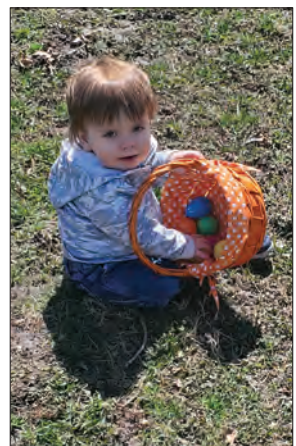




YOUTH COME OUT TO HUNT FOR EGGS

And they are off. The Amboy Lions Club held its annual Cliff Walter Memorial Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday at the Amboy City Park. Pictures and a list of winners appear on page A6.

Brandon LaChance/Amboy News



Local fire departments kept busy Easter weekend

Amboy, Sublette called to four structure fires in district

BY BRANDON LACHANCE
Amboy News Reporter

AMBOY – Easter weekend was a busy few days for the Amboy and Sublette Fire Departments as they were called to four structure fires in less than 34 hours. Sublette’s Fire Department responded Auto-Aid to Amboy with Engine, Tenders, Chief’s, and Ambulance if available.

There was a confirmed barn fire in the 1300 block of IL Route 52, in Amboy boundaries, at 2:51 p.m., Friday, April 8. Assistance came from Franklin Grove, Harmon, West Brooklyn, LaMoille, Compton, Paw Paw, Ohio, Lee, Stillman Valley, Walnut, Troy Grove, Earlville, Princeton, Rock Falls, Ashton and Byron.

At 12:01 a.m., Saturday, April 9 there was a reported fire in the basement of a home in the 1400 block of Amboy Road. When units arrived, they found the fire had already spread to the first floor and walls. Assistance came from Dixon Rural and City, Rock Falls, Advanced EMS, Lee, Amboy, Princeton, Harmon, West Brooklyn, LaMoille, Compton, Paw Paw, Mendota Troy Grove, Byron, Mt. Morris, Polo, and Ogle-Lee Flagg Center and Steward.

Another barn fire was confirmed in the 1300 block of IL Route 52 at 6:55 p.m., Saturday. This barn fire was at a different location than the fire on Friday.

See FIRE page A3

2022 Lee County final multiplier announced

SPRINGFIELD — Lee County has been issued a final property assessment equalization factor of 1.0000, according to David Harris, Director of the Illinois Department of Revenue.

The property assessment equalization factor, often called the “multiplier”, is the method used to achieve uniform property assessments among counties, as required by law. This equalization is particularly important because some of the state’s 6,600 local taxing districts overlap into two or more counties (e.g. school districts, junior college districts, fire protection districts). If there were no equalization among counties, substantial inequities among taxpayers with comparable properties would result.

Under a law passed in 1975, property in Illinois should be assessed at one-third (1/3) of its market value. Farm property is assessed differently, with farm homesites and dwellings subject to regular assessing and equalization procedures, but with farmland assessed at one-third of its agriculture economic value. Farmland is not subject to the state equalization factor.

Assessments in Lee County are at 33.15 percent of market value, based on sales of properties in 2019, 2020, and 2021.

See COUNTY page A3

Election Day for city, village, school boards was held April 4

BY BRANDON LACHANCE
Amboy News Reporter

LEE COUNTY — Voters took the polls to select city alderman, trustees, board members, and school board members on election day, April 4.

The unofficial results are in for Amboy City Ward 1 Alderman, Amboy City Ward 2 Alderman, Amboy City Ward 3 Alderman, Amboy CSUD No. 272 Board Member, and Sublette Village Trustees.

The Village of Sublette had three

openings on the village board that were on the ballot with six candidates vying for the positions: Mackenzie Belan, Richard Klaser, Linda Klaser, Brigantia O’Sadnick, and two write-in candidates Scott Hanson and Jeff Myers. The votes for the write-in candidates is done by hand and will not be configured for approximately two weeks, according to the Lee County Clerk’s Office.

Belan is leading the race with 34 votes, while Richard Klaser has 30, Linda Klaser 26, and O’Sadnick 25.

The only other contested race during election day for Amboy or Sublette was for Amboy City Ward 3 Alderman.

Incumbent Frank Stenzel received 96 votes and former city alderman Daryl Stuckemeyer received 51.

Peter Rood was the only selection for Amboy City Ward 1 Alderman, Brandon Klein for Amboy City Ward 2 Alderman, and Nichole Stenzel for Amboy CSUD No. 272 Board Member.

A Look Back At Amboy Area Heroes Who Served During World War II

Editor’s note: The Amboy News will be publishing a series of articles on veterans who served during World War II. These heroes are part of Amboy’s history and it is our honor to publish these articles so you can learn about their service to our country. This article was researched by Jack Mead and Tom Dempsey, and written by Dempsey.

Pvt. Harry Allen Smyth

Under his senior class picture in the 1931 Dixon High School yearbook are the words, “Men of few words are the best men.” If Harry was soft spoken in life, his death gave a loud clear voice to his actions in the name of freedom and human decency.



On Oct. 25, 1913, Harry Allen Smyth was born near Polo, to John and Lena Gould Smyth. His parents were living in the household of Harry’s grandfather who was employed as a carpenter. By the late 1920’s, Harry’s parents were renting a home in Dixon, his father working as a carpenter, his mother employed at the shoe factory in town. After completing high school, Harry found work for a roofing company and later at the Hunter Lumber Company. On Christmas Day, 1939, he was married



to Hazel Carlson in Clinton, Iowa. The couple would later have one son, Dale, born in 1942.

As required in 1940, Harry registered for the military draft, and in November of 1943, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. After training at Camp Walters, Texas and Fort Meade, Maryland, he was assigned to the 363rd Infantry Regiment, 91st Infantry Division.

In April 1944, the 91st Division was sent to Italy toward the end of the Rome-Arno Campaign. Po-

sitioned north of Rome, General Mark Clark’s 5th Army was given the mission to hold German troops at bay in Italy to prevent them from moving into France as Allied forces planned invasions at Normandy (“Operation Overlord”) and southern France (“Operation Dragoon”), both to occur that year. Private Smyth and the 363rd Infantry Regiment were sent as replacement troops in this campaign with the 91st Division. From July until early August, Harry and his Company B were engaged

in fighting to hold positions along the Arno River.

During the last week of August, Hazel Smyth received word from the War Department that her husband Harry Smyth had been “slightly wounded” in action. Just days later, on September 3rd, another telegram brought shock and grief with the news that Harry had died in a base hospital in Italy on Aug. 7 due to wounds received during battle on July 24.

See SMYTH page A3



Obituaries

Barbara A. Gehant
John J. “Jack” Mini

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Inserts

Snyders



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LOCAL NEWS

TEEN TURF

Aerobics

We will be having Aerobics on Tuesday and Thursday. Everyone is invited to gather at Teen Turf these days at 10 a.m. for group chair exercises and walking. They have a great time together.

Fish Fry Dance Party

We had 26 kids sell their tickets and were invited to a pizza party. We had Pizza, music, games, and treats. Everyone had a great time. Thank you to everyone who bought tickets from the kids.

Draw Down

May 6 is the Drive-Thru Dinner from 4 to 6 p.m. and the live drawing at 7 p.m. on Facebook. Our online Auction will be on Air Auctioneer again starting noon on Thursday, April 27 through Thursday, May 4 ending at 8 p.m. Cost is \$50 per ticket. If you would like to donate a basket or a gift certificate, please contact us at 815-857-4800, email teenturf@yahoo.com, or message us through Facebook. If you would like to purchase a ticket, please see Eileen Piper, Pam Thomas, or any of our board members-Barb Harrison, Mark Grossman, Shelli Bump, Janine and Scott Huffman, Trese McNinch, and Kimberly Watley.

