



Celebrating **The 2023** **AMBOY DEPOT DAYS** **August 24-27**

A supplement to The Amboy News,
The Mendota Reporter and The Rochelle News-Leader
Wednesday, Aug. 16, 2023

THE AMBOY LIONS CLUB IS PROUD TO PRESENT
"TOGETHER WE CAN" - 2023 DEPOT DAYS PARADE
SATURDAY, AUG. 26 - 3 PM - MAIN STREET

Register for the parade on our website at
<https://e-clubhouse.org/sites/amboyil/>

**See A Lions Club Member About A
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2023 AMBOY LIONS CLUB DRAWDOWN

Benefitting Community Projects & Scholarships

\$5,500 Total Cash & Prizes • \$2,000 Cash Grand Prize

Saturday, September 9, 2023

Amboy Community Center

Pork Dinner — 6:30 - 7:30 PM

Drawdown — 7:30 - 9:00 PM

Entertainment

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Catered by the Lee County Park Producers

\$60.00 per ticket (2 meals per ticket) • Maximum of 200 Tickets Sold

Must be 21 years old • Must be present for LOSER'S Drawing

Amboy Lions Club



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The Amboy Lions Club serving the community:

- Amboy Welcome Signs & Landscaping
- Cliff Walter Memorial Easter Egg Hunt
- AEDs in Amboy & Sublette Community Bldgs and Churches
- Continuing Education Scholarships
 - Depot Museum Shelter
 - Park Playground Equipment
- Eyeglass & Hearing Aid Recycling
 - And Much More!



Welcome to the 2023 Amboy Depot Days

It's that time of year again folks, please join us at the 42nd Annual Depot Days! This year's festivities will surely entertain all ages.

The weekend will kick off on Thursday night downtown at the main stage for the Miss Amboy Contest, be sure to stick around for family night at the carnival.

On Friday the community-wide garage sales begin at 8 a.m. and the carnival will open at 6 p.m. The food stands will be open at 10 a.m. with a wide variety of choices. Saturday morning is off to an early start with the Sylvan Shuffle 5k.

The Lions Club Parade theme this year is "Together We Can" and will begin at 3 p.m. Saturday afternoon followed by musical guest The New Frontiers, a Journey tribute band, at 7 p.m. on the main stage.

As they say, "The best for last," Sunday we will be hosting one of the largest Car, Truck, and Motorcycle Shows in Northern Illinois! Have you got your 50/50 tickets



Amboy Mayor John Schamberger

yet? Last winner received \$99,430.

On behalf of the City Council, I would like to thank all of our sponsors and volunteers that make this weekend happen, without them it would not be possible.

This is one weekend you will definitely not want to miss in Amboy!

Mayor John Schamberger

Welcome to the 2023 Amboy Depot Days! We Are Glad To Welcome You Back!



*The City of Amboy
thanks you for attending
our annual event.*

*Mayor John Schamberger
Alderman Peter Rood
Alderman Greg Noble
Alderman Brandon Klein
Alderman Bill Bontz
Alderman Dave Shaw
Alderman Frank Stenzel*

Something for everyone at the 2023 Amboy Depot Days

AMBOY — The 2023 Annual Amboy Depot Days offers something for everyone. This year's festival runs Aug. 24-27.

The annual festival kicks off on Thursday night in downtown Amboy with the opening of the food stand and carnival. Thursday night is family night and arm bands are \$30 for unlimited rides for this special night. The Depot Days Little Dancers will take the Main Stage at 6:30 p.m. The Miss Amboy and Little Miss Amboy pageant will begin at 7 p.m. with the crowing of the new Miss Amboy at 8:30 p.m.

On Friday at 8 a.m., the community wide garage sales and the vendor booths downtown open for business. The food stands open at 10 a.m. and the carnival will open at 6 p.m. The carnival

special for Friday night is \$30 bands for unlimited rides. The free concert on the Main Stage is Snapshot, sponsored by Shell Oil, from 7 – 9 p.m. The Knights of Columbus is again hosting a beer garden, where Class Trip will be performing from 9 p.m. – 1 a.m.

Saturday morning kicks off bright and early at 8 a.m., when the annual Amboy Education Foundation Sylvan Shuffle Adult 5K Run/Walk begins. The Amboy Farm Tractor Show and Semi Big Rig Show will be held in downtown Amboy from 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Also open in downtown Amboy at 8 a.m. will be the vendor booths. The community wide garage sales will open at 8 a.m. The food stands open at 11 a.m. and the KC Beer Garden opens at 11 a.m.

Kids will have a chance to meet and greet LOL Doll and Mario Luigi at the Pankhurst Memorial Library from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Wrestling mats will be rolled out at approximately 11 a.m. for the first ever Meet in the Streets Old-Timers Tournament as Amboy High School wrestling coach Brent Montavan is hosting a tournament for wrestlers 21-over who are not currently wrestling in college.

The carnival opens at noon on Saturday and from noon to 3 p.m., they will offer an arm band special of \$30 for unlimited rides. A dinosaur show will be held on the Main Stage in the Depot Museum parking lot from at 1 p.m. Whimsy Face Painting will be on hand in the Depot Parking lot decorating faces for free

from 2 – 4 p.m.

