

Established In 1854

# The Amboy News

Amboy, Illinois

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## AMBOY MINUTE

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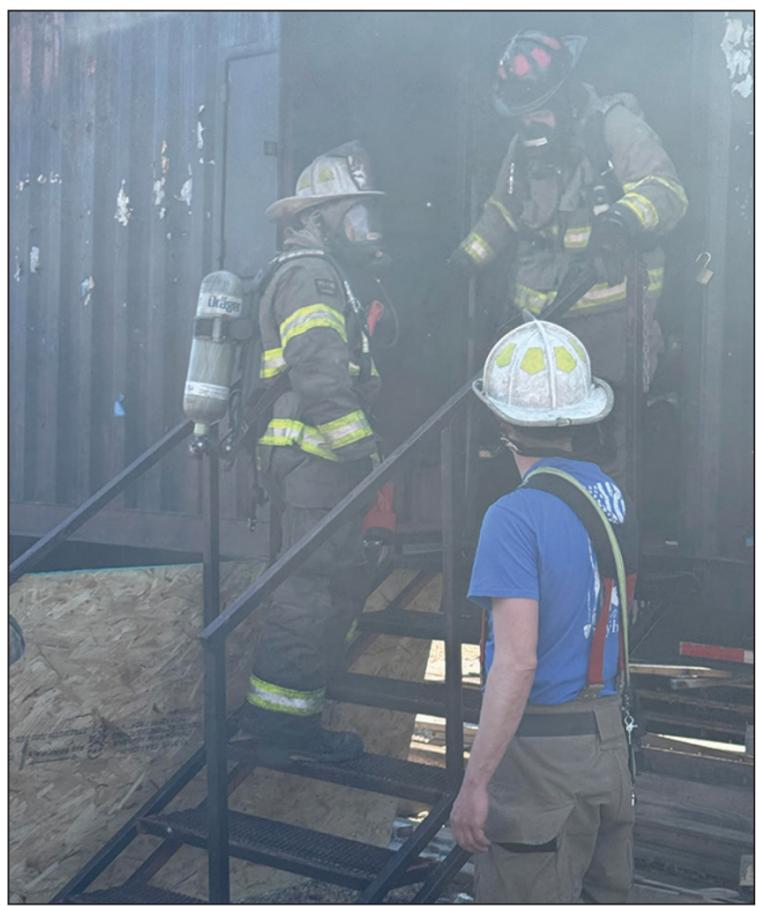
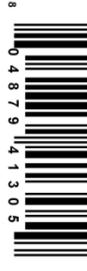
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Left, The cadets of the Sublette Fire Department Training Program went through a hands-on structure fire procedure at the Amboy Fire Department training trailer facility on Sunday, March 9. The fire produced heat with 500-plus temperatures. Right, Sublette Fire Department Assistant Chief Brian Dallam, blue shirt, makes sure cadets exit the training trailer safely. The first-year program had 18 people sign up and 16 made it through nine weeks of the training. Week 10 is Sunday, March 16. The cadets are instructed and assisted by Sublette Fire Chief Kevin Schultz, Assistant Chief Nick Dinges, Lt. Brian O'Malley, Ethan Orzech, Scott Hanson, and Dallam. (Reporter photo by Brandon LaChance)

## Sublette Fire trains the next generation

The 10-week Cadet Training Program had 18 register, 16 complete

By BRANDON LaCHANCE  
Amboy News Editor

SUBLETTE – The Sublette Fire Department always has a mission.

For the most part, they change depending on the day or if there is a fire or emergency situation in the area. However, there is one that has been around impactfully for a long time, bringing in a new class of EMTs and firefighters.

Wanting to take a proactive step to addressing the issue of low numbers and an aging roster, the Sublette Fire Department decided to try a first-time 10-week Cadet Training Program, which will conclude Sunday, March 16.

The department had 18 cadets sign up and 16 were still present at Week 9 on Sunday, March 9.

“It means a ton to us to see how many cadets we had for this program. In small communities,

it’s either you let things happen or you make things happen,” said Sublette Assistant Fire Chief Nick Dinges. “We see these critical shortages in EMT and firefighter services. You look at 70 percent of the United States is still covered by volunteers, but that number went from 900,000 volunteers to 700,000 in the last decade.

“If you look at places like Amboy, Sublette, West Brooklyn, and Compton, the fire service is not getting any younger. I’m 46 and in year 28 or 29. We have to fill that pipeline to the next generation. We think it’s extremely important.

“The only way to do that is by actively creating the young people. If we wait until they’re 18, 19, or 20 years old when they’ve already gone to college, they have a girlfriend or boyfriend, maybe they’ve taken a career path, we’ve lost them.

“Collectively, the Sublette Fire Depart-

ment sat down and said, ‘How do we get to these young people?’ I used my son Jake as the Litmus test. He just turned 16 and we thought to try a cadet program and see if we could be successful. I was hoping for 6-8 kids. We were lucky enough to have Quinn Leffelman, an all-state senior captain of the state championship Amboy football team, call me and say, ‘I can get more bodies.’ Once he did that, we had 18 sign up from Amboy, Sublette, and Byron.”

The cadets have learned different information in a manner of different ways.

They learned hands-on through training facilities such as Amboy Fire Department’s training trailer with a real-time fire situation with flames and heat producing temperatures 500-plus.

See Fire page A2

## Luck o’ the Irish won’t save you from DUI

LEE COUNTY – St. Patrick’s Day will be here before we know it, bringing with it parades, parties, green beer and more to communities throughout the state.

To remind motorists of the dangers of impaired driving and to help keep our streets safe, the Lee County Sheriff’s Office is teaming up with the Illinois State Police and Illinois Department of Transportation for a stepped-up traffic safety campaign.

“With St. Patrick’s Day falling on a Monday this year, we expect increased celebrations throughout the weekend prior,” said Lee County Sheriff Clay Whelan. “We urge everyone to celebrate responsibly. Please plan ahead for a sober ride home before you leave the house — your safety and the safety of others depends on it.”

In addition to looking for alcohol- and cannabis-impaired drivers, the Lee County Sheriff’s Office will be stepping up seat belt enforcement, particularly at night when seat belt usage rates are lowest.

## Senator Arellano introduces bill to allow local governments to store public records electronically



SPRINGFIELD – Senator Li Arellano, Jr has introduced Senate Bill 1719, a legislative measure aimed at modernizing public record-keeping for local governments across Illinois.

The bill amends the Local Records Act to allow local government units to store public records electronically, reducing costs and improving efficiency.

Senator Arellano, Jr built the legislation from his own experiences as a local mayor, as well as on discussions initiated by Peoria County at a January legislative breakfast co-hosted by the County of Peoria,

the City of Peoria, and the Peoria City/County Health Department.

“We must cut costs in Illinois. As technology continues to evolve, it is crucial that we provide local governments with the flexibility to store records in a way that is both secure and accessible,” said Senator Arellano, Jr. “This bill gives local governments the option to move away from outdated and costly paper-based systems and embrace a modern, digital approach.”

By eliminating unnecessary barriers to digital storage, SB1719 provides local governments

the tools to transition to a more modern and cost-effective record-keeping system.

