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LOCAL NEWS... LOCAL VIEWS WEDNESDAY, FEB. 26, 2025 \$1.25

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**Donation made to cancer fund**

Runnings in Rochelle made a donation to the Rochelle Community Hospital's All About Me Fund. **Page 9**

**WEATHER**

<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b>
<b>HIGH LOW</b>	<b>HIGH LOW</b>
<b>51 36</b>	<b>42 31</b>
<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b>
<b>HIGH LOW</b>	<b>HIGH LOW</b>
<b>54 29</b>	<b>40 26</b>

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**OBITUARIES**

- SAMUEL JOSEPH GRABER
- NENA MORRISON

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**INSERTS**

- FARM & FLEET
- RUNNINGS
- OLLIE'S
- KIDS CREATE AN AD

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## Passenger bus proposals to be obtained for potential purchase

### ESRI license renewed for 3 years for GIS work during City Council meeting

BY JEFF HELFRICH  
MANAGING EDITOR

**ROCHELLE** — At its meeting Monday, the Rochelle City Council voted unanimously to authorize City Manager Jeff Fiegenschuh to obtain proposals for a passenger bus for a potential future purchase.

The council and city staff have had recent discussions about purchasing a 12-passenger, handicap accessible shuttle bus for community events and tours. Fiegenschuh will seek at least 3-4 proposals for new and/or used buses.

Potential uses for the bus could include: pop up events at local parks and department facilities; tours for economic development visits, chamber functions and citizen's academies; transporting staff to out of town events and trainings; transporting residents during festivals (community fireworks, Lincoln Highway Heritage Festival, events downtown with limited parking); and as a warming space for residents and staff if needed.

Fiegenschuh estimated the total cost for a bus would be \$80,000-95,000. Estimated insurance premiums are expected to be \$850-1,150 per year. All employees using and riding the bus will be covered under the city's general liability insurance. Anyone not considered an employee will be required to sign a waiver and will be covered by the city's general liability insurance. Annual estimated fuel costs are \$2,800 and annual maintenance is expected to be \$1,200.

If purchased, the vehicle would be stored at the city's 1030 S. 7th St. location. City staff would be utilized to drive the bus during regular hours and one or two part-time seasonal employees would be hired for potential after hours usage.

The city has seen community contributions totaling \$25,000 for the bus purchase so far, \$15,000 from the Greater Rochelle Economic Development Corporation (GREDCO) and \$10,000 from the Lee County Industrial Development Association (LCIDA).

Remaining fund allocation for the potential



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

**At its meeting Monday, the Rochelle City Council voted unanimously to authorize City Manager Jeff Fiegenschuh to obtain proposals for a passenger bus for a potential future purchase.**

purchase would include \$18,000 from the mayor/city council budget, \$25,000 from excess proceeds from a 2024 auction and \$7,000 from the Rochelle Municipal Utilities community relations budget. Any additional community contributions raised would replace dollars budgeted from city funds.

City Councilman Tom McDermott said he was "apprehensive" of a potential future bus purchase based on how often it would be used.

"I just don't know what problem we'd be solving by buying a bus," McDermott said. "We didn't have a problem realistically other than a few times a year when we might want to transport people. If we have employees who really see a demand for this, I'd appreciate it if they'd let me

know. Because so far I'm not seeing it."

Mayor John Bearrows said during the meeting that a bus would remedy potential liability issues and be valuable for economic development tours for businesses interested in locating in Rochelle.

"I think one of the biggest things we've talked about is if God forbid something happened while we were using our personal vehicles on city business," Bearrows said. "Or if we take people from a private company out to visit a site, we can have them all in one vehicle with the same message about the area."

Fiegenschuh said the city council will likely consider proposals for a potential purchase at its first meeting in April.

**See CITY COUNCIL page 2**

## Rochelle Hiring Expo is March 13 at RTHS

### 'That's ultimately our goal every day, to make those businesses stronger'

BY JEFF HELFRICH  
MANAGING EDITOR

**ROCHELLE** — The Rochelle Hiring Expo, presented by the City of Rochelle, the Rochelle Chamber of Commerce, Kishwaukee College and Rochelle Township High School will be held Thursday, March 13 at RTHS at 1401 E. Flagg Road.

Employers, job seekers and students are invited to participate at no cost. Registration can be done at <http://kcrhe25.eventbrite.com/>. Employer check in and set up will take place from 9:30-10:30 a.m. RTHS seniors will participate in the event starting at 10:30 a.m. RTHS juniors and those with special invitation will attend at 11 a.m. A break/lunch will take place at 11:30 a.m. and the event will be open to the public from noon to 2 p.m.

The public hiring expo event began in recent years after a workforce shortage was seen post COVID-19 and it melded well with the yearly RTHS career fair, causing the events to be combined.

"We are shooting for over 40 employers to be there," Chamber Executive Director Tricia Herrera said. "It will once again have the Hubs For Hire for the first portion of it. That is about hiring students, but it's also about exposing them to the types of businesses that we have here in the community so when they graduate and go off to school and come back, maybe they remember that business and want to come back and work there and stay within their community. After that, it will be open to the public. At the chamber, we get businesses every week that want to know where they can find quality employees. This is a way to do that along with the city and Kishwaukee College."



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

**The Rochelle Hiring Expo, presented by the City of Rochelle, the Rochelle Chamber of Commerce, Kishwaukee College and Rochelle Township High School will be held Thursday, March 13 at RTHS at 1401 E. Flagg Road.**

The idea to host a hiring expo in the community started with Mayor John Bearrows. He said each event over the years has been well attended by employers and prospective employees.

Bearrows said he believes the event shows the support the city, chamber and Kishwaukee College have for local businesses. Herrera agreed.

"I think having a strong workforce makes a business stronger," Herrera said.

"That's ultimately our goal every day, to make those businesses stronger. So that they're here and we retain them and they can expand."

Bearrows said there are still "a few" local businesses that still have positions to fill, but most are looking to build up a pool of potential hires for when openings come about.

**See HIRING EXPO page 3**

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# LOCAL NEWS

## CITY COUNCIL: Mayor Bearrows memorializes Graber during Monday meeting

**From page 1**

**ESRI**

The council unanimously approved a resolution to renew the city's Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Small Government Enterprise License for \$87,900 over three years, billed annually at \$29,300. The new contract represents a \$1,050 annual increase from the previous contract due to software updates and inflation.

The renewal will allow the city continued access to ESRI's geospatial software for operations including mapping utilities, zoning, database management, public-facing applications, and exploring the newest in geospatial innovation to increase overall efficiency and promote the city's strategic

plans. City initiatives that utilize geographic information systems (GIS) include maps for events, road closures, utility projects, and asset management software.

**Graber**

During his mayor's comments portion of the meeting, Bearrows memorialized Sam Graber, who passed away Sunday. Graber was a longtime local business owner and former RTHS history teacher and assistant basketball coach and sold insurance before and following his retirement from teaching. He lived and worked in the community for 56 years.

"He was a great supporter of our community in a lot of ways," Bearrows said. "He was a great guy and our thoughts and prayers go out to his family."



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

**During his mayor's comments portion of the meeting, John Bearrows memorialized Sam Graber, who passed away Sunday. Graber was a longtime local business owner and former RTHS history teacher and assistant basketball coach and sold insurance before and following his retirement from teaching.**

## Local Girl Scout Cookie booths opened Feb. 7

**OGLE COUNTY** — The 2025 Girl Scout Cookie Program is going strong! Customers may continue to purchase cookies for in-person delivery, shipping, or donation to the military, veterans, and first responders through each Girl Scout's Digital Cookie website. Keep an eye out for these safety-conscious and marketing-savvy entrepreneurs as they also take Cookie Walkabouts with cookies in hand, so customers can buy cookies directly with no waiting!

Starting Feb. 7 through March 9, Girl Scout Cookie customers can also support the world's strongest and youngest entrepreneurs as they host cookie booths. Girl Scouts will offer cookie booths at various community locations outside local businesses and stores. Interested customers can visit the Cookie Finder at [www.girlscoutsni.org/findcookies](http://www.girlscoutsni.org/findcookies) to locate nearby cookie booths.

Don't feel like going out? Starting Feb. 21, visit the Cookie Finder to be connected to a local troop who'll gladly ship cookies to your door with funds

being distributed equally between all participating troop members. Cookies are also available at all Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois locations in Lake Zurich, Oswego, Rockford, and South Elgin during normal business hours at [www.girlscoutsni.org/visitus](http://www.girlscoutsni.org/visitus).

This year's cookie lineup includes refreshing Thin Mints® (made with vegan ingredients), peanut butter-stuffed Tagalongs®, coconutty Samoas®, crunchy Do-si-dos®, buttery Trefoils®, sweet S'mores®, inspirational Lemon-Ups®, gluten-free Toffee-tastic®, and the caramel and brownie-inspired Adventurefuls®. At the close of the 2025 cookie season, the beloved Girl Scout S'mores cookie flavor will be retired, so now is the time to stock up. All Girl Scout Cookies are on sale for \$6 per package!

If you know a Girl Scout, ask how you can support them in their own cookie small business. Don't know a Girl Scout? Customers may visit [www.girlscoutsni.org/buycookies](http://www.girlscoutsni.org/buycookies) to purchase cookies directly or be connected

local Girl Scout entrepreneurs looking for cookie customers.

**The Girl Scout Cookie Program**

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the world's largest entrepreneurial program for girls. Girl Scouts' updated Financial Literacy badges offer entrepreneurial playbooks for every age level. From the Cookie Goal Setter badge earned as a Daisy (grades K-1) to the Entrepreneur Accelerator for girls in high school, the Girl Scout Cookie Program teaches Girl Scouts financial literacy, planning, budgeting, teamwork, innovative thinking, and confident decision making.

During Girl Scout Cookie season, each entrepreneur sets out to sell delicious cookies while also building entrepreneurial and business skills imperative for leadership and future success. All net revenues raised — 100 percent of it — stays within the northern Illinois area. Every package of cookies sold provides invaluable experiences for Girl Scouts such as service projects,



(COURTESY PHOTO)

**The 2025 Girl Scout Cookie Program is going strong! Customers may continue to purchase cookies for in-person delivery, shipping, or donation to the military, veterans, and first responders through each Girl Scout's Digital Cookie website.**

troop travel, and summer camp for girls across the country!

**Join Girl Scouts**

Girl Scouts in grades K-12 can start their journey to fun, friendship, and new experiences by joining the world's largest entrepreneurial organization for girls at any point in the year. Girls can join and adults can become volunteers at [www.girlscouts.org/join](http://www.girlscouts.org/join).

Girl Scouts bring their dreams to life and work together to build a better world. Through programs from coast to coast, Girl Scouts of all backgrounds and abilities can be unapologetically themselves as they discover their strengths and rise to meet new challenges—whether they want to climb to the top of a tree or the top of

their class, lace up their boots for a hike or advocate for climate justice, or make their first best friends. Backed by trusted adult volunteers, mentors, and millions of alums, Girl Scouts lead the way as they find their voices and make changes that affect the issues most important to them. To join us, volunteer, reconnect, or donate, visit [www.girlscouts.org](http://www.girlscouts.org).

## From one to many: A beginner's guide to plant propagation

**URBANA** — Many indoor gardeners quickly discover that one houseplant is rarely enough. What begins as an admiration for a charming or unique plant often evolves into a strong desire, or even a need, to fill every corner of a home or office with lush greenery. A simple and cost-effective way to grow any collection is by propagating existing plants.

Propagation is the process of growing new plants from existing ones through seeds, sexual, or vegetatively with plant parts, asexual. Stems, leaves, or roots that are

removed from parent plants to root and form new plants are referred to as cuttings. This is an inexpensive and effortless way to get more plants without stretching the pocketbook.

The best time to propagate houseplants is early spring, March through April, but it can be done throughout the year. Large houseplants, outgrowing their space, are perfect for propagation. Use the cuttings to grow newly rooted plants that can be shared with other gardeners.

