking of a juvenile, after receiving a tip from Round Lake Beach Police. During the course of the investigation, Sheriff's Special Investigations Group Detectives discovered Sheila E. Johnston, 33, of the 1200 block of Sunset Drive, Round Lake Beach, was potentially pimping a 15-year-old girl, who she previously held legal guardianship over.

On July 12, 2019, Johnston posted an advertisement on a

website offering the juvenile to participate in sexual acts in exchange for money. Undercover Sheriff's Detectives communicated with Johnston and she agreed to offering the juvenile and herself to engage in sexual acts in exchange for money.

Johnston trafficked the juvenile to a hotel in Waukegan, where she met with who she thought was a customer, but was really an undercover Sheriff's Detective. During the meeting Johnston offered both herself and the juvenile to engage in sexual acts for money. Following the agreement, Johnston was placed under arrest and the juvenile was taken into protective custody.

The juvenile was transported to safe shelter and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has taken protective custody of her.

Johnston was subsequently charged with: Trafficking in Persons, Involuntary Sexual Servitude of a Minor (Class X Felony), Promoting Juvenile Prostitution (Class 1 Felony), and Prostitution (Class A Misdemeanor).

Sheriff John Idleburg said, "There is nothing more revolting than taking the innocence away from a juvenile and promoting a child for prostitution. I am very proud of the collaboration which went into this investigation to identify and arrest a sexual trafficker, while rescuing a juvenile. In addition to seeking drug pushers, gun traffickers, and other violent felons, our Special Investigations Group will work tirelessly to arrest those who force juveniles or adults into sexual servitude."

Three injured in traffic crash

On March 27, at approximately 11:15 a.m., the Lake County Sheriff's Office responded to a traffic crash on Route 59, south of Golfview Drive in North Barrington.

Preliminary investigations indicate that a Ford van was traveling northbound on Route 59 when, for unknown reasons, it crossed the center line and collided head-on with a southbound Subaru passenger vehicle.

Both drivers were transported to area hospitals in stable condition. A passenger in the Subaru was transported to an area hospital in critical condition.

The Lake County Sheriff's Technical Crash Investigation

Team is continuing its investigation.

Man charged after fleeing from police in two states

On March 25 at approximately 4:30 p.m., a Wisconsin police agency issued a notification to surrounding law enforcement agencies regarding a black BMW that had fled from them on I-94 at a speed of 138 MPH, heading into Illinois. The Wisconsin agency provided the Illinois registration details for the vehicle.



Declan J. Moore

Shortly after the notification, an alert sheriff's deputy observed the same BMW traveling southbound on Route 41 at 96 mph in a posted 55 mph zone. The deputy attempted to catch up to the vehicle near Stearns School Road but lost sight of it. Anticipating the driver's potential destination, the deputy proceeded toward the registered owner's address.

While en route, the deputy spotted the BMW in the area of Grand Avenue and Green Bay Road. Pulling alongside the vehicle in traffic, the deputy identified the driver as Declan J. Moore, 23, of the 500 block of 1st Street, Waukegan. The deputy then activated emergency lights and attempted a traffic stop. However, the BMW fled at speeds exceeding 80 mph in a posted 30 mph zone, disregarding two stop signs. Due to the excessive speed and risk to public safety, the deputy terminated the stop attempt and did not initiate an active pursuit.

The deputy proceeded to the registered owner's address, where a family member was able to contact Declan and encourage him to surrender. Declan returned home and voluntarily surrendered to sheriff's deputies. He was taken into custody and transported to the Lake County Jail.

Declan was subsequently charged with: Aggravated Fleeing - 21+mph (Class 4 felony), Aggravated Fleeing - Disobey 2+ traffic control devices (Class 4 felony), 2 counts of Speeding (35+) (Class A misdemeanor), Reckless Driving (Class A misdemeanor) and Fleeing/Evading Peace Officer (Class A misdemeanor).