“Allowing electronic storage will help local governments operate more efficiently and transparently, benefiting both officials and residents,” added Senator Arellano, Jr. “This is already being done in court systems and is a common-sense update to our laws that aligns Illinois with the best practices in government record-keeping.”

Senate Bill 1719 has been assigned to the Government Operations committee.



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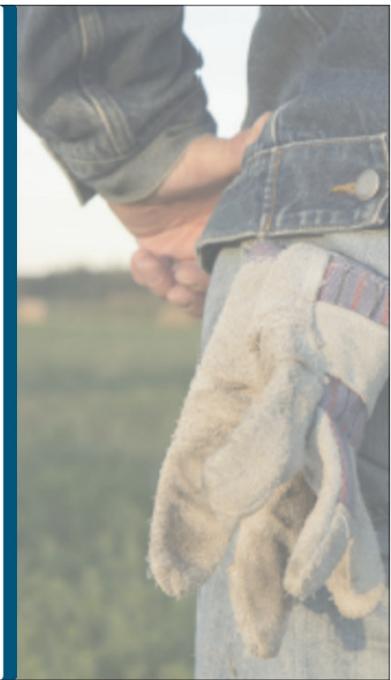
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# LOCAL NEWS



## Tyler Huggins earns Student of the Month

**AMBOY**—Tyler Huggins, son of Jeffery and Michelle Huggins and senior at Amboy High School, is The First National Bank in Amboy Student of the Month for March.

GPA: 3.3  
Memberships and Involvement: Varsity Football, Varsity Basketball,

Amboy FFA Chapter Reporter, and Student Council Awards and Honors: 2023 and 2024 I8FA State Champions, 2021-22 State FFA Conduct of Chapter Meeting Champions, State FFA Degree, 2022 I8FA State runner-ups, Amboy FFA Chapter Officer for three years.

## Dive into fun, learning at Project Pool

**AMBOY**—Lee County 4-H announced Project Pool, an engaging and educational event for youth ages 5-18, will take place from 9 a.m.-12:15 p.m. April 5<sup>th</sup> at the Lee County Fairgrounds.

Check-in begins at 8:45 a.m., there is a \$15 supply fee, and snack time will be at 11 a.m.

Registration is accessible until March 28. Interested participants can register at [go.illinois.edu/ProjectPool](http://go.illinois.edu/ProjectPool).

Project Pool offers a fantastic opportunity for young people to explore the

diverse activities and hands-on learning experiences that 4-H has to offer. The event will feature a special Cloverbud session for youth ages 5-7, running all morning.

For youth ages 8-18, there will be a variety of topics to choose from, with participants selecting one topic per time slot. Topics include cooking 101-401, kitchen chemistry, wool felting, mammals of Illinois, paper plane science, and more.

For more information, please contact Katie Baker at 815-857-3525 or [kmcbr2@illinois.edu](mailto:kmcbr2@illinois.edu).

## Hennepin Hike bridge to bridge close to Rock Falls

**ROCK FALLS**—This month's Friends of the Hennepin Canal hike will be on the feeder canal from Bridge 52 to Bridge 56. This portion is 4.2 miles in length and has been named the "Red Squirrel."

Hikers will meet at 1:30 p.m. at Bridge 56 on Rt. 92, four miles west of Rt. 40. Rt. 92 is 13 miles south of Rock Falls on Rt. 40 or 12 miles north of I-80, Exit 45 on Rt. 40.

You don't need to be

a member of the Friends of the Hennepin Canal to participate and there is no fee for the hike. Come join the fun. Bring a friend.

We ask that you dress weather appropriately. If the hike needs to cancel due to inclement weather, notice will be posted on our Facebook page.

For more information, contact the Friends of the Hennepin Canal at [hikes@friends-hennepin-canal.org](mailto:hikes@friends-hennepin-canal.org).



## Wool Felt Making Workshop at the Coliseum Museum

**OREGON**—The Coliseum Museum of Art, Antiques & Americana in Oregon will present a Wool Felt Making Workshop at 10 a.m. Saturday, March 22 presented by Joann Murdock.

Learn to wet felt. Create a mini purse to carry your phone, credit cards, or other small items. All it takes is a bit of colorful wool and soap and water. Embellish your purse with texture and sparkle from handmade yarns or give it a luxe sheen with a bit of silk or rayon to adhere to the wool.

Each item is one-of-a-kind, very strong and sturdy, yet light weight with recycled Sari silk string used for the adjustable strap. Designed for beginning and intermediate felt makers. All supplies are included. Registration is \$60 and the deadline

is March 16.

Instructor Joann Murdock is a multimedia fiber artist who loves to stretch the boundaries of felt making. She uses silk, sequins, upcycled materials, even paper in her felt creations.

You may register online at [www.cmaa.org/classes--workshops.html](http://www.cmaa.org/classes--workshops.html). Registration forms are available at the Coliseum. You may also call 815-595-5810 or email us at [info@cmaa.org](mailto:info@cmaa.org) for more information.

The CMAAA mission is to present Art, Antiques, Americana and history through permanent and rotating exhibits, workshops, music, theater and more. Additional information can be found on the website, [www.cmaa.org](http://www.cmaa.org) and Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/Coliseum-Museum/](http://www.facebook.com/Coliseum-Museum/)

## Amboy High School Report

Janet Crownhart, Principal

Get ready for the Amboy High School spring musical, "Into the Woods, Jr" as the student-actors will perform at 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, March 14-15, and at 2 p.m. Sunday, March 16.

Tickets will be sold at the door for \$5 and may be purchased the week ahead in the high school office from 8:30 am-3 pm.

The kids have been working really hard to

get this ready. Also take note, the agriculture construction class built the set and the art club painted it. This show really does include more than the cast.

The BSAA animal science classes were busy making mozzarella cheese this week. Some turned out well, while others didn't. I was told it tasted great...

In the photo on the right is Alexis Cheever, left, and Aubrey Wells.



## Pankhurst Memorial Library March programs

**AMBOY**—There are plenty of events happening at the Pankhurst Memorial Library in Amboy during the month of February.

From painting to reading to crocheting to being a mom or a child, there is something for you.

Here is what is on the February schedule for Pankhurst Memorial Library:

- Diamond Painting** – 4-6 p.m. March 17, 31
- Book Club** – 5-6 p.m. March 24
- Mommy & Me** – 10-10:45 a.m. every Tuesday
- Lego/Craft Club** – 11 a.m.-1 p.m. every Saturday

## Fire continued from page A1

The young team learns how to communicate in pressure situations while maneuvering a water hose and saving the fire rescue dummy. It gives them the experience of dealing with the heat, moving through an unknown environment with 50-60 pounds of equipment and fire gear, and the complexity of adding more weight and duty by saving a person.

"I'm thinking about firefighting as a career. It's pretty fun and pretty active. It helps out the community also," said Leffelmann. "It's a lot of hard work, but you make a lot of new friendships and it's a lot of fun. I'm forming bonds with kids I probably wouldn't have if we weren't in the program.

"It teaches you a lot. I had no idea about any of this stuff or the work that goes into it. It's pretty awesome." Byron Fire Chief Andy Politsch has helped the Sublette Fire Department through the program.

It's way of giving back and sharing his 26 years in

the fire service as he began with Sublette in 1999 before getting hired in 2007 by the Byron Fire Department.

