



First State Bank plans ag conference for Jan. 23

25th annual event set at Civic Center

MENDOTA – First State Bank announces a special conference for area farmers. The 25th Annual First State Bank Ag Conference is scheduled for 10 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 23 at the Mendota Civic Center.

Starting the program will be Kelly Jackson Hardy, Principal, CliftonLarsonAllen. She serves client needs related to tax consulting, planning and compliance. She serves primarily the agribusiness industry and cooperatives. She comes from a farm background and understands the nuances of agriculture. Her talk will focus on the areas of ag taxation and farm succession planning.

Following Jackson Hardy will be Kurtis Wujek. Wujek is the Trading Director for Export Corn at Archer Daniels Midland Company. His main responsibilities include the execution and risk management of ADM’s North American export program thru New Orleans, La.

This year’s keynote speaker, Delaney Howell, will take a deep dive into the issues impacting the business of agriculture. Howell

grew up on a grain and livestock farm in Southeast Iowa and has been involved in agriculture from a very young age. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Sciences and minors in Broadcasting and International Studies from Northwest Missouri State University and a Master’s in Agricultural Communications through Texas Tech University.

Howell strives to bring the most up to date information on the latest “news cycle” in DC politics, commodity markets, and the international agricultural scene through her travels to 23 countries. You may recognize Delaney from her role as former host of the 45-year-old agribusiness show “Market to Market” or from her daily podcast she launched in 2017, Ag New Daily. Day to day, she is the face of an ag marketing company out of Des Moines, Iowa, called Trader PhD, offering advisory services to farmers and ranchers across the U.S.

See Conference, Page A5

Complete 18-hole disc golf course in Mendota to be finished this spring

Disc baskets will be moved from Lake Mendota to Lake Kakusha area

By BRANDON LaCHANCE
Staff writer

MENDOTA – There have been disc golf baskets circulating the park at Lake Mendota for a few years.

However, there has never been an official course.

Over the last year, the City of Mendota, Reimagine Mendota, Mendota Parks and Recreation Director Nick Stremlau, Mendota Project Director Annie Short, and disc golf aficionados Dana Vicich, Wes Black, and Dan Nagle, among others, have designed and created a full 18-hole disc golf course at Lake Kakusha.

After the winter is over and spring is upon us, the final touches will be complete and disc golf can be officially played in Mendota.

“I saw on Facebook where Annie was looking for feedback and interest in fixing the disc golf course because right now there is just a number of disc golf baskets scattered throughout the park at Lake Mendota,” said Vicich, 40, who grew up in Ottawa, but made many trips to Mendota over the years to spend time with his grandparents and mother, who were lifelong Mendota residents. “There are baskets, and you can play there, it’s not technically a course. It’s like going out to a field with holes and saying it’s a golf course.

“One of my goals in life is to grow disc golf in La Salle County, where I grew up and spent most of my life. Over the last 10-15 years, I’ve been involved with two courses in Ottawa, one in Streator, one



City of Mendota staff cleared out Lake Kakusha for an 18-hole disc golf course. There were disc golf baskets at Lake Mendota, but the crowded area didn’t allow for a course. They will be moved to Lake Kakusha in the spring to finalize the new course. (Photo contributed)

in Oglesby, one in La Salle, and one in Peru.

“When I saw the opportunity to help Mendota with its course, I jumped on it and offered to work with Annie and the city to design the course free of charge. My grandma, grandpa, my mom, and my aunt (the Fahler family) have all passed on, so I don’t have any close, immediate family ties to Mendota anymore, but Mendota still holds a special place in my heart.”

Vicich, who now lives in Mokena, has been around the game since 2002 when he began playing in Ottawa.

He turned professional in 2007 and from 2009-2016

he played across the United States, Canada, and overseas as a touring pro.

After settling down to start a family, he stopped traveling as a player, and has worked in the disc golf industry ever since designing courses, sales, and branding.

Vicich saw promise in the Mendota disc golf course right away and was excited to take on the endeavor.

“We looked beyond the crowded space of the park at Lake Mendota to Lake Kakusha,” Vicich said. “The City of Mendota has been amazing. Nick Stremlau and his team have worked on removing evasive trees and

clearing out fairways.

“The fairways are all cleared out. We now have cement tee pads that have been poured as well as the sleeves for the disc golf baskets. The next step, this spring, is to install signage and the baskets.

“We are very close in the grand scheme of things, but we’re still a winter away from playing disc golf in Mendota.”

The City of Mendota, Stremlau, and Short are appreciative of Vicich’s assistance.

See Disc Golf, Page A5

Illinois Audubon Society expands Green River Lowlands Preserve with 60-acre acquisition

AMBOY – The Illinois Audubon Society has purchased 60 acres to expand the Green River Lowlands Preserve (Lee County.) This latest acquisition will expand the preserve to more than 1,000 acres of sand dunes, wetlands, savanna, prairie, sedge meadow and woodlands.

The parcel lies adjacent to the 130-acre Queen of the Prairie tract (purchased in 2022) where volunteer stewards are currently restoring a 40-acre former agricultural field to grassland habitat. Deb Carey, Illinois Audubon Society Board of Directors and Chair of Illinois Audubon Society’s Land Protection and Stewardship Committee reports, “Nesting Lark Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks and more have already found



Blue Grosbeak

it to their liking. This work would not happen without the efforts of dedicated volunteers.”

The latest purchase will also be targeted for grassland restoration; volunteer stewards have already reported finding New Jersey tea and prairie drop seed on the property.

According to Carey, “Southern Lee County’s sandridges and marshes hold a multitude of amazing life forms: glass lizards, poppy mallow, cream indigo, and blue racers, just to name a few. Now, with the majority of the county in row crop agriculture, many of the native plants and animals no longer thrive due to a lack of sustainable habitat. It is the goal of the Illinois Audubon Society to protect representative examples of intact native ecosystems and unique natural features that persist and provide habitat for native plants and animals.”

Green River Lowlands is a river of sand, eolian

See Preserve, Page A5

Council renews health insurance

Stop signs to replace yield signs at city intersection

By KIP CHEEK
Staff writer

MENDOTA - The Mendota City Council acted on health insurance and heard the results of a traffic survey during its first regular meeting of the new year on Jan. 6.

ALDERMANIC REPORTS

Alderman John Hessenberger informed the council of a zoning variance request for the property owners at 1712 Lucille Lane. The matter will go before the Plan Commission at a meeting yet to be determined before the request is acted on by the city council.

Alderman Jim Fitzpatrick presented requests for proposals for environmental engineers for a Brownfield Cleanup grant for the locations of 805 and 807 Illinois Ave. Those properties are the former auto parts store and dry cleaning store.

Alderman John Holland gave figures for the annual city health insurance renewals, which were approved. Holland said the health insurance renewal premium went

up 6.08 percent, from \$69,609 last year to \$73,841 this year. He noted that the dental insurance premium remains the same and the vision insurance premium had a slight decrease.



In action from Alderman Kyle Kim’s report, the council agreed to accept and execute pay for interim police chief Tyler Kent.

Alderman Vicki Johnson informed the council that a two-week traffic study was conducted by the Mendota Police Department at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Eighth Street. Per the recommendation of the police department, the council approved replacing the yield signs on the east-west street with stop signs.

The next regular meeting of the Mendota City Council will be Monday, Jan. 20 at 5:30 p.m.



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LOCAL AND AREA



First Day Hike for the second time

Friends of Lake Kakusha, hikers, nature lovers, and anyone who wanted to walk off some holiday calories joined for the second annual First Day Hike at Lake Kakusha. The hike took place on Wednesday, Jan. 1. (Photo contributed)

Learn about nature from the comfort of your home with Master Naturalist Winter Webinar series

OGLESBY – The Bureau, LaSalle, Marshall, and Putnam County Master Naturalists are excited to announce their upcoming Winter Webinar series. While the cold weather may keep us indoors, it doesn't mean we can't connect with nature. Join in this series and explore fascinating topics related to the natural world from the comfort of your home.

The series will kick off on Tuesday, Jan. 21, with a presentation on birds by Dr. Daniel Goldberg, Ornithologist and Assistant Professor of Biology at Grand Valley State University. University of Illinois History Professor Dr. Robert Morrissey will then give a presentation on his book *People of the Ecotone*, which explores indigenous history and how it shaped Illinois' prairies. Finally, Dr. Leo Gaskins, University of Chicago David H. Smith Conservation Research Fellow, will present his research on how muskrats impact wetland landscape and diversity.

Whether you're a seasoned naturalist or simply curious about the environment, these sessions offer something for everyone. For more information or to register for the series visit go.illinois.edu/BLMPWinterWebinar

Webinar Schedule:

- Tuesday, Jan. 21, 5-6 p.m. – Birds, Dr. Daniel Goldberg
- Tuesday, Feb. 11, 5-6 p.m. – People of the Ecotone, Dr. Robert Morrissey
- Tuesday, March 4, 5-6 p.m. – Muskrat and Wetland Ecology, Dr. Leo Gaskins

If you need an accommodation to participate, contact Emily Hansen at emhansen@illinois.edu or 815-224-0896. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your access needs.

Extension offices are located in Princeton, Ottawa, Henry, and in Oglesby on the IVCC campus. The Mission of University of Illinois Extension is to provide practical education you can trust to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future. University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. Visit its website at <https://extension.illinois.edu/blmp>. If you have questions or need more information, call University of Illinois Extension—Bureau, LaSalle, Marshall, Putnam Unit Office at 815-224-0896.



Amy Palmer didn't have anywhere to lock her bike when she rode the 2 1/2 miles from her home to downtown Sublette. With help of the Village of Sublette, Palmer accomplished her goal and had a bike ramp installed in downtown Sublette. (Photo contributed)

Need a place to put your bike?

By **BRANDON LaCHANCE**
Staff writer

SUBLETTE—Amy Palmer hadn't lived in Sublette for quite some time.

Actually, 50 years to be exact as she lived in the village for the first 17 years of her life before leaving in 1971 and not returning until 50 years later in 2021.

Spending the previous 35 years in Florida, Palmer could ride her bike anywhere and there was somewhere to lock it up.

This was not the case in Sublette.

"With my return to the area, I thought, 'If I have a trip that is only to Sublette,

I'm going to try to ride my bike.'" Palmer said. "That's 2 1/2 miles to go to the bank, the post office, the grocery store, or the grain elevator. I failed miserably in the quest since I only took two bike rides. I use the wind as an excuse.

"But when I would ride my bike to Sublette, I had no place to lock my bike. The irony of it all, this is Sublette where Burma Shave chose to put signs about the cost of a bike. The signs are still on Rt. 52."

After a chat with the Village of Sublette and explaining the importance of a bike rack, one was installed

in downtown Sublette this past summer.

"I was hooking my bike to the Sublette Farmers Elevator's deer blinds. I decided I could donate the cost of a bike rack," Palmer said. "Fortunately, the Village of Sublette Trustees took me up on it. I worried about it not getting enough use, but after it was installed, I was told people use it often.

"I hope the village sees the importance of the rack. I pitched it as, if you build it they will come. There are some avid cyclists who are at Woodhaven. They ride into Sublette. Now, they have a place for their bike."



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LOCAL AND AREA

First-ever statewide smoke alarm blitz sees over 5,000 smoke alarms distributed to 71 Illinois fire departments

SPRINGFIELD – The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal, Camp I Am Me by Illinois Fire Safety Alliance and the Illinois Community Risk Reduction Taskforce launched the first-ever statewide smoke alarm installation blitz the week of Oct. 20 in conjunction with Fire Prevention Month.

“Data shows that nearly 59% of home fire deaths were caused by fires in properties with no working smoke alarms, almost three out of every five home fire deaths in the U.S. resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or non-working. These are scary statistics as fires burn hotter and faster due to synthetic construction materials in modern construction reducing escape times to less than 3 minutes,” said Illinois State Fire Marshal James A. Rivera. I encourage all departments across the state to engage with their residents and stress the importance of having working smoke alarms in their homes.”

“The Be Alarmed! Smoke Alarm Installation Program continues to help keep Illinois residents safe as departments work hard to educate their residents on the importance of having a fire escape plan and how to prevent fires, while also installing lifesaving working smoke alarms in homes,” said Philip Zaleski Executive Director Camp I Am Me by Illinois Fire Safety Alliance. Since Be Alarmed! began in 2018, Illinois Fire Departments have installed 35,000 alarms across the state. This first-ever statewide blitz also saw 10 new departments join the Be Alarmed! Fire Alarm Installation Program. We are excited to see this program continue to grow while helping make Illinois a safer place for residents to live.”



“I am proud of the amazing efforts of the staff here at the Buffalo Grove Fire Department, who were also assisted by the Buffalo Grove CERT Volunteers, as they were able to install 600 smoke alarms in just one week during the blitz,” said Buffalo Grove Fire Chief Larry Kane. “Our firefighters are committed to helping protect our residents and educate them about the importance of not only having working smoke alarms, but developing a fire escape plan that includes all the needs of every family member and making sure they know two ways out of every room in their home.”

This new initiative saw 71 Illinois fire departments canvas

their communities, educating their residents on the dangers of fire in the home and ensured there were working smoke alarms properly installed. The campaign was an extension of the Be Alarmed! Smoke Alarm Installation program, a fire prevention program which distributes fire safety education materials and 10-year sealed battery smoke alarms to fire departments in the state of Illinois. The fire departments then deliver the education while installing smoke alarms in at-risk homes within their communities. Both the educational materials and the smoke alarms are provided to the fire departments at no cost as a result of funding from both Camp I Am Me and OSFM.

Blitz Data (Data listed below is what has been reported by participating departments as of Nov. 6, 2024):

- 71 – Participating fire departments
- 5,232 – Smoke alarms distributed to fire departments
- \$130,800 – Equipment value provided to fire departments
- 2,351 – Smoke alarms installed by fire departments
- 743 – Homes protected with new, working smoke alarms
- 1,678 – (989 high-risk) residents protected with new, working smoke alarms

The OSFM, Camp I Am Me and the State of Illinois CRR Taskforce are planning to hold a statewide smoke alarm blitz again Oct. 19-25, 2025.