**Before Propagating**

When propagating, always use sterilized tools and containers in a clean

space for the greatest chance of success. A high-quality potting mix will provide adequate moisture-holding capacity and good drainage without allowing cuttings to dry out or rot. Many plants will also develop roots in a container of water, changed out with fresh water every 3 to 5 days. Before starting, make sure any propagated plant material is healthy and free of pests and disease.

**Taking Cuttings**

Tip cuttings are taken by selecting a healthy, 3 to 5-inch shoot with four to six leaves.

With sharp pruners or snips, cut directly below a leaf node or where the leaf is attached to the stem.

Remove any flowers or buds and the bottom two to four leaves.

Insert the lower portion of the cutting into a container of moist potting soil.

Take several cuttings to increase the chance of one rooting and growing into a viable plant. Most houseplants can be propagated by tip cuttings, including snake plants, croton, peperomia, pothos, and philodendron.

Begonias and African violets are commonly propagated by leaf cuttings. This process includes one leaf blade and sometimes the petiole or leaf stalk. Using a sharp



(PHOTO: JENNA BRAASCH, ILLINOIS EXTENSION)

**A simple and cost-effective way to grow any collection of houseplants this spring is by propagating using existing plants.**



**Saturday, March 22, 2025**  
**9am - 1pm**  
**SPRING CRAFT & VENDOR SHOW**

LOCATION: Mendota Civic Center  
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knife, slice horizontally across the main leaf vein and then lay the cutting flat on the soil with the vein side down. Roots will develop at the cut point along the vein.

Once cuttings have been planted or placed in their growing medium, cover the container with transparent plastic to increase the humidity around the plant while it is forming roots. The goal is to never let the rooting media dry out. Place the cuttings in bright, indirect light. The plastic cover should be removed after the roots have developed. Some plants may form roots within days, while

others may take several weeks. Cuttings can be dipped in rooting hormone powder before planting to improve root development. But too much of a good thing can be bad as excess powder on the cutting will hinder the development of the roots.

Other, more challenging methods of vegetative propagation are layering or rooting a new plant while it is still attached to the parent plant and grafting or growing a plant shoot with desirable characteristics on a strong rootstock. Division is the easiest method of propagation, achieved by removing naturally pro-

duced offsets or shoots from the parent plant.

Keep in mind that not every plant is a candidate for propagation. Check university resources for additional suitable plants and be patient, as propagation skills come with practice. Experiment with new plants, new growing media, and new propagation techniques to find what works for you.

For more on plant propagation, visit the Extension houseplants topic site. For questions, connect with a local Extension office from the map at [go.illinois.edu/ExtensionOffice](http://go.illinois.edu/ExtensionOffice).



# LOCAL NEWS



(PHOTOS BY JEFF HELFRICH)

Employers, job seekers and students are invited to participate at no cost. Registration can be done at <http://kcrhe25.eventbrite.com/>. Employer check in and set up will take place from 9:30-10:30 a.m.

## HIRING EXPO: Annual event at RTHS scheduled for March 13

From page 1

Herrera said Rochelle-area employers are seeking a stronger workforce with specifically-trained individuals.

The Rochelle Hiring Expo brings the community's stakeholders together for the event and Herrera said the fact that they keep coming back each year

means they find value in it. She thanked Kishwaukee College for taking the lead on logistics and registration and RTHS for hosting the event and having it act as a medium for students to learn soft skills and forge relationships with local employers to keep them working locally in the future.

City Manager Jeff Fie-

genschuh said the event is an example of local partnerships prospering.

"If you look at a lot of the communities around Rochelle, they're not doing job fairs," Fiegenschuh said. "Our mayor and city council are big proponents of workforce because they want to support local businesses. I love that we have these partnerships

going with the high school and Kishwaukee College and that every year we're doing something like this. It's a great opportunity for students and people out in the market looking for positions. These partnerships we use to put it on help us to build relationships where we can partner in other areas too."

The City of Rochelle

sets up its own booth at the hiring expo and met an RTHS student three years ago who had interest in being a first responder. She later started to work as a part-time dispatcher for the Rochelle Police Department and Rochelle Fire Department and is still employed by the city today. That made it well worth it for the city to par-

ticipate, Fiegenschuh said.

"If people who attend get a job or an interview that results in a job, you change their lives," Be-arrows said. "And if you change the life of one person, the entire event was worth it. It's not about the number of people that come through the event, it's about helping any one person. That's a win."

## Arellano Jr. secures key roles on 7 committees

**SPRINGFIELD** - State Sen. Li Arellano, Jr. (R-Dixon) has been appointed as the Republican Spokesperson for the Illinois Senate's Public Health Committee. In addition to his newly appointed leadership role, he will serve on six other Senate committees during his first term in office.

"It's an honor to be selected for this important role and to take a deeper dive into critical issues through the committee process," said Senator Arellano, Jr. "Committees play a vital role in shaping legislation. This is where we closely examine bills, ask important questions, and hear testimony from

the public."

With each new general assembly comes new appointments and committee assignments. Senator Arellano, Jr was sworn into his first term in office on Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025, and will serve on the following Senate Committees: Health and Human Services, Local Government, Pensions, Public Health (Minority Spokesperson), State Government, Veterans Affairs, and Appropriations - Health and Human Services.

"As a former Mayor of Dixon, I've seen firsthand how local government functions and the challenges of our state's

pension system," said Senator Arellano, Jr. "As a veteran, I am especially honored to serve on the Veterans Affairs Committee, where I will work to support our state's heroes and cut through the red tape that too often stands in their way."

Senator Arellano, Jr proudly represents Illinois' 37th Senate District, which includes all or parts of Bureau, DeKalb, Henry, LaSalle, Lee, Marshall, Ogle, Peoria, Rock Island, Stark, Whiteside, and Woodford counties.

For more information or to contact Senator Arellano, Jr's office, visit [www.SenatorLi.com](http://www.SenatorLi.com) or call 779-251-5003.



(COURTESY PHOTO)

State Sen. Li Arellano, Jr. (R-Dixon) has been appointed as the Republican Spokesperson for the Illinois Senate's Public Health Committee.

## NICI announces new name: Nicor Illinois Community Investment

**CHICAGO** — Northern Illinois Community Initiatives, one of the foundations supported by Nicor Gas, is proud to announce its new name as Nicor Illinois Community Investment (NICI). NICI was formed with contributions from Nicor Gas and its parent Southern Company Gas in 2021 to directly support economic impact in under-resourced communities in Northern Illinois. NICI's new name signifies the growing impact of the foundation since its inception, retaining the signature logo and shorthand acronym that are familiar to its partners, while more closely collaborating with Nicor Gas in economic and community development across Northern Illinois.

NICI fosters year-over-year growth by helping nonprofits, small businesses, entrepreneurs and community organizations establish strong foundations for continued success. The change to Nicor Illinois Community Investment represents NICI's dedication to enduring, substantial contributions — an impact that NICI seeks not just to initiate, but sustain.

"Since our inception, NICI's investments in small business and community resilience across Northern Illinois cultivates economic opportunity that has otherwise been inaccessible to communities like South Suburban Chicago, Rockford

and Joliet — communities that have seen opportunities and resources lessen and shift throughout recent decades," says Tovah McCord, executive director. "NICI provides the building blocks for these communities to thrive."

Each year, NICI commits \$1 million through \$100,000 grants for high-impact community projects and other programs that support small businesses, entrepreneurs and other critical support for communities in need of targeted assistance. NICI's impact addresses three main areas: Economic mobility through programs designed to empower individuals and improve financial stability, commercial development through investments in local businesses that strengthen community infrastructure and small business support through resources and funding for small businesses, particularly those led by women and minority entrepreneurs.

"For 160 years, Nicor Gas has been an essential part of the Northern Illinois community, supporting its development and understanding its unique needs," says Wendell Dallas, president and CEO of Nicor Gas and NICI board chair. "The name change reflects the alignment of NICI's philanthropic goals and the needs of Nicor Gas customers. We are excited about the lasting, positive impact

that will result from this collaboration."

NICI's investment strategy is informed by insights from local leaders and community members, ensuring that its initiatives meet the evolving needs of Northern Illinois communities. NICI's programs remain flexible and responsive to the unique challenges and goals of each community it serves. Through collaboration with Nicor Gas and Southern Company Gas, Nicor Illinois Community Investment will continue building on its achievements, scaling its impact to support a more economically resilient and equitable Illinois. NICI looks forward to sharing more of the foundation's exciting plans for 2025 and outlook for the fu-

ture of the communities it serves.

Learn more about Nicor Illinois Community Investment, read about the foundation's impact and stay up to date with NICI's growth at [www.nici-il.org](http://www.nici-il.org).

### About Nicor Illinois Community Investment

Nicor Illinois Community Investment is a foundation established by Nicor Gas in 2021 to deepen its commitment to underserved communities. NICI invests in organizations that are doing transformative work that fosters economic mobility of historically marginalized groups. Through our grant portfolio and small business program, we strive to be a dedicated champion of economic opportunity.

NICI takes a place-

based approach to ensure funding goes where it is needed most. We provide multi-year commitments to our prioritized communities and seek to collaborate with local stakeholders to leverage our impact.

### About Nicor Gas

Nicor Gas is one of four natural gas distribution companies of Southern Company Gas, a wholly owned subsidiary of Southern Company (NYSE: SO), and serves 2.3 million customers in more than 650 communi-

ties across northern Illinois. Ranked as a Crain's 2024 Best Place to Work in Chicago and Most Trusted Utility Brand by Escalent, Nicor Gas is fueling customer choice, innovation, economic growth and a sustainable energy future. Nicor Gas is committed to a goal of net zero emissions from its operations by 2050, and we are working to keep bills as low as possible as we continue providing access to safe and reliable natural gas. For more information, visit [nicorgas.com](http://nicorgas.com).

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

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# LOCAL NEWS

## Obituaries

### Samuel Joseph Graber

**ROCHELLE**—Samuel Joseph Graber's time on earth ended early Sunday, February 23, 2025 at the age of 82 at Manor Court in Rochelle. We are sad. Yet, we are grateful his suffering has ended and he is now at peace. Sam was born on June 27, 1942 in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. He was the seventh child of Ernest and Lenora (Schaaf) Graber. He grew up in Mineral Point, WI alongside his life long friend, Tom Speich. Together, they excelled in sports; each a member of the Mineral Point High School Hall of Fame. They attended Lakeland College and continued in athletics. Sam would enter the Lakeland College Hall of Fame in 1980. While at Lakeland, he met Sandi Dalton. They married in June of 1965.

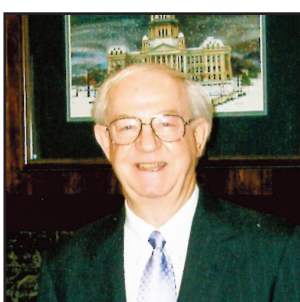
The following year, his first son, Greg, was born. A few years later, in 1968, he took a teaching position at Rochelle Township High School. It was in Rochelle, IL where Sam would settle; he would raise a family, build a business and make

a home. Soon after the move to Rochelle, he was recruited to sell insurance by Ken Detweiler. Ken would become a great friend and mentor. Two more sons were born; Matt in 1969 and Andy in 1973. Throughout his life, he held on to his love of sports. He was an avid golfer and devoted fan of the Green Bay Packers, Philadelphia Phillies and any sport the Wisconsin Badgers were playing. He was a member of St. Patrick Catholic Church, on the Board at the Rochelle Community Hospital and a Rotarian. He was a friend to many.

Over the years, his family grew, as Greg married Tina and Andy married Jodi. Andy would have two sons of his own; Sam's grandsons, Jackson and Jamison. Sam is also survived by two brothers: Kenneth (Marie) Graber and Theodore (Mary) Graber.

In addition to his parents, Sam is preceded in death by four siblings: George, Mary Lou, David and Nancy.