Thank You's

We are always grateful to those that help us in our endeavor to help the community:

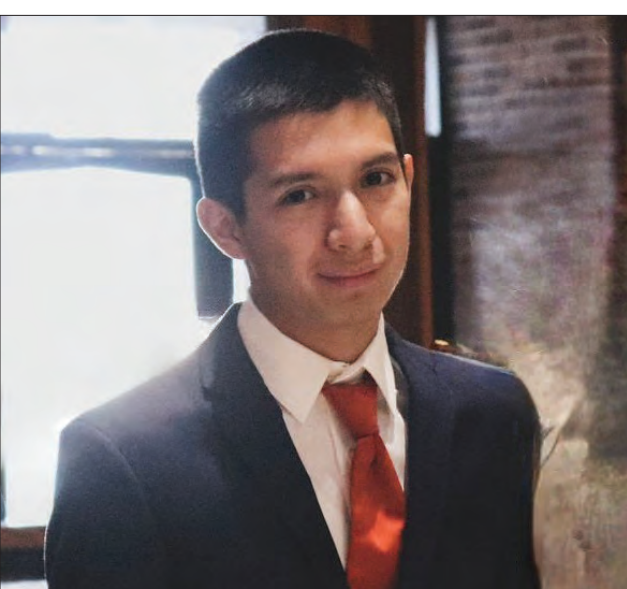
Eric Adkins for his monetary donation in memory of Dean Stephenitch; Anonymous for the granola bars and snacks; Eileen and Irene Ramsdell for the paper towels; Martha Henley for the cookies; Nancy and Terry Leffelman for the coolers; Margaret and Jerry Shaw for the cookies and shelving; Bonnie and Bob Faivre for the granola bars; The Easter Bunny for the granola bars; Tom and Anna Mainhart for the snacks; Pam and Will Thomas for the snacks; and Theresa Pillar for the snacks.

Needs

Granola Bars

Final Note

"Heavenly Father, we ask for your guidance and protection as we come together as a community. Please help us to be a source of love and support for one another, and to show compassion and understanding to those in need. We pray for your grace and mercy to be with us always. Amen."



Adrian Marquez

Marquez named AHS April Student of the Month

AMBOY — Adrian Marquez, son of Garrett Phiefer and Adriana Pfeiffer, has been named the Amboy High School Student of the Month for April.

GPA: 2.588

Memberships and Involvement: Amboy Track and Field, Volunteer at Teen Turf

Awards and Honors: None

Best Memories of AHS: Having only moved to Amboy just before the start of my Senior year, I would say my best memory is going out to the football games and watching the team go to state. I also enjoy my time with the track team and it's probably one of my favorite things to do at school.

Future Plans: My post graduation plans are to either attend Sauk Valley Community College to study Criminal Justice to pursue a career in law enforcement, or attend Kishwaukee College to study Chemistry. Then I want to transfer to a 4-year school in hopes of pursuing a career in law enforcement, post secondary education, or chemical engineering.

SMYTH

continued from page A1

On Sunday, Sept. 10, 1944, funeral services were held at the Congregational Church in Dixon. The Rev. W. H. Lewis delivered the sermon entitled, "One Step To Death." Military honors were conducted by members of the Post No. 510 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Harry's two year old son and widow would have to wait until November of 1948 when the body of Private Harry Allen Smyth was returned for burial at Palmyra Cemetery. Perhaps Harry was a quiet man but his actions are remembered forever by his hometown and nation.

Citations: Purple Heart, World War II Victory Medal, American Campaign Medal, Army Presidential Unit Citation, and Army Good Conduct Medal

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

DIXON-The Lee County Health Department will have Immunization Clinics for Children and Adults by appointment only. Call 815-284-3371 to make an appointment or for information on other services available. You may also visit the website at www.lchd.com for a list of services available.

AMBOY-The Amboy Township meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 12, at the township building, 106 S. Prospect.

DIXON- April is Child Abuse Awareness Month and Shining Star Children's Advocacy Center and the Lee County Courts are hosting a Child Abuse Awareness Event on April 14 at the Old Lee County Courthouse lawn. The event will be held from 12:15 - 12:30 p.m. A short presentation will be made by the Honorable Matthew T. Klahn, Shining Star Executive Director Jessica Cash and Karen Digby, a survivor.

AMBOY-The Pankhurst

Memorial Library will hold its School Age program on April 15, from 10 - 11 a.m.

STERLING- University of Illinois Extension Whiteside Master Gardeners offers Saturday with a Master Gardener Series. Explore gardening on the second Saturday of each month at the Whiteside Extension office, 12923 Lawrence Rd., Sterling, from 10 a.m. to noon. "Here Today Gone Tomorrow" will be the topic on April 15. As the first plants to emerge and bloom, they have special value. Registration is required and can be completed at go.illinois.edu/whitesidesaturdays

AMBOY-The Pankhurst Memorial Library will host a new book club for adults on April 17, from 5 - 6 p.m. This is the first meeting of this new book club.

AMBOY-The Amboy American Legion will meet Monday, April 17, at 6 p.m., at the Old NAPA Building, 399 N Metcalf, Amboy.

AMBOY-The City of

FIRE

continued from page A1

At 12:32 a.m. Sunday, April 10, a fully engulfed porch fire in the 200 block of East Bluff St., Amboy, was called in. Before the fire departments could arrive, the fire had reached the residence. Assistance came from Dixon City and Rural, Rock Falls, Lee, Franklin Grove, CGH and the Lee County Sheriff.

Both barns and both homes were total losses.

The Sublette Fire Department posted on their Facebook page, "We want to thank all of our members for their hard work and dedication. Thanks to all the surrounding neighboring departments that came to assist. Know that joining your local fire department does not just help your community but helps many others. Thank you to our wonderful 911 Dispatchers for everything they do."

A disclaimer was posted on the Amboy Fire Department Facebook page stating:

"We can't stress enough, every home needs working smoke alarms. A fire can turn fatal in minutes if there are no early detection devices. If you or someone you know living in Amboy are in need of a smoke detector, please message our page as soon as possible.

"Please be aware of your surroundings and practice basic fire safety. Report any suspicious activity in your neighborhoods. We are fortunate to share that there have been no civilian injuries, however one dog did perish in a house fire."

COUNTY

continued from page A1

The equalization factor currently being assigned is for 2022 taxes, payable in 2023. Last year's equalization factor for the county was 1.0000.

The final assessment equalization factor was issued after a public hearing on the tentative factor. The tentative factor issued in December 2022 was 1.0000.

The equalization factor is determined annually for each county by comparing the price of individual properties sold over the past three years to the assessed value placed on those properties by the county supervisor of assessments/county assessor.

Thank you for all of the support and votes.

Frank Stenzel

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Amboy Council will meet at 6 p.m. on Monday, April 17, at the Community Center, 280 W. Wasson Rd.

DIXON- 4-H Junior Gardener SPIN club teaches children about the wonderful world of gardening through hands-on investigation of growing their own vegetables and flowers and learning to use the harvest. A portion of the produce grown will be given to food insecure

situations. This group will meet on Tuesdays from April 18 through Aug. 1, from 4 - 5:30 p.m., at the Immanuel Lutheran Church, Dixon. The club is for youth ages 8-18 and the cost is \$30 for non-4-H members and \$10 for 4-H members. For more information contact the Lee County Extension Office at 815-857-3525. Register online at: go.illinois.edu/LeeCoJG

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Tonja Greenfield, Publisher
Published weekly on Wednesday by The Amboy News,
703 Illinois Ave., Mendota, IL 61342
Phone: 815-857-2311
Periodicals postage paid at Amboy, IL
Publication Number USPS 016820
POSTMASTER: Send address change to:
The Amboy News, PO Box 162, Amboy IL 61310
Subscriptions: \$46.00 yearly in Lee, LaSalle and Bureau counties.
\$50.00 yearly elsewhere in the United States.
Display Advertising Deadline: 10 a.m. Monday
Classified Advertising Deadline: 10 a.m. Monday
All Editorial Deadline: noon Friday
Letters Policy: The Amboy News encourages letters from readers on current issues. Letters should be brief and must be signed, with a street address and daytime telephone number for verification purposes. The newspaper reserves the right to publish, edit, condense, revise or reject any submissions.

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OBITUARIES/LOCAL NEWS

OBITUARIES

Barbara A. Gehant March 26, 1938 - April 2, 2023

MENDOTA — Barbara A. Gehant, 85, of Mendota, passed away peacefully April 2, 2023 at Stonecroft Village, Mendota, surrounded by her loving family.

Private family services will be held Sunday, April 16 with visitation at 10 a.m. and services led by Linda Dinges at 11 a.m. all at Wasmer Funeral Home, Mendota. A private burial of ashes will be at the family homestead in rural West Brooklyn.

Barbara was born March 26, 1938, in Lee Center Township, Lee County, to Clarence and Evelyn (Chaon) Montavon. She graduated from Lee Center High School where she was the senior prom queen and class president. Barb met her future husband, Ray Gehant at church and they were married on July 21, 1956. They celebrated 52 years of marriage before his passing in 2008.