The annual Amboy Lions Depot Days parade will step off at 3 p.m. on Saturday.

The annual Teen Turf Donkey Drop will be held at 5 p.m., near Amboy Sporting Goods.

Journey Tribute Band will take the Main Stage for a free concert from 7-9 p.m., sponsored by KSB Hospital. The final act of the evening is live music of Kirkland in

the KC Beer Garden from 9 p.m. – 1 a.m.

Sunday morning begins at 6 a.m. with the opening of registration for the 32nd annual Depot Days Car, Truck and Motorcycle Show.

The Knights of Columbus will be hosting a pancake breakfast from 6:30 – 10 a.m., at the beer garden.

At 8 a.m., the downtown vendors and community wide garage sales open for

business. The food stands open at 11 a.m.

Judging for the annual car show begins at 11:30 a.m.

At noon, the KC Beer Garden opens and the carnival will offer an arm band special of \$30 for unlimited rides from noon to 4 p.m.

The Depot Days car show awards will be presented at 3 p.m., followed by the 50/50 raffle winner drawn.



The Amboy Depot Days carnival provides fun for all. (Amboy News file photo)

WORLD FAMOUS AMBOY DEPOT DAYS CAR SHOW COMMITTEE 50/50 DRAWING



**2022 Winner -
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Ticket sales will end on Saturday at noon, at the Ashton, Dixon, Ohio, Franklin Grove and Sublette locations.

Most Amboy locations will sell tickets until noon on Sunday.

Tickets may also be purchased at two locations on Main Street during Depot Days festivities each evening & all day on Sunday.

Drawing Sunday, Aug. 27 after the Car Show Proceeds to benefit Community Projects

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- FRANKLIN GROVE:**
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- OHIO:**
Harry's Pub & Grub

- DIXON:**
Shamrock Pub

For more information, check out Amboy Depot Days 50/50 Drawing on Facebook

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Wittenauer, King take over 50/50 drawing; Jeff and Stacie Gerdes step down

By **BRANDON LaCHANCE**
Amboy News Reporter

AMBOY—Since the first Depot Days Car Show and the 50/50 drawing in 1991, it has been synonymous with the name Gerdes.

Jeff and Stacie Gerdes were involved since Day 1 and have earned names such as 50/50 director, 50/50 Committee Chairperson, and the 50/50 messiahs.

For the last few years, the Gerdeses have tried to hand the reins to someone new and take a step back. However, they haven't been able to find someone.

Until now as Sandy Wittenauer raised her hand to be the next 50/50 caretaker.

"I thought, 'How hard could this be?' Most of the people who go to the car show meetings are involved in the cars, the parade, and all the other facets of Depot Days," said Wittenauer, who goes by the nickname "City Girl" as she was born in Chicago, raised in Brookfield and has lived in Amboy with her husband, Roger Wittenauer, for the last 10 years. "So, I threw my hand up. But, I'm a one-woman show, it won't be a husband and wife collective because my husband isn't available to help because he is a high

school football referee.

"I said, 'If you think one person can do it, I'll find myself a right-hand man and let's see if it will work'."

Wittenauer's right-hand man is Robert King.

Both Wittenauer and King, the two-person Car Show 50/50 Committee, are both retired and thought this was a great way to help the community.

Knowing she wanted to do the best job she could, Wittenauer shadowed the Gerdes couple last spring and watched their every move during the planning, pre-Depot Days, during Depot Days, and post-Depot Days.

"I paid attention to everything they were doing because someday they're not going to be doing it anymore," said Wittenauer, who retired 11-years ago after being an accountant for a retirement home in Brookfield and then working for the Lisle Library District for 33 years. "I am so grateful that Jeff and Stacie are around for all of my questions, starting this past spring, to make sure I'm doing things in the right order, so they're done by August. There is a schedule most people don't know about. You don't just



Sandy Wittenauer raised her hand to become a Depot Days Car Show 50/50 Chairperson and, with the help of Robert King, take over for Jeff and Stacie Gerdes.

pop in a trailer the day before Depot Days. A lot happens before then. I could call Jeff and Stacie.

"There haven't been any nerves because I'm not involved. I can't buy a ticket. That would be ethically wrong for me to buy a ticket. You're not actually looking at a pile of money sitting on a table. You make regular deposits at the bank.

"The pot does build up and an excitement level is

going to come when you give the big check to the winner. That is the cherry on top. Giving the big check to the winner is what you work so hard for. Also, the four prizes of \$2,500 each. Those are nothing to sneeze at and are very generous."

For Jeff Gerdes, the transition is, well, different.

Jeff and Stacie were the go-to 50/50 figures, although they had help from many other volunteers, from 1991

to 2022 with only one August off, 2020 because of COVID-19.

"It's bittersweet to a certain point. My wife Stacie and I have been running the Depot Days Car Show 50/50 since Day 1," said Gerdes, who will stay involved with the car show. "It's bitter-sweet, but it's time to pass it along to someone with new enthusiasm, new energy, and is willing to take it over and wants to do a good job.