To learn more about the Be Alarmed! Smoke Alarm Installation Program, visit <https://www.ifsa.org/prevention-resources/smoke-alarm/>

Let it dough, make and take bread workshop planned

OGLESBY – Join Illinois Extension Nutrition and Wellness Educator Susan Glassman and learn the art of bread-making. Proof the yeast, mix the dough, knead, let rise, and bake till done in our hands-on workshop.

Participants will be making a hearty and delicious Swiss Cheese Rye Bread and flatbread called Naan Bread during the workshop. Everyone will take the breads they make home to share with family and friends on a cold winter night or eat yourself.

Let it Dough, Make and Take Bread Workshop is for adults on Saturday, Jan. 25, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Illinois Valley Community College Culinary Kitchen in the Peter Miller Community Technology Center at 815 N. Orlando Smith Road in Oglesby - room CTC-123.

Program fees are \$18 per person and include all the materials to make the breads, recipes and resources. Please bring a hat or hair tie (for longer hair), an apron, and a beverage. A light snack will be served. The class size is limited to 12 adults.

Register by Saturday, Jan. 18, at go.illinois.edu/makebread or by calling Glassman at Illinois Extension’s Main Office on the IVCC Campus at 815-224- 0894.

If you need reasonable accommodation to participate or need more information, please contact Glassman, Extension Educator, Nutrition & Wellness, University of Illinois Extension at 815-224-0889. Extension offices are located in Princeton, Ottawa, Henry, and in Oglesby on the IVCC campus.

Kish College holds fall commencement ceremony

MALTA – Kishwaukee College held its Fall 2024 Commencement Ceremony on Dec. 14, in the gymnasium, with 103 students attending to commemorate their achievements.

The ceremony recognized graduates who earned associate degrees, certificates of completion, Fast-Track program credentials, and Illinois High School Diploma credentials. Overall, 250 students completed a program or certificate requirement for the Fall 2024 semester.

Destiny McKinnie, who graduated with an Associate in Arts degree, served as the Student Speaker during the ceremony. McKinnie reminded her fellow graduates of the importance of resilience as they move on from Kishwaukee College.

“I encourage each of you to remember this — challenges will come. Life will test you in unexpected ways. But allow every setback to become a step up. Every obstacle

a stepping stone. Success is not about the accomplishments. It is about the perseverance that brought us there,” McKinnie said.

In addition to McKinnie, students heard remarks from Dr. Laurie Borowicz, President of Kishwaukee College; Bob Johnson, Kishwaukee College Board of Trustees Chair; Barbara Leach, Vice President of Instruction; and Nicole Rempfer, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, serving as the faculty speaker. Rempfer celebrated the graduates’ accomplishments while reminding them to stay true to their values.

“Your path in life doesn’t have to look like anyone else’s. What matters is that it aligns with who you are and what you stand for. As you leave here today, remember that challenges will come, but your values will guide you,” Rempfer said.

The ceremony was livestreamed on Kish’s social media channels and website. View the ceremony at kish.edu/commencement.

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OBITUARIES/LOCAL NEWS

William G. Walters

ST. CHARLES – William Grant Walters, 85, passed away Dec. 31, 2024, at his home in St. Charles, after a long illness.

Visitation was from 9-11 a.m. on Friday, Jan. 3, and funeral service at 11 a.m. at Hosanna! Lutheran Church, 36W925 Red Gate Road, St. Charles, IL. Interment was at Clarion Cemetery LaMoille, at 2 p.m.

William "Bill" was born June 24, 1939, in Rochelle, to Franklin and Irene (Samuelson) Walters.

Bill graduated from Mendota High School. He married Betty L. Stuepfert on Nov. 26, 1961, at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Clarion in LaMoille. They raised their three daughters in LaMoille.

He is survived by three daughters, Bonnie (Joseph) Kain, Becky (Dennis) Abella and Brenda (David) Bergeson; five grandchildren, Bridgette (Aaron) Treske, Grant Abella, Lily Abella, Sarah Kain and Benjamin Bergeson; two great-grandson, Elijah and Emory Treske.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Betty; sister, Jacqueline Roof; and brother, Terence Walters.

Bill had over a 25-year career working as a lineman for ComEd in Mendota and Walnut. After retirement, Bill and Betty moved to St. Charles to be closer to their children and grandchildren. They found their new church home at Hosanna! Lutheran Church in St. Charles, where Bill enjoyed bible study and fellowship.

Bill kept busy with home improvement projects and loved woodworking. He was known for beautifully carved canes, handcrafted furniture and unique wooden boxes he created for family. He was always ready to help his neighbors, friends and family with their projects.

Memorial contributions may be directed to Hosanna! Lutheran Church 36W925 Red Gate Road St. Charles, IL 60175.

For additional information contact Moss Family Funeral Homes, 630-584-2000 or www.mossfuneral.com

Romona Schweiger

MENDOTA – Romona Schweiger, 87, of Mendota, a former long-time resident of Earlville, passed away on Monday, Dec. 30, 2024, at OSF Saint Paul Medical Center in Mendota.

Cremation care has been provided by the Horner-Merritt Funeral Home, Mendota.

She was born July 19, 1937, in Earlville, the daughter of Roy and Margret (Wilcoxon) Johnson.

Romona is survived by her two sons, John and Jeff Schweiger; her sister-in-law, Betty Rose (Kuntz) Johnson of Ft. Worth, Texas; four grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews.

In addition to her parents, Romona is preceded in death by her siblings Minnie, Helen, Rob, Marion, and Janice.

Romona retired from the U.S. Post Office after working many years as a mail clerk.

Please visit www.horner-merritt.com to sign the online guest book.



Martin R. Jonsson Sr.

COMPTON – Martin R. Jonsson Sr., 59, of Compton, died Sunday, Dec. 29, 2024, at his home.

His memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 11, 2025, at the Fulton Chapel of the Bosma-Renkes Funeral Home. Following the service, family and friends are invited to gather at King Pins in Fulton. There will be no visitation. Cremation rites have been accorded, and interment will take place at a later date at Lower York Cemetery in Thomson.

Martin was born April 25, 1965, in Elmhurst, to Martin J. "Corky" and Peggy Ann (Goff) Jonsson. On Aug. 4, 1989, he married Candy L. Scroggins, in Aurora. He was a Class of 1983 graduate of Fulton High School.

Survivors include his wife, Candy; one son, Martin Roy Jonsson Jr. of Colorado; one daughter, Courtney (Charlie) Preidis of Illinois; his cherished dogs and granddogs; one brother, Ted Jonsson of Florida; beloved members of his extended family.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents, Roy and Pearl Goff; parents; one brother, Jerry "JJ" Jonsson; his cousin and best friend William "Billy" Moog.

From an early age, he would spend time in the garage with his Grandpa Goff, who taught him how to work on cars. This sparked a lifelong passion in Marty, and the racetrack became his favorite place to be. He grew up going to dirt track races with his uncles and cousins. Later, he would become a race car driver, himself and pass his passion for cars on to his son.

Throughout their marriage, Candy would randomly show up at home with a new dog exclaiming "I rescued it." Marty would sporadically bring a used car home, always reassuring "But beautiful, she's a runner." They matched each other's energy in this way. Marty would pretend to be mad that Candy brought home a new dog, and moments later he'd be laying on the floor cuddling with the dog. He absolutely adored dogs. You could catch him singing "My Girl" by The Temptations to his dog Ethyl and he would rough house with Gus Gus and Bubba. He was always happy to see his granddogs Buster, Doris, and Walt.

Marty cared deeply about his wife, children, and extended family. He loved chatting on the phone, always answering a call from his daughter by saying "Hey, girl!" He was the voice of reason, the patient figure, and the person you'd call if you needed someone to show up for you. It wasn't out of character for him to reach out, just because he hadn't heard from you in a while. He kept in touch with everyone he cared about and no one was ever a stranger.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial contributions be made to Friends of Strays Animal Rescue in Princeton. To send online condolences go to www.bosmarenkes.com



Ann E. Brockwell-Althaus

AMBOY – Ann Elizabeth Brockwell-Althaus, 81, of Amboy, passed away Tuesday, Dec. 31, 2024, at Prairie Crossing Living and Rehab in Shabbona.

Cremation care has been provided by the Horner-Merritt Funeral Home, Mendota. A memorial service was held at 11:30 a.m. Monday, Jan. 6, 2025, at the Horner-Merritt Funeral Home, Mendota. Visitation was from 10 a.m. until the time of the service at the funeral home. Private interment will take place at a later date at Restland Cemetery in Mendota.

She was born Jan. 12, 1943, in Mendota, the daughter of Wilfred and Dorothy (Wise) Ehlbeck. She married Robert Althaus.

Ann is survived by her husband, Bob, of Amboy; children, Barb (Tyler) Meloy of Earlville and Greg (Gina) Brockwell of Omaha, Neb.; two grandchildren, Delaney and Kennedy Meloy; two sisters, Cindy (Hank) Gerdes of Amboy and Peggy (Joey) Sardisco of Ocala, FL; and several nieces and nephews.

In addition to her parents, Ann is preceded in death by a sister, Judy Hernandez.

Ann worked as a distributor for Safeguard Business Systems for many years until her retirement in 2016.

Ann loved her horses and living on the farm. She was a stylish dresser and presented herself well. Ann also showed her sense of style when decorating the places she lived. She loved shopping for new clothes or decorations for the house.

Ann was a stay-at-home mother until her children got older. She got a job as a secretary for Safeguard Business Systems in the early 1980s. She eventually bought that business and successfully ran it for over 30 years.

Please visit www.horner-merritt.com to sign the online guest book.



Diane M. Musgrove

MENDOTA – Diane M. Musgrove, 78, of Mendota, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2025, at her home.

Cremation care has been provided by the Horner-Merritt Funeral Home in Mendota. A memorial visitation will be from 3-7 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025, at the Horner-Merritt Funeral Home, Mendota. Private interment will take place at Restland Cemetery in Mendota at a later date.

Diane was born May 7, 1946, in Mendota, the daughter of Harold and Mildred (Delaney) Mathesius. She married Vernon L. Musgrove on Sept. 24, 1967, at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Compton.

Diane is survived by two sons, Eric (Terry) Musgrove and Damon (Michelle) Musgrove; two step-children, Virgil Allen (Jan) Musgrove and Lyn (Dan) Cook; daughter-in-law, Tina Musgrove; and many friends.

In addition to her parents and husband, Vernon, Diane is preceded in death by a son, Lance Musgrove, and a grandson, Madrick Musgrove.

In her younger years, Diane was a member of FFA and showed cattle. She worked for the Social Security Office and later at Wal-Mart in Peru. She was always very supportive of her children and would be at all of their sporting events. She was also very supportive of all Mendota sports. She was an artistic and musical person who enjoyed pottery, painting, specialty cake-making, and playing the piano. In her later years, she enjoyed traveling and seeing the world.

Contributions in Diane's memory may be directed to the family for the benefit of the Madrick Musgrove memorial account.

Please visit www.horner-merritt.com to sign the online guest book.



Mendota Police Department gives winter driving safety tips

MENDOTA – The Mendota Police Department would like to remind drivers of a few safety tips to keep everyone safe while driving in winter weather conditions.


Take the time to clean the snow and ice from all vehicle windows prior to driving on the road. Keep your speed down to assist in keeping control of your

own vehicle when driving on slick icy roads. If traveling long distances remember to pack a few emergency items to take along in the event your vehicle should go off the roadway, including a cell phone, blankets and water.

If you are leaving town and need information regarding road conditions, call 800-452-4368.

Please see more
Obituaries on Page A5.

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If you know where this scene is located in Mendota, write the answer briefly and concisely on a slip of paper and drop it off or mail it to The Mendota Reporter Office. All entries must be received no later than noon on Monday.

One correct answer will be drawn each week. Prizes must be picked up at the Mendota Reporter Office.

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LOCAL NEWS/OBITUARIES

Disc Golf

Continued from Page A1

Now Mendota can use the new and improved disc golf course in its marketing campaign as the city is striving for improvements and updates.

“Through Reimagine Mendota and the Heart and Soul Seed Grant questions, one of the things that came up was the disc golf course,” Short said, who has also served as a co-director for Reimagine Mendota and the grant program. “The course at Lake Mendota was unplayable because the lake has grown so much that the baskets are in inconvenient places when there is a lot of activities going on out there.

“In 2023, I talked to Nick Stremlau, who is the Mendota Parks and Recreation Director, and he said we could move the baskets. He just didn’t know where to move them. The more we looked at it, the City of Mendota thought moving the course to Lake Kakusha was a better idea.

“We’re really excited because disc golf is a huge thing right now. It will bring us some tourists.”

The disc golf course also offers sponsorship and marketing opportunities for businesses.

To help pay for the concrete used for the tee boxes and the baskets, the City of Mendota is looking for a



Over the last year, a new disc golf course has been in the works at Lake Kakusha. Most of the work has already been done as concrete has been poured for tee boxes and the sleeves for the boxes at each of the 18 holes. After a winter weather delay, the plan is for signage and the baskets to be installed in the spring for disc golf to officially be played in Mendota. (Photo contributed)

sponsor for each of the 18 holes on the course.

Each sponsorship will be \$1,000 and the sponsoring business will have its logo on the hole’s sign for the duration of the course, which Short hopes is forever. To become a sponsor, reach out to Annie Short at 815-639-7459 or ashort@mendotacity.com.

With only a winter weather delay in the way before

the disc golf course can be finalized and used, all parties wait in anticipation.

“This whole project from the first conversation with Annie to this point has been pretty awesome and unexpected,” Vicich said. “Annie is a great human and a real mover and shaker. Nick and his team have been awesome to work with. They’ve done everything I’ve suggested

and asked about. They’ve done it in a real timely manner.

“For me, living 1 1/3 hours away from Mendota, I don’t get there as much as I’d like to, so this has given me an opportunity to come back more than I would have. It’s been nice to get back to Mendota and relive a lot of great memories of my family.”