Barbara will be sadly and forever missed by her seven children, Kim (Gary Metzen) Pohl of Mendota, Julie (Jeff) Sloan of Peru, Nick (Natalie) Gehant of Compton, Curt Gehant of Spring Valley, Linda (Mike) Osborne of Louisville, Ky., Dennis Gehant of Amboy and Pamela (Greg) Smith of Naperville. She was blessed with nine grandchildren, Korey (Donna Chu) Kromm, Tod (Jill) Sloan, Hilary (Bill) Krol, Cody Gehant, Lilly Gehant, Adam Gehant, Libby (Brett) Gustafson, Sydney (Jaylen Lockhart) Rehm and Patrick Rehm. She was extra blessed with five great-grandchildren, Jax and Rory Sloan, Isaac and Fallon Gehant, Jeffrey Krol and an additional baby Lockhart on the way; a brother Gene (Sandy) Montavon of Deland, Fla. and a sister Alice Delhotal of Escondido, Calif.; sisters-in-law Karen (Melvin) Delhotal, Susan (Larry) Eddy, Patty (Terry) Moyer, Kathy (Tim) Burkhardt, Sherrie (John) Jacobs, and brother-in-law Mike (Colleen) Gehant. Barb is also survived by many nieces and nephews.



She was preceded in death by her husband, Raymond; her parents Clarence and Evie Montavon; her mother- and father-in-law, Raymond (Anna Mae) Gehant Sr.; sister and brother-in-law Lois and (Ken "Peany") Bruce; brother-in-law Wally Delhotal; sister-in-law and brother-in-law Don (Tonna) Gehant; sister-in-law and brother-in-law Janet (Jerry) Hornung; and sister-in-law and brother-in-law Marylou (Jerry) Reeser.

After raising seven children in West Brooklyn, Barbara went to work for the Richardson Wildlife Foundation, formerly the Richardson Hunt Club as social and dining director. Barb and Ray loved camping and spent many summers at the Green River Oaks Campground. They often camped at the Sandwich Fair with friends and family.

Barb enjoyed festive decorating for every holiday. She loved going to garage sales and shopping at thrift stores-her favorites were Nightengales and PADS. She enjoyed baking and her famous "brooklyn brownies" were always a favorite at holidays and picnics. More than anything she treasured and loved her children and their families. After retirement, Barb and Ray moved to DeBary, Fla., where they made lots of new friends. She continued her festive decorating by turning their golf cart into a moving holiday on wheels. Many times, she won a first-place ribbon for best decorated.

Barb was a proud member of the Red Hat Society and always loved wearing hats to complement her bright



and fun outfits. After Ray's passing, Barb moved back to Mendota and bought a house across the street from her daughter. She loved to tell her friends that she lived on the Mendota Sweet Corn Festival parade route. She enjoyed many train rides to Chicago with her daughters to see musicals and holiday lights. In 2018, she moved to Stonecroft Village where she made many new friends and met old acquaintances. She was fondly called the Mayor of Stonecroft because of her friendly personality and genuine manner. She was always happy, had the biggest heart, and a beautiful smile on her face. She made it a priority to personally greet and welcome new residents so they were comfortable in their new home. The staff at Stonecroft truly adored her because of her great attitude and cheerful self.

Barb loved traveling to her daughter's home in Louisville, Ky., where they cooked and baked many new recipes. She also loved to take road trips to Woodhaven Lakes where they would see and count the deer, wild turkeys and other wildlife. The excursions would always be followed by dinner at one of her favorite places: the Beaver Den, Long Branch, Ziggie's or McDonald's. Barb had just celebrated her 85th birthday with family and friends at a party at Stonecroft Village. She left this legacy to all who knew her: Love big and no judgment.

Memorials may be made to Mendota Area Senior Services (MASS) or donor's choice. Online condolences may be left at wasmerfuneralhome.com.

John J. "Jack" Mini March 27, 1945 - April 5, 2023

SUBLETTE — John J. "Jack" Mini, 78, of Sublette, died Wednesday, April 5, 2023 at his home.

He was born March 27, 1945 in Spring Valley, the son of Rootle and Lena (Arrigio) Mini. Jack had been a highway maintainer for IDOT for 30 years and then had worked in shipping and receiving at Mendota Community Hospital for several years.

He was a veteran of the Navy during the Vietnam War serving on the USS Enterprise. He was a member of the VFW and the Mendota Elks Club.

Jack married Christine Nowinski May 27, 1972 at

St. Mary of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Chicago.

He was preceded in death by his parents, one sister, Rose Uselmann and one brother, Donald Mini.

Jack is survived by his wife, Christine; two sons, Christopher Mini of Clermont, Fla. and Gregory Mini of Chicago; and one granddaughter, Kaylee Mini.

Mass of Christian Burial will be at 11 a.m., on Saturday, April 15, 2023, at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Sublette. Burial with military honors will follow at St. Mary Cemetery in Sublette. Visitation will be from 4 - 7 p.m., on



Friday, April 14, 2023, at the Mihm-Jones Funeral Home in Amboy with a Scripture service at 3:30 p.m.

Online condolences can be left at www.thejonesfh.com.

Secretary marks National Donate Life month with campaign to boost donor registration

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias highlighted the need for organ and tissue donation during National Donate Life Month announcing the launch of a new ad campaign and joining recipients and donor families to encourage more sign ups.

"We launched a public awareness campaign focusing on the critical need for organ donors and to encourage people to register, especially in communities of color where the need for some organs is the greatest but registration rates are the lowest," Giannoulias said. "We've found that the more people know about organ donation, its benefits and the impact that it has on lives, the more likely they will become donors. A single donor can save or improve the lives of up to 25 people."

Currently, more than 7.5 million Illinoisans are registered with the Illinois' Organ and Tissue Donor Registry with more than 2,000 transplants taking place each year. Yet, approximately 4,000 people remain on the transplant waiting list, and about 300 die

waiting for a transplant every year.

Illinois residents Rocío Huerta, a kidney recipient from Chicago, Katie McKay Phillips, the sister of an organ donor from McHenry, Kim Gossell, a three-time kidney recipient from Palatine as well as other Illinois residents spoke of the impact of organ donation. In addition, Illinois State Rep. Nabeela Syed, an organ donor, and Matteson Mayor Sheila Chalmers-Currin shared their personal stories and stressed the importance of organ donation.

During National Donate Life Month, the Secretary of State's office is running a statewide public service announcement (PSA) that urges people to enroll in the Secretary of State's Organ and Tissue Donor Registry while showcasing Illinoisans who have received organs and donor families.

To become a donor, Illinoisans can register with the Secretary of State's Organ and Tissue Donor Registry by visiting LifeGoesOn.com, calling 800-210-2106 or signing up at the DMV.

Local nurse champions \$4 million in scholarships available to Illinois students

ROCHELLE — Now is the time to apply for up to \$4 million in nursing scholarships, a substantial increase over last year due to the statewide nursing shortage.

Rochelle Community Hospital (RCH) Nurse Practitioner Stephanie Crawford is championing the Nursing Education Scholarship Program, a state program providing financial assistance to qualified individuals pursuing an associate, bachelor's or graduate degree in nursing or those pursuing a certificate in practice nursing.

"Investing in the education and training of nurses is not only an investment in their future, but also in the health and wellbeing of our communities," said Crawford, who is

also serving as President of the Illinois Society for Advanced Practice Nursing.

Scholarships range from one year to five years and can go up to \$10,000. More than 200 recipients received combined scholarships of \$2 million last year and the success of the program pushed it to double in size to \$4 million in scholarships this year.

The \$4 million nursing scholarship program is accepting applications from through April 30, 2023. It's managed through the Illinois Student Assistance Commission and can be found here: <https://www.isac.org/students/during-college/types-of-financial-aid/scholarships/nursing-education-scholarship-program.html#HowToApply>

The Amboy News will print DEATH NOTICES (approximately 50 words including name, age, date of death, time/date of services) free of charge. OBITUARIES will be printed at a cost of \$40 to be billed to the arranging funeral home or prepaid with cash, check or credit card. Please submit obituaries or death notices to tgreenfield@amboynews.com.

Amboy News Obituary Policy

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Your Guide To Local Houses of Worship

St. Patrick Church
Fr. John Gow
32 N Jones, Amboy
815-857-2315 • www.stpatrickamboy.org
Masses: Monday - Thursday Daily Mass 8 am
Saturday 4 pm • Sunday 7 am & 10:30 am
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:
Friday, 4-6 pm with Confessions and
Mass at 6 pm

St. Mary Church
Fr. John Gow
912 Walton Rd., Walton
815-857-2670
Mass: Saturday, 5:30 pm

St. Flannen Church
Fr. John Gow
213 S Second St., Harmon
815-857-2670
Mass: Sunday, 8:30 am

United First Church of Amboy
Pastor Mark Glenn
East Main & Jefferson
815-440-0745
Sunday Worship - 10:00 a.m.
Bible Study Wednesday 6:00 p.m.

Christ of Lee Center
Pastor Jack M. Briggs
1140 Inlet Road, Lee Center
www.LeeCenter-UCC.org
Phone 815-732-7032
Family Worship - 10:30 a.m.