"After years of searching, someone finally said, 'Yeah, I can do it'. It was kind of a shock. I initially thought, 'I have someone who says they can do it, but can they actually do it'. Sandy is a great lady. She is very organized, jumped in with both feet, and she's doing great.

"There were nerves at the start on our side, but the nerves are gone now."

Gerdes remembers the beginning very vividly.

The first winner of the 50/50 took home a whopping \$750. At that point Jeff and Stacie did not think it would reach the levels it has.

Winning has been in the \$100,00 range for most of the 21st century as the 50/50 has brought in \$2.4 million from 2001-2022 and has paid out \$1.2 million.

Last year's winner taking home \$99,430 and the 2015 chosen ticket holder claimed the 50/50's largest pot, \$149,333.

"A couple of friends of mine and I were walking around begging people to buy tickets. Boy, it grew and grew," Jeff Gerdes said. "Once we got past 2012, the 50/50 has had a mind of its own. People wanted tickets. We didn't have to ask anymore; people were asking us. It's good money. People think they have a better chance of winning our money than the lottery, so why not?"

"The original idea was to help the Depot Museum with their expenses. We did that and the 50/50 kept growing and growing. Eventually, it got to the point where we could help out the Depot financially and help other people. That was the premise of the whole thing. Now, we help many organizations every year."

Wittenauer said cutting a check for nonprofit organizations is her favorite part of her new role.

With the help of Jeff and Stacie Gerdes she is learning and becoming comfortable with all of her duties.

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Everything new Miss Amboy has new director, new strategy, new numbers



Ashley Grim, left, has made some power moves in her first year as the director of Miss Amboy. She's implemented a new recruiting strategy, boosted the contestant numbers, and incorporated a \$1,000 college scholarship. She's done it all with the support of her husband Alex Grim and their three children, left to right, Carter, Emma, and Kane. (Photo contributed)

By **BRANDON LaCHANCE**
Amboy News Reporter

AMBOY—When Ashley Grim was named first runner-up Miss Congeniality in the 2010 Miss Amboy pageant, she didn't think she would ever be the director.

Fast forward 13 years and here we are, Grim is the new director and she has immediately made executive decisions and taken action to boost Miss Amboy.

"Back in 2010, I ran for Miss Amboy. I've always had a passion for the contest that is important for every girl," said Grim, who is married to Alex Grim with three children. "When Emily Leffelman was step-

ping down, I decided it was time to see if I could take over the pageant.

"I asked her if I could do it. She said there were a few other women who were interested in being the director. She chose me and now I'm doing everything I can to turn the pageant around."

Grim, born and raised in Amboy and a 2013 Amboy High School graduate, started recruiting high school-aged contestants at the end of the 2022-23 school year as she wanted to get a jump on the 2023 pageant.

The new strategy worked well as there are 31 participants combined through the ranks, Little Miss, Little Mister, Junior

Miss, and Miss Amboy.

There are eight girls vying for Miss Amboy, which is six more than last August.

"Last year there was only two girls in Miss Amboy. One was an incoming freshman and the other was an eighth grader," Grim said. "I closed the age to only allow high school students to do it because I feel there is a maturity level from junior high to high school. That one year makes a difference. I want the girls to be mature, be good representatives of Amboy, and I want them to take this role seriously because you are the face of Amboy for the next year.

"I also went to the schools and sat at the lunch

tables to talk to girls and try to get them to join the pageant. I brought popcorn, chocolate, and tried to get to know them. I wanted to know why they were or were not interested, and what would make them interested. I got to know the kids 1-on-1 and it definitely helped."

The eight Miss Amboy contestants are Brianna Henkel, Hayden Hunsberger, Magdalena Keene, Alexa Morris, Madison O'Malley, Emilie Reed-Dempsey, Emily Sachs, and Brooklyn Strub.

Not only are they competing for Miss Amboy, but for the first time in pageant history, they're also in con-

See Grim Page 9

*Have a safe and fun
time at this year's
Amboy Depot Days.*

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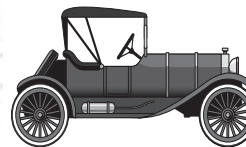
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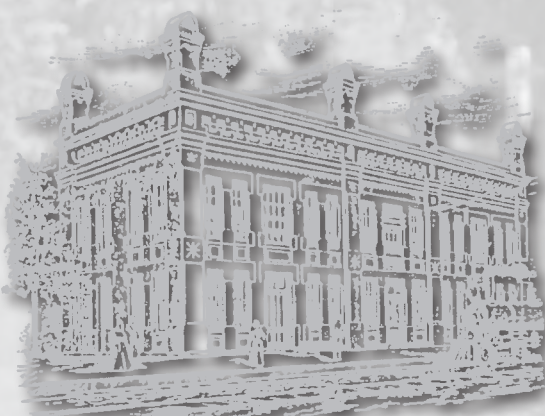
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AMBOY DEPOT DAYS

August 24, 25, 26 & 27

Thursday, August 24 - "Family Night"

- 5pm-10pm Food Stands open
5 pm - Bags Tournament - downtown East Ave - 6 pm
tournament starts
6pm-10pm Carnival on Depot Museum Grounds
"Family Night Special" Arm bands \$30.00 for
unlimited rides
6:30pm Depot Days Little Dancers-on Main Stage
7pm Miss Amboy Pageant & Little Miss Amboy
8:30pm Announcement of Miss Amboy of 2023

Friday, August 25

- 8am-4pm Community Wide Garage Sales
8am-5pm Craft Booths - Downtown
10am-10pm Food Stands open - Depot Museum
Grounds
6pm-10pm Carnival on Depot Museum Grounds.
Arm bands \$30.00 for unlimited rides.
7pm-9pm Snapshot on Main Stage. FREE. Sponsored
by Shell Oil
9pm - 1am K.C.'s Beer Garden: Class Field Trip

Saturday, August 26

- 8:00am Sylvan Shuffle Adult 5K Run/Walk sponsored
by Amboy Education Foundation.