IVAC recognizes IVCC leaders for their regional contributions

OGLESBY – Four Illinois Valley Community College leaders were part of a group recognized by the Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce recently for their contributions across the Illinois Valley region.

The list of 2024 Community Cornerstone Award winners includes retired President Dr. Jerry Corcoran, community advocate/Director of Adult Education Sara Escatel, IVCC Board member Jay McCracken and longtime Foundation board member OJ Stoutner.

The award celebrates people who have been mentors, volunteers, visionaries, innovators and compassionate leaders whose efforts strengthen, support and shape the Illinois Valley.

Corcoran said he is proud of the staff and programs offered at IVCC for delivering outstanding career, technical and transfer opportunities that impact so many people in the region. He points proudly to the construction of the 80,000-square-foot Peter Miller Community Technology Center as a standout accomplishment while in office.

Escatel was named Administrator of the Year by the Illinois Community College Board in 2020. Reviewing her community involvement through boards such as the Illinois Valley Hispanic Partnership Council and the Valley Immigrant Advocates Board, Escatel said she believes in giving back while working hard to make a difference along the way. She acknowledges her background as the daughter of Mexican immigrants lends her insight and compassion to help those facing cultural issues or challenges.

McCracken, who is the

executive director of the Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce, has a long history in education beyond his tenure on the IVCC Board of Trustees, where he is the vice chair. In addition to being a longtime mayor in Henry, he was a teacher and administrator in local school districts and continued to serve as an administrator even in retirement. He noted he continued his career because he still had a passion to make a difference in the lives of students, and that his involvement with the College expands that capability further.

Stoutner has long been active on the IVCC Foundation Board, which supports students with scholarships, as well as on many community boards. He graduated from agriculture studies in college and worked as a bank loan officer to help fuel the agriculture engine in Illinois and eventually became the President of Hometown Bank. After his retirement, he served as an aide to State Senators Gary Dahl and Sue Rezin, where he assisted with community outreach and correspondence.

IVCC President Dr. Tracy Morris noted that, “IVCC has had a tremendous impact on the community for 100 years and these nominations are a reflection of the great work that is done every day. I am so proud of each of our award winners and the important role they each have in making our community better.”

All 16 Community Cornerstone Award winners were announced recently. IVCC’s Jennifer Scheri, Director of Continuing Education and Business Services, was in the inaugural class of Cornerstone Award recipients last year.

OBITUARY

Eugene T. Chandler

AMBOY – Eugene T. Chandler, 76, of Amboy passed away on Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025, after a brief illness.

Visitation will be on Thursday, Jan. 9, 2025, from 1-3 p.m. at the Mihm-Jones Funeral Home in Amboy. A prayer service will follow at 3 p.m. at the funeral home. Cremation rites are to follow with burial of cremains to take place at a later date at St. Patrick Cemetery in Amboy.

He was born on April 16, 1948, in Amboy, the son of Leo and Irene Chandler. He was a graduate of Amboy High School and a Vietnam War veteran.

He is survived by his brothers, Dale (Glenna) Chandler of Mayfield, Ky., and Kevin (Trenton) Chandler of Amboy; sisters, Colleen Howard of Dixon, Patricia (Ed) Reglin of Amboy and Julia (Tom) Hoak of Polo; two nieces and several nephews.

He is preceded in death by his parents, and two brothers, Lawrence Chandler and Dennis Chandler.

Gene worked at Motor Wheel in Mendota and Seal Master in Aurora until their closures. He was an avid collector and enthusiast of cars, trains, airplanes, and ships. Beyond collecting items, he had a vast knowledge of the history and operations of these vehicles. He also was an avid gardener in his retirement. He always had a sweet and sunny disposition to all who knew Gene.

A memorial has been established to American Cancer Society.

Arrangements by the Mihm-Jones Funeral Home in Amboy.



City Ordinance - Prohibited Parking

MENDOTA – The City of Mendota reminds citizens that Chapter 41.49 of the Mendota Municipal Code in regard to Prohibited Parking reads as follows:

- Parking is prohibited along both sides of First Avenue for the entire length of the avenue.

- Parking is prohibited on the east side of Sixth Avenue from Second Street to Fifth Street.

- Parking is prohibited on the east side of Main Street from Sixth Street to Washington Street.

- Parking is prohibited on the south side of Washington Street from Pennsylvania Avenue to Iowa Street.

- Parking is prohibited on both sides (north and south) of Washington Street from Iowa Street to U.S. Route 251.

Conference

Continued from Page A1

Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. and the first speaker will begin at 10 a.m. First State Insurance will be supplying coffee and donuts. ADM Grain Company and Farmers Mutual Hail Insurance are generously sponsoring the noon luncheon. Clifton Larson Allen is sponsoring the soda.

Door prizes are being provided by several area businesses including: Beck Oil Co., Cantlin Law Firm, Chris Eller – the Retirement Specialists, Dinges Fire Company, Earlville Farmers Coop, Guilfoyle & Stevenson Law Firm, Hornung Tiling, Inc.,

Foster’s Tax & Accounting, LLC., Leffelman & Associates, Leone Grain & Supply, Maplehurst Farms, Mendota Mutual Insurance, Meriden Grain-Pioneer Seed, Northern Partners Cooperative, Nutrien Ag Solutions, Prescott Brothers Chrysler Jeep Dodge Ram, Schimmer Automotive Group, Sublette Farmers Elevator Co., Sublette Mechanical, Troy Grove Coop, Vaessen Bros. Chevrolet, Vaessen Implement & Repair, and West Brooklyn Farmers Coop.

To reserve a seat at the conference, contact the First State Bank Ag Department by calling 815.539.3834 by Saturday, Jan. 18, 2025.

Preserve

Continued from Page A1

sands, sand dunes and sand ridges because the landscape was once covered over by outwash from the receding of the Wisconsin glaciation. Subsequent post-glacial winds had used the most portable component of this outwash, sand, to shape the dune and swale topography seen today.

Studies of the substance, structure and orientation of sand deposits in the area, indicate that winds from west to northwest had largely completed this work by about 17,000 years ago.

The late botanist Henry Allan Gleason referred to the vegetation of the Green River Lowlands in his extensive study of Illinois sand deposits. Gleason studied a site near Amboy on Aug. 21, 1910. He noted: “This name – the Amboy area – is given to the irregular complex of sand ridges and marshes along the Green River in Lee County, well-illustrated in the vicinity of Amboy. The drainage of the whole valley is poor,

and two large marsh areas, known as the Inlet Swamp and the Winnebago Swamp, are, as yet, not entirely reclaimed.”

Both the Inlet and Winnebago “swamps” were eventually drained and converted to row crop agriculture by the very early 1900s and Gleason witnessed the final bloodletting of the swamp. But the sand remains.

“Oh, what a delight it would have been to walk with him as he investigated the remains of the great swamps,” added Carey.

As the late, great naturalist and author Aldo Leopold reminded us “the first rule of intelligent tinkering is to keep all the pieces”.

This newest tract is one of those vital pieces.

The mission of the Illinois Audubon Society is to promote the perpetuation and appreciation of native plants and animals and the habitats that support them. The Society, founded in 1897, is an independent, statewide, member supported, not-for-profit organization.

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OPINION



The Mendota Reporter

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Letters to the editor should be typed or hand-printed. They should also be brief. All letters must contain a name, address and telephone number. The editor reserves the right to publish, condense, revise or reject any submissions.

Why haven't we talked about the election?

After the election, I wrote a column about how I hadn't heard much about the supposedly epic, life changing election we had on Nov. 5 since it happened.

It seemed the social media posts about Donald Trump and Kamala Harris slowed down and stopped, and nobody was talking about it at watering holes, grocery stores, libraries, schools, or police departments in the boisterous manner it was before the election took place.

An email was sent to me shortly after from Sublette resident and Lee County Democratic Party precinct representative for Sublette, Amy Palmer.

She stated I must be hanging out in the wrong crowds because others are talking about the election every day. After a chuckle about my crowd, because she may be right, haha, I reached out to meet with her to see what people were saying since I wasn't hearing much aftermath from Trump being elected president once again.

I met with Palmer and Dave McCarver, chair of the Lee County Democratic Party in late December to discuss my question in the previous column, "Why are we not talking about the election?"

"People were still talking about the election Day 2 or Day 3 afterwards, but then it all stopped," McCarver said, who is a Mendota native, 2011 Mendota High School graduate, 2016 Illinois State University graduate, who currently lives in Amboy and was appointed chair of the party in 2021 and was reelected in two elections. "I think some of it is because Donald Trump hasn't been inaugurated yet (planned for Monday, Jan. 20), so he hasn't been able to do anything. President Joe Biden, is a lame duck president right now by definition. And the Republicans control the House of Representatives.

"Not much news can be made in terms of policy. That's a huge part of people not talking about the election at the moment. I've also worked in politics before and I'm the chair of the Democratic Party in the county, it's exhausting. You work hard putting in extra volunteer hours. Around 10 p.m. on election night it started to set in that it wasn't going our way.

"You kind of deflate. I woke up the next day ticked off. And my wife was ticked off. Our election cycles are long in America; it's unlike any other country. It takes a year and a half, and it wears on you. After it's over, your priorities shift, and it becomes I have to spend time with my boys or put energy into other work. The election had its time and now it's over."

Palmer, who lived in Sublette for the first 17 years of her life before leaving in 1971 and did not return until 2021, feels Democrats have to be cautious.

She sent me photos after our conversation of damage done to Democratic signage.

"We're careful with who we share our political feelings with because sometimes talking about politics is hostile," Palmer said. "Most Democrats vet who they're talking to before they offer too much of an opinion. It's a hostile environment at times.

"One thing you might not be aware of is the stat of how many Democratic voters changed their vote to Republican when it came to voting for Trump. They may have kept their Democratic vote for the senator, but there was a 7% shift nationally.

"But, in Lee County, because of Dave, Sarah Bingaman, and I, we worked so hard that our shift was only a little bit over 1%. Our Democrats stayed dedicated to the Democratic votes."

Palmer stated she made a YouTube video to present to local schools in efforts to speak to students about the importance of voting and offer voting information.

She was told it wouldn't happen because other schools had been sued for political propaganda.

McCarver added people who are truly plugged into politics were still talking about the election further than Day 1 or Day 2.

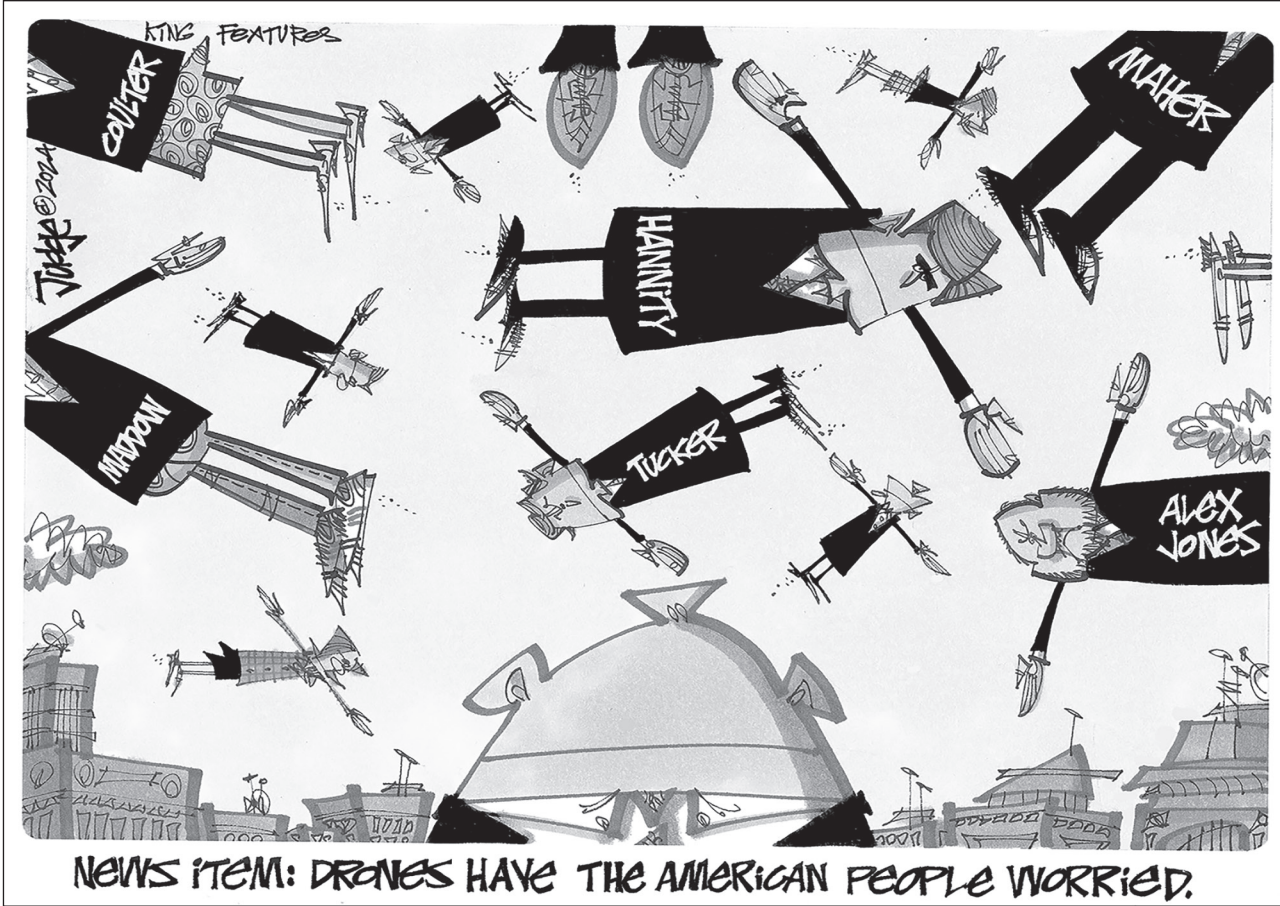
Action for a Better Tomorrow Sauk Valley, a sub-committee of the Lee County Democratic Party, which involves Democrats from La Salle, Whiteside, Ogle, and Bureau counties, met on Nov. 11 to talk about the election.