"This is where I started in the fire service. To be able to come back and help the next generation come through the ranks is invaluable," Politsch said, who is a 1996 Mendota High School graduate. "For us, it's like every job out there, we're hurting for people. It's great to see the ambitiousness in these kids. It's a phenomenal experience for them and for us.

"I always tell them, learn from your mistakes. You want to make decisions because when someone doesn't make a decision that's when there is potential for someone to get hurt. The biggest thing is to make a decision. Even if it's a mistake, you learn from it to where you won't repeat the mistake."

Although everyone was happy to see 18 sign up and 16 kids make it through the program, Sublette Fire Chief Kevin Schultz may have the biggest smile.

The success of the cadet program has sparked interest in a basic ops firefighter class with the Dixon City and Dixon Rural Fire Departments.

"Sublette has never done a cadet program like this. Around 15 years ago, Amboy had a very active cadet program," said Schultz, who has been part of the Sublette department for 38 years. "Some of the firefighters who have helped with this program were in the Amboy program. This is the first time we've done it. We already have four people signed up for full-time on our roster, so we're excited.

"For us, it's all about getting the volunteers in. It's super exciting. All of our officers and other members of our department have helped train the cadets. We get a little re-energized with this as well. It helps make sure they're going to be trained the proper way to go on to have a healthy, safe career.

"We love every minute of it."

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# LOCAL NEWS

## TEEN TURF

We want the community to know that your support is always appreciated. A few important dates coming up: April 11 is the fish fry. May 4 is the drawdown. Stay tuned for ticket availability. We are also working on a date for the next dance.

## Land of Smiles teaches 680 students how to battle tooth decay

**LaSALLE** – In the last month, Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation’s Land of Smiles visited Northwest Elementary School, Rutland Elementary School, and Wallace Grade School, reaching 680 pre-kindergarten through third-grade students.

Land of Smiles is a free interactive program that makes learning about oral hygiene, nutrition, and regular dental check-ups fun and engaging. Featuring characters like Captain Super Grin, Terri Tooth Fairy, Toothpick, and their playful nemesis, Caz Cavity, Land of Smiles captivates young audiences while teaching them how to keep their smiles healthy and cavity-free.

Tooth decay remains the leading chronic disease affecting children. Research shows that 22% of Illinois third graders have untreated tooth decay. In a steadfast effort to address and curb tooth decay among children, Delta Dental of Illinois

Foundation’s free Land of Smiles program visits Illinois elementary schools throughout the school.

This spring, Land of Smiles is reaching more than 30,500 students at 141 schools. Every student at a Land of Smiles performance receives a free oral health kit with a toothbrush, toothpaste, and floss, along with oral health tips outlining how students should care for their teeth.

The Land of Smiles program is a testament to Delta Dental of Illinois’ commitment to improving the oral health of young Illinoisans. Over the past 16 years, the program has reached over 600,570 students at more than 1,100 Illinois elementary schools.

To learn more about the Land of Smiles program, download oral health educational resources, or request a school performance, visit [landofsmilesil.org](http://landofsmilesil.org).



## Rep. Fritts honors Dinges Fire Company for February Local Business Highlight

**DIXON** – For his February 2025 local business highlight, State Representative Bradley Fritts (R-Dixon) chose to highlight Dinges Fire Company in Amboy.

Rep. Fritts spent time touring the business and presented the owner with a certificate of appreciation for his contributions to the community.

“This month, I am proud to recognize Dinges Fire Company in Amboy for their dedication to public safety and their remarkable growth as a company,” said Rep. Fritts. “Dinges Fire Company provides essential equipment and services to fire departments across the Midwest, and their continued expansion is a testament to their hard work and commitment to their mission.”

Founded in 2002 by owner Nick Dinges, Dinges Fire Company sells firefighter protective equipment, rescue tools, gear, and more. They also service fire trucks on site. Dinges Fire Company currently employs over 180 people across multiple

states. “I also want to recognize Nick Dinges not only as a business leader but as a dedicated public servant,” said Rep. Fritts. “Not only does he work as an Assistant Fire Chief with the Sublette Fire Department and a firefighter-paramedic with the Amboy Fire Department, but Nick also runs Sublette 365, a non-profit organization that works to fund projects to develop and beautify Sublette. Nick has devoted himself to bettering our community. His leadership, and the continued success of his team, deserve to be honored.”

Dinges Fire Company is located at 243 East Main Street in Amboy. For more information, you can visit their website at [Dinges-Fire.com](http://Dinges-Fire.com).

To nominate a local business in District 74 for a future highlight, visit [RepFritts.com](http://RepFritts.com) and select Local Business Highlight Submission Form under Resources.

For more information about Representative Fritts, visit [RepFritts.com](http://RepFritts.com).

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**AMBOY** – You are invited to join fellow senior citizens for a free exercise program at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 960 US Highway 52, Amboy. Sessions are held Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 a.m. Chairs are provided for an approximate 30-minute workout. For more information, call Chris at 815-857-3963.

**AMBOY** – The Amboy/Lee Center Multi-Township meeting will take place at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 19 at the Amboy Township building, located at 106 South Prospect Ave.

**AMBOY** – The Amboy Lions Club meeting will be at 6 p.m. Monday, March 24 at the Amboy Community Center, located at 280 W. Wasson Rd. The Lions Club meetings take place the second and fourth Monday of every month.

**AMBOY** – The Board of Trustees of The Amboy Township will meet at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 26 for the continued, end of the fiscal year meeting at the Amboy Township Building, located at 106 South Prospect St. in Amboy.

**AMBOY** – The City of Amboy committee meeting will be held at 6 p.m. Monday, April 7 at the Community Center, 280 W. Wasson Rd. The meetings take place the first Monday of every month.

**EAST GROVE** – East Grove Township is holding its next meeting at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 8 at the East Grove Township Hall.

**LEE CENTER** – The Lee Center Township meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 8.

**PAW PAW** – The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Paw Paw will commence at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 9 at the Paw Paw Village Hall.

**SUBLETTE** – The next Village of Sublette meeting is at 7 p.m. Monday, April 14 at the Ellice Dinges Center at 202 S. West Street in Sublette.

**AMBOY** – The Amboy City Council will meet at 6 p.m. on Monday, April 21 at the Amboy Community Center, 290 W. Wasson Road. The council meets every third Monday each month.



## Rep. Fritts’ staff honored with Shoulder to the Wheel Award

**DIXON** – State Representative Brad Fritts (R-Dixon) is proud to announce that his Deputy Chief of Staff and Outreach Director, Piper Grazulis, recently won the ShouldertotheWheelAward from the Rock Falls Chamber of Commerce.

“I couldn’t be more proud of my Deputy Chief of Staff and Outreach Director, Piper Grazulis, for receiving this award,” said Rep. Fritts. “Her dedication to the people of the 74th District is remarkable, and I am truly fortunate to have such a committed team member working every day to improve our community.”

The ShouldertotheWheel Award honors an individual who demonstrates unwavering dedication, hard work, and commitment to the betterment of the community.

This award recognizes those who go above and beyond, putting their “shoulder to the wheel” to drive positive change, support local initiatives, and uplift businesses and residents through their efforts. Recipients exemplify resilience, perseverance, and a true spirit of service, making a lasting impact on the community.