He was kind, patient, honest, loyal and faithful.



We thank him for all he gave us and we love him. We all look forward to the time we are reunited with Sam Graber.

Visitation will be from 4:00 - 7:00 P.M., Thursday, February 27, 2025 at the Unger-Horner Funeral Home, 400 N 6th St., Rochelle. Funeral mass will be at 12:00 noon the following day, Friday, February 28 at St. Mary and St Paul Catholic Church, 224 Davis St., Mineral Point, WI with a visitation from 11:00 A.M. - 12:00 noon, prior to the service. Burial will be at St. Mary Cemetery in Mineral Point, WI. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made in Sam's memory to St. Patrick Catholic Church, Rochelle or St. Mary and St. Paul Catholic Church, Mineral Point. Visit [www.UngerHorner.com](http://www.UngerHorner.com) to sign the online guest book.

### Nena Morrison

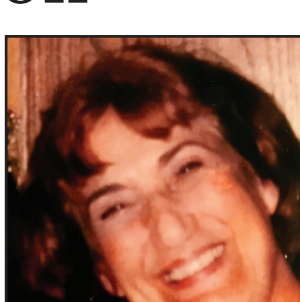
**ROCHELLE**—Nena Morrison, 94, passed away peacefully Thursday, February 20, 2025 at her daughter's house in Rochelle with family by her side. Nena was born on June 1, 1930 to Carl and Ann (Castor) Cipolla in Rockford, IL. On June 6, 1948, she married Harold R. Morrison in Rochelle. He preceded her in death on March 9, 2006. She worked for the Aigner's and then for Avery Corporation.

Nena enjoyed going on walks, tending to her flower gardens and visiting friends. She loved her church and cherished the time she spent with all of her family.

Nena is survived by her children: Harold (Kathi) Morrison of Nevada and

Sandra Morrison of Rochelle; seven grandchildren: Brian (Scarlett) Dailey, Michael (Cindy) Dailey, Christopher (Dorain) Dailey, Erica (Jeremy) Hicks, Amanda (Derrick) Cox, Matthew Morrison and Chad (Myria) Schabacker; nine great grandchildren: Ashley, Christopher and Emily Dailey, Emma and Laney Hicks, Riley and Shelby Cox, and Nolan and Amelia Schabacker; great great grandchild, Grey Miller, and three sisters: Frances Boggs of Irvine, CA, Carol Sondgeroth of Rochelle, IL and Karla Fiorenza of Rockford, IL.

In addition to her parents and husband, Nena was preceded in death by her brother and sister-in-law, Bill and Dee Cipolla; infant sister, Concetta Cipolla;



sister, Mary Ann VanKirk and three brothers-in-law, John Van Kirk, Herb Sondgeroth, and Joseph "Pep" Fiorenza

There was a private family funeral service on Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at the Unger Horner Funeral Home, 400 N 6th St., Rochelle with the Rev. Dr. James Horvath officiating. Burial followed at Lawnridge Cemetery in Rochelle. Visit [www.ungerhorner.com](http://www.ungerhorner.com) to sign the online guest book.



**American Legion Post holds first meeting of new year**

American Legion Post 403 had its first meeting of the new year on Feb. 16 at the Iron Skillet Restaurant at the Petro Truck Stop. Commander Chuck Roberts gave a presentation on his service in the military. From left to right Eric Welles (finance officer), Gary Tarvestad (sergeant at arms), Paul Bearrows (chaplain), Roberts (commander), Steve Korth (adjutant) and Jerry Oleson (commander, Post 209). (Courtesy photo)

## OGLE COUNTY SHERIFF'S REPORT

**OREGON** — On Feb. 16 at approximately 11:15 a.m. deputies were advised of a disturbance that had occurred earlier in the morning near 3125 S. Stone Hill Road in rural Chana. After investigation, deputies placed a 17-year-old male juvenile under arrest for aggravated battery. The male juvenile was released to an adult per the parents' permission. Stephanie Smith, 38, of Rochelle, was also placed under arrest for contributing to criminal delinquency of a minor. Smith was released on a notice to appear and given a future court date.

On Feb. 19 at approximately 1:03 p.m. deputies conducted a traffic stop near the intersection of Illinois Route 38 and Dement Road. After investigation deputies placed Brandon Barnes, 32, of Rochelle, under arrest for driving while license revoked. Barnes was transported to the Ogle County Jail where he was released on a notice to appear at a future court date.

On Feb. 19 at approximately 3:30 p.m. deputies conducted a traffic stop in the 14,000 block of East Flagg Road. After investigation deputies placed Belinda Sullivan, 50, of Rochelle, under arrest for driving while license suspended. Sullivan was released on a notice to appear at a later court date.

On Feb. 19 at 12:49 p.m. deputies attempted to serve an order of protection in the 100 block of South Colfax Street, Byron. After a brief incident, Nathan Gentz, 29, of Byron, was arrested for threatening a public official, disorderly conduct, misuse of 911, and possession of ammunition without a FOID. Gentz was transported to the Ogle County Jail and held without bond. Deputies were assisted by

Byron Police Department.

On Feb. 20 at approximately 1:44 p.m. deputies were dispatched to a domestic in the 100 block of West Meadowland Drive in rural Rochelle. After investigation, deputies placed Juan Manuel A. Delgado-Gomez, 25, of Rochelle under arrest for aggravated domestic battery (class-two felony) and two counts of domestic battery. Delgado-Gomez was transported to the Ogle County Jail where he was held pending a court appearance in front of a judge. Rochelle EMS assisted and transported a one-year-old child to Rochelle Community Hospital for non-life-threatening injuries.

On Feb. 20 at approximately 12:48 p.m. deputies responded to a one-vehicle accident with an injury in the 8,000 block of South Illinois Route 38. After investigation, deputies learned that Farrel Stauffer, 62, of Rochelle, was traveling southbound in the 8,000 block of South Illinois Route 38. Stauffer was driving a brown Subaru Outback. While Stauffer was driving southbound, he had fallen asleep and traveled off of the east side of the roadway before jumping a ditch and traveled approximately 400 feet before coming to rest. Stauffer was transported to Rochelle Hospital by Rochelle EMS for non-life-threatening injuries.

On Feb. 23 at approximately 12:10 a.m. deputies conducted traffic stop in the 13,000 block West Sterling Road. After a brief investigation, a 17-year-old juvenile was placed under arrest for no valid driver's license after curfew. The juvenile was additionally cited for speeding and released on a notice to appear with a future court date.

## ROCHELLE POLICE REPORT

**ROCHELLE** — On Feb. 17 at 9:43 p.m. Ailin Lopez Carmell, 19, of Rockford was cited for use of an electronic communications device. She signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 18 at 2:08 a.m. Michelle Rivera, 32, of Rockford was cited for speeding 63 in a 40 miles per hour zone. She signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 18 at 4:13 a.m. Derrick K. Clark, 42, of Rockford was arrested for driving with no license and cited for disregarding a stop sign. He signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 18 at 3:52 a.m. Rene Ramirez, 47, of Rochelle was cited for disobeying a stop sign. He signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 18 at 7:32 a.m. Jennifer R. Stark, 39, of Rochelle was arrested for criminal trespass to property and resisting arrest and transferred.

On Feb. 20 at 12:08 a.m. Jack R. Fleeger, 28, of Rochelle was cited for disregarding a stop sign and operating an uninsured motor vehicle. He signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 20 at 12:44 a.m. Celia Valle, 26, of Rochelle was cited for disregarding a stop sign. She signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 20 at 2:12 a.m. Ryan J. Thomas, 28, of Dixon was cited for operating an uninsured vehicle. He signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 20 at 6:45 p.m. Mitchell Baker, 31, of Rochelle was cited for expired registration and operating an uninsured motor vehicle. He signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 20 at 6:19 p.m. Jennifer Valdez, 28, of Rochelle was cited for expired registration. She signed a promise to comply and was given a March

On Feb. 24 at approximately 8:31 a.m. deputies conducted a traffic stop at the intersection of Illinois Route 2 and Blackhawk Vista Drive. After investigation, deputies placed William Hiatt, 60, of Rockford under arrest for driving while license suspended. Hiatt was additionally issued citations for and expired registration and operating a vehicle with suspended registration. Hiatt was released on a notice to appear at the scene and given a future court date.

On Feb. 24 at approximately 1:27 p.m. deputies conducted a traffic stop near the intersection of South Mulford Road and Ritchie Road. After investigation, deputies placed Jamie Howard, 35, of Rockford, under arrest for driving while license suspended. Howard was also cited for no insurance. Howard was released on a notice to appear with a future court date.

On Feb. 24 at approximately 1:31 p.m. deputies checked on a vehicle in the BP gas station parking lot at Illinois Route 72 and Illinois Route 251. After investigation, deputies placed Jesus Orozco, 33, of Rochelle under arrest for no valid driver's license, after deputies had witnessed him drive. Orozco was transported to the Ogle County Jail where he was released on a notice to appear and given a future court date.

On Feb. 24 at 3:27 p.m. deputies conducted a traffic stop in the 7,000 block of North Illinois Route 2. After a brief investigation, Deputies arrested Deon Cooke, 49, of Rockford, for driving while license suspended. Cooke was released with a notice to appear.

All individuals are considered innocent until proven guilty.

21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 21 at 8:13 a.m. Kelly L. Olson, 44, of Rochelle was cited for speeding 70 in a 45 miles per hour zone. She signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 21 at 9:15 a.m. Maurice Martin II, 21, of Machesney Park was cited for uninsured vehicle, speeding 67 in a 45 miles per hour zone and suspended registration. He signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

Patricia Morrison, 26, of DeKalb was cited for suspended registration. She signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 22 at 12:14 a.m. Curtis P. Means, 22, of Poplar Grove was arrested for driving while license suspended and cited for expired registration. He signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 22 at 12:16 p.m. Liam Wakeland, 18, of Sycamore was cited for speeding 53 in a 30 miles per hour zone. He signed a promise to comply and was given a March 21 Rochelle court date.

All individuals are considered innocent until proven guilty.

## Chana UMC drive-up dinner is March 8

**CHANA**—The Chana United Methodist Church will host a Homemade Chicken and Noodles and Lasagna Drive-Up Dinner on Saturday, March

8 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Dinner includes chicken and noodles, lasagna and apple crisp. Each dinner is \$12. There will be no pre sales.

ROCHELLE  
News-Leader

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# LOCAL NEWS



## RTHS students attend 2025 Building Trades Career Expo

Mrs. Jacobs of Rochelle Township High School had the opportunity to take a group of students to the 2025 Building Trades Career Expo at the Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 23 Training Center in Rockford Feb. 18. The students explored construction careers in the skilled trades and learned about world-class apprenticeship programs. Students were able to participate in hands-on construction activities and demonstrations. (Courtesy photos)

## Tri-State Forestry Conference scheduled for March 1

**DUBUQUE, Iowa** — The Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference has a 25+ year tradition of providing great information and resources to forest landowners in the Illinois/Iowa/Wisconsin tri-state area. It has been one of the largest conferences for forest landowners in the Midwest.

The 2025 Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference will be held March

1 at the Grand River Center in Dubuque, Iowa from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. This conference is sponsored by Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin Extension Services. This year's keynote speaker is Lara Noldner from the University of Iowa. Lara will discuss managing cultural resource and protecting Archeological sites. New this year to the conference is a Basics of Forestry

tract, that gives great information to landowners that are just getting started in forest management or anyone looking for a refresher. This tract includes sessions on Tree Identification, working with a forester, knowing your woods, and understanding forest management plans. Other topics at the conference include invasive species, wildlife, using chainsaws, forest health, pruning, generational land transfers, and more.

The day will end with a discussion with Forestry leaders from each state on programs, cost-share opportunities, and new initiatives available to landowners.

The Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference is designed specifically for forest landowners in the Midwest, but forestry

professionals, consultants, volunteers, Master Naturalists, and students are all encouraged to attend. The conference is scheduled for Saturday, March 1, 2025, and will be held at the Grand River Center, 500 Bell St., Dubuque, Iowa. Check in will be from 8-9 a.m. that morning. The conference begins promptly at 9 a.m.

Preregistration is required to guarantee a seat

and lunch. To register visit us online at <https://go.illinois.edu/TriState-Forestry> or by calling the Extension Office at (815) 858-2273. Registration, including lunch, is \$55 on or before Feb. 21 and \$65 afterwards.

If you need reasonable accommodation to participate in this program, please contact the local Extension Office at (815) 858-2273.

## Kish goes live on Ellucian Colleague SaaS Student Information System and ERP

**MALTA** — Ellucian, the leading higher education technology solutions provider, announced that Feb. 24 Kishwaukee College has gone live with Colleague SaaS, a cloud-based Student Information System (SIS) and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) suite leveraging an AI-powered platform that delivers solutions for comprehensive student, human resources, and finance management. Integrated across departments and systems, the new platform scales resources to drive student success. As an Ellucian customer for nearly 20 years, Kish's migration to Colleague SaaS unlocks improved user experiences and optimizes workflows for its community of 4,000+ students and 320+ staff in Northern Illinois.

"We are thrilled to see Kishwaukee College now running their operations in the cloud with Colleague SaaS," said

Mike Wulff, chief product and technology officer, Ellucian. "This migration marks a significant milestone in Kish's digital transformation journey, enabling the College to serve its students more effectively. This modernization streamlines the College's technology operations and empowers the institution to innovate and adapt as the higher education landscape evolves."

The successful implementation of Colleague SaaS aligns with Kishwaukee College's strategic plan, supporting initiatives to drive student success, institutional effectiveness, and resource management. By centralizing resources and integrating systems, the new ERP and SIS enhance student lifecycle management from admissions to graduation by creating more efficient processing and user experiences for staff. This transformation positions the College

for the future, ensuring continued excellence and advancing its mission to improve lives through equitable, student-centered education.

"The power of Colleague SaaS has been transformative for our institution," said Robert McGarry, executive director of Campus Operations and Technology, Kishwaukee College. "The smooth implementation process ensured we could seamlessly transition to the new system without disrupting our operations. This platform empowers our faculty and staff with intuitive tools and centralized information, allowing us to support our students better and remain responsive to the priorities of our community."

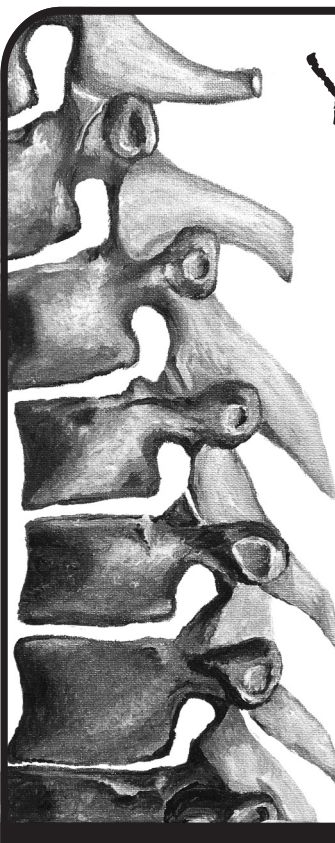
"Congratulations to Kishwaukee College, a remarkably impactful and mission-driven community college, on successfully going live with Colleague SaaS,"

said Kelly Rogan, chief operating officer, Ellucian. "This achievement highlights the strong collaboration between

Ellucian and Kishwaukee teams. With this new SaaS SIS and ERP, the College is well-prepared to support their students

now and in the future."

For more information on Ellucian solutions, visit [ellucian.com/solutions/all-products](https://ellucian.com/solutions/all-products).



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# American Hero: Rochelle's Libberton served 20 years in U.S. Air Force

BY JEFF HELFRICH  
MANAGING EDITOR

**ROCHELLE** — Ed Libberton of Rochelle served in the United States Air Force for 20 years. He worked as a flight simulator technician for most of his service. Libberton enlisted into the Air Force in 1966, after a recruiter contacted him and said his draft papers would soon be served.

He went to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas for basic training before being sent to Denver, Colorado for three years to work on fire control systems. Libberton was then stationed at Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota and was discharged from the military.

Libberton spent a year as a civilian, during which his brother passed away in a car accident. That, and other factors moved him to reenlist in the military. Libberton went back to Lackland Air Force Base and then to Shreveport, Louisiana to work with flight simulators, a field he would work in for the next 16 years.

A variety of locations were called home by Libberton during his service. He was stationed in Bitburg, Germany for three years. He also served in Shreveport, Louisiana, and worked with a flight simulator in a railcar train that went to sites up and down the east coast from Maine to Georgia. Libberton spent his final years in the military at Castle Air Force Base in Atwater, California before being discharged from the military in the 1980s.

"I stayed in the service for so long because I enjoyed it," Libberton said. "I enjoyed the companionship and the job itself. I got to go places. I learned a lot working on those flight simulators. I've never flown an airplane, but I don't doubt that I could after working on simulators for so long. It was a job for me. And if they called me up today I'd go back tomorrow. Even at 78 years old."

As a flight simulator technician, Libberton's job was to maintain and operate the analog computer that was working the cockpit, and to assist the instructor pilot on putting in malfunctions on the engines so the pilots could get training without risking their lives or military property.

During his time in Germany, Libberton had the

chance to visit Luxembourg, Paris and Switzerland, which he enjoyed. Another unique experience for him was being involved with a new digital simulator for the B-52 bomber.

Libberton called the Vietnam era in America "scary", especially for a young man. He said he had no desire for the Army, and thought he could better serve his country with the Air Force. Libberton's brother served

in Vietnam in the Navy on a munitions supply ship.

Libberton's 20 years in the service also included time as an augmentee military policeman and as a customs customs officer for military members leaving Guam and going back to the U.S.

When Libberton got out of the service, he lived in Fort Worth, Texas and worked on flight simulators and had a job repairing pressure washers. He moved to the

Rochelle area to be with his aging parents and his work history in the area has included time at Panther Chemicals and Pressure Washing in Ashton, Crest Foods, working at a tree service, and at Walmart. Libberton retired in 2019 and has become a member of American Legion Post 403 in Rochelle.

Libberton said he believes his 20 years in the military have helped him with his life since.

"My service helped me to mature and gave me respect for people and the ability to get along with just about anyone," Libberton said.

*Honoring Our American Hero is a series that will print twice a month in the News-Leader. If you know an American Hero you would like to have featured, contact Jeff Helfrich at [jhelfrich@rochellenews-leader.com](mailto:jhelfrich@rochellenews-leader.com) or call 815-561-2151.*



Ed Libberton of Rochelle served in the United States Air Force for 20 years. He worked as a flight simulator technician for most of his service. Libberton enlisted into the Air Force in 1966, after a recruiter contacted him and said his draft papers would soon be served. He went to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas for basic training before being sent to Denver, Colorado for three years to work on fire control systems.



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# LOCAL VIEWS

## Applications open for specialty crops program

APPLICATIONS are now open for USDA's new \$2 billion Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC) program. This initiative, administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), aims to help specialty crop producers manage heightened marketing costs and expand both current and new markets. However, the program's structure does not require funds to be directed toward marketing-specific activities, functioning instead as general financial assistance for specialty crop farmers.

Specialty crops including fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, nursery crops, and herbs — are a vital part of American agriculture. These crops not only provide nutritious food that families worldwide depend on for a balanced diet; through ornamental plants they also enrich living spaces and enhance the overall quality of life, making them integral to both health and well-being. In the US over 239,000 specialty crop farms produced more than \$115 billion in agriculture sales, supporting millions of jobs and generating billions more in downstream economic activity.

Despite their significance, the farmers who grow specialty crops face unique challenges that set them apart from other commodity producers. These crops are highly perishable and prone to damage, necessitating

specialized equipment for harvesting, handling, storage and transportation. In many cases, the delicate nature of these crops requires significant manual labor, as automation options remain limited compared to other agricultural sectors. According to the most recent Agricultural Resource Management Survey, the average specialty crop farm spent over \$142,000 on labor — an astounding 553% higher than the \$22,000 labor expenditure reported by the average farm operation across all commodities. USDA data further highlights that labor alone accounts for nearly 45% of specialty crop operations' variable costs, far exceeding the 9% average for other farming sectors. Additionally, specialty crop producers spend more on repairs and machine hire — 50% and 232% higher, respectively — due to the highly specialized equipment required to manage these high-value crops. On top of this, elevated prices and regulatory barriers for specialty fertilizer and pesticide products add to the financial burden. These cost dynamics, compounded by frequently burdensome state regulatory systems and fewer risk management options, often place U.S. specialty crop producers at a price disadvantage compared to their foreign-produced counterparts.

USDA intends for the MASC program to support specialty crop farmers in overcoming these chal-

lenges, with the added benefit of promoting domestic fruit and vegetable consumption. MASC is funded by the Commodity Credit Corporation, whose charter under Section 5(e) grants USDA broad authority to stabilize agricultural markets and incomes through financial assistance, marketing initiatives and other strategic interventions. While MASC is described as providing relief toward marketing expenses, the program does not police whether funds allocated to farmers are spent specifically on marketing activities, functioning instead as general financial support for specialty crop farmers.

To participate in MASC, producers must:

- Be actively farming specialty crops for sale in 2025.
- Certify, through documentation, their sales for either 2023 or 2024 (or project 2025 sales if they are new producers).
- Complete and submit required documentation, including forms such as FSA-1140 and AD-1026. (Farmers applying for MASC must follow rules that protect highly erodible land and wetlands, which means they need to use "good farming practices" to qualify for the program.)
- Eligible specialty crops include fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, nursery crops, honey, floriculture, hops, maple sap, tea,

spices, herbs, Christmas trees, floriculture, turfgrass, mushrooms, vegetable seed and grass seed. Value-added products and non-specialty crops such as grains and forage are excluded.

Payments are capped at \$125,000 per producer, and if demand exceeds the allocated \$2 billion, payments may be prorated. Final payment factors will be determined after the application period closes.

MASC payments are based on the producer's eligible sales from 2023 or 2024, or projected sales for 2025 for new producers. Eligible sales include only sales of commercially marketed raw specialty crops grown in the United States by the farmer. The portion of sales derived from adding value to a specialty crop, such as sorting, processing or packaging, is not included in a producer's eligible sales. For example, the eligible sales for a farmer who grows cucumbers and sells raw cucumbers and pickles at a local market would be the sales of raw cucumbers sold at the market plus the raw value of the cucumbers used in the pickles - not the value of pickles sold. The raw value would also be the value of the crop at the packinghouse door - before it is processed and packaged for the grocery store. Total sales will also include crop insurance in-

demnities and payments from the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

USDA has provided the option to use marketing years 2023 or 2024 as the basis for 2025 sales calculations, offering farmers greater flexibility, particularly those who may have faced reduced sales due to natural disasters, pests or other unforeseen challenges.

MASC payments are calculated based on a tiered system that divides reported specialty crop sales into five sales ranges. Each range has a corresponding payment factor, with smaller farms receiving larger payment percentages. This is intended to reflect the higher variable costs smaller farms face relative to their sales, as they lack the economies of scale that reduce costs for larger operations. Payment factors decrease progressively for higher sales ranges but are applied incrementally, similar to income tax brackets.

USDA imposes several payment limitations within the MASC program. Producers with an average gross income exceeding \$900,000 for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023 are not eligible for payments unless at least 75% of their AGI is derived from farming, ranching or forestry operations. Additionally, MASC payments are capped at \$125,000 per person or legal entity. Payments to legal entities

are attributed to individual members based on their ownership shares, with reductions applied proportionally for members who are ineligible due to AGI limits or other criteria. Payments made to Indian tribes or tribal organizations are exempt from the \$125,000 payment cap. The following graph illustrates example MASC payments based on USDA's application estimations, using randomly selected specialty crop sales values. These calculations assume all producers meet the program's eligibility requirements, including the 75% AGI farm income threshold.