They're afraid Trump will once again have a net loss of jobs, he won't be able to fulfill his promise of lowering prices and fighting inflation rates, he will dismantle allegiance from world allies, and his tariffs will hurt the agriculture economy (high priority in Lee County), and in turn fail small businesses.

Politics and religion have always been known as things to not talk about. However, both are main cogs to our lives as citizens of the United States of America.

Let's further the conversation, before Trump is inaugurated, and let's hear the answer to "Why haven't we talked about the election after the election?" from the Republican side.

If you're a member of a county Republican Party or someone who is heavily involved on another stage, reach out at blachance@mendotareporter.com. Let's chat.



1991 wrap-up published January 1992

(The following is from Jessica Nashold's Backtracks & Sidetracks column reprinted from Jan. 8, 1997.)

By Jessica Nashold

When The Reporter came out on Jan. 8, 1992, it carried some statistics for 1991. Police calls had increased by 423 over the 1990 total, to 4,896.

There had been 170 public service calls. Other calls included 19 for domestic disturbance, 18 juvenile complains and 14 instances of criminal damage to property.

During 1991, 75 building permits had been issued – among them 15 for single-family dwellings, two apartments, 12 duplexes, 12 additions, 11 garages, six commercial additions, eight auxiliary buildings, six fences and three signs.

The Mendota Area Christian Food Pantry held its annual meeting Jan. 14, 1992. It was reported that 251 families numbers 2,682 people received Thanksgiving meals. For Christmas, 432 people in 82 families were provided with food.

Retiring board members Carl McNair and Marthe Ellingen were thanked for their years of service. Jack Due and Helen Faulk were welcomed as new board members, with Due serving as treasurer. President for 1992 was John McConville. Beatrice Arteaga was manager of the Mendota area site.

The Jan. 8, 1992, issue of The Reporter carries a newsworthy picture of the thermometer on the First Federal Savings Bank as it registered a balmy 62 degrees.

The first baby to be born at Mendota Community Hospital in 1992 was Ian David Richardson. He arrived on Jan. 4, the son of Mark and Beverly Werdin Richardson. He had a sister, Natalie, age 6.

A true New Year's baby, born Jan. 1, 1992, was Robert Patrick Askey, son of William and Meloday Askey of LaMoille. He was born at Illinois Valley Community Hospital in Peru.

Ground was broken for the first house to be built in Brookside First Subdivision on Lot 25. Ten of the 26 lots being developed in Brookside First, north of Northbrook, had been sold. Developers were LMS Properties, owned by Joe McConville, Brian Sprowls and John Lewis.

This first house was for John Brown of Compton and contractor was Tim Bauer of Bauer Painting & Construction, also of Compton. The 1900-square foot bi-level was scheduled for completion on May 1.

Mayor James Strouss launched the 1992 Girl Scout cookie sale with his purchase from Amber Simpson, Alisa Jones, Lou Ann Patterson and Jolene Patterson.

District 289 in Mendota was one of 92 recipients of state grants to provide training for gifted students. The 1992 grant was structured for gifted science students. A previous grant had been designed for gifted students in language arts.

Items found in a ditch northwest of Mendota on Jan. 12, 1992, were sent to the Illinois State Crime Lab for analysis. An anonymous caller directed police to the location where a box containing bloody sheets, a pipe with drops of blood and bits of hair, wrapped in a towel, scraps of blue jeans and a multi-colored shirt. Plastic bags and a metal rod were also in the box. The police could not be sure the blood and hair were human.

They are still at the lab for analysis.

Mendota Community Ambulance Service was considering adding a third shift EMT driver.

When I-39 is completed between Mendota and Bloomington,

9,000 more vehicles could be on the road.

Applications for the position of third shift EMT driver would be accepted until Feb. 15.

The ambulance service gave its Outstanding Service Award for 1991 to Judy Poisel.

Plano Molding gave assurance that more work would be done on its retention pond.

They will allow no more water to come off their property than before the plant came to Mendota.

Mendota businesses sponsored a full-page presentation on Jaycee activities in Mendota during National Jaycees Week. Among 21 projects listed were a contribution of \$1,000 to the D.A.R.E. program, \$1,500 toward lights for the baseball diamond, a Punt, Pass & Kick program, donation to Nightengales Closet and a Super Bowl breakfast.

The Northbrook basketball team took first place in the Starved Rock Conference Tournament at Streator, Jan. 11-18, 1992. The eighth grade team, with a record of 17-1, benefited from the skill of Bryan Boyer, Jason Brandner and Eric Duke, its high-point players. The seventh grade team had a 16-1 season. Their Jeff Kreiling totaled 387 points for a 22.8 average.

Loretta Causa, children's librarian at Graves Public Library, reported purchase of 27 geography books from the Enchantment of the World Series. She did not purchase any books about the Eastern Block countries of the former Soviet Union. These books will be added when the boundaries of the countries have been established.

Purchases were made from \$500 received from the Kanteen Trust Fund.

State Police conducted a second statewide blitz to enforce use of seat belts. Beginning Jan. 19, 1992, warnings were issued "at troopers' discretion."

The fiscal hawks never win

By Rich Lowry

It feels like 2013 again.

Back then, a beleaguered Republican Speaker of the House was forced into a government shutdown by firebrands in his caucus who considered him insufficiently pure.

A revolution in GOP politics has happened since, and yet a beleaguered Republican Speaker of the House has been forced to the verge of a government shutdown by firebrands in his caucus who consider him insufficiently pure.

The difference is that Mike Johnson -- unlike his predecessor, John Boehner -- isn't just dealing with an internal revolt; he also had the most powerful Republican politician on the planet and his extremely influential sidekick blast his handiwork, namely, Donald Trump and Elon Musk, respectively.

Johnson did make a misstep with the so-called continuing resolution to keep the government funded past a looming deadline. In negotiations, he let it balloon into a true monstrosity. What was supposed to be a stop-gap measure to avoid a government shutdown became a vehicle to pass new legislation in a last-minute, 1,500-page bill that no one was going to read.

The yet-to-be-resolved episode shows that Republican hostility to spending still exists a decade after Tea Party Republicans roiled the establishment -- and made John Boehner's life miserable -- demanding massive deficit reduction.

Now, though, this reflex has taken a new form. It is expressed in fierce opposition to "the swamp" -- in this case, business-as-usual logrolling in Congress -- and excitement about the prospects for Musk's DOGE, the new Department of Government Efficiency.

The bipartisan agreement in Washington, D.C., to perpetually spend more money is indeed disgraceful, and DOGE could be a welcome force for new thinking. Yet, both of these are really beside the point when considering the red ink that one day -- probably not tomorrow and maybe not even several years from now -- could cause a horrendous fiscal crisis.

There are idiotic programs and senseless regulations aplenty, but the money that can be found in the federal couch cushions is relatively minimal. Most federal spending has strong public backing, and so a \$6.8 trillion budget that looks like a juicy target is very hard to bring under control.

The math is as brutal as ever. Social Security and Medicare, together with veterans benefits and other health programs, account for more than half of the budget. One of Trump's signature promises, of course, is not to touch Medicare and Social Security. Then, interest on the debt and defense spending take up about another \$2 trillion.

What's left is, in the scheme of things, a pittance, and even programs in this category have constituencies.

If the budget is ever to be put on a more rational basis, there is no substitute for making a public case for a serious reform agenda that includes entitlements like Social Security and Medicare. This is a politically perilous project, which is why the Republican Party abandoned it. How much easier and satisfying it is to tank flagrantly absurd end-of-year spending bills and to put extravagant hopes in DOGE.

It is telling what else was happening in Washington while Mike Johnson's continuing resolution went down in flames. Congress was busy working to pass, on a bipartisan basis, the Social Security Fairness Act at a cost of roughly \$200 billion over 10 years. It doesn't matter that the legislation is a poorly designed giveaway to public employees that experts across the spectrum think is a bad idea.

DOGE will be hard-pressed just to claw that money back. Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy have talked about cutting a swath of federal workers. According to the Congressional Budget Office, in 2022, the federal government employed 2.3 million civilians at a cost of \$271 billion. So if you can cut 10% of those employees, which would be a stunning accomplishment, you might cover the 10-year cost of the Social Security Fairness Act, while still treading fiscal water.

This points to another similarity with 2013. All the drama and chaos is unlikely to fundamentally alter our dreadful fiscal trajectory.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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LOCAL AND AREA

Illinois drops to No. 39 in wages for entry level workers

By GLENN MINNIS

The Center Square contributor

SPRINGFIELD – Once ranked tops in the country for entry level wage growth over inflation, in 1935, Illinois has fallen to No. 39 compared to other states, according to BrilliantMaps.com.

Several southern states were among the biggest winners of increasing their entry level hourly wages since 1935, the report said. Many northern and western states barely saw their inflation adjusted starting wages improve over this time period.

“Illinois is perhaps the most interesting state,” the report said. “It had the highest entry level hourly wage in 1935 at \$0.67/hour, but by 2024 its starting hourly wage was 39th in the country at \$14.06/hour.”

Illinois state Rep. La Shawn Ford, D-Chicago, worries how much more the state will be forced to pay for its long sputtering economy.

“Workforce drives population and drives people to a state,” Ford told The Center Square. “People travel to find high-paying jobs. And so, when you talk about equity and income, I think that if Illinois wants to increase its population we have to work with the federal government, increasing wages and at the same time be more business friendly so that people will actually have the ability to pay their employees more.”

Even with the state’s non-tipped minimum wage increasing to \$15 an hour on Jan. 1, Ford said there is still more work to do if Illinois is to have any chance of curbing a trend that has seen it lose population in 10 of the past 11 years.

“You have a situation in Illinois where the cost of living is high and the actual wages are not keeping up,” he said. “People are driven out of the state. They have to go places where wages are comparable to Illinois but the cost of living is less. We could do more to cut some regulations for businesses and also support business needs so that they can hire more people or at least pay higher wages.”

Ford is also calling on the federal government to take on a bigger role in making sure more people are earning a livable wage.

“We should definitely be looking for the federal government to increase minimum wages so that they can bring some parity across the states,” he said. “I think if the federal government would do better by setting a higher minimum wage, that will help with this problem.”

Reason.org noted that economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis concluded in 2021, “A higher minimum wage can also result in employers using automation to replace more expensive human labor.”

Since 1935, BrilliantMaps.com shows South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama and Arkansas have all increased their average entry level hourly wages by 150% or more over and above inflation.

Legislator warns Illinois being left behind as other states lower taxes

By GREG BISHOP

The Center Square

SPRINGFIELD – A Republican state representative says Illinois is a cautionary tale, not a shining example of how a state’s economic policies should work.

Illinois legislators are nearing the end of the 103rd General Assembly. During a brief session in the House on Jan. 4, state Rep. Brad Halbrook, R-Shelbyville, used a point of personal privilege to address his concerns around the lack of progress on addressing economic issues in the state.

Several states are lowering personal taxes, switching to a flat income tax or fostering more policies for business development, he said.

“Across America, states are recognizing the power of a stable, progrowth and competitive tax code to attract businesses and improve the life of their citizens,” said Halbrook.

He said Illinois hasn’t taken such steps, having among the highest property taxes in the country and high overall tax burdens with heavy restrictions on business.

“Illinois has become the

greatest economic development tool that a neighboring or southern state can have,” Halbrook said. “This needs to change.”

To reverse Illinois’ economic doldrums, Halbrook said the state must address high property taxes, lower personal and corporate income taxes, and simplify the state’s tax code.

“We are losing [residents], businesses and economic opportunity to states that understand the importance of competitive tax policy,” he said. “We’ve become a cautionary tale instead of a shining example.”

Illinois’ unemployment rate is third worst of all states in the country with most neighboring states ranking much higher with lower unemployment rates. The state has also lost population 10 of the past 11 years, with last year’s gains attributed mainly to international migration into Illinois, offsetting more people moving out domestically.

Jan. 7 was the final full day of the 103rd General Assembly. The 104th General Assembly will be seated at noon Wednesday, Jan. 8.

Social Security News

Why it’s important to check your earnings history

By Mike Weittl

PERU – It may have been years or even decades since you thought about how much you earned at your first job. Did you know that you can find out how much you made that first year? Or any year you worked and paid Social Security taxes? Your earnings history is a record of your progress toward your future Social Security benefits. We track your earnings so we can pay you the benefits you’ve earned over your lifetime. That is why it’s so important for you to review your earnings record.

Even though it’s your employer’s responsibility to provide accurate earnings information, you should review your earnings history and let us know if there are any errors or omissions. Otherwise, your future Social Security benefits could be lower than you should receive. It’s important to identify and report errors as soon as possible. If too much time passes, it could

be hard for you to get older tax documents. Also, some employers may no longer exist or be able to provide past payroll information.

The best way to verify your earnings record is to visit www.ssa.gov/myaccount and create or sign in to your personal my Social Security account. You should review your earnings carefully every year and confirm them using your own records, such as W-2 forms and tax returns. Keep in mind that earnings from this year and last year may not be listed yet. When you have a personal my Social Security account, we send you an email once a year, 3 months before your birthday, to remind you to check your earnings and to get future benefit estimates.

If your Social Security earnings record is incorrect and does not match your personal records, you may be able to submit a correction request online using your personal my Social Security at www.ssa.gov/myaccount.



If that feature is available in your personal my Social Security account, you can use the online process to correct missing earnings, inaccurate earnings from a valid employer, or earnings from an employer you did not work for. You’ll need to provide:

- Your address if we need to contact you about your request.
- Details about your correct earnings and employer.
- Evidence or proof of correct earnings, if available.

You can electronically upload your proof (W-2, W-2C, tax return, wage stub, pay slip, etc.) in a JPG or PDF format. After you successfully submit your evidence, you can print or save a receipt.

Earnings corrections cannot be processed online if they are for:

- The current or prior year, which may not be recorded yet.
- Self-employment.
- Railroad Board.
- Certain years before 1978.

Also, you cannot submit an earnings correction online if you:

- Receive Social Security benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Medicare.
- Have applied for Social Security benefits or SSI.

If you cannot correct your earnings online, call us at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778), Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. to request a correction.