“As the committee reviewed the applications and reflected on the incredible success of so many outstanding individuals, one name kept surfacing,” said Sam Smith, President/CEO of the Rock Falls Chamber. “Piper’s positivity and drive stood out time and again. As the committee finalized their discussion, it became clear that there was a deserving winner for this year’s award.”

## Book sale at Princeton Public Library

**PRINCETON** – The Friends of Princeton Public Library are hosting the Spring Book Sale.

Over 6,000 quality used books, both hardcover and paperback, are for sale. The library has current best sellers, cookbooks, mysteries, children’s and young adult books, history and science books, puzzles, CDs, and DVDs.

There is a preview for Princeton Pub-

lic Library members only from 4-6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 19 in the Princeton Public Library Friends Sale Room in the library before the sale is open to the public Thursday-Saturday, March 20-22. The sale is from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. on Thursday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday, and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday.

The Princeton Public Library is located at 698 East Peru St., Princeton.

## Fish Dinner

Friday March 21st 4:30pm-7:00pm

\$15.00/plate dine in or carry out

Buy tickets in advance from any AFPD member or call 815-857-2325 to get tickets!

Located at:  
**The Amboy Fire Department**  
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Brandon LaChance, Editor

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# OBITUARIES

## OBITUARIES

### James M. Blaine

Oct. 16, 1949 - Feb. 28, 2025

**DIXON** – James M. Blaine, 75, of Dixon, passed away on Friday Feb. 28, 2025 at the home of his daughter.

Cremation rites have been accorded and a mass was held at 11 a.m. Friday March 7, 2025 at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Amboy. A luncheon followed at the church hall. Visitation will be from 9 a.m.-11 a.m., ending when mass begun, Friday March 7, 2025 at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Amboy. Arrangements by the Mihm-Jones Funeral Home in Amboy. Condo-

lences can be left at [www.thejonesfh.com](http://www.thejonesfh.com).

Blaine was born on Oct. 16, 1949 in Princeton, the son of Charles and Clara Ann (Ogan) Blaine. James worked for the telephone company in Dixon for over 35 years prior to his retirement.

Blaine is preceded in death by his parents, and brother Stephen Blaine.

James is survived by his children Jessica (Manuel) Revolorio of Abingdon, Josh (Cayleah) Blaine of Davenport IA, four step-grandchildren, siblings Janet Theriault



of Franklin Wis., Cathy Schultz of LaSalle, Barb Protiva of Flagstaff, Ariz., and Jeff (Russ Kessler) Blaine of Ohio, Ill.

### Karen E. LeFevre

June 27, 1950 - March 4, 2025

**DIXON** – Karen E. LeFevre, 74, of Dixon, passed away on Tuesday March 4, 2025 at OSF St. Anthony Medical Center in Rockford.

Funeral services were Tuesday March 11, 2025 at the Jones Funeral Home in Dixon. Burial followed Chapel Hill Memorial Gardens in Dixon. Visitation was Monday March 10, 2025 at the Jones Funeral Home in Dixon. Arrangements by the Jones Funeral Home in Amboy. Condolences can be left at [www.thejonesfh.com](http://www.thejonesfh.com).

LeFevre was born on

June 27, 1950 in Amboy, the daughter of John Bernard, and Rita (Conderman) Sullivan. Karen was a Clerk and Security Officer at the Dixon State School 1971-83, worked at KSB Hospital 1987-89, a part owner of Don's Seafood in Sterling 1990-92, and worked at Anchor Coupling from 1992 to her retirement in 2014.

Karen married Lyle LeFevre on April 20, 1973 in Dixon. Karen is preceded in death by her parents. LeFevre is survived by her husband Lyle, son Josh LeFevre of



Sterling, granddaughter Paige Sutton of Dixon, sister Carol (Floyd) Bauer of Rockford, several nieces, nephews, and extended family.

### James Arthur Gray

March 1, 2025

**OREGON** – James Arthur Gray 76, of Sublette, a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and friend, left us on March 1, 2025, at the Serenity Hospice & Home in Oregon, IL after a valiant battle with Alzheimer's.

A funeral mass will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, March 15 at Holy Family Catholic Church in Litchfield. Visitation will be from 10 a.m. until the start of the mass Saturday, March 15 at Holy Family Catholic Church in Litchfield. A Celebration of Life will follow the mass. In lieu of flowers, a scholarship is being established in Jim's honor at SIUC. Condolences can be left at [www.thejonesfh.com](http://www.thejonesfh.com).

Gray touched the lives of many with his deep love, kindness, and unwavering support, especially toward his beloved wife, Colleen Brown Gray, whom he married on July 24, 1976. Together, they shared 48 years of marriage.

Gray will be fondly remembered by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Jim earned his bachelor's degree in social studies from Southern Illinois University, a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of Illinois, and a specialist degree in educational leadership from Eastern Illinois University.

A lifelong educator, Gray began his career at Olympia High School as a teacher, football, and wrestling coach. He then transitioned into administration, serving as principal and athletic director at Tower Hill Schools. Jim led the way for the first rural conversion of the New Holland-Middletown School District, creating new opportunities for the rural community.

His culminating achievement was the creation of Liberty Junior High School for Burbank District #111, a suburb of Chicago. Gray was a staunch advocate for public schools, teachers, and students, and earned respect throughout the educational community for his commitment and leadership. Above all, he was most

proud of his children and grandchildren. He cherished attending their events and admiring their many accomplishments throughout his life. His love for his family knew no bounds, and his greatest joy came from seeing them thrive and grow.

Gray's presence will be deeply missed, but his memory will continue to inspire all who were fortunate enough to know him. Jim had a deep passion for classic cars, owning and cherishing many models. He also loved restoring old houses, from Queen Anne to bungalow, prairie to Victorian, always taking on the work himself with skill and dedication.

Beyond his love for cars and craftsmanship, he was passionate about dancing, especially swing, which he competed in during college and continued to enjoy throughout his life with Colleen. He also delighted in teaching his children the joy of dance, sharing with them the joy and energy it brought to his life. He was a Rugby National Champion with the Bloom-



ington Blues and earned the SIUC Golden Helmet Award. He contributed to "This Old House Journal." Gray is survived by his loving wife, Colleen Brown Gray; children, Aaron Gray (Kelsey), Katie Henkel (Adam), and Jacob Gray; grandchildren, Jamison and Ivy Gray, and Olivia and Vivienne Henkel. He is also survived by his brother, Joseph Gray; two sisters, Jean Sheridan and Jackie Gray; cousins, Sharon Terneus and Rusty Boone; and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Joseph and Doris Gray, and his in-laws, Raymond and Ruth Brown.

### Daryl S. Sand

June 24, 1961 - March 2, 2025

**AMBOY** – Daryl S. Sand, 63, of Amboy, passed away on Sunday, March 2, 2025 at OSF St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Ottawa.

Funeral services will be at 11 a.m. Monday, March 10, 2025 at the Mihm-Jones Funeral Home in Amboy. Burial will follow at Prairie Rest Cemetery in Amboy. Visitation will be from 2-5 p.m. Sunday at the Mihm-Jones Funeral Home in Amboy. In lieu of flowers donations can be made to St. Jude Children's Hospital. Condolences can be left at [www.thejonesfh.com](http://www.thejonesfh.com).