Grace Fellowship Church
Amboy-Sublette
Pastor Kyle Kelly
500 W. Main Street, Sublette
Sunday School 8:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.
www.graceisforyou.com

East Grove Union Church
449 Reuter Road,
Amboy, IL
Phone 815-440-5321
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Youth Church, Ages 3 - Grade 4
10:15 am Sunday School, Age 3 - Adult
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Pastor Rocky Fritz
24 N. Mason Avenue
Church Phone 857-2682
www.fbcamboy.com
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Morning Service - 10:30 a.m.
Evening Service - 6 p.m.
Wed. prayer meeting & Bible Study 6:30 p.m.
King's Kids program from 6:30-8 p.m. Friday
Reformers Unanimous additions program
from 7-9 p.m.

St. Mary's Church - West Brooklyn
Rev. Randy Fronck
Mass - Tuesday & Thursday - 7:30 a.m.
Sunday - 8:45 a.m.

St. Patrick Church - Maytown
Rev. Randy Fronck
Mass - Friday - 8 a.m.
Sunday - 7 a.m.

Immanuel Lutheran Church
Pastor Barb Otten
960 U.S. Route 52
Phone 857-2225
Sun. Worship - 9:00 a.m. Fellowship - 10:00 a.m.
Sunday School - 9:40-10:15 a.m.

Rev. Randy Fronck
Locust Street, Sublette
Phone 815-849-5412
Saturday Mass - 4:00 p.m.
Sunday Mass - 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday - 8:00 a.m.
Thursday - 8:30 a.m.

Refuge Church
Pastor John Kalebaugh
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SOCIAL NEWS

Local nature and history

By Jim "Mazie" Long



Unlike their raptor predecessors, hawks should be welcomed as citizens of our ecosystem.

An Unfair Reputation

Hawks are not the raptors they used to be

Down though the years, hawks have always been shot and persecuted as game-bird and chicken killers. They are almost completely innocent of these charges. A rare Cooper's Hawk may kill a game bird where they are abundant, but there are many other birds that are easier to catch; a blackbird probably tastes just as good to them.

Our most abundant hawk is the Red-tailed Buteo. They are often seen soaring high overhead or perched in a tree or on a utility pole. They are always looking for mice. If it wasn't for our hawks, we would be overrun by mice. These hawks commonly nest in our woods and can be seen the year round.

The Broad-winged Buteo can produce a grand spectacle in the fall. Sometimes they can be seen in large, soaring flocks that number several thousand. When they pass over, only a few hundred feet up, it is a remarkable sight. They are obviously common to the north, but I have never seen one in summer. They spend the winter in Argentina.

The Rough-legged Buteo is only seen in the winter. They nest in the arctic and drift south in winter. They are usually seen soaring around in open country.

Not long ago, the Sparrow hawk (Kestrel) was a rare bird. Today, because nesting boxes have been provided for them, they have become common. They are always seen perched on electric lines in open areas, winter and summer. It is unusual for a Sparrow Hawk to chase after a Sparrow. Their main food supply is the many mice that live in our fields and roadsides. In summer they also eat insects, including grasshoppers.

The Marsh Hawk is seldom seen. Occasionally they



Jim "Mazie" Long

can be seen drifting low over the fields in autumn. They follow the terrain lie a slow flying swallow. With our new additions of planted prairies with ponds such as Richardson's reservation, we may soon see Marsh Hawks return as a nesting bird.

Our only hawks that are genuine bird killers are the rare Sharp-skinned Hawk and the Coopers Hawk. I have found it impossible to determine which bird I am observing when I see one of these birds in flight; they differ only in size and are seldom seen.

One day I watched one of them, obviously a youngster. It kept diving on blackbirds, but he was not aggressive enough to catch one. It is a common thing in spring to find patches of robin feathers on golf courses where robins have been killed by these hawks. They are seldom seen in summer or winter.

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.

Resources:

Illinois Hawks
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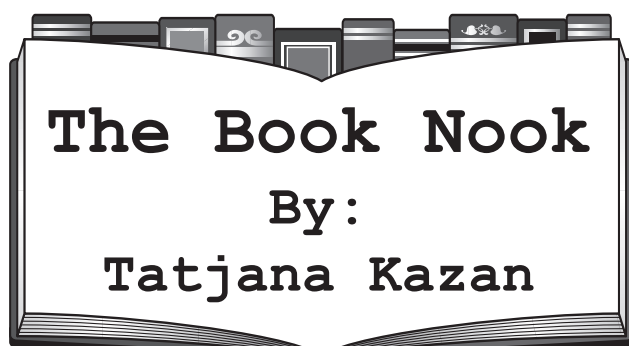
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Forsaken Women

The Woman Beyond the Sea" (2019) by Sarit Yishai-Levi (translated from the Hebrew by Gilah Kahn-Hoffmann in 2023) is the story of three deeply wounded Jewish women whose will to survive is at the heart of this rather long novel. The book begins in Paris in the early 1970's and reaches back to Christmas Eve 1927 at a Catholic convent in Jerusalem. Two of the women were abandoned by men for whom they had given up their families and the third woman was abandoned by her mother at birth.

Eliya, young, hopeful, and slavishly dedicated to her loathsome husband Ari, arrives in Paris from Tel Aviv to be with him. The aspiring novelist who for years has barely managed to put pen to paper, Ari mistreats Eliya without mercy, including raping her in a drunken stupor. Eliya bears it all until he dumps her in a cafe. She returns home to her

parents, broken.

Eliya's parents, like Ari, verge on caricature. Lily, the mother, is a hysteric who cannot abide her daughter. Her father Shaul, a jeweler, is a saint without a halo. When Eliya slits her wrists, her mother saves her as she yells at him, "Enough, Shaul, stop behaving like a woman! That's all Eliya needs now, to hear you crying. Be a man. Show her that you're strong!" Eliya subsequently tries to drown herself in the ocean, but is rescued by a surfer. Soon after, she meets a gruff psychiatrist who, along with the surfer, heals her in no time.

The most interesting character of the novel is Lily. Born in Jerusalem in 1927, she is left at the iron gate of a convent with a note asking the nuns to take her in. With no one to love her in a cold, rigidly regimented world, Lily feels forsaken. At nine, after she learns that she was not an orphan but was abandoned by her mother, she runs away and commences an even harsher life on the street. At seventeen, filled with a towering rage, she meets Saul who dedicates himself to her much as his daughter did to Ari. The issue for Lily is the woman who abandoned her. Only when she can make peace with her past will she be able to conquer her rage.

I liked this novel, especially its setting of Palestine before the Second World War and Israel's struggle to be born. But I do have a problem with the ending. Saving and being saved comes too easily for the broken characters in this novel. Retrieving one's past does not magically make one whole in a matter of an evening's conversation. Forgiveness is important, but is not automatically the magic cure-all. A happy ending may be satisfying but it is not convincing.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

100 Years Ago April 13, 1923

The Lee County Central Electric Railway is in financial straits and the future of the line is very uncertain. The First National Bank has secured a judgment against the company and the sheriff has declared the property to be sold on May 1.

The Central Oil Company have their two big storage tanks set on their foundations and ready to receive gasoline and kerosene. They are located near the city pumping station.

A crew of surveyors from the state engineer's office are making their headquarters in Amboy while surveying Bond issue route No. 2 in this vicinity.

75 Years Ago April 8, 1948

Russel Rockwood and Luther Turner of Shaws staged a two-man fox hunt and gagged 15 foxes. They took two

dens, one at Bill Kirk's and one in the Ives timber.

After 60 years in the home furnishing business, Stephan Furniture Store is going out of business.

50 Years Ago April 12, 1973

Tony Kuebel received the Amboy News Athlete of the Year Award, as the most valuable lineman for football. He received the Mike Janson wrestling award, was captain of the football team and co-captain of the wrestling team.

Shirley Klausen operated Shirley's Town & Country Café, formerly known as Klara's Kitchen.

25 Years Ago April 9, 1998

On March 5, the Amboy FFA Freshmen Parliamentary Procedure team went to Annawan High School. Floor members who did the debating were Maggie

Fane, Aaron Krager, Greg Myers and Amanda Streit. Secretary Cari Oester placed second.

Farmers in Illinois expect to plant 11.1 million acres of corn for all purposes this year. This is one percent less than the 11.2 million acres planted in 1997. Acreage planted to corn in the past 10 years ranged from a low of 9.9 million in 1988 to a high of 11.6 million in 1994.

Intentions are for 10.4 million acres to be planted to soybeans in 1998. This would be the most soybeans ever planted in Illinois, being four percent more than the previous record of 10.0 million acres planted in 1997.