Start a conversation today. Ask a family member or friend about their first job and let them know they can find out what they earned that year!

(Weittl is the Social Security District Manager in Peru.)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Mendotans on Palmer Dean’s List

DAVENPORT, Iowa – Palmer College of Chiropractic has named its 2024 summer trimester Dean’s List for its Main Campus in Davenport, Iowa.

Among the students making the Dean’s List are Gabrielle Peasley and Francisco Romero, both of Mendota.

Palmer College of Chiropractic, the first and largest college in the chiropractic profession, has campuses in Davenport, Iowa; San Jose, Calif.; and Port Orange, Fla.

Area students on WIU Dean’s List

MACOMB/MOLINE – A total of 1,083 undergraduate students enrolled at Western Illinois University were named to the Fall 2024 Dean’s List. The total includes 112 students at the WIU-Quad Cities Campus.

Among the students achieving the honor are Elizabeth J. Bresley, a senior from Mendota, and Lilliane F. Brower, a sophomore from Paw Paw.

To receive this award, an undergraduate student must earn at least a 3.6 grade point average on a scale of 4.0, which equals an A in a minimum of 12 credit hours of graded courses; pass-fail hours are not counted (e.g., student teaching, internships).

F. Anderson makes Belmont Dean’s List

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Faith Anderson of Mendota was named among the students who qualified for Belmont University’s fall 2024 Dean’s List. Belmont University recently released the Dean’s List for the fall 2024 semester. Approximately 53% of the University’s 7,175 undergraduate students qualified for the fall 2024 Dean’s List.

Dean’s List eligibility is based on a minimum course load of 12 hours and a quality grade point average of 3.5 with no grade below a C.

“Earning a place on the Dean’s List is an accomplishment that reflects the dedication, talent and resilience of our students who maintain competitive GPAs while concurrently making lasting contributions at Belmont and beyond,” said Belmont University Provost Dr. David Gregory. “These scholars have gone above and beyond, matching rigorous academic schedules with robust extracurriculars including volunteerism, student organizations, athletics, the arts, and more. It gives me great joy to acknowledge the dedicated students who embody what it means to seek excellence, academically. Their achievement is a testament not only to their hard work and intellectual aptitude but also to Belmont’s high academic standards and commitment to student success.”

E. Massey named to UW-Madison Dean’s List

MADISON, Wis. – The University of Wisconsin-Madison has recognized students named to the Dean’s List for the fall semester of the 2024-2025 academic year.

Among the students achieving the honor is Ella Massey of Mendota, School of Human Ecology, Dean’s Honor List.

Students who achieve at a high level academically are recognized by the dean at the close of each semester. To be eligible for the Dean’s List, students must complete a minimum of 12 graded degree credits in that semester. Each university school or college sets its own GPA requirements for students to be eligible to receive the distinction. Most call the honor “dean’s list,” but some grant the “Dean’s Honor List” and “Dean’s High Honor List.”

Notice is given of the Annual Open Meeting at the Mendota Area Christian Food Pantry. The meeting is open to the public and anyone wanting to serve on the board or anyone with other business should attend. Election of board members and officers will take place at this meeting. The meeting will be held at the pantry at 710 6th Ave., Mendota, IL. at 6:30 pm on January 14, 2025.

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THE BACK PAGE

POLICE BLOTTER

DRIVING WHILE LICENSE REVOKED

Miguel A. Ferreira, 32, of Milwaukee, Wis., was charged with driving while license revoked after a traffic stop at 12th Street and Fourth Avenue at 1 a.m. Jan. 5. The subject was released with a LaSalle County court date.

DRIVING WHILE LICENSE SUSPENDED

Tony Munoz Jr., 34, of 2532 Johnson St., West Brooklyn, was charged with driving while license suspended after a traffic stop at U.S. 34 and Raymond Drive at 9:51 p.m. Jan. 5. The subject was released with a LaSalle County court date.

City Ordinance

Animals-Pet Waste Ordinance

- The purpose of this section is to establish requirements for the proper disposal of pet solid waste in the City of Mendota so as to protect public health, safety and welfare, and to prescribe penalties for failure to comply.
- Requirement for disposal. All pet owners and keepers are required to immediately and properly dispose of their pet's solid waste deposited on any property, public or private, not owned or possessed by that person.
- Exemptions. Any owner or keeper who requires the use of a disability assistance animal shall be exempt from the provisions of this section while such animal is being used for that purpose.
- Violations and penalties. Any person(s) who is found to have violated the provisions of this section shall be subject to a fine of no less than \$25 and no more than \$75.

Rural Mendota house destroyed by fire

MENDOTA—Fire totally destroyed a two-story house at 73 N. 43rd Road, Mendota, on Jan. 2. The Mendota Fire Department received the call at 8:31 a.m. and was on scene five minutes later. MABAS Box Alarm was activated to the second level.

Engines from Mendota, Troy Grove, LaSalle, Peru and Sublette were on scene, in addition to squads from Mendota and Troy Grove, tenders from Mendota, Troy Grove, Sublette, Compton, Earlville and LaMoille (two) and an ambulance from Peru EMS. Change of quarters was supplied by Oglesby with an engine and Amboy with an ambulance.

No cause of the fire has been determined. The Illinois State Fire Marshal was called and two investigators were sent to the scene.

ValCom and Ottawa MABAS Dispatch handled the calls.

Others that assisted were the Mendota Police Department and LaSalle County EMA for traffic control, Mendota Street Department, Otterbach Excavation, ComEd and Kurt Bruno, who supplied food and water to the personnel.

The last emergency unit cleared the scene at 3:19 p.m.

Make sure CO detectors are functioning

SPRINGFIELD - The Office of the State Fire Marshal warns residents across the state to pay special attention to the distinct signals sent by carbon monoxide alarms when their life has expired. Frequently, people may believe that a beep coming out of their CO means it's time for a battery change, when in fact it means that the device needs to be replaced.

"It is extremely important to pay attention to the different beeps that come out of a dead CO alarm. We want to ensure that our residents understand the difference in order to take immediate action and prevent a tragedy," said a spokesperson from the Illinois State Fire Marshal's office. "Carbon monoxide is known as the silent killer. The replacement of dead carbon monoxide detectors is also a life saver."

Since January 2007, it has been an Illinois law to have a properly functioning CO alarm in all dwelling units. The law requires that detectors must have battery power as the primary or secondary power supply. They cannot be solely electric powered. Many carbon monoxide detectors now in service were made prior to the incorporation of the new requirements and may not have an end-of-life signal.

Carbon monoxide is the number one cause of poisoning deaths in the nation, claiming approximately 300 lives a year, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Because CO is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas, it can kill people before they realize its presence. It can be produced by gas or oil appliances such as furnaces, clothes dryers, water heaters, ovens, space heaters or, in some cases, by fireplaces and wood-burning stoves.



OSFM advises consumers that if their CO alarms were manufactured before August 2009, prior to the incorporation of the new requirements, they may not have the end-of-life feature. In addition, residents who have a carbon monoxide detector installed for more than three years should look for the manufacturing date, which may be found on the outside back of the alarm or visit the company's website for further information. If none can be found, the device should be replaced without any hesitation.

Carbon monoxide alarms should be tested every month by pushing the test button. If the alarm goes off, follow the basic steps:

- If your CO detector activates, evacuate everyone from your home immediately leaving the door open for ventilation on your way out and then call 911.
- Do not re-enter until experts have investigated the problem and declared it safe to return.

Other important tips:

- Ensure that household appliances are installed and running correctly. Have a professional technician check fuel-burning appliances, furnaces, chimneys and vents at least annually for

blockages, corrosion, debris and faulty connections.

- Check appliances in the home that use natural gas, oil, wood and kerosene such as water heaters, clothes dryers, ranges, ovens, gas-powered refrigerators and pilot lights.
- Never operate unvented fuel-burning appliances in a room with closed doors or windows or in rooms where people are sleeping.
- Check venting systems to the outside for cracks and blockages such as flues, chimneys and fireplaces.
- Make sure space heaters are vented properly.
- Never operate generators indoors.
- Never burn charcoal inside a home, garage, vehicle or tent.
- Never use gasoline-powered tools and engines indoors.
- Never use gas-powered appliances such as an oven or clothes dryer for heating a home.
- Never leave a car running in an attached garage, even if the garage door is open.

For additional information about carbon monoxide poisoning, visit the OSFM webpage at www.sfm.illinois.gov or the National Fire Protection Association.

Snowmobile routes

MENDOTA – For those individuals who are operating snowmobiles throughout the city of Mendota, please obey all traffic laws and show respect for private and public property. Remember, routes are in the curb edge of the roadway only, not the shoulder, through yards or on sidewalks. Those found in violation will be subject to any and all applicable fines, including restitution for any damage done.

Designated snowmobile routes are as follows:

- Cherry Street from First Avenue west to Seventh Avenue
- Seventh Avenue from Cherry Street north to Fifth Street
- Fifth Street from Seventh Avenue east to alley between Seventh and Sixth avenues
- Alley between Seventh and Sixth avenues north to Seventh Street
- Seventh Street to Front Street
- Front Street north from Seventh to Eighth streets
- Eighth Street west crossing BNSF railroad tracks
- 15th Street from First Avenue west to Lincoln Avenue
- Lincoln Avenue from 15th Street south to 12th Street
- 12th Street from Lincoln Avenue west to E. Main Street
- E. Main Street from 12th Street north to Illinois Route 251
- Third Street from W. Seventh Avenue west to 12th Avenue
- 12th Avenue from Third Street south to Second Street
- Second Street from 12th Avenue west to 14th Avenue
- 14th Avenue from Second Street south to Division Street
- Division Street from 14th Avenue west to west city limits

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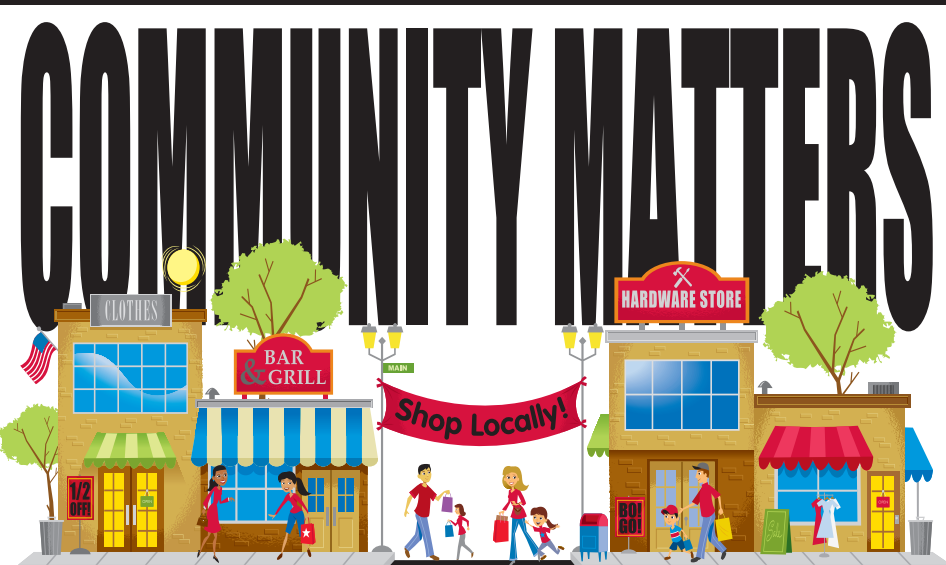
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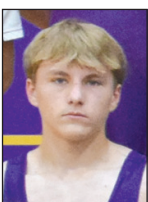


Mendota's Kennedy Knaff has her field goal attempt contested by Emily Sachs of Amboy on Jan. 3 at the MHS gym. (Reporter photo)

MHS grapplers top 2 of 3 opponents

Mendota beat two of three opponents in the Kewanee Wrestling Quad on Jan. 4 at Kewanee.

The Trojans edged Putnam County-Hall, 36-30. Komen Denault and Gavin Evans pinned their opponents for the Trojans, while forfeit wins went to Gavin Stevenson, Adrian Arteaga, Jayleen Jordan and Delila Kent.



Evans

The Trojans picked up a 29-15 victory over Somonauk. Evans recorded the only pin for Mendota, while Denault dominated his opponent for a 17-1 triumph. Forfeit victories went to Stevenson, Arteaga and Kent.

The host Boilers posted a 58-11 win over the Trojans. Evans got his third pin of the night for Mendota and Stevenson rolled over his foe, 19-4.

Jan. 4 @ Kewanee
Mendota 36, Putnam County-Hall 30
106 – double forfeit; 113 – Lindas (PCH) won forfeit; 120 – Gavin Ste-

venson (M) won forfeit; 126 – Adrian Arteaga (M) won forfeit; 132 – Jayleen Jordan (M) won forfeit; 138 – Komen Denault (M) pinned Finley (PCH), 0:18; 144 – double forfeit; 150 – Bouxsein (PCH) pinned Cole Kleckner (M), 2:44; 157 – double forfeit; 165 – Gavin Evans (M) pinned Scribner (PCH), 1:10; 175 – Delila Kent (M) won forfeit; 190 – Tucker (PCH) pinned Aaron Torres (M), 0:40; 215 – Irwin (PCH) won forfeit; 285 – J. Irwin (PCH) won forfeit;

Mendota 29, Somonauk 15
106 – double forfeit; 113 – double forfeit; 120 – Stevenson (M) won forfeit; 126 – Arteaga (M) won forfeit; 132 – Denault (M) dec. Haggerty (S), 17-1; 138 – Stenzel (S) pinned Jordan (M), 2:34; 144 – double forfeit; 150 – Daniels (S) pinned Kleckner (M), 3:15; 157 – Evans (M) pinned Campbell (S), 1:15; 165 – double forfeit; 175 – Kent (M) won forfeit; 190 – double forfeit; 215 – Orr (S) dec. Torres (M), 7-6; 285 – double forfeit

Kewanee 58, Mendota 11
106 – double forfeit; 113 – K. Edens

(K) won forfeit; 120 – Stevenson (M) dec. T. Edens (K), 19-4; 126 – Vancil (K) pinned Arteaga (M), 0:23; 132 – Greenhagin (K) dec. Denault (M), 12-2; 138 – Lane (K) won forfeit; 144 – Dontell (K) won forfeit; 150 – Taylor (K) pinned Kleckner (M), 1:03; 157 – Evans (M) pinned Johnson (K), 3:04; 165 – Mitchell (K) won forfeit; 175 – LaFalette (K) won forfeit; 190 – Swearingen (K) pinned Torres (M), 0:44; 215 – Sanchez (K) won forfeit; 285 – double forfeit

The Mendota girls' wrestling team participated in the Ottawa Girls' Tournament on Dec. 30.