Sand was born on June 24, 1961 in Oak Park, the son of Earl and Carol (Thies) Sand. Daryl was known as the "Knife Guy" to locals and Woodhaven



Campers.

He is preceded in death by his father. Daryl is survived by his mother Carol, siblings Kye Sand of Bolingbrook, Jerrod Sand of Rochelle, Rebecca (Lewis) Hess of Yorkville, nieces and nephews Brandon Hess, Amber Hess, Ashlyn Hess, Charles Hess, Marin Sand and Keaton Sand.

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# CHURCH DIRECTORY

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Masses: Tuesdays-Friday Daily Mass at 8 a.m.  
Confessions: Wednesday 5:30 p.m.,  
Saturday 3-3:45 p.m.  
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:  
8:30 a.m. - noon on Fridays after 8 a.m. mass

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

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

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

**First Congregational United Church of Christ of Lee Center**  
Pastor Jack M. Briggs  
1140 Inlet Road, Lee Center  
[www.LeeCenter-UCC.org](http://www.LeeCenter-UCC.org)  
Phone 815-732-7032  
Family Worship - 10:30 a.m.

**Grace Fellowship Church**  
Amboy-Sublette  
Pastor Kyle Kelly  
500 W. Main Street, Sublette  
Sunday School 8:30 a.m.  
Worship 10:30 a.m.  
[www.graceforyou.com](http://www.graceforyou.com)

**East Grove Union Church**  
449 Reuter Road,  
Amboy, IL  
Phone 815-440-5321  
½ Mile East of Route 26 at Union Rd  
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Youth Church, Ages 3 - Grade 4  
10:15 am Sunday School, Age 3 - Adult  
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Pastor Rocky Fritz  
24 N. Mason Avenue  
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[www.fbcamboy.com](http://www.fbcamboy.com)  
Sunday School for all ages - 9:30 a.m.  
Morning Service - 10:30 a.m.  
Evening Service - 6 p.m.  
Wed. prayer meeting & Bible Study 6:30 p.m.  
King's Kids program from 6:30-8 p.m. Friday  
Reformers Unanimous addictions program  
from 7-9 p.m.

**St. Mary's Church - West Brooklyn**  
Rev. Randy Fronek  
Mass - Tuesday & Thursday - 7:30 a.m.  
Saturday - 5:30 p.m.

**St. Patrick Church - Maytown**  
Rev. Randy Fronek  
Mass - Friday - 8 a.m.  
Sunday - 8 a.m.

**Immanuel Lutheran Church**  
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Phone 857-2225  
960 U.S. Route 52  
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# OBITUARIES/STATE NEWS

## Ronald "Ron" Leffelman Sept. 28, 1944 - March 7, 2025

**OREGON** – Ronald "Ron" Charles Leffelman, 80, of Dixon, passed away on Friday March 7, 2025, at Serenity House, in Oregon, IL surrounded by family.

Funeral services will be at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday March 12, 2025 at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Amboy. Burial will follow at St. Patrick Cemetery in Maytown. Visitation will be from 3-7 p.m. Tuesday March 11, 2025 at the Mihm-Jones Funeral Home in Amboy with a saying of the rosary at 2:30 p.m. A memorial has been established to Serenity Hospice and Home in Oregon. Arrangements by the Mihm-Jones Funeral Home in Amboy. Condolences can be left at [www.thejonesfh.com](http://www.thejonesfh.com).

Leffelman was born on September 28, 1944, in Amboy, the son of Francis and Clara (King) Leffelman. He married Eileen Ann (McCoy) Leffelman on January 23, 1965, in Walton. The couple had just celebrated their 60th

wedding anniversary. Leffelman loved hunting, fishing, riding motorcycles and anything outdoors, but most of all he loved his family. Ron cherished his time spent with his kids, grandkids, three great-grandsons, and his beloved dog, Tommy.

Ron is survived by his loving wife, Eileen Leffelman; two children, Ronette (Bob) Moore/Rogers, Oregon, and Jeff Leffelman, Amboy. His two granddaughters, Jenee (Jacob) Grove, Dixon, and Haley (Riley) Stephens, Denton, Texas and his three great-grandsons, Christian Grove, Emmitt Grove, and Carson Grove. Ron is also survived by his sisters Elaine Henkel, Mendota, Velma Quest, Sublette, and Doris Latta, Amboy; brothers/sisters-in-law Don (Karen) McCoy, Dixon, Theresa Wilson, Sublette, Regina McCoy, Van Orin, Sharon McCoy, Tennessee, Leo (Jane) McCoy, Amboy, Monica (Tom) Bulfer,



Amboy, Dean (Paula) McCoy, Amboy, Hugh (Susan) McCoy, Sublette, Doug (Brenda) McCoy, Amboy, and many nieces and nephews.

Leffelman is preceded in death by his parents Francis and Clara Leffelman, parents-in-law, William (Marie) McCoy; brothers Robert Leffelman, Melvin (Marge and Sue) Leffelman, Eugene (Joanne) Leffelman, brothers/sister-in-law Jane Henley, Floyd Wilson, William McCoy, Dan McCoy, Dennis (Cindy) McCoy, Don Henkel, Joe Quest, John Latta.

## Donna M. Sharkey Feb. 4, 1937 - March 9, 2025

**BETTENDORF, IA** – Donna M Sharkey, 88, formerly of Dixon, died Sunday, March 9, 2025 at the Clarissa C. Cook Hospice House in Bettendorf, IA.

Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 11 a.m. Friday, March 14, 2025 at St. Anne Catholic Church in Dixon. Visitation will be from 10-11 a.m. Friday at the church. A memorial has been established to St. Anne School in Dixon. Condolences can be left at [www.thejonesfh.com](http://www.thejonesfh.com).

Sharkey was born Feb. 4, 1937 in Polo, the daughter of Glen and Pauline (Davison) James. After high school she worked at Watt Publishing in Mt. Morris for seven years, was a stay at home mom, and worked in the dietary department at the Franklin Grove nursing

home prior to retirement. Donna was a loving mother and grandmother. She loved baking, was an avid gardener and seamstress and a supporter of children's charities. She was a member of St. Anne Catholic Church in Dixon.

Donna married Kenneth Sharkey Sept. 8, 1962 in Amboy. He preceded her in death July 12, 2022. She was also preceded in death by her daughter Diana Sharkey, her parents, and her sister Barbara Peterson. Sharkey is survived by her children Dave (Brenda) Sharkey of Dixon, Brian (Elizabeth) Sharkey of Bettendorf, IA, Barb (Peter) Vaessen of Sublette, nine grandchildren Camila (Greg) Lahey, Janessa (Nolan)



Rappe, Hannah Sharkey, Megan (Dane) Reinhardt, Emily Sharkey, Madeline Vaessen, Natalie Vaessen, Ben Vaessen, Charlie Vaessen, four great-grandchildren Kenadie Lahey, Kaydence Lahey, Briar Rappe and Maverick Rappe. She is also survived by a brother Tom (Barb) James.

## Governor Pritzker announces \$7 million Tech Incubator Enhancement Grants

**CHICAGO** – Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced \$7 million in funding for the Tech Incubator Enhancement Grants Program (TIEG) to support entrepreneurship and innovation in key growth industries through startup incubators.