Students in Mr. Full's reading class decided to dress the part after reading the tragic saga of the sinking of the Titanic. Breann Cook and Jessica Klein decided to dress up as Rose and Jack. Eric Glenn portrayed a male passenger who dressed as a woman and then tried to sneak his way onto a lifeboat to avoid certain death in the frigid water of the North Atlantic.

A.C.O. meeting rescheduled for May 2

AMBOY — Due to inclement weather, the April 4 meeting of the Amboy Civic Organization was cancelled. Due to scheduling conflicts, we are unable to reschedule this month. We look forward to seeing you May 2, 4 p.m. at Maria's Pizza and Family Restaurant.

Kish College to offer appliance repair technician class

MALTA — Kishwaukee College will offer Appliance Repair Technician as a new short-term training program during the Summer 2023 semester.

The inaugural course will be held from 5:30-9 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays starting June 5 and ending Aug. 30. Students will receive hands-on experience in the field through labs at Knodle's Appliance Service Company Inc. with lectures at Kishwaukee College. Appliance Repair Technicians provide quality customer service by assisting clients with household appliance installation, troubleshooting and repairs. Through Kish's program, students will gain the skills and technical knowledge for appliance repair in one semester.

To learn more about the program or to register, fill out the Appliance Repair Technician Interest Form at kish.edu/appliancerepair.

Senior Dining Menu

April 17- April 21

8 oz. of low-fat milk served with each meal

Monday – Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes/gravy, green beans, wgr dinner roll, mandarin oranges

Tuesday – Ravioli with meat sauce, Italian blend veggies, wgr garlic bread, hot applesauce

Wednesday – Meatball sub on wgr roll, peas and carrots, seasoned potato wedges, diced peaches

Thursday – A). Tropical chicken salad, cucumber slices, wgr croissant, mandarin oranges B). Chicken salad/tomato

Friday – Hot ham and cheese, wgr wheat bun, tator tots, baked beans, chilled applesauce

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Blessing rescheduled in Ashton

ASHTON – The Tractor Blessing at the Ashton United Methodist Church, originally scheduled for March 26 was cancelled due to snow. The Tractor Blessing will now be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, April 15.

All are invited to drive your tractor to the church parking lot, located at 906 Richardson Ave. to participate in the blessing. If you prefer, you can bring a photo of your farm, family or crops. Gardeners are encouraged to bring your gardening gloves.

After the blessing there will be a lunch served. Pray for no snow that day and hopefully we will see you then.

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CLIPPER kIDDIE 2

This Week's Student of the Week is:

Otto Leffelman

Student's Favorites:

Favorite Color – Green

Favorite Animal – Lion

Favorite Food – Chicken Nuggets

Favorite Book – Paw Patrol Halloween

Favorite Game – Guess Who

Favorite Song – Believer (Imagine Dragons)

CLIPPER kIDDIE 2

This Week's Student of the Week is:

Quinn Kaleel

Student's Favorites:

Favorite Color – Pink

Favorite Animal – Cat

Favorite Food – Bacon

Favorite Book – Dr. Suess

Favorite Game – Mario Cart

Favorite Song – Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes

LOCAL NEWS/SPORTS

Amboy Lions Easter Egg winners



2-3 Year Olds, 1st Place Hudson Barlow



2-3 Year Olds, 2nd Place Chloe Havenar



2-3 Year Olds, 3rd Place Isabelle Ross



4-5 Year Olds, 1st Place Quinn Kaleel



4-5 Year Olds, 2nd Place Adalee Dunlop

AMBOY — The Amboy Lions Club held its annual Cliff Walter Memorial Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday. There were about 150 children in attendance. Winners of the special prizes were:

- 2-3 years old
 - 1st Hudson Barlow
 - 2nd Chloe Havenar
 - 3rd Isabelle Ross
- 4-5 years old
 - 1st Quinn Kaleel
 - 2nd Kinley Gittleson
 - 3rd Adalee Dunlop
- 6-7 years old
 - 1st Adah Kant
 - 2nd Charlotte Walter
 - 3rd Clare Considine
- 8-9-10 years old
 - 1st Joslyn Insley
 - 2nd Jaron Walter
 - 3rd Paisley Kant



6-7 Year Olds, 1st Place Adah Kent



6-7 Year Olds, 2nd Place Charlotte Walter



6-7 Year Olds, 3rd Place Clare Considine



8-10 Year Olds, 1st Place Joslyn Insley and 2nd Place Jaron Walter



8-10 Year Olds, 3rd Place Paisley Kant



4-5 Year Olds, 2nd Place Kinley Gittleson

Lady Clippers win in rout, nail biter

AMBOY – The Amboy Lady Clippers won in a rout and in a nail-biter in varsity softball action last week.

The Lady Clippers made short work of Ashton-Franklin Center, 12-0, on April 6 at the AHS field. The game was halted in the fifth because of the 10-run rule.

Amboy scored in all four innings it came to bat, including seven times in the third to make it 10-0.

Ellie McLaughlin fired a one-hit shutout to earn the victory. She walked two and struck out eight.

Jersey Thomas (single, double) and Tyrah Vaessen (two singles) led the offensive attack for the Lady Clippers, while Jayden Wheelchel and McLaughlin both singled.

Amboy rallied to defeat Indian Creek, 7-6, on April 7 at the AHS field.

Indian Creek held a 5-2 lead after four innings before the Lady Clippers plated four runs in the fifth to take a 6-5 lead. The visitors tied the score in the top of the seventh, but Amboy tallied the winning run in the bottom of the seventh.

Kiara Karlson and Thomas each banged out three hits, with Karlson clouting a home run, a single and a double. Thomas delivered two singles and a double. Picking up a pair of safeties were Vaessen (single, double) and Haleigh Stenzel (single, double).

Alyvia Wheelchel was the winner pitcher for Amboy. Indian Creek collected six hits.

JV ACTION

The JV Clippers lost against River Ridge 5-0. Pictured is #5 Dillon Merriman stretching for the out at first base.

Photos courtesy of Brenda Merriman



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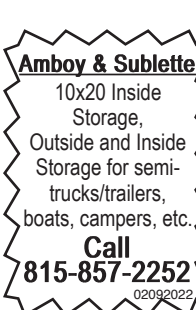
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SPORTS



Ed Fry tries to clear the bar during the high jump at the Don Gooden Invitational on April 8 at Mendota. Fry finished in a tie for third place.
Kip Cheek/Amboy News

Clippers finish in the middle at Don Gooden Invitational in Mendota

MENDOTA—The Amboy-LaMoille track teams finished in the middle of the pack in the Don Gooden Invitational on April 8 at Mendota.

The Clipper boys landed in the sixth spot with 45.5 points. El Paso-Gridley grabbed top honors with 154.5 points.

Two A-L competitors took second-place honors for the best finishes on the day. Zane Murphy ran a time of 12.18 in the 100-meter dash, while Kyle McNinch was clocked in 10:42 in the 3200-meter run.

For the Lady Clippers, they tallied 55 points and were seventh in the team standings. El Paso-Gridley piled up 93.8333 points to claim first place.

Elly Jones was the lone first-place finisher for the Lady Clippers, traveling 33-4 to win the triple jump. She was second in the 300-meter hurdles with a time of 51.51.

Gooden Invite – April 8 (boys)

El Paso-Gridley 154.5, Kewanee 109, Bureau Valley 78.5, Byron 67, Princeton 65, Amboy-LaMoille 45.5, Kewanee Wethersfield 41, Harvard 41, Pecatonica 24.5, Fieldcrest 24.5, Hinckley-Big Rock 23, Mendota 17.5, Somonauk 7, Hall 4

A-L 2nd place: Zane Murphy, 100m dash, 12.18; Kyle McNinch, 3200m run, 10:42

A-L 3rd place: Ed Fry, high jump, 5-4

A-L 4th place: 4x200m relay (Caleb Yanos, Fry, Brayden Kein, Murphy), 1:40.75; Ian Sundberg, discus, 120-5

A-L 5th place: McNinch, 1600m run, 5:02; 4x400m relay (Murphy, McNinch, Fry, Joel Billhorn), 3:47.87

A-L 6th place: 4x100m relay (Yanos, Fry, Kein, Murphy), 47.53

A-L 8th place: Yanos, 100m dash, 12.39; 4x800m relay (Conner Deering, Kelton Schwamberger, Adrian Marquez, Atticus Horner), 9:51.93; Zach Dunne, discus, 106-8