The tournament was divided into three divisions – junior varsity, varsity and elite. All of the four girls competing for Mendota wrestled in the elite division.

Delila Kent finished in third place in the 170-pound weight class and Jayleen Jordan took fourth place in the 130-pound division. Laina Gonzales and Hayden Senders also wrestled for Mendota and each won one match.

L-P, Amboy post wins over MHS

❑ Cold shooting plagues Lady Trojans

LaSalle-Peru poured it on from the opening tip and cruised to a 66-20 win over Mendota in varsity girls' basketball action on Jan. 2 at the L-P gym.

The Lady Cavs scored 20 points in each of the first two quarters to open a 40-11 halftime cushion. The home team led 57-17 with one quarter to play.

"We forgot our defense and energy from 2024," stated Mendota coach John Hansen. "Hopefully we get a couple of our players back as soon as possible and that energy we've had all year returns, because it just wasn't here tonight."

Ella Coss led Mendota with seven points and Karson Doyle paced the team with six rebounds.

The Lady Trojans connected on just 15 percent of their field goal attempts and 36 percent of their free throws.

Mendota and Amboy played for the second time in a week and the Lady Clippers prevailed again, 51-29, on Jan. 3 at the MHS gym.

The Lady Trojans were slow out of the gate, putting up just five points in the first quarter compared to 17 for Amboy. Mendota matched its five points in the second period while the Lady Clippers scored nine to take a 26-10 halftime lead.

Mendota was able to cut into the deficit with an 8-4 third quarter as Laylie Denault scored six of the eight points for the Lady Trojans and Amboy got just a pair of buckets from Jillian Anderson, but the Lady Clippers exploded for 21 fourth-quarter points to win going away. Amboy's Addison Pertell tallied seven of her 10 points in the final frame.

"We could not hit a shot tonight," noted Hansen. "We played well considering that. We could've lost by 50, but showed up elsewhere to make up for the poor shooting."

Mendota hit 12 of 46 (26 percent) shots from the field, including just two of 18 from three-point range.

Ava Eddy topped the scoring chart for Mendota with nine points. She also had six rebounds and three steals. Denault added six points, four rebounds and three steals, while Cassie Gonzalez hauled down eight rebounds and had six blocked shots, and Ella Martin collected four boards.

Anderson paced Amboy with 11 points. Tyrah Vaessen and Emily Sachs chipped in with eight points apiece for the Lady Clippers.

LaSALLE-PERU 66, MENDOTA 20				
Mendota (20)				
	FG	FT	Reb	TP
Eddy	1	1-2	3	3
Knaff	1	1-2	1	3
Coss	2	2-4	0	7
Martin	0	0-0	2	0
Denault	1	0-0	2	3
Freeman	0	0-0	2	0
Doyle	0	1-4	6	1
Strouss	1	0-2	0	3
Totals	6	5-14	16	20

LaSalle-Peru (66)				
	FG	FT	Fls	TP
Aguirre	1	1-2	0	4
Jereb	5	0-0	2	12
Hines	2	0-0	2	5
Frederick	4	1-2	2	9
Sines	1	0-0	3	2
Shetterly	2	0-0	0	5
Kawiecki	3	0-0	1	6
Depenbrock	2	1-2	0	5
Ruppert	6	6-6	0	18
Totals	26	9-12	10	66

SCORE BY QUARTERS				
Mendota	5	11	17	20
LaSalle-Peru	20	40	57	66
Three-point goals: Mendota - Coss 1, Denault 1, Strouss 1; LaSalle-Peru - Aguirre 1, Jereb 2, Hines 1, Shetterly 1				

AMBOY 51, MENDOTA 29				
Amboy (51)				
	FG	FT	Fls	TP
Vaessen	3	1-2	1	8
Pertell	3	2-4	2	10
Anderson	5	1-2	2	11
Wells	1	0-0	0	2
Sachs	2	4-4	1	8
McLaughlin	3	0-0	1	6
Yanos	2	1-2	0	5
Parker	0	1-2	0	1
Totals	19	10-16	7	51

Mendota (29)				
	FG	FT	Reb	TP
Eddy	3	1-2	6	9
Knaff	1	1-2	1	3
Coss	2	0-0	1	4
Martin	1	1-2	4	3
Denault	3	0-0	4	6
Gonzalez	2	0-0	8	4
Reddin	0	0-0	2	0
Totals	12	3-6	26	29

SCORE BY QUARTERS				
Amboy	17	26	30	51
Mendota	5	41	18	29
Three-point goals: Mendota - Eddy 2; Amboy - Vaessen 1, Pertell 2				



Laylie Denault of Mendota drives in for a shot as Amboy's Addison Pertell defends on Jan. 3 at the MHS gym. (Reporter photo)

'89 & '90 Trojan hoop teams to be celebrated on Jan. 11th

MENDOTA – Mendota High School will be celebrating the 1989 state team and the 1990 supersectional team on Saturday, Jan. 11 against LaSalle-Peru at the Mendota High School gymnasium.

The players and coaches will be announced between the junior varsity and varsity games. Varsity tipoff is at 3 p.m. A celebration will be held at the Elks after the game.

Members of the 1989 team were Joel Perez, Grant Rogers, Gary Barrera, Rob Daugherty, Marc Bond, Scott Aughenbaugh, Brian Schmidt, Scott Lauer, Kyle Piller, Chris Howe, David Young, Jim King, Dan Bohn, Kyle Schoenholz, Steve Hanson, Tony McLaughlin, Geoff Bond and Brian Possley. Managers were Al Rich and Tim Collings. Coaches were Mike Kilmartin and Mike Wasmer.

Members of the 1990 team were Rob Daugherty, Todd Whitmore, Gary Barrera, Joel Perez, Greg Jansen, David Stuckey, Matt Andruniak, Scott Lauer, Jim Meiers, Kyle Schoenholz, Skip Truty, Brian Sawin, Kyle Piller, Jason Jones, and Bill Snyder. Managers were Jose Delao, Brian Basil and Aaron Eddy. Coaches were Mike Kilmartin, Mike Wasmer, George Pohl and Mike McKeague.

Waterfowl hunting season underscores important role wetlands play in outdoor recreation economy

CHICAGO – Wetlands, like marshes and swamps, are a key part of Illinois' natural landscape and serve as a critical rest stop for migrating ducks and geese. That makes wetlands an important part of the state's outdoor recreation industry and economy as waterfowl hunting season runs from November through mid-January through much of the state.

"Waterfowl hunting is a big business in Illinois, but it wouldn't be that way without the many wetlands that dot our state providing a pristine backdrop for late fall and early winter hunting," said Randy Smith, Illinois River project director for The Nature Conservancy. "Without these wetlands, less money will be spent at small town diners, gas stations and outfitters, which hurts rural economies across the state."

According to a 2022 report issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, duck hunters spend as much as \$1.6 billion nationwide at small businesses throughout the hunting season on things like gas, meals and ammunition. A 2016 study by the University of Illinois found that for every duck or goose harvested in Illinois, \$453 is generated for the local economy.

Wetlands also play a key role in absorbing and filtering nutrients and sediments, as well as reducing erosion and preventing flooding.



"Wetlands come in all shapes and sizes, from swampy to dry and grassy or brushy and even forested, but they all play incredibly important roles for nature, including acting as a nature-based solution to filter runoff from farm fields and providing a habitat for insects, amphibians and migrating songbirds and waterfowl," said TNC Illinois Executive Director Georgie Geraghty. "Unfortunately, this vital ecosystem is under threat after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling early last year removed federal protections for some wetlands and small streams." Illinois introduced legis-

lation in the spring of 2024 to ensure these wetlands remain protected but was not acted on before the Illinois General Assembly adjourned in November. Illinois has already lost 90% of its wetlands since the 1800s and can't afford to lose more. That's why The Nature Conservancy, along with several other conservation organizations, are encouraging the Legislature to take up the issue in the new year and restore protections that have existed for decades and protect wetlands and the nature-based and economic benefits they bring to small towns throughout the state. "We're hopeful lawmak-

ers can get their ducks in a row during the next legislative session to protect wetlands, which is a win for both people and nature," Geraghty said.

The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, TNC works to create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to the world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. Learn more online at nature.org/Illinois and connect with us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok.

SPORTS

BOWLING

Monday Night Mixed League

Standings as of Dec. 30 – 1. Bad Kats 9-1; 2. The Struggle is Real 5.5-4.5; 3. CM Farm 5-5; 4. Leagal Beagles 4.5-5.5; 5. Ramer Inc. 4-6; 6. Split Happens 2-8

High team game (scratch) – Split Happens 713, Ramer Inc. 705, Leagal Beagles 659

High team game (hdcp) – Bad Kats 979, Ramer Inc. 968, The Struggle is Real 967

High team series (scratch) – Split Happens 2111, Ramer Inc. 1969, Leagal Beagles 1868

High team series (hdcp) – The Struggle is Real 2813, Split Happens 2765, Ramer Inc. 2758

Men's high game (scratch) – Aaron Holocker 207, Matt Ramer 193, Brendan Ramer 181

Men's high game (hdcp) – Aaron Holocker 273, Brendan Ramer 251, Bob Moench Jr. 233

Men's high series (scratch) – Matt Ramer 548, Aaron Holocker 538, Brendan Ramer 523

Men's high series (hdcp) – Aaron Holocker 736, Brendan Ramer 733, Bob Moench Jr. 682

Women's high game (scratch) – Gail Sessler 256, Jessica Robinson 224, Hannah Westphal 200

Women's high game (hdcp) – Gail Sessler 306, Sarah Westphal 285, Stephanie Ramer & Jessica Robinson 278

Women's high series (scratch) – Jessica Robinson 642, Gail Sessler 581, Emily Thomas 518

Women's high series (hdcp) – Jessica Robinson 804, Sarah Westphal 753, Audrey Holocker 748



Mendota's Ella Martin, back left, and Elaina Reddin leap for the ball along with Amboy players Jillian Anderson, left, and Gloria Parker on Jan. 3 at the MHS gym. (Reporter photo)

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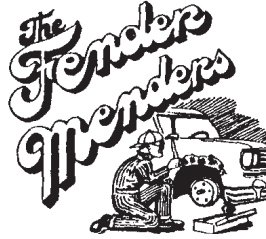


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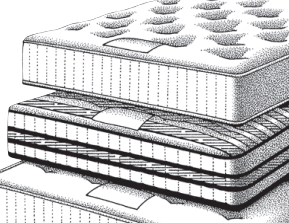
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ENTERTAINMENT

Celebrity Extra

By Dana Jackson

Q: Who is the actress who plays Maddie in the “Sonic” movies? I swear she used to be on a soap opera when she was younger, but I can’t remember her character’s name. -- *K.I.*

A: She’s Tika Sumpter, and she honed her acting skills playing Layla Williamson on the ABC soap “One Life to Live” from 2006-2011. She went on to land regular roles on “Gossip Girl,” “Mixed-ish,” and “The Haves and the Have Nots” before being cast in the hit franchise “Sonic.”

Sumpter isn’t the only former soap star in “Sonic 3.” Shemar Moore and Sofia Pernas both got their starts on CBS’s “The Young and the Restless.”

Q: What ever happened to Rob Lowe’s show “9-1-1 Lone Star”? I thought it got really high ratings. -- *L.L.*

A: Despite being Fox’s second-highest-rated series during the first half of 2023, the Ryan-Murphy-produced series “9-1-1: Lone Star” was given the axe. Its fifth and final season began airing this past September. The show will return on Jan. 20 for three more weeks before bidding

a final farewell. According to an article in Variety, the decision to cancel the series “wasn’t due to lack of enthusiasm for the show. Instead, it was a matter of business logistics.”

According to Murphy, he loved the show, but “the financials just didn’t work. It’s a Disney company that was on a Fox network, and it just was never going to work.” This mismatch was the result of Disney’s acquisition of 21st Century Fox, which included the 20th Century Fox film and TV studios but excluded the Fox network. “The arrangement was less than ideal,” according to Variety.

The announcement was another blow for Lowe in 2024, whose other series “Unstable,” a comedy on Netflix co-starring his son, John Owen Lowe, was also canceled. Fortunately, he has a new pet project to focus on, a possible sequel to the ‘80s classic “St. Elmo’s Fire.” Interest began stirring among its cast members, including Demi Moore, after the airing of the Hulu documentary “Brats.” The process has been slow so far, but Lowe says it’s because they’re searching for the right script.

The film’s director, Joel Schumacher, passed away in 2020.

Q: When is the “Georgie & Mandy” sitcom coming back? I know that like most shows, it’s taking a break during the holidays, but I hope it’s not a long one. -- *J.W.*

A: The “Young Sheldon” spin-off sitcom “Georgie & Mandy’s First Marriage” will return to CBS with new episodes beginning Jan. 30. With February being a big ratings “sweeps” month, look for some of your favorite “Sheldon” cast members to appear, including Georgie’s mom, Mary, played by Zoe Perry, and Pastor Jeff, played by Matt Hobby.

So far, Sheldon himself (Iain Armitage) hasn’t returned, but perhaps they could be saving it for the season finale. The show is a hit, so there will be plenty of opportunities in future seasons for some of the core “Sheldon” cast to pop up as guest stars or recurring characters.