This grant funding will strengthen Illinois' technology network by increasing the resilience of existing technology incubators. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process.

"Here in Illinois, we're providing the critical support that startups need to grow and drive the future of technology," said Governor JB Pritzker. "Thanks to the TIEG program grants, we're strengthening our innovation system, modernizing incubators, and solidifying Illinois as a leader in cutting-edge industries. I highly encourage all eligible entities to apply for

this funding opportunity."

TIEG was designed to modernize and revitalize tech incubators across Illinois to meet the evolving needs of startups. This initiative aims to support the transformation of tech spaces, embracing a hybrid work model, and fostering an ecosystem of innovation, collaboration and resilience.

"Illinois' technology incubators are showing incredible growth and possibility. The TIEG grant funding opportunity will help sustain that momentum," said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. "There's never been a better time to do business in Illinois and I can't wait to witness the continued development of the technology landscape."

In addition to strengthening Illinois' existing incubator foundation, TIEG will also lean into key growth industries of the future as outlined in Illinois' 2024 Economic Growth Plan.

## Senator Rezin files legislation to strengthen protections against child predators

**SPRINGFIELD** – Illinois Senate Republican Deputy Leader Sue Rezin (R-Morris) is taking direct aim at child predators.

She has issued new legislation to ensure they face the full force of the law. Senate Bill 284 closes dangerous loopholes that have allowed offenders to escape full accountability, prohibiting plea deals for individuals charged with grooming, trafficking in persons, or involuntary sexual servitude of a minor while also imposing stricter restrictions on convicted offenders.

"For too long, predators have been able to manipulate the legal system to avoid serious consequences for their horrendous acts," said Senator Rezin. "My legislation ensures that those who harm children face the full weight

of the law. No plea deals, no reduced charges, just justice."

Senate Bill 284 also expands restrictions on where convicted child sex offenders can work, volunteer, or be present, barring them from facilities that cater specifically to minors.

"Illinois lawmakers must send a clear message to those who harm

our most vulnerable," continued Senator Rezin. "If you exploit a child, there will be no easy way out, and you will face real consequences. Protecting our children is not a partisan issue. It is a moral obligation."

Senate Bill 284 is currently in Senate Assignments, awaiting to be assigned to a Senate committee.

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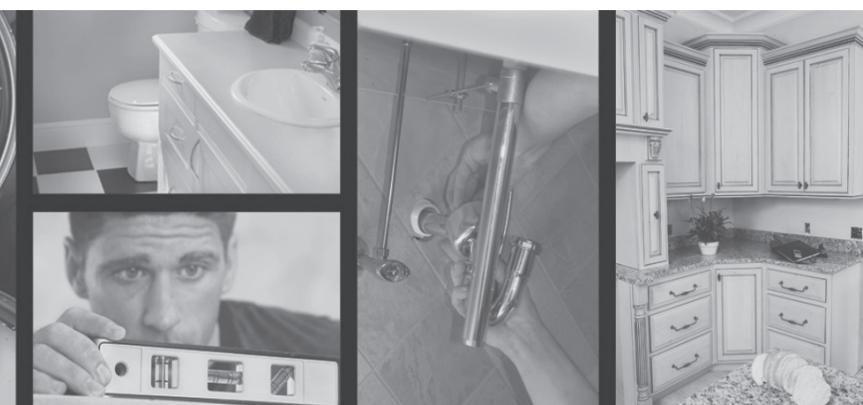
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# AG OUTLOOK '25



Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and demand are driving up egg prices to historical highs. (Photo by Illinois Farm Bureau)

## Demand, HPAI drive record egg prices

By RHIANNON BRANCH  
*FarmWeek*

Consumers are experiencing the highest egg prices in history driven by increased demand and highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), which could keep the market elevated for a while.

The latest report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics puts the average retail egg price at \$4.90 per dozen nationwide.

"That's an all-time high and a lot more expensive than what consumers are typically dealing with," Brian Earnest, lead animal protein analyst for CoBank told FarmWeek. "I think back 10 years ago when it was pretty common to see \$1 per dozen or less."

He said HPAI is one of the main causes, noting the current outbreak has had more of a year-round impact than the previous outbreak in 2015.

"Now it has been found in all 50 states and has had an impact to supply every month since February of 2022," Earnest said.

As a result, there are 8% fewer egg laying hens in U.S. production compared to two years ago, and Earnest said consumer demand has also shifted in that time frame.

"We've seen big growth in demand of cage free eggs," he said, using California as example of a state that has elected to go completely cage-free.

"There's roughly 39 million residents in California and there were roughly 9 million table egg laying hens that were depopulated as a result of bird flu in California," he said. "Their ability to feed

their residents eggs that were produced within the state was severely impacted."

But Earnest said even without HPAI, a boost in demand would still have prices somewhat elevated, noting that eggs have become a staple item for innovation in quick-service restaurant entrees, and consumers have latched on to emerging trends like all-day breakfast.

"We moved from consuming roughly 275 eggs per capita annually in the U.S. in the 2015-time frame to nearly 300 by the time we got to 2020, so that's a pretty big increase in consumption," Earnest said.

He said lingering impacts from demand could prolong the higher price environment through Easter and even Mother's Day.

"We may be seeing a peak in terms of shelf prices here in the next 3-4 months, but the summer months typically bring softer demand to the egg case," he said. "That's when I think the industry has an opportunity to get caught back up."

The decrease in supply has left shelves temporarily bare in some regions.

"I think the West Coast might be feeling a little bit more of an impact than what the Midwest would be seeing just due to proximity of where major production is," Earnest said.

But eggs are still being produced, he said optimistically.

"Overall, the system works pretty well," Earnest said. "If it can work through these market deficiencies, I think we'll start seeing price ration demand a little bit and then work towards inventorying where there are empty shelves."

## U.S. DOE releases updated GREET model for biofuel feedstocks

By TAMMIE SLOUP  
*FarmWeek*

The U.S. Department of Energy released an updated model evaluating lifecycle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for biofuel feedstocks under the 45Z Clean Fuel Production Credit.

The release of the 45ZCF-GREET (Greenhouse gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Technologies) model follows the U.S. Department of the Treasury and Internal Revenue Service guidance on the 45Z released in January.

Under 45Z, tax credits are provided for the production of transportation fuels with life cycle greenhouse gas (GHG)

emissions below certain levels. The credit applies to eligible transportation fuel, including sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), produced domestically after Dec. 31, 2024, and sold by Dec. 31, 2027.

The 45ZCF-GREET model includes feedstock-specific fuel production pathways for SAF and non-SAF fuels. The model is designed specifically to evaluate life cycle GHG emissions to meet the requirements of section 45Z.