(girls)
El Paso-Gridley 93.8333, Princeton 91, Kewanee Wethersfield 81.75, Bureau Valley 74.5, Harvard 70, Sandwich 60.75, Amboy-LaMoille 55, Fieldcrest 47, Kewanee 46.8333, Byron 33.3333, Hall 27.75, Somonauk 2, Pecatonica 1, Hinckley-Big Rock 1, Mendota 0

A-L 1st place: Elly Jones, triple jump, 33-4

A-L 2nd place: Jones, 300m hurdles, 51.51

A-L 3rd place: Bella Yanos, 100m dash, 13.87; Jones, long jump, 15-0

A-L 4th place: Yanos, long jump, 14-8

A-L 5th place: Lexi Ketchum, high jump, 4-6; Jillian Anderson, high jump, 4-6

A-L 7th place: Anderson, 400m dash, 1:09.24

A-L 8th place: 4x400m relay (Grace Althaus, Anderson, Ketchum, Alexis Cheever), 4:53.31



Kyler McNinch, left, sets a nice pace during the 3200-meter run at the Don Gooden Invitational on April 8 at Mendota. McNinch finished second in the event.
Kip Cheek/Amboy News



Elly Jones sails through the air during one of her attempts in the long jump at the Don Gooden Invitational on April 8 at Mendota. Jones took third place in the long jump and first place in the triple jump. She also placed second in the 300-meter hurdles.
Kip Cheek/Amboy News

Clippers split with AFC, lose to River Ridge

AMBOY — The Amby Clippers opened up the conference baseball season with a 12-6 setback to Ashton-Franklin Center on April 5 at Ashton.

The game was tied at 4-all entering the bottom of the fifth when the Raiders sent 14 batters to the plate and eight of them scored.

Quinn Leffelman had a single, double and two runs batted in for the Clippers, while Landon Montavon and Jackson Rogers knocked in two runs apiece. Landon Whelchel recorded three stolen bases.

Brody Christoffersen was the losing pitcher, going 4 2/3 innings and allowing eight runs on six hits. He struck out six.

It was a different outcome when the two teams met again the next day at Parker Field in Amboy as the Clippers had two huge innings en route to a 17-10 league triumph over AFC.

The Raiders grabbed a 1-0 advantage in the top of the first, but the Clippers took the lead for good with seven runs in the bottom of the second. Amboy kept its offense going with a six-run third inning to make it 13-4. AFC tried to make a comeback when it pushed across five runs in the fifth, but Amboy scored twice in the fifth and sixth frames to pull away.

Whelchel and Tucker Lindenmeyer had three hits



The Clippers lost to River Ridge 4-3. Above right, Landon Welchel runs to base. Above, Ryan Dickinson runs to base.
Photos courtesy of Brenda Merriman



apiece to lead the Clippers' 12-hit attack.

Rogers got the start on the hill and pitched into the fifth inning to get the win. Lindenmeyer finished up on the mound.

The Clippers fell by a 4-3 count to River Ridge in a non-conference road contest on April 8.

Amboy (5-4, 1-1) scored three runs in the third to start the scoring with a Christoffersen double being the big blow in the inning. River Ridge climbed back to within one (3-2) in the bottom of the inning and then won it with two runs in its final at-bat. Hayden Wittenauer got the ball to start the contest and allowed six hits and two runs in six innings. He walked one and fanned five. Leffelman came on in relief in the seventh and was tagged with the loss.

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AHS Boys Track @ Forreton-4:00 pm
Early Dismissal-School Improvement Day-AHS/AJHS-11:20; Central-11:25

Tuesday, April 18
AHS Baseball @ Polo-V-4:30 pm/F/S-After Varsity
AHS Girls Track @ Fulton-4:15 pm
AHS Softball @ Polo-V-4:30 pm/JV-After Varsity
AJHS Track @ Bureau Valley High School-4:30 pm

Wednesday, April 19
AHS Art Club-Room 210-3:30-4:30 pm

Thursday, April 20
Central School Drawing Club-Art Room-3:20-4 pm
School Board Meeting-AJHS-6:30pm
AHS Baseball (H) Polo-V-4:30 pm/F/S-After Varsity
AHS Softball (H) Polo-V-4:30 pm/JV-After Varsity
AJHS Scholastic Bowl @ Dimmick-4:15 pm

Friday, April 21
AHS Boys Track @

Rock Falls-4 pm
AHS Girls Track @ Oregon-4:15 pm
AJHS Track @ Spring Valley High School-4 pm
Amboy Invitational Art Show-AHS-6:30-7:30 pm

Saturday, April 22
AHS Fresh/Soph Baseball (H) Marquette-DH-11 am
AHS Softball @ Marquette-V/JV-DH-11 am/F/S-1 pm
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SPRING HOME IMPROVEMENT

How to create more privacy on your property

An inviting backyard can serve as a welcome retreat from the hustle and bustle of daily life. After a long day at the office or an exhausting day spent transporting kids to and fro, it's hard to resist the allure of a peaceful outdoor space in which to unwind.

Privacy is a key component of any backyard oasis. Some homes may be so remote that privacy isn't an issue. But many suburban homeowners recognize they might need to tweak their landscapes if they hope to create a private oasis outside.

Fencing or planting?

Most homeowners looking to create more privacy on their property will have to choose between fencing and planting. Fencing provides immediate privacy because, once it's installed, no one can see into the yard. Fencing also doesn't require watering or other immediate upkeep, which will be necessary when planting to ensure tree roots can establish themselves.

But planting has its benefits as well. Planting for privacy is essentially creating a living fence that can grow over time and provide even more privacy as trees reach maturity. Plants also tend to be less costly than fencing. The home renovation experts at BobVila.com estimate that fencing projects typically cost between \$1,667 and \$4,075.

However, fencing projects can cost considerably more than \$4,000, especially for homeowners with large properties they want to enclose. Large, mature trees can be expensive, though it's unlikely they will cost as much as fencing. In addition, fencing requires more maintenance and will potentially need to be replaced, while native trees won't require much upkeep and can last for generations.

Planting

Homeowners who choose to plant for privacy will next have to decide which type of plants to add to their properties. Evergreens provide year-round privacy because they don't shed their leaves, so these are the ones most often chosen when creating a living fence.

A number of varieties of evergreen trees can do the job, but it's important that homeowners consult with a landscape architect prior to choosing trees so they can ensure the trees will thrive when faced with the growing conditions on their properties. During such a consultation, homeowners may discuss the following popular privacy trees.



· **Leyland cypress:** The Arbor Day Foundation® notes that the Leyland cypress is popular for hedges and boundaries, likely because a typical tree reaches a mature height of 60'-70' and can spread as wide as 25'. The Leyland cypress grows fast, which may appeal to homeowners who don't want to wait to establish privacy.

· **Green Giant Arborvitae:** There are different varieties of the arborvitae, but the Green Giant tends to be the go-to option for privacy. The ADF notes that Green Giants will grow up to three feet per year until they reach maturity, providing a fast-growing option for privacy planters. The Green Giant can spread as wide as 20 feet at maturity, which is another attribute

that makes it so popular among homeowners desiring privacy.

· **Eastern White Pine:** The ADF notes that the eastern white pine, which can reach heights as high as 80 feet, is favored in spacious yards. That's likely due to its height and its potential spread, which can reach 40 feet. Homeowners who choose the eastern white pine might like it for its resemblance to a Christmas tree, and in fact it is widely used for that purpose. The privacy provided by the eastern white pine is significant, but it might be best suited to especially large properties.

Whether it's fencing or planting, homeowners have many options to consider as they seek to create more privacy on their properties.

Let the outside in with all-season rooms

Many homeowners express interest in creating fewer barriers between the interior and exterior of their homes. Some may have backyards built for entertaining and want to facilitate the transition between the inside of the residence and the outside when guests arrive. In other instances, homes may back to a nature preserve that homeowners want to enjoy more readily. Whatever the reason for bringing the outside in, all-season rooms can serve as a welcoming bridge between

indoor and outdoor spaces.

What is an all-season room?

Also known as a four-season room, all-season rooms are specially engineered spaces that provide a connection to the outdoors no matter the season. They are like sunrooms, but climate-controlled so that they will be comfortable throughout winter, spring, summer, and fall.

What is the difference between a three-season room and an all-season room?

The biggest difference

between these two spaces is the level of usage and the capacity of the room to be heated and cooled. Individuals who reside in climates with moderate year-round temperatures may get by with a three-season room. However, those who experience all four seasons may need a more insulated space to make the room usable throughout the year.

Features of all-season rooms

One of the more notable features of an all-season room is an abundance of windows, which allow plenty of natural light to shine in. All-season rooms also can feature creature comforts like a reading nook, outdoor kitchen spaces and televisions. Retractable screens can be installed when privacy or shade is desired.