Register at www.amboy.net

- 8am-1pm Semi Big Rig Show and Amboy Farm
Tractor. Downtown Amboy.
8am-5pm Community Wide Garage Sales
8am-5pm Craft Booths - Downtown
11am-10pm Food Stands open - Depot Museum Grounds
11am Kids' meet and greet is LOL Doll and Mario
Luigi, Pankhurst Memorial Library
11am-1am K.C. Beer Garden: South of Bandstand
Noon-3pm Carnival on Depot Museum Grounds
Arm bands \$30.00 for unlimited rides
1 pm Dinosaur Show, Main Stage-Depot Museum
Parking Lot
2pm-4pm Whimsy Face Painting. Free Kids Event
(Depot Parking Lot)
3pm Depot Days Parade
Sponsored by the Amboy Area Lions Club -
www.amboylionsclub.com to sign up
5pm Teen Turf Donkey Drop-Chance to win \$\$
857-4800 (located by Amboy Sporting
Goods)
7pm-9pm Journey Tribute Band, Main Stage. FREE.
Sponsored by KSB Hospital
9pm-1am K.C. Beer Garden: Kirkland

Amboy's Depot Days is presented to benefit the Amboy Depot Museum. Your support is greatly appreciated. The Depot Days Committee wishes to give a special thank you to the many people who volunteer their time, energy and funds to ensure the success of Depot Days.

Carnival sponsored by Amboy Area Chamber of Commerce

Plenty of FREE parking is available!

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AMBOY DEPOT DAYS

August 24, 25, 26 & 27

Sunday, August 27

- 6am-3pm 32nd Annual Depot Days Car, Truck & Motorcycle Show — Downtown Amboy.
- 6:30-10am Pancake Breakfast: Knights of Columbus, at the Beer Garden
- 8am-4pm Crafts - Downtown Streets
- 8am-4pm Community Wide Garage Sales
- 11am-4pm Food Stands Open
- 11:30am Car, Truck & Motorcycle Show Judging
Downtown Amboy
- Noon-5pm K.C. Beer Garden: South of the Bandstand
- Noon-4pm Carnival on Depot Museum Grounds.
Arm bands \$30.00 for unlimited rides.
- 3pm Depot Days Car, Truck & Motorcycle Show Awards
Presentation & 50/50 Drawing. Main Stage by Depot
Museum

INFORMATION BOOTHS

On West Main St. in front of First Federal.

DAILY INFORMATION

FREE SHUTTLE on Sunday. Park at Amboy School, 11 E. Hawley St.
First Aid & Cooling Center at the Lee County Farm Bureau, 37 S. East Avenue.
Food Stands & Restrooms are open all weekend on Depot Grounds.
Community-Wide Garage Sales: Friday, Saturday and Sunday 8am-5pm.
Garage sale maps available at City Hall or the information booth.
Museums open for viewing. Stop in and enjoy a little of Amboy's history.
The Gift Shop will be open.

Car Show Registration and information - Contact Garth Dallam 815/857-2946.
www.amboycarshow.com

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Calling all cars to Amboy

The Car Show is the Depot Days centerpiece

By **BRANDON LaCHANCE**

Amboy News Reporter
AMBOY – The Amboy Depot Days didn't start off with a car show.

But when the Amboy Depot Days Car, Truck, and Motorcycle Show was inserted 33 years ago, it instantly became a fan favorite and the centerpiece to Depot Days.

Throughout the years the expectations have stayed the same.

Awesome cars.
Lots of people.
A judged contest.
And tons of fun.

"We hope everyone comes to show off their cars, to look at great cars, and to buy 50/50 tickets," said Car



The 32nd Annual Amboy Depot Days Car, Truck and Motorcycle Show will be held on Sunday, Aug. 27. (Amboy News file photo)

Show President Garth Dallam, who has been involved since the first show. "The one

thing we've learned over the years is people don't like change. We stick to our

format and we have good shows. The registration tent, the 50/50 trailer, and the gate

where you come in hasn't changed in 30 years. The only year we haven't had a show was in 2020 because of COVID-19."

There was one change in the strategic planning of the car show.

Dallam and the Car Show Committee went to unusual locations to try to recruit a different batch of cars and car owners.

"This year, we went to different car shows than we usually go to whether they were large ones or small ones," said Dallam, who added 6,500 flyers were given to car show goers last summer. "We're hoping to get some different cars in our show. There are a group of guys who haven't missed a show yet. They keep coming back because they like the show.