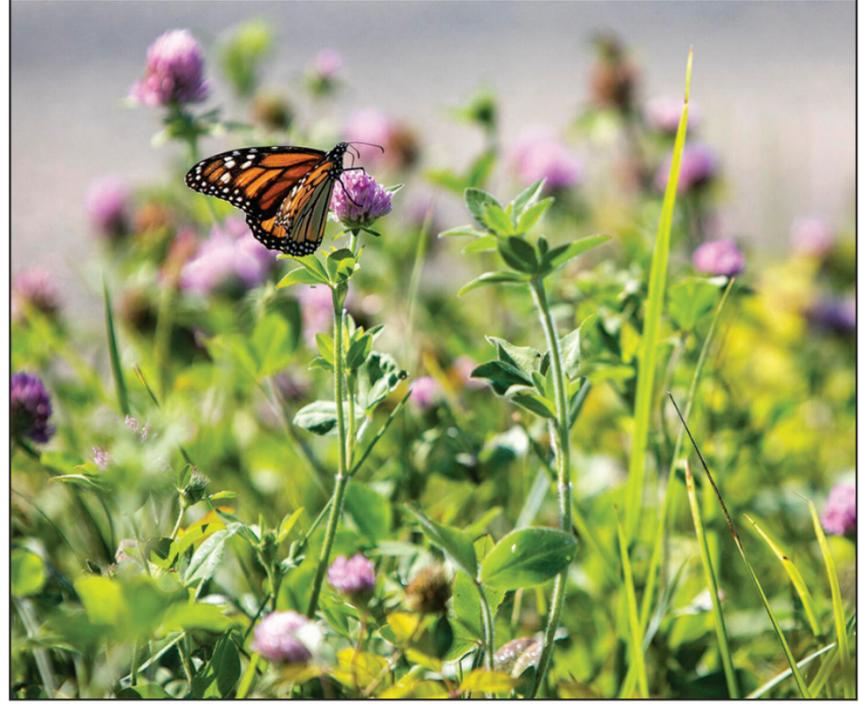
DOE also released the 45ZCF-GREET user manual, which describes how the 45ZCF-GREET model characterizes life cycle GHG emissions of transportation fuel production pathways and provides

guidance for using the model to determine emissions rates for clean fuels under section 45Z.

The updated GREET model allows certain foreign feedstocks to be used to make U.S. biofuels, including Canadian canola oil and Brazilian sugarcane ethanol for SAF. Under the 45Z guidance previously published, foreign unused cooking oil is currently not allowed.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/3E7UPuw](http://bit.ly/3E7UPuw).

(This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit [FarmWeek-Now.com](http://FarmWeek-Now.com).)



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Thursday, Dec. 12, proposed to list the monarch butterfly as a threatened species and designate critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

## Monarch butterflies proposed as threatened species

By TAMMIE SLOUP  
*FarmWeek*

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is proposing federal protections for the monarch butterfly.

The service proposed to list the monarch butterfly as a threatened species and designate critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

According to a notice in the Federal Register, USFWS determined the monarch butterfly meets the definition of a threatened species due to the ongoing impacts from loss and degradation of habitat, exposure to insecticides

and the effects of climate change.

"To improve future conditions so that the monarch migratory populations stabilize and grow, we need to (1) achieve a significant increase in the availability of milkweed and nectar plants in monarch breeding and migratory areas; (2) protect and enhance overwintering habitat; (3) avoid and minimize impacts to monarchs and their habitat from insecticides and herbicides; and (4) maintain public support for the conservation of monarch butterflies," it is written in the notice.

"Because of the monarch butterfly's general habitat use and wide distribution, all sectors of society, including the general public, have an opportunity to participate in a broad range of conservation efforts throughout the species' range."

The listing proposal is accompanied by a proposed 4(d) rule that offers species-specific protections and flexibilities to encourage conservation and a proposed "critical habitat" designation for the species at its overwintering grounds in 4,395 acres in coastal California. Federal agencies are prohibited from destroying or modifying areas with that designation.

Two informational meetings and public hearings also have been scheduled. Comments can be submitted to the Federal Register through March 12.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/3OQ4ZIT](http://bit.ly/3OQ4ZIT).

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# AG OUTLOOK '25

## Rural education programs getting help in comeback fight

By **PHYLLIS COULTER**  
*FarmWeek*

The long-held idea that a four-year university education was best for everyone is now recognized as flawed by many education advocates. Today, rural schools are bringing back displaced programs, but it will take time and resources.

“Career and Technical (CTE) programs, once called vocational programs, were a significant part of the fabric of rural schools across Illinois and the nation. Several decades ago, a huge pendulum swing took place across the country that all but wiped out this valuable CTE programming,” said Patrick Twomey, superintendent of Macomb School District 185, and a longtime rural school advocate.

“The push was that every child needs a four-year college education and in the process of addressing that belief, vocational/CTE courses were eliminated one by one. As they say, hindsight is 20-20, and looking back, we all know that was a monumental mistake,” Twomey said.

John Dunlap always saw the value of technical education. Directly after high school, he worked as an ag equipment technician and earned his certification, which eventually led him to the position of director of the AGCO Service Technician Program at Parkland Community College.

“Earn-while-you-learn programs are a perfect option for somebody who



Left to right, John Glasgow, Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools program director; Duane Price, Bureau Valley High School principal; and Jeff Harris, who heads the cooperative program at the school, discuss career training options for students. (Photo by Phyllis Coultter of FarmWeek)

has to pay for their education. Most of the time they are guaranteed a job placement,” Dunlap said. “Business and industry have jobs they need to fill, and schools have a pool of students to draw from,” he said of the model that has worked so well for him and his students.

However, rural schools struggle to gather resources to bring CTE programming back. “They lack the financial resources as well as the human capital necessary to tackle this issue and yet we all agree it is paramount that we find a way,” said Twomey, who is on the executive board of the Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools (AIRSS), one of the organizations leading

the comeback.

John Glasgow, AIRSS program director, is spearheading the Rural Illinois Career and Technical Education Project, a joint effort between the Illinois State Board of Education and AIRSS, founded in 2023, to revive and advance career and tech education for Illinois students.

High school tech classes were once viewed as something for “kids who have nothing better to do.” Attitudes are changing. “College is only one route to success today,” Glasgow said, noting that college grads often earn less today than those in “the trades.”

He and the team spent the first year of the Rural Illinois CTE mostly on research. Their study

quickly revealed a priority: the need for direct and specific support for rural CTE programs. Glasgow and his colleagues created a web-based portal to share resources including webinars, newsletters and materials. Now, the site, [airsedu.org/cte](http://airsedu.org/cte) is live and provides centralized information from a respected source for rural districts, Glasgow said.

“We’re slowly playing catch up but there is still really a long way to go,” said Glasgow of the team’s effort to get more resources and funding for CTE.

Among other things, the Illinois Rural CTE Project is looking for ways to improve options for regional career and tech schools, which have long

been underfunded.

In 2024, the IL Rural CTE Project team identified the highest-need rural school districts, noting their challenges and strengths. The biggest pocket of high-needs schools is in the south including Jefferson, Clinton, Marion, and Franklin counties. Other areas are scattered throughout the state including LaSalle and Bureau counties in the north and parts of Champaign and Vermilion in the east.

The next step is to create pilot projects.

Some new pilot projects will come from adapting innovations in urban centers. One such idea is a pharmacy tech program that allows students to work in a hospital pharmacy. It is offered by a high school in Elgin, in a school district of more than 33,000 students in Kane County. “It offers a foundational knowledge base for every student wanting to go into a medical area. In rural areas that kind of medical experience may be hard to get,” Glasgow said.

Glasgow is already working with schools in Tazewell and Peoria counties in central Illinois to see how they could use Elgin’s idea as a model to get a pathway for medical careers in their rural schools.