Maintaining a comfortable temperature

All-season rooms can be built with adequate thermal insulation and energy-saving features. Insulation will be installed in the walls and roof, and homeowners may have a choice of window ratings for efficiency. Some all-season rooms are specially equipped with HVAC systems that may or may not be tied in to the home's general heating and cooling system. Some people use portable heaters or air conditioners



to control the temperature in all-season rooms. It's best to speak with an all-season room contractor to identify heating and cooling needs.

How much does an all-season room cost?

Prices vary by region and are contingent on the features homeowners desire.

According to the outdoor resource Garden Center Care, a three-season room can cost anywhere from \$8,000 to \$50,000 to build. A four-season room can cost \$20,000 to \$80,000 to add.

If there is an existing three-season room, it may be more affordable to upgrade

the space into an all-season room, but an architect and contractor should inspect the space to determine the scope of the project.

All-season rooms can be an ideal addition to a property, providing extra space for entertaining or lounging and a connection to the outdoors.

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SPRING HOME IMPROVEMENT



How to prepare soil for spring planting

Spring is a season of rejuvenation, and perhaps nowhere is that rebirth more noticeable than in the yard. Each spring, grass begins to grow again as inviting landscapes beckon people outdoors.

Extra sunlight and rising temperatures make spring a great time to plant flowers, grasses and trees. To ensure successful planting, homeowners must take steps to prepare the soil. Healthy soil can provide the ideal conditions for roots to take hold, helping plants establish themselves before potentially harsh summer conditions arrive. Preparing soil might seem like an extensive job, but a simple approach may be all that's necessary to create conditions that promote plant growth this spring.

- Clean up the previous months' mess. Whether homeowners live in regions marked by year-round warmth or places where winter typically features heavy snowfall, it's a good idea to clean up an area prior to spring planting. Fallen leaves, rocks, grass clippings, and other debris can contribute to compacted soil that makes it hard for plants to establish strong, healthy root systems. Clear away any debris prior to planting before taking the next step in your soil preparation routine.

- Loosen the soil. Once debris has been cleared away, loosen the soil. Depending on the size of the area where you'll be planting, you may need to invest in tools like a shovel,

spade, spading fork, and/or a lawn edger. If you're planting in a small area, such as a deck planter box that still has soil from last year's planting inside it, you can either clean the box and replace the soil entirely or dig around with a handheld trowel, cultivator and/or weeder. It's important to loosen all of the soil around where you will ultimately plant prior to planting to ensure water can reach the roots and help them establish themselves once planting is completed.

- Test and, if necessary, amend the soil. A simple pH test can help determine the acidity or alkalinity of the soil. This is an important step as soil that is too acidic or alkaline can decrease the availability of nutrients the plants will need to thrive. In addition to conducting a pH test, which can be purchased at little cost at a local home improvement store, homeowners can contact their local Cooperative Extension Service to test their soil quality. These tests will reveal soil pH, but also can shed light on the texture of the soil and other components. Once the test is conducted, the local Coop Extension Service may recommend amendments to improve the nutritional quality of the soil so new plants can thrive.

Soil conditions go a long way toward determining if new plants will thrive. Preparing the soil prior to spring planting can ensure a successful season.

How to handle a lengthy renovation

The global pandemic reignited people's passions for home renovations, as they directed dollars that would normally have been spent elsewhere into the places where they were now spending the most time - their homes.

According to the 10th annual Houzz & Home survey of more than 70,000 respondents in the United States, higher-budget projects cost around \$85,000 or more in 2020, compared with \$80,000 in the two years prior. Kitchen projects were the most popular among renovating homeowners.

Even though many COVID-19-related restrictions have lifted and life has largely returned to regular programming, renovations remain a popular investment. Homeowners embarking on home renovation projects understand that a certain measure of upheaval is to be expected, but some may not fully anticipate the impact that renovations have on daily life. The following are some tips for making it through a lengthy renovation.

- Discuss the timeline with contractors. It may be easier to make a plan for how much life will be disrupted if you have an idea of how long the renovation will be (if everything goes according to plan).

Sit down with contractors and have them spell out the minutiae of the project so you'll be able to anticipate what's going on day-to-day.

- Start at the right time. Some contractors may say they can fit your project into their schedules in between other jobs. While this may seem convenient and timely, your work may be put on hold if there are delays with the other job or jobs. Instead, it may be better to hold off until the contractors can devote the bulk of their attention to your renovation.

- Recreate commonly used spaces elsewhere. A kitchen or a bathroom remodel often requires giving up spaces that are used throughout a typical day. Unless you have a spare full bathroom or kitchen, you'll need to make due. Set a microwave, tabletop electric burner and a coffee pot on a folding table in the garage or utility room. Rent or purchase a small refrigerator where you can store a few necessities. Ask your contractor to set up a makeshift outdoor shower so you have a place to get clean when the bathroom is under construction.

- Pack up and cover. Remodeling one room may cause a trickle down effect on other areas. Dust from drywall sanding can infiltrate

many rooms in the home. Pack and label boxes with items not immediately needed and store them in another area. Cover most things so a film of dust won't form on them.

- Adjust your schedule. Sleeping in will be a thing of the past for the duration of the renovation, as may be working from a home office. Try to get out of the work zone as much as possible for new scenery and respites from the noises and smells.

- Ease up on cleaning standards. It's challenging to keep a home clean during a renovation. Relax standards and expect a mess for some time. Explain to guests what they'll find if they drop by.

Renovations can disrupt life, but often are well worth the sacrifices homeowners must make to see them through to completion.



Tips for pet-proofing a home

Expecting parents realize that as their child grows and becomes mobile, certain safety precautions must be made around the house. The term "baby-proofing" refers to making modifications that prevent little ones from getting into trouble and causing injury.

Even though pets may not require the same level of home modification, some measure of pet-proofing is necessary to safeguard companion animals. Any animal that is given free rein of the house, whether it's a puppy, rabbit or kitten, can get into trouble. These tips can help pet parents ensure the safety of their pets at home.

Get down to business

It may seem silly, but pet owners can get down on all fours and crawl around spaces to see just where their new companions might get into trouble. Put those "downward dog" yoga moves to work and try to see where electrical cords may generate curiosity or if any low-level cabinets are accessible.

Lock away chemicals

Certain cleansers, automotive fluids, paints, and even some foods and beverages can be toxic to pets if ingested. Animals often seek things with their noses first. Products such as antifreeze can smell sweet and appealing. The pet resource Porch suggests researching which foods, beverages, plants, and other items can be harmful.

Keep a neat home

Any item within reach is fair game for pets. Even something as seemingly innocuous as a sock can cause intestinal blockage if a puppy ingests it.

Garages are no-gos

Make the garage off-limits to pets. There are too many potential hazards in there,

from chemicals to sharp tools, according to American Humane. Cats may want to snuggle up against the warm car engine under the hood, and can be injured or killed when a car is started. There also are too many places to hide and get stuck in the garage.

Don't forget the yard

Pets that spend time outdoors need to be watched carefully, especially when they are young. In addition to wild animals and potential predators, fertilizers and herbicides used on lawns can be toxic. Outside dogs may consume mushrooms or sticks. Pets could get into animal or insect nests. Pet-proofing often involves installing fencing.

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SPRING HOME IMPROVEMENT

Simple landscaping strategies that can transform a home's exterior

The interior of a home may be where homeowners and their families spend the majority of their time, and there's no denying that a well-planned interior goes a long way toward making a house a home. However, the exterior of a home, including its landscaping, can serve as a source of pride and catch the eye of prospective buyers when the home hits the market.

It's easy to walk past a home with an eye-catching exterior and assume the homeowner has a green thumb or has spent lots of time and money working on the landscaping. Though that may be true, oftentimes it's the simplest strategies that make all the difference. Homeowners can keep these strategies in mind as they look to transform the exterior of their homes.

- Dress up the walkway. A longer walkway can give guests a strong first impression of a home and won't break the bank. Create new planting beds and plant bright plants and flowers along each side of the walkway. If it's necessary and within budget, lengthen the walkway to create the feel of a more grandiose entryway.

- Make things more symmetrical. A messy landscape can give a poor first impression, even if the area features some beautiful plants. In such instances, a little effort to make things more symmetrical, with equal parts grass and vegetation, can create a cleaner, more inviting look.

- Mulch your flower and tree beds. Mulch is a relatively inexpensive but effective way to add aesthetic appeal to a landscape. Freshly mulched beds beneath trees and flowers creates a clean and organized look, and the mulch also serves a practical purpose, as it reduces weed growth and helps the soil retain moisture so plants stay healthy and look better throughout the warmer months when rainfall may not be steady or significant.