"It's a judged show and we try to have guys who have been doing it for a while or guys who are in the automotive industry judge cars."

The blueprint of the Depot Days Car Show is etched in stone and chisels out success.

However, outside interference has hindered the show the last few years.

"Last year, at around 3 p.m. on Sunday, we had water coming up to the curb on Main Street because of all of the rain," Dallam said. "The weather put a damper on everything. There are more and more car shows on the day of our car show now. There are at least two in northern Illinois on the same date that I know of.

"When I talk to people who are involved in other car shows, they say their numbers are up. But because of weather being unfavorable and the date being booked by other car shows, we've been down a little bit."

Fingers are crossed for great Depot Days Car Show weather and for car showers and car viewers to come to Amboy.

Pre-registration is recommended as the entry fee remains \$10, but early birds receive perks such as having all of the paperwork and dashboard card filled out and ready to be placed on the dashboard and \$5 worth of 50/50 tickets.

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'It's-a me, Mario'

AMBOY—Turtle shells with spikes, green pipes, skeletons, and mushrooms are, figuratively, currently growing at the Pankhurst Memorial Library. Why?

Because Mario and Luigi, and an LOL Doll will take over the library during Amboy Depot Days at 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Saturday Aug. 26. For a character meet and greet.

"There will be exciting stuff happening at the library during Depot Days with the characters here," said Emily Goff, who has been the director at Pankhurst Memorial Library for eight years. "We always have a pretty good turnout, and everyone is excited to see them."

The City of Amboy chooses the characters and the Pankhurst Memorial

Library offers them a place to meet the community and make tons of children smile.

In past years, kids have dressed up like characters such as Elsa from "Frozen".

It will only make sense if the library is taken over by multiple Marios, Luigis, and LOL Dolls.

"It's always a good thing to have something that can bring people into the library," Goff said. We look forward to it every year."

Last year, Merida from Brave and a Minion from Minions and Despicable Me delighted Depot Days goers.

In other years, Captain America, Spiderman, and members of Paw Patrol have visited.

Grim from Page 5

tention for a \$1,000 scholastic scholarship donated by the Amboy Depot Days Car Show Committee.

"I figured an incentive such as a college scholarship would help get a few more girls in Miss Amboy," Grim said. "We had our first meeting with the girls a couple of weeks ago and I asked them, 'Why haven't you been in Miss Amboy? You're seniors and this has been going on for years.' They mostly didn't know about it or it was too late to enter when they found out. Maybe an opportunity to earn money for college can help make girls aware of Miss Amboy."

Grim, a hair stylist who rents a booth at The Warehouse, always has topics for

discussions with her clients. With the changes and new energy surrounding

Miss Amboy, the pageant will be toward the top of the chat list.

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Sylvan Shuffle returns for third annual 5K run/walk

By **BRANDON LaCHANCE**
Amboy News Reporter

AMBOY – There has been a 5K run/walk at the Amboy Depot Days for 16 years.

Originally named the Depot Days Dash, the 3.3-mile event was renamed the Sylvan Shuffle in 2021 after Sylvan Leffelman, a longtime Amboy Education Foundation

member, and his wife Virginia passed away in 2020.

The third annual Sylvan Shuffle will begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 26 with entry fee being \$15 for 18-under and \$25 for 19-plus.

“Sylvan Leffelman was an intricate part

See Sylvan Shuffle, Page 13

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Farm Tractors on display Saturday

AMBOY — The 23rd Annual Amboy Depot Days Farm Tractor Show and Semi Big Rig Show will be held from 8 a.m. – 1 p.m., on Saturday, Aug. 26, in downtown Amboy.

Tractors will receive dash plaques and door prizes.

The tractors will also take part in the annual Depot Days parade. Line-up for the parade starts at 1 p.m., with the parade beginning at 3 p.m.

For more information about the annual tractor show, please contact John at 815-973-4676.

Enjoy Depot Days!

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Quilt Raffle to Benefit Depot Museum

Becky Welty donated another one of her extravagant quilts to the Amboy Depot Museum for a Depot Days raffle.

This is the third year Welty's skill and handwork has been raffled at the annual festival.

"They're beautiful quilts. She is so generous to donate these beautiful quilts," said Depot Museum Director Peggy

(Shapiro) Horstman. "The people who have seen the quilt, want it. We're very lucky that she has chosen the Depot Museum to gift these quilts."

This year's red and white quilt, which could honor the Amboy Clippers, 4th of July, Christmas, and Valentine's Day, is queen sized, 82x94 inches, of 100-percent cotton.

Tickets are selling \$2

per ticket or three for \$5 at Amboy City Hall (where the quilt is located) and the Amboy Depot Museum. Tickets can also be purchased from any member of the Depot Museum Commission.

The drawing will take place at 2 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 27.

(Amboy News story and photo by Brandon LaChance)

Scavenger hunting at the Amboy Depot Museum

By **BRANDON LaCHANCE**
Amboy News Reporter

AMBOY – Sometimes we fall in the habit of saying, 'Same ole, same ole,' when it comes to ideas or events. Not this year.