Send me your questions at NewCelebrityExtra@gmail.com, or write me at KFWS, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

By Tony Rizzo

HOLLYWOOD -- Austin Butler’s just completed the black comedy “Eddington”



Kravitz

with Pedro Pascal and Emma Stone. He is now shooting the crime thriller “Caught Stealing”

with Zoë Kravitz, Regina King, Matt Smith, Liev Schreiber and Bad Bunny. Kravitz (Catwoman in “The Batman,” opposite Robert Pattinson) recently directed “Blink Twice,” with her ex-paramour Channing Tatum, plus Christian Slater, Simon Rex, Kyle MacLachlan and Geena Davis. It opened in late August 2024 and grossed a modest \$46.4 million against its \$20 million cost. “The Batman 2,” again with Pattinson, is now slated for 2027. “The Batman” (2022) cost \$200 million and grossed \$773 million.

Director Luca Guadagnino (whose “Queer” movie starring Daniel Craig has only grossed \$3.2 million against 48 million euros) recently cast Butler as Patrick Bateman in his remake

Hollywood

of “American Psycho” (the original starred Christian Bale in 2000). Guadagnino says that it’s not a remake but a new adaptation. Is Butler ready for such a demanding role?

Tom Holland’s “Spider-Man: No Way Home” (2021) cost \$200 million and grossed \$1.952 billion. Obviously, Holland’s chemistry with his off-screen paramour, Zendaya, transferred very well to the big screen. Add Benedict Cumberbatch, Jon Favreau, Jamie Foxx, Willem Dafoe, Marisa Tomei, Andrew Garfield and Tobey Maguire to the mix, and we had an acting fest! But what will the on-screen chemistry be when Spider-Man meets Elvis as Holland and Austin Butler square off in “American Speed” for Amazon MGM Studios?

The top-grossing film in Italy that even beat “Wicked” and “Gladiator II” at the box office was “The Boy With Pink Pants.” It tells the story of 15-year-old Andrea Spezzacatena (played by Samuele Carrino), who committed suicide after enduring bullying at school and online. The film explores the real story

behind Italy’s first publicized case of online bullying that led to the suicide of a minor.

Apparently, teens and families turned out in hordes to see the film, and the repeated business of teens, who’ve seen it four or five times, have driven up the grosses. (Much like our teens in the United States who see comic book epics multiple times.)

Equally depressing is the upcoming film from Barry Levinson with David Mamet’s screenplay about John F. Kennedy’s assassination. It stars Oscar winners Jared Leto, Al Pacino, Jessica Chastain and Brendan Fraser, as well as Oscar nominee Bryan Cranston. The only way they can make this different from the slew of JFK conspiracy films we’ve had before is to make it a musical!

While the film “Barbie” didn’t gross as much as “Spider-Man” (it only grossed \$1.446 billion), it nonetheless sent Barbie doll sales soaring. Mattel calculates that the revenue because of “Barbie” was a whopping \$125 million, up 14% from their usual earnings. Will there be a “Barbie 2,” or will it be “Just Ken”?

Strange But True

By Lucie Winborne

* Shonda Rhimes got the idea for the TV series “Grey’s Anatomy” after a doctor told her how hard it was to shave her legs in the tiny hospital shower.

* The first Hershey’s chocolate bars with almonds were produced in 1908 because they were cheap to make. The nuts took the place of some of the more expensive milk chocolate, which meant Hershey’s could keep the price of the candy at a nickel.

* A website called Myfridgefood.com lets you enter whatever ingredients you have in your fridge and tells you what you can make with them.

* One of the reasons your lungs feel refreshed when walking through a pine forest is because of an anti-inflammatory compound called a-Pinene, found in conifers. It is used as a bronchodilator in the treatment of asthma and is abundantly present in marijuana.

* An estimated 10% of Europeans are immune to HIV infection because they have an ancestor who survived bubonic plague, or “Black Death.”

* The Hardy Tree in London’s St. Pancras churchyard is named for Thomas Hardy. The Victorian author worked at the burial ground in the 1860s and rearranged tombstones around the base of an ash tree to make room for a railway expansion.

* If you’re a man and pee on a pregnancy test and it’s positive, you could have cancer.

* Because of the amount of granite in its construction, Grand Central Station produces more radiation than is allowable at a nuclear power plant.

* In India, a statue of Jesus had “holy” water mysteriously dripping from its toes, which worshipers would collect and sometimes drink. A man traced the fluid’s source to a clogged toilet behind the wall, condensing on the statue.

S	V	H	S	E	N	N	E	O	N	S
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Solution time: 23 mins.

Answers

King Crossword

• Trivia Test •

1. TELEVISION: Which popular spinoff series originated with the drama “Breaking Bad”?
2. HOLIDAYS: What is another name for Three Kings Day, celebrated on Jan. 6?
3. LANGUAGE: What does the Latin phrase “bona fide” mean?
4. MOVIES: In the movie “Babe,” what kind of animal is the title character?
5. MEASUREMENTS: How many grams are in a kilogram?
6. GEOGRAPHY: Which strait separates Saudi Arabia from Africa?
7. SCIENCE: What are the three layers that make up the Earth?
8. FOOD & DRINK: Which breakfast food is associated

with the retro series “Stranger Things”?

9. MEDICAL: What is the common name for muscae volitantes?

10. LITERATURE: Which poet wrote a six-volume biography of President Abraham Lincoln?

Answers

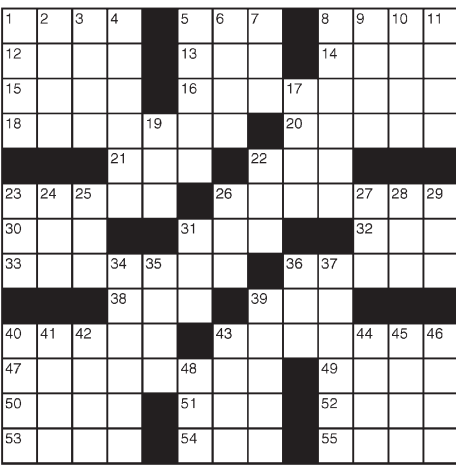
1. “Better Call Saul.”
2. Epiphany.
3. “Good faith.”
4. Pig.
5. 1,000.
6. Bab-el-Mandeb.
7. Crust, mantle and core.
8. Eggo waffles.
9. Eye floaters.
10. Carl Sandburg.

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Screen star Lamarr
- 5 Abrupt turn
- 8 Wild party
- 12 Half a sextet
- 13 Equi-
- 14 Tennis great Arthur
- 15 Crystal-tapping sound
- 16 Solicit
- 18 Funnel-shaped bloom
- 20 Herrings' cousins
- 21 Squaler
- 22 Chemical suffix
- 23 Montana city
- 26 Scare badly
- 30 Buckeyes' sch.
- 31 Tibetan bovine
- 32 “Ulalume” writer
- 33 Dress store section
- 36 Broadway duds
- 38 Cat doc
- 39 Life story
- 40 Madonna role
- 43 “Cutie,” e.g.
- 47 Peevish
- 49 Actor Jannings



- 50 “No —!” (“Sure thing!”)
- 51 Quibble
- 52 Sandwich option
- 53 “Auld Lang —”
- 54 Away from SSW
- 55 Ladies of Spain (Abbr.)

DOWN

- 1 URL opener
- 2 Toledo’s lake
- 3 Force
- 4 Dairy case buy
- 5 “Hush!”
- 6 On the Aegean, say
- 7 Inherited
- 8 Tub user
- 9 China setting
- 10 Not barefoot
- 11 Coop group
- 17 “— it Romantic?”
- 19 Scot’s refusal
- 22 “A spider!”
- 23 Jazzy style
- 24 Exploit
- 25 Boy king
- 26 Mas’ mates
- 27 Wall St. debut
- 28 Dandy guy
- 29 “You bet!”
- 31 However
- 34 ICU hookup
- 35 Pond duck
- 36 In shape
- 37 Hermits
- 39 Davis of “Jezebel”
- 40 Actor Omar
- 41 Quite
- 42 Lay — the line
- 43 Nabokov novel
- 44 Love god
- 45 “— 18” (Uris novel)
- 46 Right angles
- 48 Raggedy doll

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Weekly SUDOKU

	6			3			8	7
2		3					6	1
	8		6			9		2
	5			7		3	9	
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Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging ♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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3	7	9	6	1	5	8	2	4
4	1	2	9	8	3	6	7	5
6	5	8	7	2	4	1	3	9
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1	9	8	7	6	7	3	4	2
7	4	1	3	5	2	5	9	6

Answer

Weekly SUDOKU

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Couch Theater

“Wicked” (PG) -- Universal Pictures’ investment in adapting the Broadway musical “Wicked” paid off big time, with the first part of their two-part saga garnering \$586.3 million at the box office at the time of this writing. Director Jon M. Chu (“Crazy Rich Asians”) assembled the perfect cast to bring the musical to life, including Cynthia Erivo as Elphaba, Ariana Grande as Glinda/Glinda, and Jonathan Bailey as Fiyero. Now viewers at home can get whisked away to the magical Land of Oz through the film’s beautiful visual effects and iconic songs like “The Wizard and I” and “Dancing Through Life.” Keep a close eye out for Idina Menzel and Kristin Chenoweth, both of the actresses who originated the roles of Elphaba and Glinda in the original production. (Amazon Prime Video)

“Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl” (PG) -- Those of us who were kids during the 2000s remember the comical shenanigans of Wallace and his dog, Gromit, in the film “The Curse of the Were-Rabbit” (2005). Almost 20 years later, the

stop-motion animation studio Aardman Animations decided to develop a second feature-length film about their much-beloved characters. In “Vengeance Most Fowl,” Wallace is still hard at work with his inventions, much to Gromit’s dismay, and creates a robotic gnome that can take care of gardens.

However, the imprisoned penguin criminal Feathers McGraw, who was once captured by Wallace and Gromit, chooses this robotic gnome as his opportunity to exact revenge on his foes. Check it out now. (Netflix)

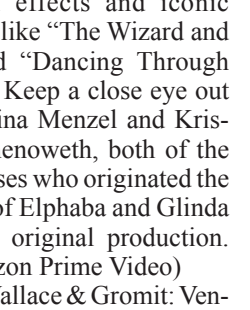
“The Front Room” (R) -- Singer/actress Brandy Norwood (“Descendants: The Rise of Red”) is making her return to movies, and this psychological horror film directed by the Eggers Brothers was a solid attempt to get her feet wet again. Norwood plays pregnant anthropology professor Belinda, whose emotional baggage is only further weighed down by her and her husband Norman’s (Andrew Burnap) financial woes. So, when Norman’s estranged stepmother, Solange (Kathryn Hunter), offers them an inheritance

in exchange for taking care of her during her final days, the couple jumps at the chance to get their lives back on track. But Solange has a deeply rooted history of religious abuse and racism that comes bubbling to the surface as Belinda gets closer to giving birth. Out now. (Max)

“The Golden Globe Awards” (TV-PG) -- Comedian Nikki Glaser hosts this year’s Golden Globe Award ceremony, which is out now to stream after airing live on Jan. 5. The musical “Emilia Perez” starring Zoe Saldana leads the film nominations, followed by “The Brutalist” with Adrien Brody and “Conclave” with Ralph Fiennes. For the television nominations, the hit Hulu series “The Bear” continues to reign, followed by “Shogun” and “Only Murders in the Building.” Viola Davis will be recognized with the Cecil B. DeMille Award, and Ted Danson will receive the Carol Burnett Award, although neither will be presented during the official ceremony. (Paramount+)

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RELIGION

Put your faith in action & fulfill your purpose in life

God loves you and He has a good plan for your life. You are a wonderful creation made by God, and you have a unique purpose to fulfill in this world. Ephesians 2:10 (AMPC) says that as Christians, “we are God’s [own] handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made

ready for us to live].” It’s so exciting to know we are each created with a purpose and God has a good life that He has prepared in advance for us to live. But it’s important to understand that we have an enemy, Satan, who wants to keep us from having the life Jesus died to give us. Yes, Satan has a plan for us, too, and his plan is destruction and death. John 10:10 (AMPC) says the enemy “comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full,

till it overflows).” The good news is, we have everything we need through Christ to overcome the enemy. We just have to know who we are in Christ (who the Bible says we are through our relationship with Him), believe that we have His authority, and know how to release the power God has given us. Faith in God is required for us to release the power and authority we have in Christ. Romans 12:3 (NASB) says, “...God has allotted to each a measure of faith.” This means God has given you enough faith to do His will, whatever it may be and no matter what the enemy throws at you to stop you.

There are many challenges and difficult situations we have to face in life. You may have a child with special needs to care for, or maybe you’re in a difficult marriage. You could be facing a devastating illness or have serious financial problems. Whatever your situation is, God has given you everything you need, through Christ, to keep you moving forward in His plan for your life.

We need to always remember that God is greater than our problems—nothing is too hard for Him and nothing catches Him by surprise. When we’re going through hard times and the enemy is attacking us, we don’t need to ask, “What can I do?” The question is, “What can God do?” The Word says



all things are possible with God, and greater is He who lives in me than he who is in the world (Matthew 19:26; 1 John 4:4).

I want you to really get this in your heart today: Through Christ, you have enough faith and the strength you need to do whatever you need to do in life! Get rid of “I can’t” thinking and focus on the truth of God’s Word, which says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!” (Philippians 4:13.)

Prayer is a simple, powerful way to interrupt Satan’s plan because we release our faith through prayer. We need to learn to pray our way through the day; 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (AMPC) says, “Be unceasing in prayer [praying perseveringly].” This basically means prayer can be as natural as breathing, and our first response in every situation. It’s so amazing that we can talk to God all the time.

Now the enemy doesn’t want us to pray, so he will do everything he can to discourage us. He wants us to think prayer is hard, that we need to use eloquent speech and sound poetic, that we need to be

careful what we ask God for so we don’t overload Him with too many requests, or that we have to be in a certain place with a certain posture (on our knees, head bowed, eyes closed) for God to hear us. But it’s actually simple to pray effectively.

James 5:16 (AMPC) says, “...The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working].” God wants you to come to Him honestly, with a sincere heart, and just talk to Him as a friend. Be yourself and don’t approach conversation with God as a religious activity. Humble yourself before Him and open your heart to Him. He loves you and wants you to walk in His will for your life victoriously.