Applications, including required forms and documentation by farmers should complete the following steps:

- Submit Form FSA-1140 (Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops Application).
- Certify sales for 2023 or 2024, or projected 2025 sales with supporting documentation if they are new producers.
- Ensure all required forms, such as AD-2047 and CCC-902, are on file with FSA.

Producers can contact their local FSA office for assistance or visit USDA's MASC webpage for additional resources.

"Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad."

-Brian O'Driscoll

Ron Kern is the manager of the Ogle County Farm Bureau.



Ron Kern

## Letter: Rochelle Rescue Mission thank you

DEAR editor,

The Rochelle Rescue Mission Board of Directors would like to take this opportunity to thank the

community members, businesses and churches for contributing to our annual fundraising campaign. Without your support the mission could not provide

the quality services for our less fortunate citizens of Ogle County. All monies are used for the shelter to provide for those in need. Thank you once again for your support.

**Pat Zilm**  
Rochelle Rescue Mission Secretary

### How to contact government officials

**U.S. Con. Darin LaHood**  
1424 Longworth HOB  
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**IL Sen. Li Arellano Jr.**  
Stratton Office Bldg  
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(217) 782-1942

**IL Rep. Bradley Fritts**  
Stratton Office Bldg  
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\* Denotes Chairman/President

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typed or legibly handwritten, and no anonymous letters will be published. Any letters from boards or organizations must include at least one name of an individual. Any criticism of public officials should be limited to issues related strictly to their position or actions made in office, as personal attacks will not be published. Letters involving private disputes between the writer and a business will not be published. Political endorsements will

be published, however letters from candidates endorsing themselves will not be printed. Letters may be dropped at the News-Leader office (211 IL Route 38 East), mailed to the News-Leader (P.O. Box 46, Rochelle, IL 61068) or e-mailed ([news@rochellenews-leader.com](mailto:news@rochellenews-leader.com).) The News-Leader reserves the right to edit or reject any letter to the editor for any reason, and letters chosen for publication do not necessarily reflect the views of this newspaper.



# COMMUNITY

## Runnings donates to RCHF All About Me Cancer Resource fund

**ROCHELLE** — The Rochelle Runnings store recently donated \$779.92 to the Rochelle Community Hospital Foundation All About Me Cancer Resource fund from its Girl's Night Out held in October of last year.

"Thanks so much to the Runnings associates for keeping your donation local to help out those in our area battling cancer," an RCH Facebook post said.

The All About Me Cancer Fund at Rochelle Community Hospital Foundation provides grants to qualified cancer patients in the hospital service area so they can better manage their road to recovery. The All About Me Scholarship Program will help to improve patients' quality of life with valuable local



**The Rochelle Runnings store recently donated \$779.92 to the Rochelle Community Hospital Foundation All About Me Cancer Resource fund from its Girl's Night Out held in October of last year.**

resources and financial support. This scholarship offers a patient in need, a one-time grant up to \$500 per year or as funds are available. To apply for the grant, visit [www.rochellehospital.com/Foundation](http://www.rochellehospital.com/Foundation)



- Jan. 31 - Elizabeth Reed, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 1 - Adam Groenhagen, Oregon, \$250
- Feb. 2 - Jodie Bryant, Rochelle, \$50
- Feb. 3 - Phoebe Hughes, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 4 - Justin Otte, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 5 - Julie Mann, Chana, \$25
- Feb. 6 - Chrissy Smardo, Steward, \$25
- Feb. 7 - Kailey Pifer, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 8 - Sharon Watkins, Sycamore, \$25
- Feb. 9 - Roger Meyer, Mt. Morris, \$50
- Feb. 10 - Elsie Johnson, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 11 - Xoe LeMay, Dixon, \$25
- Feb. 12 - Tom Myrick, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 13 - Juan Luna, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 14 - Bill Cash, Roscoe, \$25
- Feb. 15 - Alyssa Perez, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 16 - Eva Chu, Rochelle, \$50
- Feb. 17 - Rocio Belmonte, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 18 - Bridget Schott, Dixon, \$25
- Feb. 19 - Mark Wanner, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 20 - Leslie Ramsey, Roscoe, \$25
- Feb. 21 - Rajiji Sud, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 22 - Doris Parks, \$25
- Feb. 23 - Tracy Alford, Rochelle, \$50
- Feb. 24 - Shelly Crouch, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 25 - Patti Doyle, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 26 - Ashley Lawrenz, Rochelle, \$25

### BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Feb. 26 Natalie Powell	March 13 Veronica Lopez	Lanie McPherson
Feb. 27 Beth Bolhaus	March 16 Christy Oleson	March 25 Chaz & Kathy Conant (anniversary)
March 2 Addison Perkins	March 19 John Overstreet	Liz Danekas Shaun Rosenbach
March 5 Briggs Bridgeman	March 20 Jesse Lopez Rachelle Phillips	March 26 LeeAnn Komadina Kim Dougherty Bernie & Anna Sexton (anniversary)
March 6 Nicole King	March 22 Wakely Peterman	March 30 Grace Olson
March 8 Chaz Conant Donna Sassaman	March 23 Kristi Gonzales	
March 9 Minia Waters	March 24 John Wooten	

Call 815-561-2151 to submit names for birthdays and anniversaries



## Coffee Break

### King Crossword

#### ACROSS

- 1 Doubtfire or Dalloway
- 4 Pesky insect
- 8 Blaze
- 12 "Alley —"
- 13 Verdi heroine
- 14 Booty
- 15 Sugar suffix
- 16 Some online essays
- 18 Doppler device
- 20 "Diamonds" singer
- 21 Brzezinski of MSNBC
- 24 Group character
- 28 Coin that keeps turning up
- 32 Stitched
- 33 Artist Yoko
- 34 "— luck!"
- 36 Actor Stephen
- 37 Euro fraction
- 39 Pub game
- 41 Cognizant
- 43 "No seats" signs
- 44 Olympics chant
- 46 Loan shark's crime
- 50 Ginsberg and Kerouac, for two
- 55 — Maria

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15				16				17				
18			19				20					
			21		22	23		24		25	26	27
28	29	30					31		32			
33				34				35		36		
37			38		39				40			
41				42		43						
			44		45			46		47	48	49
50	51	52				53	54		55			
56					57				58			
59					60				61			

#### DOWN

- 1 Heath
- 2 Activist Parks
- 3 Raced
- 4 Angel with a trumpet
- 5 Zero
- 6 Commotion
- 7 Labels
- 8 Parade attractions
- 9 Cyclades island
- 10 Decay
- 11 UFO engi-neers
- 17 Diner dessert
- 19 Sound boost-er
- 22 Handle
- 23 Poker pay-ments
- 25 Medal earner
- 26 Actor Clive
- 27 Hitch
- 28 — Raton, Fla.
- 29 From the start
- 30 Lady of Spain
- 31 Belgian river
- 35 Stirs up
- 38 "We hold these — to be ..."
- 40 Letter adden-da, for short
- 42 Sixth sense
- 45 Top-notch
- 47 Beehive State
- 48 Get up
- 49 Tibetan herd
- 50 "Kapow!"
- 51 Before
- 52 Play segment
- 53 Where Lux. is
- 54 Ring decision

### Weekly SUDOKU

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

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!

### CryptoQuip

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: E equals X

CGVL DSB'KV HL VEMVKI PL  
FSPLPLZ HAHZVY, CGHI FSBRA  
DSB YHD DSB YMVFPHRPOV PL?  
QHEPQ-POPLZ.

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

M	R	S	G	N	A	T	F	I	R	E
H	A	D	A	R	B	L	O	G	S	T
S	O	S	I	A	V	A	L	O	O	T
S	O	S	I	A	V	A	L	O	O	T
S	O	S	I	A	V	A	L	O	O	T
S	O	S	I	A	V	A	L	O	O	T
S	O	S	I	A	V	A	L	O	O	T
S	O	S	I	A	V	A	L	O	O	T
S	O	S	I	A	V	A	L	O	O	T
S	O	S	I	A	V	A	L	O	O	T

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WEDNESDAY, FEB. 26, 2025

ROCHELLE NEWS-LEADER • SECTION 2 • PAGE 1

# SPORTS



## IKWF REGIONAL ACTION

The Rochelle Wrestling Club sent 17 kids to the 2025 IKWF North Regional in Byron.

See page 2 for more details

### RTHS Wrestling



(PHOTOS BY RUSSELL HODGES)

The Rochelle Hub varsity wrestling team sent four athletes to the 2025 IHSA State Championship at the State Farm Center in Champaign over the weekend. Seniors Grant Gensler (top left) and Kaiden Morris (top right) each medaled in fifth place at their respective weight classes, while senior Xavier Villalobos (bottom right) earned a second-place medal at his weight class.

# Rochelle trio medals at state

Villalobos takes second, Morris and Gensler finish fifth in IHSA State Championship

BY RUSSELL HODGES  
SPORTS EDITOR

**CHAMPAIGN** — Xavier Villalobos saw his high school wrestling career come full circle as he entered the circle one last time during the IHSA State Championship at the State Farm Center.

Once a state finalist in Class 2A as a freshman, Villalobos returned to the mat as a state finalist for a second time on Saturday, when the senior squared off against Elmhurst IC Catholic's Max Cumbee for his first-ever state championship. As Villalobos prepared to face off with Cumbee for the start of the opening period, he took one more moment to soak in the

state environment.

"Everything happens for a reason," Villalobos said. "My freshman year, I got second and it was a good goal. My goal for my senior year was to come back and try to get a state championship."

Villalobos fought to the final second of the third period, but the senior was unable to escape off the bottom, falling one point short in a 1-0 decision to Cumbee, who earned the lone point of the bout on a second-period escape. Despite the loss, Villalobos (42-6) has etched his name in the history books at Rochelle Township High School, becoming the boys wrestling program's first four-time IHSA state qualifier as well as the program's

first three-time IHSA state medalist.

"It means a lot," Villalobos said. "I've always preached to people that Rochelle is a great town and a great environment to be in. I wanted to put Rochelle on the map and let people know that Rochelle isn't just some small town. It feels great to be on the board and to set records."

Villalobos, who became Rochelle's first two-time state finalist since Pat Brownson (2002 and 2003), opened his tournament in dominant fashion, cruising for a 14-0 major decision over Providence Catholic's Lucas Forsythe.

See **WRESTLING**  
page 4



### RTHS Boys Basketball

# Hubs notch back-to-back wins to finish regular season

Rochelle enters regional on hot streak after victories against Byron and Ottawa

BY RUSSELL HODGES  
SPORTS EDITOR

**ROCHELLE** — Offensive rebounds and balanced scoring allowed the Rochelle Hubs to overcome a slow start during their varsity basketball matchup against Ottawa on Friday night.

Junior guard Van Gerber finished with 18 points and drained four 3-pointers for the Hubs, who outrebounded the Pirates 34-17 overall and 11-3 on the offensive glass en route to a 67-55 win over Ottawa. Sophomore forward Brody Bruns contributed 15 points and nine rebounds, while senior guard Carson Lewis added 13 points on 4-of-7 shooting in the win. Rochelle (12-19, 3-7 Interstate 8) will face Woodstock in the IHSA 3A Freeport Regional Semifinals on Wednesday.

"It was a slow start to the game, but we're doing a better job of knowing where our shots are coming from, which makes offensive rebounding easier,"

head coach Tim Thompson said. "We have some good offensive rebounders and they're working hard. It was a choppy first half, but we started to get going in the third quarter and we were confident in our shooting. We got a lead and when the kids are playing with a lead, they're guarding harder and going to the boards."