The Amboy Depot Museum is bringing something new as it will have a scavenger hunt during Depot Days for children 3-7.

"We have photos of things that are in the Depot Museum and they have to find them," said Depot Museum Director Peggy (Shapiro) Horstman. "We

have a little gift for them at the end if they find all of the items. This is something new this year. It'll give these little kids a challenge.

"One of the members of our commission took her grandchild to another museum, Northwest Territory Historic Center in Dixon, which had a scavenger hunt. Her and her grandchild thought it was so much fun. She told us about it, I went, and asked them if I could borrow their idea.

"They were very helpful. They said it's very popular

Sylvan Shuffle continued from Page 10

of the Amboy Education Foundation," said Amboy Education Foundation President Mark Becker. "When I joined, he was the last remaining original member that served on the foundation's board. He was our president for a couple of decades.

"After he passed away, it was one of those things where we thought it would be really nice to acknowledge his contribution to Amboy, the Amboy Education Foundation, and to education as a whole. That's why it was renamed the Sylvan Shuffle.

It's a nice way to continue the legacy left by Sylvan and his wife Virginia."

The Sylvan Shuffle, which features a family challenge and a corporate challenge with teams of at least five runners vying to see who finishes the best, starts at Amboy High School, runs by Central School, past the old junior high building (which is currently being demolished) on S. Appleton Avenue, down to Amboy City Park, works back to the downtown area on East Avenue, and ends at the Amboy Depot Museum.

Last year, the 5K had 180 participants.

"We get really great participation. We have people

with kids and we thought it would be a fun thing for us to try."

The Depot is excited to offer something new and exciting for the younger generation of Depot Days goers.

Scavenging the museum and other events at the museum are in thanks to the Depot Days Car Show's 50/50 tickets sales and other donations.

Last year, the Car Show Committee donated \$12,000 to the Amboy Depot Museum.

that have ran or walked in the 5K every year that it has been held," said Becker, who has been the foundation's president for 10 years and has been involved in Amboy education for nearly 30 years. "It's really nice to see those familiar faces and they bring their kids. I was recently contacted from someone who lives out of state and he has been wanting to participate since it was renamed.

"He is coming back this year to walk in the shuffle. Sylvan was important to a lot of people in this community."

To register for the 2023 Sylvan Shuffle visit, runsignup.com/Race/IL/Amboy/SylvanShuffle.

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Donna Wellman chosen to be the Depot Days Parade Grand Marshall

By **BRANDON LaCHANCE**
Amboy News Reporter

AMBOY—When Donna Wellman was first asked to be the Depot Days Parade Grand Marshall for the 2023 Depot Days, her first reaction was shock.

“I said, ‘Oh no, I don’t think I’m worthy of being the grand marshal of the parade,’ said Wellman.

Actually, it’s shocking she hasn’t been asked to be the grand marshal before.

Wellman, 88, hasn’t always lived in Amboy but she was only a hop away as she lived on Shaw Road with a West Brooklyn address as a kid, went to little country

schools until she started eighth grade at Lee Center, and graduated from Lee Center High School in the Class of 1952.

Amboy residency became official in 1955 after she married Richard Wagner (1932-2008; co-owned the Amboy News from 1971-80).

The couple lived in a three-room apartment on W. Division Street before moving to a home on S. Jefferson Street in 1958 and raising their children Jeffrey Wagner (now 65) and John Wagner (62).

Donna Wellman still bakes in the kitchen of the

house on S. Jefferson.

“I’m a cookie baker and they call me, ‘Grandma Baker.’ I bake cookies for Teen Turf,” said Wellman, who married Don Wellman (1934-2015) in 2010. “I made a couple of pies for Teen Turf’s fundraiser at the Lee County Fair and 4-H Show in July. I try to donate as much as I can. When we have a blood drive for the Amboy Civic Organization (ACO), I donate cookies for that.

“I’m a cookie and a pie baker. I’m not much into cakes.”

With the quote alone, you can tell Wellman is involved with many organizations.

“Grandma Baker” makes cookies for Teen Turf as she has volunteered for 15 years and was honored as the 2010 Volunteer of Year and a February 2023 Volunteer of the Week through the state of Illinois.

Wellman belongs to the ACO, the Amboy Depot Museum, and the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Lee Center.

Before disbanding in 2023, she was on the Lee County Home Extension Association Board for 10 years and a member for 38 years. This run also included being named Homemaker of the Year in 2002.

And there is a good chance you ate a Wellman donut at Casey’s as she came every morning for 12 years.

It doesn’t matter what the organization is, when it comes to baking, being involved, and helping the community, Wellman is there.

“I think it’s real important to support the children of the community,” Wellman said. “We need to help them in any way that we can and keep them out of trouble. We need to help anyone who needs help.

“The saying, ‘Try to do a kind deed a day’, is true and is my motive.”



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50/50 more than just big winner

By **BRANDON LaCHANCE**

Amboy News Reporter

AMBOY – If you thought the Depot Days Car Show 50/50 planning started the first day of the summer spectacular, you are incorrect.

Actually, planning starts in the spring and many of the setup process are taking care of in May and June.

Just ask new 50/50 Chairperson Sandy Wittenauer.