As a believer in Jesus Christ, you are God’s child and He is with you. He will never leave you or forsake you. He is the Almighty God, and if God is for you—if He is on your side—who can be against you?

In Christ, you have what you need today to live in victory. All you need to do is believe it and do what

God is showing you to do in His Word and as He speaks to your heart. Put your faith in God constantly. Pray, take God-inspired action, and fulfill your true purpose in life! ***

For more on this topic, order Joyce’s four-part teaching resource How to Release God’s Power in Your Life. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, Enjoying Everyday Life, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting www.joycemeyer.org

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 140 books, including BATTLEFIELD OF THE MIND and OVERCOMING EVERY PROBLEM (FaithWords). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www.joycemeyer.org

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LEGAL NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice is hereby given that on December 18, 2024 a certificate was filed in the Office of the County Clerk of LaSalle County, Illinois, setting forth the names and post-office addresses of all persons owning, conducting and transacting the business known as Danny's Wash & Wax located at 516 Lundy Street Stretator, IL. 61364.

Dated: December 18, 2024. Daniel Lynch Applicant.

No. 0101

(Jan. 1, 8 and 15, 2025)

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

NO: 2022-JA-01

TO: Jason Miller, Unknown Fathers, other interested parties, and to All Whom It May Concern:

Take notice that on the 25th day of October, 2024, a petition to terminate your parental rights was filed under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987 by David A. Greer, in the Circuit Court of LaSalle County entitled 'In the interest of Kevin Bruce Miller, a minor', and that in the Criminal Justice Center Courtroom 223 at Ottawa on the 26th day of February, 2025, at the hour of 11:00 a.m., or as soon thereafter as this cause may be heard, a Termination Hearing will be held upon the petition to have the child declared a ward of the court under that Act. The Court has authority in this proceeding to take from you the custody and guardianship of the minor, to terminate your parental rights and to appoint a guardian with power to consent to adoption. You may lose all parental rights to your child. If the petition requests the termination of your parental rights and the appointment of a guardian with power to consent to adoption, you may lose all parental rights to the child.

You are entitled to have an attorney represent you at all stages of these proceedings. If you are financially unable to afford a private attorney, the court will appoint an attorney for you.

Unless you appear you will not be entitled to further written notices or publication notices of the proceedings in this case, including the filing of an amended petition or a motion to terminate parental rights.

Now, unless you appear at the hearing and show cause against the petition, the allegations of the petition may stand admitted as against you and an order or judgment entered.

Dated December 23, 2024.

Greg Vaccaro, Clerk

No. 0102

(Jan. 1, 8 and 15, 2025)

PUBLIC NOTICE

A notice of guardianship of Billie Marie Belcher Gamboa, a minor, to the parents Rebecca Belcher and Lupe Gamboa. A petition has been filed for guardianship by Dawn Belcher.

The case number 24GR454 has been filed at the Will County Courthouse. A public hearing will be held at River Valley Justice Center 3208 W McDonough St Joliet, IL 60432 Room 2 February 4, 2025 at 9 am No. 0103

(Jan. 1, 8, 15 and 22, 2025)

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LEGAL NOTICE

This publication does not knowingly accept fraudulent or deceptive advertising. Readers are cautioned to thoroughly investigate all ads, especially those asking for money in advance.

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BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

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FINANCIAL

NOTICE Advance Fee Loans or Credit Offers Companies that do business by phone can't ask you to pay for credit before you get it. For more information, call toll-free 1-877-FTC-HELP. A public service message from your hometown newspaper and the Federal Trade Commission.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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DOMESTIC/CHILD CARE

NO INDIVIDUAL, unless licensed or holding a permit as a childcare facility, may cause to be published any advertisement soliciting a child care service. A childcare facility that is licensed or operating under a permit issued by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services may publish advertisements of the services for which it is specifically licensed

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HELP WANTED

ROCHELLE

News-Leader

Part-time local delivery driver

The Rochelle News-Leader has an opening for a part-time newspaper bundle delivery driver who would load and deliver bundles to the post office, store racks and machines.

The daytime deliveries would be two or three days per week (including weekends) and consist of approximately 4-5 hours per shift depending on the route usually 10-15 hours per week.

Applicants must be at least 18 years old, possess a valid driver's license, proof of insurance and a safe driving record. Drivers will use company vehicles when delivering, and will be trained on the respective routes.

Candidates must be able to load, unload and carry multiple bundles of 5 to 10 pounds each. Driver applicants must be reliable, personable and have a general knowledge of area streets and roads.

This position is perfect for someone looking to supplement their income or retirement.

Interested individuals must fill out an application in person at the Rochelle News-Leader office at 211 Hwy. 38 E., Rochelle.

No phone calls please.

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601

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2022 Chevy 1500 Crew Cab LTE 4x4 Z71, 50K Miles, White, GM Certified, 1-owner, leather interior, heated/cooled seats, bedliner, running boards & More!

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2023 Chevy Trailblazer AWD ACTIV, Sunroof, Loaded, 46K Miles, Yellow..\$24,900	2019 Chevy 1500 Crew Cab LT 4x4 Z71, 29K Miles, Red.....\$33,900
2022 Chevy 1500 Crew Cab LTZ, 4x4 Z71, 50K Miles, White.....\$42,900	

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2022 Chevy Equinox Premier, AWD, Loaded, Blue, 92K Miles\$19,900	2019 Chevy Equinox Premier, AWD, 111K Miles, Pepperdust.....\$15,900
2021 Chevy Traverse LT, AWD, Silver, 102K Miles\$23,900	2018 Chevy 1500 Crew Cab LTZ, Z71 4x4, 6.2L, 95K Miles, Maroon.....\$31,900
2020 Chevy Colorado Crew Cab 4x4 Z71, Red, 86K Miles\$23,900	2018 Chevy Equinox AWD LT, 35K Miles, Pepperdust.....\$16,900

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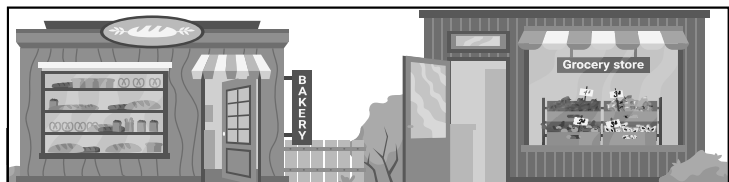
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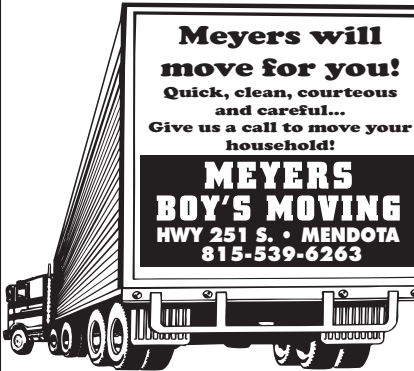
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MONEY MATTERS



Tips to avoid falling into debt

Avoiding debt is a key to long-term financial stability. However, data from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York indicates households throughout the United States began 2024 with a record high of \$17.3 trillion of debt. Debt also is a problem in Canada, where a recent survey from NerdWallet found that 55 percent of Canadians had credit card debt, which marked a 12 percent increase from the previous year. Perhaps even more telling is that 51 percent of survey respondents indicated they expect it will take them six months or more to pay off their credit card debt.

Debt may seem unavoidable in a time marked by high inflation, when the cost of everything from groceries to entertainment has increased significantly. Thankfully, various strategies can help individuals avoid falling into debt.

- Prioritize an emergency fund. Unforeseen expenses, whether it's major auto repairs or unexpected medical bills, can quickly land consumers in financial hot water. In fact, a recent survey from the Kaiser Family Foundation found that more than half of all adults in the United States report going into debt in the previous five years due to medical or dental bills. Roughly one in five respondents indicate they don't ever anticipate paying off such debts. One way to avoid such a fate is to prioritize building an emergency fund that can be accessed whenever sizable, unforeseen expenses threaten to derail your finances. Resist any temptation to tap into an emergency fund during non-emergencies, and continue to grow the fund

with routine contributions each month.

- Utilize automatic transfers via your bank. Banks enable account holders to set up automatic transfers, which make it easier than ever to save money and thus avoid debt. Consumers can examine their finances and determine how much from each paycheck they can automatically transfer into a savings or retirement account. Once that number is determined, set up the transfers so you are not tempted to spend the money come payday.
- Build and maintain a good credit rating. A strong credit rating is advantageous for many reasons, not the least of which is the cost savings associated with such a reputation. When borrowing money for big-ticket items like homes and vehicles, individuals with high credit scores generally receive better lending terms, including lower interest rates. Over time, the money saved by earning a lower interest rate on a mortgage can equal tens of thousands of dollars, and those cost savings can help consumers avoid utilizing credit cards to pay for unforeseen expenses like home repairs or medical bills.
- Become a disciplined consumer. Online shopping has made it easier than ever to spend beyond one's means. A new wardrobe and expensive concert tickets are only a few mouse clicks away, and that accessibility can tempt consumers to spend beyond their means and accrue a substantial amount of debt. By resolving to remain a disciplined, savings-first consumer, individuals can avoid the pitfalls of debt.

Financial strategies to consider as retirement draws near

Freedom is often cited as a benefit of retirement. Many professionals look forward to the day when they retire and have more free time and the freedom to spend that time however they choose. Of course, the opportunity to spend retirement how one sees fit typically requires considerable financial freedom.

Financial planning for retirement is often emphasized to young professionals beginning their careers. But it's equally important that people on the cusp of retirement continue to look for ways to protect and grow their wealth. As retirement draws near, professionals can consider these strategies to ensure they have the financial freedom to make their golden years shine even brighter.

- Plan to grow your wealth in retirement. It's widely assumed that retirees need less income after calling it a career because the need to save for retirement is no longer present. However, some expenses, including health care, may rise in retirement, which underscores the need to continue growing your wealth. Cost-of-living also will increase over the course



of your retirement years, which highlights the need to keep growing wealth in retirement. It can be tricky to protect your existing retirement savings as you approach the end of your career while also growing that wealth, so it is best to work with a financial planner to navigate that situation.

- Maintain a mix with your investments. A model from the Schwab Center for Financial Research indicated that a hypothetical retiree with a \$2 million portfolio in year one of retirement will have slightly less than \$1 million left 30 years later if her portfolio maintains a mix of 60 percent stocks and 40 percent bonds and cash. The

model found that a second hypothetical investor with the same size portfolio in year one of retirement will run out of funds prior to year 29 if his portfolio is 20 percent stocks and 80 percent bonds and cash. Though conventional wisdom suggests limiting risk as retirement nears and eliminating it entirely upon retiring, modern retirees are living longer and may therefore need to maintain a mix of investments to ensure they don't outlive their money.

- Make the maximum allowable contributions. Many aging professionals may not have saved as much for retirement as they might have hoped to upon starting their careers decades ago. In fact, a

2024 survey from Prudential Financial found that many 55-year-olds have fallen far short of establishing the level of financial security they will need in retirement. The Prudential survey found that 55-year-olds had a median retirement savings of less than \$50,000, a number that falls considerably short of the recommended goal of having eight times one's annual income saved by this age. If that situation sounds familiar for professionals nearing retirement age, then now is the time to begin catching up. Make the maximum allowable contributions to a 401(k) plan (\$23,000 in 2024) and/or an IRA (\$7,000). In addition, the Internal Revenue Service notes that IRA catch-up contributions remained \$1,000 for individuals age 50 and over in 2024.

Retirement can provide a sense of freedom professionals have worked hard to achieve over the course of their careers. Some simple strategies can help professionals on the cusp of retirement achieve the financial freedom they'll need to enjoy their golden years to the fullest extent.

What distinguishes 3 popular retirement accounts from one another

Financial security in retirement is a goal worth pursuing, but it's one that a significant percentage of individuals feel is out of reach. According to a February 2024 report from the National Institute on Retirement Security, 55 percent of Americans are concerned they cannot achieve financial security in retirement.

Saving for retirement is an integral component of securing long-term financial security. There are many ways to save for retirement, and individual retirement accounts (IRAs) and employer-sponsored 401(k) plans are among the more popular ways investors build a nest egg for their golden years. IRAs and 401(k) plans differ in some notable ways, and recognition of what distinguishes these types of accounts can help people choose the right vehicle for them. When considering these vehicles, it's important to point out that contribution limits can change from year to year, so individuals can expect to increase their contributions in future years

if they hope to maximize the allowable amounts. The following breakdown, courtesy of a nationally known bank, notes some key differences between a traditional IRA, a Roth IRA and a 401(k).

Traditional IRA

Eligibility: Anyone with earned income is eligible to open a traditional IRA.

Funding: A traditional IRA can be funded with after-tax dollars or as tax-deductible contributions.

Contribution limits: \$7,000 annual limit in 2024, though individuals age 50 or older can contribute an additional \$1,000 if they choose to do so.

Employer match: None.

Investment selection: Account holders can choose their own investments.

Roth IRA

Eligibility: Individuals aspiring to open a Roth IRA are urged to speak with a financial planner or accountant, as certain contribution criteria and tax filing requirements must be fulfilled.

Funding: A Roth IRA is funded with after-tax dollars.

Contribution limits:



\$7,000 annual limit in 2024, though individuals age 50 or older can contribute an additional \$1,000 if they choose to do so.

Employer match: None.

Investment selection: Account holders can choose their own investments.

401(k)

Eligibility: Individuals are urged to speak with human resources professionals at their place of employment, as most employers have certain qualifications their workers must meet in order for them to participate in these plans. Those qualifications can vary between firms.

Funding: A 401(k) is funded with pre-tax dollars


deducted directly from participants' paychecks.

Contribution limits: The annual limit for 2024 is \$23,000, though participants age 50 and older can contribute an additional \$7,500.

Employer match: Some employers match employee contributions up to a certain percentage. Investopedia notes the average match was 4.5 percent in 2023.

Investment selection: Various portfolios may be offered, but those available are generally chosen by employers.


Individuals aspiring to create financial security in retirement are urged to consider investing via a 401(k) or a traditional or Roth IRA.

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