Freshman guard Cohen Haedt chipped in 11 points on 3-of-5 shooting with three assists for the Hubs, who shot nearly 47 percent from the field and 40 percent from 3-point range during the game. Rochelle's muscles on the glass led to an advantage in second-chance points, where the Hubs outpaced the Pirates 11-3. Junior forward Brode Metzger finished with five points and seven rebounds for the Hubs, who will be the No. 5 seed in next week's regional tournament.

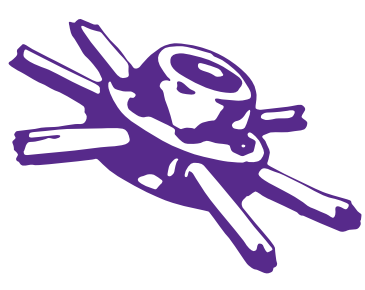
See **BASKETBALL**  
page 5



(PHOTO BY MARCY DELILLE)

Junior Brode Metzger puts up a shot between two defenders during the Rochelle Hub varsity basketball game against Ottawa on Friday evening.





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## WE SUPPORT OUR HUBS!

### HUB SPOTLIGHT



(COURTESY PHOTO)

The Rochelle Wrestling Club sent 17 athletes to the 2025 IKWF North Regional in Byron over the weekend, qualifying 16 athletes for the sectional tournament.

## RWC fields five champions at 2025 IKWF North Regional

BY RUSSELL HODGES  
SPORTS EDITOR

**BYRON** — The Rochelle Wrestling Club sent 17 athletes to the 2025 IKWF North Regional in Byron on Sunday, with five athletes recording first-place finishes and 16 athletes earning top-6 finishes to qualify for the 2025 IKWF North Sectional in Algonquin on Saturday, March 1.

Elias Andronic finished first in the Boys Bantam 62 Division with a 4-0 record. Andronic scored a 20-3 technical fall over Alber Athletics WC's Madox Houser before earning a fall over DuPec WC's Keegan Graves in the quarterfinals. Andronic sealed his regional title with a 10-0 major decision over Rochelle's Cooper Harris and a 12-0 major decision over Dakota's Carter Auer.

Nehemiah Andronic finished first in the Boys Intermediate 79 Division with a 3-0 record. Andronic recorded a fall over Dakota Wrestling Club's Paisden Miller before notching a 14-1 major decision over Rochelle's Grant Cole in the semifinals. Andronic clinched his regional championship with a 19-3 technical fall against Dakota Wrestling Club's Zander Graika.

Teddy Millard finished first in the Boys Novice 80 Division with a 3-0 record. Millard earned an 18-3 technical fall over Alber Athletics WC's Milan Murdakes before securing a pin against Stockton Renegades WC's Gannon Kriebs in the semifinals. Millard locked up his regional title with a 5-3 decision against Alber Athletics WC's Gionni Zapf in the championship round.

Benjamin Morris finished first in the Boys Senior 164 Division with a 1-0 record, scoring a 19-3 technical fall against Belvidere Bandits WC's Vincenzo Montanez. Raya Windham finished first in the Girls Bantam 115 Division and Ty Johnson took second in the Boys Bantam 43 Division.

Chase Marruffo took second in the Boys Intermediate 90 Division with a 2-1 record. Marruffo opened the tournament with a fall over Alber Athletics WC's Maxton Green

before turning in a 9-7 decision against Stockton Renegades WC's Gabriel Bartell in the semifinal round.

Grant Cole placed third in the Boys Intermediate 79 Division with a 3-1 record, picking up a 20-4 technical fall over Stockton's Gavin Goebel in the quarterfinals. After a loss, Cole bounced back with a fall over Belvidere's Conrad Barber and a 6-4 decision over Alber Athletics' Jax Teran.

Eoghan Good finished fourth in the Boys Bantam 55 Division with a 2-2 record, scoring a 3-1 decision over Stillman Valley's Ashwin Bishop and an 8-0 major decision over Stillman Valley's Bryson Bunk. Cooper Harris finished fourth in the Boys Bantam 62 Division with a 3-2 record, securing a 7-2 decision over DuPec's Elias Cox as well as a 17-10 decision over Stillman Valley's Brayden Wrage and a 14-5 major decision over Belvidere's Jesse Fanara.

Wells Millard finished fourth in the Boys Intermediate 64 Division with a 2-2 record, earning a fall over The Law WC's Cameron Kryder and an 18-1 technical fall over Hawk WC's London Lewis. Dominic Escatel finished fourth in the Boys Novice 93 Division with a 2-2 record, picking up a fall over Rockford's William Ross and a 22-3 technical fall over Belvidere's Christopher Arroyo.

Joshua Hernandez finished fourth in the Boys Senior 118 Division with a 1-2 record, scoring a 16-0 technical fall against 815 Stateline WC's Oliver Nolan. Matthew Johnson Jr. took fifth in the Boys Novice 134 Division and Montana Contreras took fifth in the Boys Senior 144 Division with a 1-2 record, receiving a forfeit from Harlem Huskies Wrestling Club's Izaak Haight.

Rowen Villalobos went 2-2 over four matches in the Boys Intermediate 84 Division, recording a 17-2 technical fall over Harvard's Maxwell Oswald and a 12-8 decision over Dakota's Brody Miller. Dustin Hutcherson Jr. earned a wild card nod in the Boys Novice 86 Division.

Good luck to our  
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# SPORTS

## RTHS Boys Track & Field

### Core athletes back in action as Hubs begin 2025 season

Auburn Boys Indoor Invitational held Feb. 22

BY RUSSELL HODGES  
SPORTS EDITOR

**ROCHELLE** — Around 75 student-athletes are signed up to run track and field for the Rochelle Hubs during the 2025 season, which started with the team's first official practice on Tuesday.

Rochelle will look for its junior class to emerge after serving as the team's core last spring. The Hubs are seeking to replace a talented senior class from 2024 that includes IHSA state qualifier Landon Mickley. Rochelle has roughly one month to prepare for its first indoor meet of the year, which will be the Byron Indoor Preview on March 15. The Hubs will also compete at the Gary Egler Invitational in Sycamore on March 19 and the Sterling Warrior Invitational on March 22.

"We had some great athletes who graduated last year, but seeing who we have coming back, I think we're going to have a great group of kids who are going to compete and I think we're going to qualify more events for the state meet," head

coach Dale Bergeson said. "Every event is going to be better this year than it was last year... We started with such a young group a few years ago and they're starting to get older. I'm looking forward to seeing what they do with that."

Field events are an area Bergeson said the Hubs should be strong in 2025. Junior pole vaulter Andrew Nuyen returns after winning the ITT Indoor State Championship and tying for third in the IHSA 2A State Championship last season. Senior Jack Tilton comes back after a second-place finish in the high jump at the Interstate 8 Conference meet. The Hubs are looking to rebuild in the throwing events, as Mickley led Rochelle in both the shot put and the discus throw in 2024.

"We're going to be looking for improvements in throwing events and we'll need to see who can fill in those gaps and score some points for us," Bergeson said. "I think we're going to see a lot of depth in our middle-distance events and our sprinters. We may have to pick and choose who goes to certain

meets, but I'm excited to see who's able to rise to the top this season."

Junior sprinters Caden Goodwin and Reece Harris are expected to take on bigger varsity roles this season. Junior Declan McGee and freshman Tyler Johnson, who were the top runners on the cross country team during the fall, are two names to watch in the distance events this year.

"I want us to score higher in the conference and my personal goal for us is to qualify for events for the state meet," Bergeson said. "I want us to do well in the conference and I want us to have a state champion. I want someone who can come up and get on the medal stand this year."

Rochelle's outdoor season will begin with a road meet at Morris on Tuesday, April 8. Among the larger events the Hubs are set to compete in are the annual Hub Relays on April 19 and the annual Ogle County Invitational on May 6, both of which will be held at RTHS. Rochelle will also host the Interstate 8 Conference meet on May 16 and the IHSA 2A Sectional on May 21.

## RTHS Girls Track & Field



(PHOTO BY RUSSELL HODGES)

Sophomore Elyse Manning will be a key contributor back in the mix for the Rochelle Lady Hub track and field team this season.

### Growth remains key goal as Lady Hubs return for 2025 season

Sycamore Invitational scheduled for March 11

BY RUSSELL HODGES  
SPORTS EDITOR

**ROCHELLE** — Growth and execution are two main goals second-year head coach Colfay Pointer is setting for the Rochelle Lady Hubs as the 2025 track and field season approaches.

Around 50 student-athletes have signed up to run track and field for the Lady Hubs, who held their first official practice of the season Tuesday afternoon. Rochelle is nearly one month from its first indoor meet, which will be the Sycamore Invitational on Tuesday, March 11. The Lady Hubs will also compete at the Byron Indoor Preview on Saturday, March 15 and the Sterling Warrior Invitational on Saturday, March 22 before transitioning into the outdoor season.

"We have a lot of returners and that's really exciting," Pointer said. "A lot of our girls who're coming back are fired up and ready to get some work in. With so many returners and with all of our coaches returning, we're going to be closer as a team and that will make things more fun. We'll get more energy out of the girls and everyone's feeling good going into the season."

Senior Dempsey Atkinson is set to return after winning the Interstate 8 title in the high jump last season. The Lady Hubs also welcome back senior thrower Erin Murphy, who took third in shot put at the IHSA Sectional last season. Junior Kyrie Cragin took fourth in the 400-meter dash at the IHSA Sectional last season and will be an athlete to watch in the middle-distance events.

"We're keeping things simple and we want to see everyone continue to work and execute and let their results do the talking," Pointer said. "We want the girls to get better every week... We had a really young team last year so the sprints weren't some of our strongest events, but with the girls lifting throughout the year, we're hoping that they can start to make some waves."

Sophomore sprinter Elyse Manning comes back after a breakout freshman campaign in which she took fourth in the triple jump at the IHSA Sectional. Junior Rose Luxton will be a name to watch in the distance events, while sophomore Vivian Worthington is a runner who could be a bigger varsity contributor for

the Lady Hubs this season. Junior sprinters Katie Toczylowski and Valerie Saldana are two more returning athletes Pointer said could step up for the team in 2025.

"Vivian was improving last year and she has a chance to start scoring points as a distance runner at the varsity level," Pointer said. "Dempsey was a conference champion in the high jump and if we can get her through a healthy season, she can do really well in the high jump this year. Erin can do really well in the shot put this year and Elyse was really progressing in the triple jump last year. If she continues with sprinting this year, she can do well in the sprints also."

Rochelle's outdoor season will begin with a road meet at Morris on Tuesday, April 8. The Lady Hubs will travel for several larger meets including the Freeport Invitational on April 19, the Rock Falls Invitational on April 25, the Sterling Night Relays on May 2 and the annual Ogle County Invitational at RTHS on Tuesday, May 6. The Interstate 8 Conference meet will be held at Morris on Friday, May 9 and the IHSA 2A Sectional is currently scheduled for Wednesday, May 14.



(PHOTO BY RUSSELL HODGES)

Junior Andrew Nuyen returns after winning the indoor state title and taking third at the IHSA State Championship in the pole vault last season.

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# SPORTS



(PHOTOS BY RUSSELL HODGES)

Rochelle's Roman Villalobos (top left), Kaiden Morris (top right), Xavier Villalobos (bottom left) and Grant Gensler (bottom right) represented the Hub wrestling team during the 2025 IHSA State Championship in Champaign over the weekend. The four are pictured below with head coach Alphonso Vruno as well as assistant coaches Nelson Baker, Tyler Baker and Hank Swalla.

## WRESTLING: Rochelle athletes compete at IHSA State Championship

From page 1

The 126-pounder continued his march through the Class 2A bracket Thursday evening, when he scored a key takedown and showed strong defense in a 5-2 decision over Niles Notre Dame's John Sheehy during the championship quarterfinals.