“I don’t like to do nothing, so I threw my hand up to take the reins of the 50/50 and people appreciate the help,” Wittenauer said. “I don’t know how the Jeff and Stacie Gerdes worked jobs and did the Car Show and the 50/50 (since 1991). The phone calls, the ordering, and all the other responsibilities makes it a semi-full-time job in July and August. They made it work somehow.

“I hope to do the same since I’m not a procrastinator. I’m always looking weeks to a month ahead. Printing T-shirts, you have to plan ahead to give the printer time to print the 50/50 T-shirts. The tickets have to be proofread, approved, and printed in May. We received the 400,000 tickets in June. There were lawn signs ordered and printed.

“There are still things to be done, but I think I’m pretty ready.”

Wittenauer and her right-hand man, 50/50 Chairperson Robert King, have 21 places selling 50/50 tickets.

They routinely call and check to see if the locations need more tickets or if there is anything else the two-person committee can help with.

Although the journey of making the tickets, seeing the tickets sold, and people smiling after their name is pulled from the thousands is enjoyable, those aspects are not at the top of Wittenauer’s list.

“I get a lot of joy at the meeting we have after Depot Days is over when we get to disperse the other half of the money to people and organizations that wrote us a letter asking for a contribution,” Wittenauer said. “I’m happy there is a winner who walks away with a lot of money. I hope they do well with it. But, I’m happier to spread the money to the ones asking for a contribution. It personally feels good to say, ‘I’m part of the car show and we supported all of these organizations with their needs’.”

The irony of our railroads

A local farmer once asked me to make a list of all the plants that grew on his preserved railroad prairie. It took many hours over a period of two



Jim "Maxie" Long

years to find them all. The prairie was a three or four-acre plot along the old CB&Q railroad. The right-of-way on both sides of the preserved prairie had been converted into cultivated land.

The final tally of species of plants that grew there was 230. Several of them were common railroad weeds from foreign lands, and several were not prairie plants. It is remarkable that so many prairie plants could persist after more than 100 years of abuse and neglect. There were 16 species of native sedges and 24 different grasses. The true prairie grasses such as Big and Little Bluestem were common. The Indiangrass and Cord grass and Switch grass were there. The Sandhill grasses represented by Porcupine grass, Purple Top, Purple Lovegrass, several Panicum, and Three-awn grasses were also there.

Also present were nine different kinds of Aster, including the Amethyst Aster that is rarely seen today. Along with four different goldenrods. It was



nice to see the Sweet William Phlox and the Prairie Phlox growing near the rare Prairie Milkweed and Marsh Pea and Rattlesnake Root. There too, near the Compass Plants, I found several Prairie Lilies.

It good to know that several railroad prairies have been set aside for preservation. Local nature guardians are dedicated to the upkeep of these prairies. I hope they remain preserved for the future study of Illinois’ natural prairies.

In 1820, prairie covered roughly 22 million acres in Illinois. Now, 200 years later, less than 2500 acres of high-quality prairie remain. Almost all of it was lost to plowing and paving. Our prairies now survive mainly in scattered fragments: Often found in pioneer cemeteries, on bluffs high above rivers, and ironically, along railroad

rights-of-way and on abandoned railroad beds. -- Editor

Editor’s Note: James Brady Long was born in Amboy on June 12, 1926. Known by many as “Mazie”, he grew up in Amboy, served in the army during World War II, then studied forestry at the Michigan College of Mining and Technology. His studies in botany and forest protection continued as he ventured into farming here. A beloved story-teller, his farm became a place of learning and adventure for relatives and friends. In his later years, he contributed a series of local nature articles to The Amboy News. Upon his death in 2000, his many hand-written drafts were gathered and initially curated by Brenda Boyle. The present, renewed series draws from those drafts, both unpublished and previously published.

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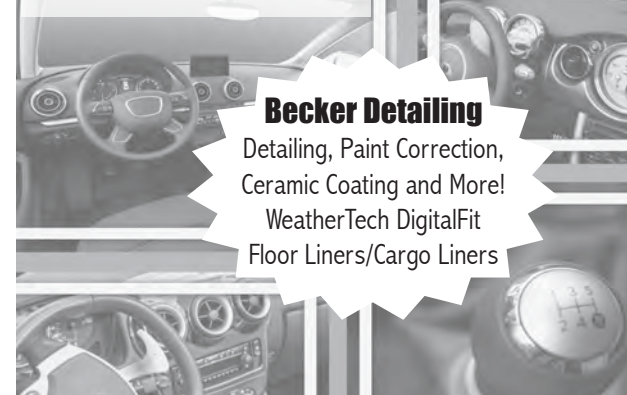
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Rolling out the wrestling mats

First annual Meet in the Streets introduced Saturday at 2023 Depot Days

By **BRANDON LaCHANCE**
Amboy News Reporter

AMBOY – Brent Montavon has dedicated his time and energy to the sport he loves as a wrestler and as the current Amboy High School wrestling coach.

Now, he wants to bring wrestling to Amboy Depot Days.

The first annual Meet in the Streets Old-Timers Wrestling Tournament is going to take place Saturday, Aug. 26 at 37 South East Ave.