Man arrested while possessing a stolen firearm

On March 27, at approximately 7:25 p.m., members of the Lake County Special Investigations Group, a HID-TA-funded initiative, conducted a traffic stop in the 26000 block of Route 83 in Mundelein. The stop involved a vehicle in which Benjamin Rodriguez, 29, of the 900 block of Stratford Lane, Mundelein, was a passenger.



Benjamin Rodriguez

During the stop, detectives observed controlled substances in plain view on Rodriguez's face and the seat where he was sitting. Detectives requested that he exit the vehicle, and he initially complied. However, once outside, he began resisting efforts to detain him. He then jumped back into the vehicle in an attempt to flee but was unsuccessful.

Detectives removed Rodriguez from the driver's compartment and placed him on the ground, where he continued to resist arrest. While struggling with officers, he concealed his hands in front of his body. Officers ultimately deployed a taser to gain control and place him in custody.

After securing Rodriguez in handcuffs, detectives discovered a loaded, stolen pistol tucked into the front of his waistband, along with several small bags of suspected fentanyl in his pockets.

During the struggle, a powder became airborne, contaminating both officers, who were subsequently treated at a hospital for possible fentanyl exposure and later released. Rodriguez was evaluated by paramedics but declined medical treatment.

Rodriguez was transported to the Lake County Jail, where he is awaiting his first court appearance. The case was reviewed by the Lake County State's Attorney's Office, which approved the following charges: Armed Violence (Class X), 2 counts Unlawful Possession of a Controlled Substance (Class 4), Unlawful Possession of a Weapon by a Felon (Class 3), Resisting Arrest (Class 4), Possession of a Stolen Firearm (Class 2), and Three counts of Aggravated Unlawful Use of Weapon (Class 4).

The Vernon Hills Police Department assisted in this arrest.

Update: Wanted man arrested during investigation

Detectives from the Lake County Sheriff's Criminal Investigations Division continued their active investigation into a homicide. During the course of their investigation, detectives discovered that Amil Little, 25, of the 12000 block of W. Wakefield Dr-Beach Park was unlawfully in possession of ammunition. It was also determined that he was present when the homicide occurred.



Amil Little

Detectives gathered sufficient evidence to obtain an arrest warrant for Little on charges of Unlawful Use of a Weapon by a Felon.

On March 25, 2025, detectives learned that Little was at a residence in the 2100 block of Gilead Avenue in Zion. As they prepared to take him into custody, he attempted to flee on foot. After a brief chase, detectives successfully apprehended him without further incident.

In addition to the weapons charge, Little was also charged with Criminal Damage to Property and Resisting Arrest. Little was subsequently turned over to the custody of the Lake County Jail. Little was released from custody after a detention hearing on March 27th, 2025.

The Racine Police Department, Zion Police Department, and the Chicago Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigations all provided valuable assistance in bringing Little's apprehension to a safe conclusion.

UPDATE: Waukegan Man Charged with Murder (02/19/25)

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.

During their interaction,

an argument ensued, and Tillman produced a firearm, firing multiple rounds at Fox—who was in the passenger seat of a vehicle—as well as the driver. Fox was struck and died shortly after the driver took him to the hospital.

Through evidence and thorough investigative work, Tillman was identified as the suspect. Sheriff's detectives arrested him without incident yesterday in the 300 block of Washington Street, Waukegan.

After reviewing the facts and circumstances of the case, the Lake County State's Attorney's Office approved two counts of First Degree Murder against Tillman.

Tillman remains held in the Lake County Jail pending an initial court hearing today.

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."

Beach Park Homicide Investigation (issued 02/10/25)

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.

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.

Feb. 13
Juvenile, was cited for reckless driving and street racing;

Juvenile, was cited for reckless driving, street racing and graduated driver's license violation;

Feb. 14
Raymond E. Koch, 53, unknown address, was cited for

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Crowded bar the night before wartime prohibition went into effect New York City, June 30, 1919. The April 12 McConnell Ball will wind the clock back to celebrate this era with music, dancing, food, libations and photographs. For more information or to buy tickets visit www.wamcconnellfoundation.org.