Villalobos, whose older brother Eddie was a three-time IHSA state qualifier and one-time state medalist, battled well beyond six minutes during his semifinal bout on Friday evening. Entering the first tiebreaker tied with Antioch's Gavin Hanrahan, Villalobos completed a successful ride before bursting out from bottom in the second tiebreaker period to emerge with a 2-1 victory.

"Every little thing has mattered to me," Villalobos said. "My coaches, my practice partners, my family and friends and God. We have a great environment in the room and everyone kept telling me that I'm the best and I can do this. I believed in myself. I didn't have a lot of confidence at the beginning of the year and that led to some losses, but during the postseason, I believed in myself and told myself that I was a top guy in the state. I just needed to go out and prove it."

Villalobos was one of multiple Rochelle wrestlers who achieved state honors and historic feats during the state tournament. Seniors Kaiden Morris and Grant Gensler both finished fifth at their respective weight classes, running Rochelle's total up to three state medalists, a new school record. Morris and Gensler each finished with 49 wins, setting a new school record for victories in a season and breaking the old mark set by Alex Harvey and Eddie Villalobos in 2017-18.

Morris (49-5) was in uncharted territory during the state tournament. Returning as last year's Class 2A state runner-up at 215 pounds, Morris was bounced into the consolation rounds after falling by 14-4 major decision against Waterloo's Jaxson Mathenia in the state quarterfinals on Thursday



evening. Needing a run through the wrestlebacks, Morris pinned Mattoon's Mitchell Clapp on Friday and scored a 7-1 decision over Bloomington's Kenner Bye on Saturday.

"I'm disappointed in myself, but at the end of the day, winning a state medal is awesome," Morris said. "I learned that I can battle back in a bracket. I haven't really wrestled in the back side of a bracket very often, but I found out that mentally, I can do it. If I had to point out one thing from this tournament that I'm most proud of, it'd be that I wrestled back and I stayed strong mentally."

The two wins guaranteed a top-6 medal finish for Morris, who conceded a 13-8 decision against Evergreen Park's Genesis Ward in the semifinal wrestlebacks Saturday afternoon before ending his high school career with a victory, pinning Burbank St. Laurence's Xavier Bitner for fifth place. Morris, who picked up a 5-3 decision over Chicago Brother Rice's Colin Goggin in his first match of the state tournament, was emotional as he walked off the mat one final time on Saturday.

"It kind of hit me after I walked off the mat that high school wrestling was over," said Morris, who intends

to wrestle collegiately after graduating from RTHS. "This has been a big part of my life and I had to take it all in one more time because this is an awesome venue and this was an awesome experience... The wins record is awesome and it's great that I can share it with Grant. I felt like I was able to stay consistent and go into every match with a mindset that I'm the best."

Morris and Gensler each concluded their high school careers as three-time state qualifiers. Gensler (49-7) competed in Class 2A at 165 pounds and started his state tournament run with a key victory, using a third-period takedown to earn a 6-4 decision over Bethalto Civic Memorial's James Wojciekiewicz on Thursday. But a tough loss to Montini's Santino Tenuta in overtime moved Gensler into the consolation rounds, where two wins would be necessary to medal.

Unfazed, Gensler didn't give up a single point over his next two matches, notching a 7-0 decision against Galesburg's Anthony Makwala on Friday before a dominant first period led to a 12-0 major decision against Mahomet-Seymour's AJ Demos on Saturday. After a loss



against Geneseo's Zachary Montez, Gensler wrapped up his high school career on a high note, pinning Chicago St. Patrick's Van Grasser in the fifth-place bout to become a first-time state medalist.

"It feels like a lot of my hard work paid off," Gensler said. "We've spent a lot of hours learning from coach [Alphonso] Vruno, coach [Tyler] Baker, coach [Hank] Swalla and coach [Nelson] Baker in the room... It feels good that I'll have my name on the board and be remembered for wrestling at Rochelle. My mindset was a lot better this year. I thought I drilled harder in the room

and I wanted to win. It's an amazing feeling to come down here. The wrestling is what it's all about and I love that, but I'm also able to spend time with the guys and my coaches."

Junior Roman Villalobos (39-12) came within one match of becoming a first-time state medalist. A first-time state qualifier this year, Villalobos overcame an opening-round loss on Thursday, finding a clutch takedown to earn a 7-6 decision against Mahomet-Seymour's Brock VanDeveer in his first wrestleback. Villalobos was again on point during his next bout, building an early lead and

holding off a late surge from Highland's Ashton Zobrist to emerge with a 10-8 decision.

"I'm so grateful that I was able to come down here with my teammates and my friends," said Villalobos, whose win over Zobrist was the 100th win of his high school career. "I'm grateful that I won a couple of matches and even though I didn't place, I accomplished some of my goals. The wrestlebacks are about surviving and advancing. It's all in the mind and I knew I had to prepare mentally and get to my offense early. That's what helped me win those matches."



# SPORTS



(PHOTOS BY MARCY DELILLE)

The Rochelle Hub varsity basketball team concluded the regular season with a 67-55 win over Ottawa on Friday evening. Above, sophomore Brody Bruns (left) drives for a layup at the rim and freshman Cohen Haedt (right) drives the ball around an Ottawa defender with his left hand. Below, senior Jack Tilton soars for a shot.

## BASKETBALL: Rochelle begins IHSA 3A Freeport Regional on Wednesday

From page 1

"We went 3-0 this week and I think we're primed for a good run in the regional," Thompson said. "We really need balance on offense going forward... We haven't had a great year defensively, but we've been able to score the ball, so sharing the ball and getting multiple guys into double figures makes it really difficult for other teams. We've done that over the last week and a half."

Rochelle dominated the third quarter, outscoring Ottawa 29-9 after holding a 25-23 halftime lead. The Hubs, who have won four of their last five games, are looking for their second straight postseason win over Woodstock, the No. 3 regional seed, who Rochelle beat last season.

"We're playing better basketball and we're not turning the ball over as much, but we're really

starting to get healthy," Thompson said. "There were times where we had a few injuries and we're still kind of bruised up, but we're starting to play with more confidence. We haven't had a tremendous season, but the kids have hung in there and they'll have an opportunity to keep going with how the regional has shaken out. I think the kids enjoy being around each other."

### Byron

Junior guard Van Gerber caught fire from 3-point range as the Rochelle Hubs looked to continue their winning ways during their nonconference varsity basketball matchup at Byron.

Gerber drilled a season-high and game-high eight triples and finished with 24 points for the Hubs, who took down the Tigers 76-66 on Thursday evening to earn their second straight win. Sophomore forward Brody Bruns

added a double-double with 17 points and 17 rebounds for the Hubs (11-19, 2-7 Interstate 8), who concluded the regular season with a home game against Ottawa on Friday evening. Senior guard Elijah Harley chipped in 12 points in the victory.

"Since Van's returned from his back injury, he's been really potent for us off the bench," head coach Tim Thompson said. "We've struggled to get scoring off of our bench and he's been shooting the ball a lot better since his injury. We were down in the first quarter and his 3-point shooting got us back into the game... I could feel that he was having a good shooting night."

Offensive rebounding proved to be a key difference maker for the Hubs, who outdueled the Tigers 22-7 on the offensive glass and 50-31 for the game. Junior forward Brode



Metzger grabbed five offensive rebounds in only 14 minutes, while Harley and Bruns each had four offensive rebounds. Gerber's stellar shooting night included seven assists and three steals.

"I thought we were a really good offensive rebounding team last season," Thompson said.

"With us trailing early in the first quarter, we had to pick it up and our kids kept going and going. If you look at the stats after the game and judge box scores, everything was pretty equal and you wouldn't know who won until you looked at the rebounding margin. We took control there."

Senior guard Carson Lewis totaled nine points on three made triples, while freshman guard Cohen Haedt chipped in seven points to aid the Hubs in their victory. Carson Newton led all players with 26 points while adding six rebounds and eight assists for the Tigers on Thursday.



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# SPORTS

## RMS Girls Basketball

(PHOTOS BY ROBIN RETHWILL)



### Rochelle Middle School seventh-grade girls basketball teams take on Prairie Knolls

The Rochelle Middle School seventh-grade girls basketball team hosted Prairie Knolls this past week, with the A team falling 33-15 and the B team losing 26-6. Above, Rochelle's Jaelyn Gonzales (top left) drives at two defenders and Berkeley Thompson (top right) puts up a shot. Below, Rochelle's Cora Mickley (middle left) shoots the ball and Destiny Hueramo-DeLaCruz (middle right) grabs a rebound. At the bottom, Rochelle's Gilberta Agbetrobu (bottom left) drives the ball up the court and Alainah Jordal (bottom right) steals the ball from an opposing player.

## RTHS Boys Track & Field

# Nuyen sets new school record at Auburn Indoor Invitational

## Rochelle pole vaulter clears 15 feet 11 inches during season-opening meet Saturday

BY RUSSELL HODGES  
SPORTS EDITOR

**ROCKFORD** — Junior Andrew Nuyen shattered the Rochelle Hub track and field team's school record in the pole vault during the Auburn Indoor Invitational on Saturday, clearing 4.85 meters

(15 feet 11 inches) to break the previous record of 15 feet 1 inch that Nuyen set in 2024.

Nuyen finished first in the pole vault and led the Hubs to a ninth-place finish out of 24 schools at the varsity level. The JV team took eighth out of 24 schools in the meet, which

was held in the indoor track and field facility at Auburn High School.

Junior Caden Goodwin took third in the triple jump with a distance of 12.63 meters and fifth in the 60-meter dash with a time of 7.19 seconds. Junior Jonathan Bearrows took third in the long jump with

a distance of 6.01 meters and at the JV level, freshman Tyler Johnson placed second for the Hubs in the 1600-meter run with a time of 5:00.46. Also on JV, sophomore German Albertyson led Rochelle in the 200-meter dash, finishing fifth with a time of 25.66 seconds.

Sophomore Justin DeClerck earned two top-10 JV finishes, taking ninth in the 60-meter dash and the 200-meter dash with times of 7.74 and 25.85 seconds. Rochelle's JV 3200-meter relay team (Eduardo Cisneros, Christopher Lawrence, Johnny Morales and Edward Koziol) placed fifth

with a time of 10:13.74 and Rochelle's varsity 1600-meter relay team (Tyler Johnson, Elijah Mayen, Johnny Morales and Eduardo Cisneros) took ninth with a time of 4:20.24. Sophomore Aaron DeClerck took seventh in the JV long jump with a distance of 5.21 meters.

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# PRIME TIME

## How to plan a memorable, celebratory retirement party

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The effort people put into retirement planning makes the moment individuals call it a career worthy of an extraordinary celebration. The following retirement planning party tips can ensure a celebration that suits an occasion as significant as the day professionals call it a career.

- Pick a unique venue. Whether the party will be a sizable affair with a guest list that includes long-time colleagues and friends or a smaller gathering with a retiree's close knit inner circle, a unique venue underscores how significant a moment and achievement retirement is. For larger affairs, shop around for venues in much the same way you might when celebrating other milestones, such as a child's graduation from



college or a wedding. If the guest list includes just a handful of friends and family members, consider planning a trip to a resort locale or renting an impressive home through a site like Airbnb or Vrbo.

- Take a stroll down Memory Lane. In the months leading up to the celebration, work with the retiree to identify key moments and people in his or her career. A photo montage of those notable moments and individuals

can be a great way to commemorate a lengthy career and simultaneously thank and honor the people who helped along the way. Play the montage for guests at a key moment during the party.

- Ask colleagues to share well wishes. Brief messages from colleagues, whether they're delivered via handwritten letters or videos each individual films, can be a great way to show the guest of honor how much he or she meant

to others throughout their careers. Messages can be incorporated into a montage video or shared privately with the guest of honor.

- Kick the curfew to the curb. It might have been a while since a newly minted retiree had a late night, but a retirement party can stretch into the wee hours. After all, the guest of honor won't need to wake up for work the next day (or any other day), so let invitees know that the party will

keep going well into the night. If booking a venue for the party, plan an after party at your home for a handful of guests who are particularly close with the guest of honor.