“My buddy John Janssen and I are putting together this tournament,” Montavon said.

“He’s going to help me coach the high school wrestling team this year also. He’s from Amboy and moved to Minnesota when he was in high school. His son Trevor is big into wrestling and won a Minnesota state championship as a senior and finished second in each of his first three seasons.

“It was kind of John’s idea. When he asked what I was doing for fundraisers, I told him about my raffle tickets. He suggested an old timer’s tournament.”

The tournament is a fundraiser as Montavon will have a donation box and there will be 50/50 tickets for \$20.

Montavon has the wrestling mats polished and ready to roll out. He has two IHSA officials in Polo’s Mark Downey and Sterling’s Neil Richmond.

Although Montavon and Janssen are pushing for 12 teams of wrestlers who are 21-over and are not currently wrestling in college, nine teams have already registered.

“I’m excited. I have hundreds of people who want to watch this. It’s going to be crazy,” Montavon said. “Everyone I’ve talked to from different towns have said, ‘I can’t wait to come watch the tournament’. Some of these guys that are coming are from Elgin, Olympia, Sterling, Rock Falls, Byron, Dixon, and two teams are from Chicago.

“Some of these guys are training for MMA.”

The wrestlers weighing in for the eight offered weight classes (145, 155, 165, 175, 190, 215, 245, and 295) will have the chance to compete for belts, medals, and trophies.

The winning team will take home a championship belt and second and third will receive trophies. Wrestlers will receive medals and there are two plaques for the Quickest Pin Award and the Outstanding Wrestler Award.



Waiting on the donkey

By **BRANDON LaCHANCE**
Amboy News Reporter

AMBOY – Teen Turf is once again providing the most anticipated waiting game of Amboy Depot Days, the Donkey Drop.

“We’re doing the Donkey Drop again where a donkey will be a on a 100-square game board,” said Eileen Piper, Teen Turf Executive Director. “Whatever number the donkey does his business on, whoever bought that number is the winner. It used to be where the numbers were in proper order, now we mix them up to make it fairer.

“A lot of people buy the tickets to support us, but they do get a kick out of watching to see where the animal is going to use the bathroom so they can win or not.”

The Donkey Drop will start at 5 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 26 and will finish when the donkey finds the winner square to make a mess on.

Tickets are \$10 apiece for each of the 100 squares. The \$1,000 is split 50/50 between the winner and Teen Turf. If the donkey’s droppings land on two squares, the winning ticket holders will split the \$500.

Piper’s husband, Larry Piper (who she calls the handyman who makes Teen Turf work) and Mark Grossman are in charge of marking the Donkey Drop board.

The waiting game will not be the only Depot Days festivities Teen Turf is involved with as the nonprofit youth group will be in Saturday’s Depot Days Parade and monitoring the Amboy High School parking lot.

“The kids enjoy being part of the parade. This year we have a new bus that we’re hopefully going to have our logos on this year,” Eileen Piper said. “Our number of kids has been growing. We were blessed to get some grant money and we were able to purchase a bus. It’s a small bus that most schools use for their sports teams.

“Before, we would have to take multiple loads to get equipment and people to where they were going. Now, we can take one load, and everyone is where they need to be. It is wonderful.”

Brooklyn Strub, a five-year Teen Turf volunteer, is sponsored by Teen Turf in the Miss Amboy pageant.



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AMBOY — Grab your Converse and studded belts and get ready to rock out to all your favorite 90's and 2000's pop-punk hits. Class Field Trip will perform on Friday, Aug. 25 from 9 p.m. - 1 a.m., at the K.C.'s Beer Garden.



AMBOY — Breaking out of a small town more than two hours west of Chicago, Kirkland knows how formidable it is to make a name in a scene as an outsider. Kirkland will perform on Saturday, Aug. 26 from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., in the K of C Beer Garden.



AMBOY — Snap Shot is the Ultimate Classic Rock Experience in clubs, at festivals, plus private and corporate events all over Northern Illinois and the Chicago suburbs. You'll know every song we play and every one is danceable. Snap Shot will perform on Friday, Aug. 25 from 7 - 9 p.m., on the Main Stage.

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AMBOY – New Frontiers: The Definitive Journey Tribute was formed in 2015 by guitarist Jimi Goare, with the idea that the MUSIC of this legendary band be paid its proper due. Instead of emulating other tributes that “look” like Journey, New Frontiers chooses to focus on recreating that classic Journey sound that everyone knows and loves.

From Neal Schon’s sig-

nature guitar tone to the lush harmonies that Journey is so famous for – lead vocalists Cliff Stanton and Jimi Goare are able to match the soaring voice of Steve Perry while engaging audiences with that familiar Perry banter. With a veteran line-up and Goare’s ability to match Schon’s classic guitar solos note for note, the band is a formidable alternative to other Journey tribute bands

around the nation.

New Frontiers performs the album versions of songs from Evolution (1977) to Trial By Fire (1996) including Steve Perry’s first solo album. The band is able to cover all vocal parts with ease, delivering a full-on, and accurate concert experience.

New Frontiers: The Definitive Journey Tribute will take the Main Stage from 7–9 p.m., on Saturday, Aug. 26.

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