- Plant shade trees. Shade trees can be especially useful when selling a home. The shade provided by trees can shield grass from blistering summer sun, potentially helping it stay green. A lush green lawn appeals to buyers and gives the impression the home has been well maintained. In addition, shade trees can be used to create the look of a backyard oasis. A well-placed bench beneath a large shade tree can entice



buyers who want a relaxing spot to enjoy warm summer days outdoors without getting a sunburn.

- Consider maintenance. The more exotic an exterior landscape is, the more maintenance it's likely to require. Lawn and garden enthusiasts may not be turned off by landscape features that require steady maintenance, but homeowners who don't have much time for such work should keep things simple. A poorly maintained landscape, even if it includes

exotic plants and elaborate designs, will adversely affect curb appeal. Another feather in the cap of low-maintenance landscape features is they could prove more appealing to prospective buyers, who may view elaborate, exotic landscaping as a lot of extra work they won't want to do.

Some simple landscaping strategies can help homeowners transform their home exteriors without requiring a significant investment of time or money.

Tips for budget-friendly home decor

Rooms featuring neutral colors and minimal clutter tend to appear large and modern.

Home interiors can be spruced up in a number of ways. Ideas run the gamut from relatively inexpensive changes in paint color to more extensive (and expensive) remodels that may include demolition and reconstruction. Investing in new home decor is another way to breathe new life into spaces, and this approach that falls somewhere in the middle in regard to cost.

Material and product costs remain high across the board, so individuals interested in

changing the furniture and other design elements in their homes might be seeking ways to do so in the most affordable way possible. In such instances, homeowners can try these budget-friendly ways to overhaul their home decor.

- Create the illusion of more space. Light, bright and white are key attributes to remember when selecting design elements for rooms where you want to create the illusion of more square footage. Painting the walls in very light colors, increasing natural and artificial light, including using well-placed mirrors to reflect light, and decorating with light-colored

fabrics can help a space seem more roomy.

- Replace the accessories. Replacing curtains, area rugs, throw pillows, and chair cushions is an easy way to change a room without a big investment. Consider updating some wall art and tying color schemes together with all of the newly introduced elements.

- Splurge on statement pieces that will be used frequently. These may include chandeliers, unique rugs or an eye-catching piece of furniture.

- Shop 'discount' stores for furniture and accents. Traditional design centers can be great places to find plenty of

high-quality merchandise. However, don't overlook local discount or close-out centers that may have items at very reasonable costs. Stores like Home Goods, At Home and Big Lots routinely get new merchandise that changes with the season, helping homeowners to refresh their spaces without having to dig deep into their pockets. Shop the high-end stores for inspiration, then try to find "dupes" in the discount stores that will mimic the looks for less.

- Cut out the clutter. Modern homes are lean and clean. A home's interior instantly looks more high-end and appealing when the clutter is



removed. Consider keeping main living areas free from too many knickknacks and other accents. If you want to display a special collection,

set aside a room specifically for such items.

There are many budget-friendly ways to make interior spaces more inviting.

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SPRING HOME IMPROVEMENT

Budget-friendly ways to freshen up your home's exterior

As any homeowner knows, renovation projects tend to cost a lot of money. The average cost of a home renovation is difficult to gauge, as such endeavors run the gamut from complex projects like a kitchen overhaul to simpler ones like painting a room inside a home. Indeed, the National Association of the Remodeling Industry notes that scope is what drives the cost of a renovation project.

Though there might not be an "average cost" of a renovation project, homeowners can expect to spend thousands of dollars on projects that are not very small in scale. Navigating such an expense at a time when inflation remains high might be difficult for some homeowners looking to maintain the appearance of their home exteriors. However, there are many budget-friendly ways homeowners can tend to the exterior of their properties.

Power washing: Power washing won't break the bank but it can revive the look of a home. Power washing removes dirt and grime from the siding of a home and a power washing can be used to clean porches, walkways and patios as well.

Hardware chains like Home Depot and Lowes typically rent power washers, but homeowners who don't want to do it themselves can hire a professional for a few hundred dollars, if not less. Power washing after winter can be a good idea, as the elements can take a toll on a home's exterior. A good power washing before spring and summer

entertaining season can thus give a home a fresh, clean look without breaking the bank.

Furnished front porch: A furnished front porch can serve as a welcome sign to neighbors and provide a great place to relax with a morning cup of coffee and a good book. Homeowners with a small porch won't need to bust their budgets to upgrade their front porch furnishings. Some small chairs with bright cushions, a small table and a rug underfoot can revamp an entryway at low cost.

Window box installation: Installing window box planters is another cost-effective way to brighten up a home's exterior. Homeowners can hang window boxes outside windows on the front of their homes and then fill them with brightly colored flowers to add an inviting pop of color to their home exteriors. The experts at Better Homes & Gardens urge homeowners to take weight into consideration before buying window planters. Keep in mind that soil and developed plants can be heavy, so look for a sturdy box as well as one that has drainage holes.

Replace hardware: Another simple way to freshen up a stale exterior is to replace hardware. Door knobs, knockers, house numbers, and even the mailbox can appear dated after a while. Replacing these items is inexpensive and quick but can have a profound impact on how the exterior of a home appears to residents and visitors.

Exterior renovations need not break the bank. Various simple and inexpensive tweaks can quickly revitalize the exterior of a home.



Shedding some light on home solar

Consumers shopping around for home improvement projects may be leaning toward overhauls that can reduce energy consumption and save them money in the long run. This is a driving factor behind a growing number of homeowners investigating solar energy for their residences.

How does solar power work?

Solar power harnesses the sun's energy and converts it into electricity that can be used in homes. Many people are familiar with photovoltaics (PV), which are the panels that absorb sunlight and create an electric field across their layers. Another

solar technology, known as concentrating solar power, is primarily used in large power plants and is not appropriate for residential use, according to Energy.gov.

According to the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, hundreds of thousands of solar panels have been put in use across the United States since 2008.

Costs associated with solar

The upfront expense of solar panels is significant, costing anywhere from \$10,000 to \$14,000 for initial installation. However, comparatively speaking, homeowners can spend \$1,500 or more per year on electricity, so solar panels will pay for

themselves over time. Keep in mind that costs may vary depending on energy needs

and how many panels will be required to service the system.

How much electricity can I expect?

The Federal Trade Com-

mission's Consumer Advice says that the amount of power generated from a solar energy system depends on a few factors:

1. The average number of hours of direct, unshaded sunlight your roof gets each year;
2. The pitch (angle), age and condition of your roof, and the compass direction it faces;
3. The size and strength of your system; and
4. Environmental factors such as snow, dust or shade that may cover the system.

Save even more money

Consumers can contact their utility companies to find out if they provide homeowners who produce solar power with "net metering." This program pays the homeowner money or gives credit for excess power the system produces and returns to the electric grid. Individuals also may be eligible for energy tax credits or other benefits.



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The many styles of front doors

A grand entryway simply wouldn't be complete without an impressive front door. A front door can dazzle guests and create a homeowner's desired vibe before anyone even steps inside, which only underscores how important the choice of door style can be.

When shopping around for a new front door for their homes, homeowners can consider the many popular styles as they seek to choose one that fits an existing scheme or use a new front door as a springboard to a redesigned home interior.

Farmhouse: Farmhouse doors are not all one and the same. Traditional farmhouse doors provide a rustic look that's become popular in home decor over the last decade or so. Modern farmhouse doors are a little less rustic because they incorporate more contemporary elements into their design. Each option is ideal for homeowners who aspire to create a farmhouse vibe in their home interiors and exteriors.

Modern: Modern front doors tend to boast a bold look and many are made up of large glass panels. Some homeowners prefer modern front doors because the glass in them allows lots of natural light into their home's interior. The added light in the entryway appeals to homeowners who want to brighten up these spaces, which tend to be dark in homes with more traditional doors.

Traditional: Traditional



front doors may be the most recognizable to today's homeowners. Often solid wood but sometimes enhanced with glass, traditional doors may feature subtle, yet ornate designs. Traditional front doors might feel out of place in modern or rustic homes, so they're generally best suited to homes with owners that prefer more traditional decor inside their homes.

Custom: It's important that homeowners recognize they need not pigeonhole themselves into a particular design style for their front doors. Custom front doors may be costly, but many door manufacturers or contractors customize front doors. Custom doors may suit homeowners' with unique ideas about decor, and some can even mimic other popular styles while still featuring subtle differences. For example, homeowners can request an arched double door that, while unique, features many of the same qualities that characterize traditional doors, including ornate designs.

A front door can greatly influence the first impression people get of a home.

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