- Keep the focus on fun. While reaching retirement is a celebratory moment that merits a good party, many retirees also feel a degree of sorrow because they're leaving behind rewarding careers they worked so hard to build. Such sentiments may not

be entirely avoidable, but party planners can emphasize fun and a festive atmosphere to ensure the night is celebratory and not sorrowful. Book a band and submit a play list of the retiree's favorite songs, and encourage guests to dance the night away.

The day professionals reach retirement merits a celebration that's worthy of the years of hard work and dedication individuals put in over the course of their careers.

## Gardening safety tips for seniors

**L**ONGER hours of daylight and warming temperatures are hallmarks of spring and each of these variables do much to contribute to the reputation of a season that's become synonymous with rejuvenation. After months spent confronting cold temperatures and huddling up indoors, people might find the welcoming conditions of spring irresistible, which compels many to spend more time outdoors.

There's no shortage of things to do outside in spring, and the season marks a perfect time to reestablish one's green thumb and get down and dirty in the garden. Gardening is a rewarding and healthy activity, though some, particularly seniors, may need to approach springtime sessions in the garden with a heightened degree of caution. Seniors can keep these health and safety tips in mind as they celebrate the return of spring and what that means for their gardens.

- Recognize that gardening is exercise. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identifies gardening as a good form of exercise, and evidence supports the notion that gardening is a particularly beneficial form of physical activity. A 2024 meta-analysis published in the Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery & Psychiatry indicated that individuals who engaged in low levels of leisure time physical activities such as gardening are likely to have a lower risk of stroke than peers who are sedentary. It's important to keep these findings in mind when gardening, which is perhaps more physically demanding than some may recognize. Seniors can approach gardening just like they would other forms of exercise, taking the same precautions, such as stretching before and after each session and making a concerted effort to remain hydrated, while out in the garden.



- Incorporate rest into your garden routine. Rest is vital for anyone engaged in physical activity, including gardeners. Frequent breaks during gardening sessions can help avoid strains and sprains and provide opportunities to hydrate and get out of the sun. If possible, seniors can identify a shaded spot on their properties and place

a bench there so they have somewhere to rest during gardening sessions.

- Utilize ergonomic gardening tools and other specialized products. The Center for Excellence in Disabilities at West Virginia University notes that ergonomics studies movements of a person's body during physical activities in an effort to produce tools that ensure

a task has as little physical impact on the body as possible. Ergonomic tools are designed to lower injury risk, improve efficiency and increase satisfaction that stems from performing a particular activity. Before each gardening

season, seniors can inspect their existing tools and replace them with ergonomic alternatives, if necessary. In addition, seniors can utilize specialized products, including long-handled gardening tools that reduce the need

to bend over or kneel down, to further reduce their risk of injury while working in the garden.

These simple strategies can ensure seniors' springtime gardening sessions are as safe as they are rewarding.

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# ASHTON NEWS



**Lumzy, Searing win AFCES Spelling Bee**  
Ashton-Franklin Center Elementary School recently held its 2025 Spelling Bee. The champion was Lianna Lumzy and the runner up was Brian Searing. "All of the contestants did a wonderful job!" a district Facebook post said. (Courtesy photo)

## Lee County Sheriff's Office announces Super Bowl weekend enforcement results

**DIXON** — The Lee County Sheriff's Office today announced it made zero driving under the influence arrests and issued six seat belt citations during the recent Super Bowl enforcement campaign. They also issued two distracted driving citations, three other moving citations, and made one driving while license suspended arrest.

The Super Bowl weekend "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" and "Click It or Ticket" enforcement effort ran from Friday, Feb. 7, through the early morning hours of Monday, Feb. 10. The goal was to keep impaired drivers off the roads and ensure more people buckle up and follow all traffic laws.

"Motorists should understand the warning that we are serious about cracking down on impaired drivers and seat belt and other traffic safety law violators. We do it to save lives," Sheriff Clay Whelan said.

The recent law enforcement campaign was made possible by federal highway safety funds administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation as part of the statewide "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" and "Click It or Ticket" campaigns.

## AFC FFA members participate in Ag Business Career Development Event

**ASHTON** — Fifty-three members of the Ashton-Franklin Center FFA participated in the Section 2 Ag Business Career Development Event in mid-February. Yarisca Esquivel-Lopez was the first place individual overall and the team of Yarisca, Jacob Warrenfeltz, and Logan O'Brien placed third as a team. In the middle school division, Spencer McPheron, Raine Winterland, and Makayla Pineda placed first as a team.



Members of the Ashton-Franklin Center FFA Chapter participated in Proficiency Judging on Feb. 18. Members had interviews about their Supervised Agricultural Experiences or Supervised Occupational Experiences that they keep records on. (COURTESY PHOTO)

## AFC FFA members participate in Proficiency Judging

**ASHTON** — Members of the Ashton-Franklin Center FFA Chapter participated in Proficiency Judging on Feb. 18. Members had interviews about their Supervised Agricultural Experiences or Supervised Occupational Experiences that they keep records on. Brooke Burger - Beef Production. Izzy Cater - Vet Science. John Delhotal - Turfgrass Management. Luke Dorn - Grain Production. Hailey Grover - Ag Services. Dominic Mullins - SOE Human & Public Safety. Logan O'Brien - Landscape Management. Elsie Viall - Star Discovery Placement. Kate Viall - Fruit and Nut Production. Kate Viall - Safety. Jacob Warrenfeltz - Small Animal Care & Production. Jacob Warrenfeltz - Specialty Animal Production. Luke Dorn, Hailey Grover, Dominic Mullins, Logan O'Brien, Elsie Viall, Kate Viall, and Jacob Warrenfeltz will be moving on to the district competition on March 6.

## COMMUNITY MATTERS



### AFC CUSD #275

## Go, Raiders!

Ashton-Franklin Center Jr/Sr High School  
611 Western Ave., Ashton, IL 61006  
815-452-7461 | Malinda Hart, Principal

### Learn ★ Grow ★ Thrive

Ashton-Franklin Center Elementary School  
217 South Elm, Franklin Grove, IL 61031  
815-456-2325 | Jenah Burkitt, Principal

### Community Building

Mills and Petrie Memorial Building  
Hourly, daily rentals for your event  
815-453-5048

### Funeral Home

Beverage Lyons Funeral Home  
601 Richardson Ave., Ashton, 815-453-2441  
beveragefamilyfh.com

### Public Library

Mills and Petrie Memorial Library  
704 First Street  
815-453-2213

### Real Estate

Lori Patterson Real Estate  
811 Main St., Ashton  
815-751-0510

### Schools

Ashton-Franklin Center CUSD #275  
611 Western Ave., Ashton  
815-453-7461

### Village Hall

Village of Ashton  
810 Main St., Ashton  
815-453-2241  
www.ashtonil.com

## Beverage Lyons Funeral Home

601 Richardson Ave., Ashton  
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beveragefamilyfh.com



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## 101 LEGAL NOTICE

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OGLE COUNTY, ILLINOIS**  
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF IDA M. HINTON, Deceased.  
NO. 2025PR10  
CLAIM NOTICE  
Notice is given of the death of IDA M. HINTON, of Mount Morris, Illinois. Letters of Office were issued on February 18, 2025, to EARLEEN A. HINTON, whose address is 412 N. 6th St., Oregon, IL 61061, and whose attorneys are Fearer, Nye & Chadwick, 420 4th Avenue, PO Box 117, Rochelle, IL 61068. Claims against the Estate may be filed in the office of the Circuit Clerk of the Court at Ogle County Courthouse,

Oregon, IL 61061, or with the representative, or both, no later than August 26, 2025, and any claim not filed within that period is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the Clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.  
FEARER, NYE & CHADWICK, Attorneys for EARLEEN A. HINTON, Executor of the Estate of IDA M. HINTON, deceased  
No. 0221  
(Feb. 26, Mar. 5 and 12, 2025)

## 101 LEGAL NOTICE

This publication does not knowingly accept fraudulent or deceptive advertising. Readers are cautioned to thoroughly investigate all ads, especially

## 105 BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

"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."

## 113 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.

## 119 ANNOUNCEMENTS

"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."

## 121 LOST AND FOUND

LOST - A blue coin purse - coins inside, a piece of paper, little stones from great granddaughter. Last seen on top of paper machine outside of Rochelle News-Leader. If found, please return to the Rochelle News-Leader, open M-Th 9a-3p and F 9a-1p or call 815-562-4171 to arrange a time to drop it off.

## 201 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 or issued a permit. Your Hometown Newspaper strongly urges any parent or guardian to verify the validity of the license of any facility before placing a child in its care.

## 301 ANTIQUES

ANTIQUES WANTED:

I pay cash for antiques; furniture, glassware, pottery & crocks, tin & iron toys, sterling silver, decoys. If it's antique, I'm interested in looking! Call 815-562-2928 or email dickharms@hotmail.com

## 307 MISCELLANEOUS FOR SALE

SPLIT Firewood For Sale. Contact 779-251-0254

## 405 HOUSES FOR SALE

ALL REAL ESTATE advertised herein is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act, which makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin, or intention to make any such

## 307 MISCELLANEOUS FOR SALE

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## 7 excellent reasons to advertise regularly

- 1. TO MEET DEMAND.** People's wants and needs change from day to day. Regular advertising increases the likelihood of consumers choosing your company when they need your specific product or service.
- 2. TO BUILD TRUST.** The more consumers are exposed to your advertising, the more familiar they become with your brand. Trust builds over time.
- 3. TO STAY COMPETITIVE.** To stay in the race, you must remain top-of-mind with your desired clientele. If your competitors advertise more often than you, who is the customer likely to turn to when they need a product or service? You know the answer.
- 4. TO GENERATE INTEREST.** When a product or service is advertised several times, it's bound to pique consumer interest. What do you have to lose?
- 5. TO ESTABLISH YOUR CREDIBILITY.** Frequent

advertising strengthens your brand image and ensures consumers take your business seriously.

- 6. TO BE REMEMBERED.** Repetition is the key to ensuring your message reaches your target audience. It's much the same as learning a new skill. After all, memory has a way of fading.
- 7. TO SAVE MONEY.** Consistently buying advertising space in your local newspaper is a great way to benefit from lower rates.

**In short, regular advertising multiplies your chances of increasing your revenues.**

## Going once... going twice...

# SOLD!

### The benefits of purchasing cattle from a live auction

A live auction can be a great place to source cattle. If you're on the fence about going to a cattle auction in your area, here are four good reasons to attend.

- 1. You'll have access to a variety of animals.** You'll be able to view and bid on a large variety of cattle of different breeds and pedigrees. If you buy cattle privately, you'll have to visit numerous farms to see the same kind of selection.
- 2. You'll get good value for your money.** At a cattle auction, you'll be able to negotiate a fair price for the cattle you want. Conversely, if you buy cattle from a private farmer, they set the price and often won't consider negotiating.
- 3. You'll be certain of your investment.** If you purchase cattle from a live auction, the animals come with health papers. This allows you to rest assured knowing the cattle you buy are in good health. These papers aren't required when selling cattle privately.
- 4. You'll be able to network.** Attending a cattle auction will give you the opportunity to get to know other people and organizations in the agricultural industry. This can be useful for promoting and expanding your business.

If you're still hesitant about attending a live cattle auction, don't be afraid to ask the more seasoned farmers in your area for their advice.

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Moving Services	\$1,097
Home Insurance	\$977
Home Warranty	\$972
Other Type(s) of Insurance	\$645
Healthcare Provider	\$593
Utilities	\$495
Home Security	\$458
Pet Care	\$431
Cable / Streaming Services	\$329
Internet	\$233

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\* Source: America's Newspapers



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Data sources: Nielsen Scarborough, Coda Ventures Newspaper Ad Effectiveness Service