• Arrests (Continued from page 6)

a warrant obtained: failure of sexual offender to report change of address;

Yuridiana Trinidad Bahena, 28, Round Lake Beach, was cited for aggravated battery and resisting arrest;

Jonathan R. Good, 50, Ingleside, was cited for fleeing to elude, and driving while license

suspended;

John Fisher, 43, Wonder Lake, was cited for a warrant arrest: theft; Feb. 15

Michael A. Greenwood, 29, North Chicago, was cited for driving while license revoked and suspended registration;

Juvenile, was cited for do-

mestic battery;

Sisco E. Salvatore, 32, Antioch, was cited for domestic battery; Feb. 16

Brian Kramer, 64, Antioch, was cited for a warrant arrest: unlawful possession of a controlled substance;

Brian Cardenas-Alejandre,

22, Waukegan, was cited for no driver's license;

Kevin D. Bennett, 23, North Chicago, was cited for driving while license revoked, and no insurance;

Brandon Mazurek, 40, Antioch, was cited for DUI – alcohol;

Feb. 18

Richard G. Cerk, 49, Racine, WI, was cited for DUI – drugs and no insurance;

Narendraupuri K. Goswami, 46, Waukegan, was cited for DUI – alcohol;

Thomas C. McCoy, 45, Beach Park, was cited for failure to register as a sexual offender;

Feb. 20

Cashmere N. Tillman, 22, Waukegan, was cited for a warrant arrest: aggravated assault;

Martin Carrillo Guerra, 36, Zion, was cited for identity theft, unlawful use of a credit card, possession of another person's credit card, and possession of a fraudulent ID.

W.A. McConnell Foundation Ball celebrates Roaring 20's, commitment to local history

Put on your best “glad rags” and Join the The W.A. McConnell Foundation for a real wingding.

The nonprofit historical group hosts its third annual McConnell Ball from 7 to 10 p.m. Saturday, April 12, at The District, 10308 Main St. in Richmond. Set in the Roaring '20s, the evening will feature the “McConnell Club” speakeasy. Dance the night away to the Charleston or imbibe in our 1920s' Signature Prohibition Cocktail.

The evening will include: music, delicacies, and tantalizing libations. Bid on exciting silent auction items and pose for photographs. Dress-

ing in 1920s style is encouraged.

The general admission tickets cost \$50 and feature::

- Heavy hors d'oeuvres
- 2 beer/wine drink tickets (Cash Bar for additional beverages)
- Jazz Music
- A 1920s' Dance Performance
- Parting gift

For an additional \$30, VIP guests receive all of the above plus extra perks: a special Speakeasy Entrance, a signature Prohibition cocktail and a commemorative photograph.

To buy tickets or for more information visit www.wamcconnellfoundation.org.

The nonprofit W.A. McConnell Foundation formed in 2021, when a group of community members recognized a need for preserving the unique history

of Richmond and the surrounding area. This grassroots group has continued to grow and impact local history in a number of ways, including buying and saving the oldest building in town – the 1844 Charles G. Cotting House, referred to as Old No. 90. All proceeds support the W.A. McConnell Foundation's mission: To preserve and protect the history and heritage of Richmond/Spring Grove area.

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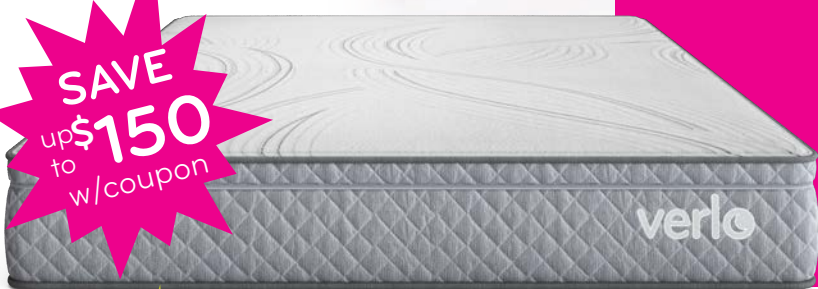
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