In southern Illinois, Brooke May, co-director of the Southern Illinois Future Teachers Coalition (SIFTC) and Leslie Bradley, director of student career services and co-director of SIFTC at

Vienna High School District in Johnson County are leading a 25-school network of more than 400 high school students in technical programs.

CTE pathways have traditionally been seen as lacking in value, especially when compared to academic pathways that lead to perceived higher wages and benefits, said May, also a member of the AIRSS Rural CTE Advisory Council.

“It is challenging to showcase the value of high school CTE pathways when funding for required equipment is limited, an insufficient instructor pool exists and inequities in the access to programs is a hurdle that many students are unable to overcome,” May said.

Yet, even with the glaring challenges, groups such as SIFTC has at its helm two qualified CTE instructors, dual credit education programs in 14 of their schools, and a large budget to support high school students who wish to enter the CTE field of education, which continues to face a shortage, May said.

As the Illinois CTE Project and other efforts enter a new year, Glasgow said he hopes that all these actions will “help all rural districts enrich and grow their programming.”

(This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit [FarmWeek-Now.com](http://FarmWeek-Now.com).)

## Harris, AFM Executime Manager with Capital Ag Property Services, Inc., inducted into ISPFMRA Hall of Fame

Tim Harris, AFM, executive manager with Capital Ag Property Services, Inc., based in Princeton, was inducted into the Hall of Fame for the Illinois Society of Professional Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers during the recent annual meeting of the organization in Peoria.

The Hall of Fame is an honorary designation given to active members who have shown service to and for the chapter “above and beyond.” The program was initiated in 1980 and is presented annually.

In the announcement of Harris’ induction at the Chapter’s Annual Meeting on Feb. 6, Hiatt noted, “(Tim) has given much to this chapter both behind the scenes for many years and then as one of our outstanding leaders.”

He then cited a background on Harris:

- Associate of Arts and Science degree from Illinois Valley Community College and Agribusiness;
- Illinois-designated managing broker, Iowa

real estate broker, Illinois licensed auctioneer, Minnesota real estate broker;

- Became an accredited Farm Manager in 2001;
- Member of the class of 2000 Illinois Ag Leadership Program and served as president of the alumni board from 2006 to 2012;
- Graduate of the Farm Bureau Agricultural Leadership of Tomorrow, leadership program;
- 2021 president of the Illinois Chapter;
- Past co-chair of the Land Values Conference;

- Took on the leadership role of guiding Chapter officers through an extensive strategic plan, which has been the roadmap guiding the direction of the board since 2022.

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# SPORTS

## Reaching a milestone just before season, career over

### Klein joins Billhorn in LaMoille's 1,000 point club

**BRANDON LaCHANCE**  
Staff writer

**LaMOILLE**—LaMoille senior Brayden Klein came into the 2024-25 basketball season knowing he was 403 points shy of reaching the 1,000-point career milestone.

Klein added to his numbers through the season trying to reach the feat. With three games left in the regular season, Klein scored his 1,000<sup>th</sup> point against IMSA on Friday, Feb. 14.

"It feels great. Some kids dream of playing basketball since they're little, and it's great to have an experience like this in my high school career," Klein said. "I didn't originally set out to score 1,000 points, but after last year, I saw how close I was, and it motivated me to step up my game a notch."

Klein is the ninth Lion to accomplish the milestone as he joins fellow senior Tyler Billhorn, who became the eighth LaMoille to do so earlier in the season.

"Tyler and I have been playing basketball together since fifth grade and we've played on the varsity team for all four years of our high school careers," Klein said. "It's a good feeling to see him reach his 1,000 career points and then for me to do it also."

"This senior class, we've been together since pre-



school. Growing up and playing sports together, it's a good feeling knowing who I was going to play with through the years. I didn't have to worry about having different teammates. I knew who my team was."

Klein will say he was able to reach 1,000 because he focused on his strength of getting to the hoop. He worked on different angles and the best ways to create separation for the easiest shots possible.

LaMoille coach Chance Blumhorst agrees with Klein, then quickly points out his work ethic.

"It's hard to imagine any school having tow

1,000-point career scores on the same school, let alone a school the size of LaMoille," said Blumhorst, whose team finished the season 7-25. "It just goes to show, we had two guys who reached this milestone, and they're the two guys on the team who have missed the least amount of team things since I took over the program three years ago."

"I had Brayden on a travel team when he was in eighth grade, and I told him to stick with it. We knew he could score. I used to run 8 a.m. Friday workouts. We only had nine guys on the team and I kind of spaced the workouts out, so I didn't think anyone was going to come."

"Brayden was working (mowing yards, McDonald's, and other jobs) and was still at every single 8 a.m. Friday workouts. I think he was the only player to be in the gym for three of those four Fridays. He shows up for everything."



### Spinelli, Heath win IWCOA Regional, Sectional titles

The Illinois Wrestling Coaches and Officials Association held its Freshmen/Sophomore Regional Tournaments on Saturday, March 1 and Sunday, March 2. Amboy High School sophomore Caiden Heath, right, (138 pounds) and freshman Aden Spinelli (101 pounds) not only competed at the Morrison Regional, but they were won their brackets. Both wrestlers advanced to the IWCOA Sectional Sunday, March 9 at Sterling. At the sectional, both Heath and Spinelli, once again, showed what they could do on the mats as Heath won his 138-pound bracket and Spinelli placed fourth at 101 pounds. Both wrestlers are competing at the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual IWCOA State Championships.

Photo contributed

Amboy High School

## ATHLETES OF THE WEEK

**Girls Basketball**  
Emily Sachs, double-double during sectional semifinal, 18 points and 13 rebounds

**Boys Basketball**  
Eddie Jones, finishes career fifth on all-time scoring list with 1,192 points

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<p><b>March 17</b> AHS Varsity Softball &amp; Baseball (H) Mendota-4:30 pm AJHS Scholastic Bowl @ Reagan Middle School, Dixon-4:00 pm</p> <p><b>March 18</b> AHS Varsity Softball @ Oregon-4:30 pm</p> <p><b>March 19</b> AHS Art Club-Art Room-3:30-4:30 pm AJHS Engineering &amp; Technology Night-Cafeteria-5:30-6:30 pm</p>	<p><b>March 20</b> School Board Meeting-AJHS Cafeteria-6:30 pm</p> <p><b>March 21</b> AHS Varsity Softball &amp; Baseball @ Bureau Valley-4:30 pm</p> <p><b>March 22</b> AHS Girls Track @ IWU Shirk Center-9:00 am AHS Baseball (H) Pearl City-Varsity-11:00/FS-1:00</p>
---	---

# SPORTS

## Amboy High Spring Sports Schedules

### Girls' Track

March 13 – at Westwood Indoor – 5 p.m.  
 March 22 – at Illinois Wesleyan U. Indoor – 9 a.m.  
 March 28 – at Westwood F-S Invite – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 2 – at Westwood Varsity Invite – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 10 – at Forreston – 4 p.m.  
 April 12 – at Mendota Gooden Invite – 9:30 a.m.  
 April 14 – at Bureau Valley – 4 p.m.  
 April 17 – Amboy Tournament – 4 p.m.  
 April 19 – at Hall Morris Invite – 9 a.m.  
 April 25 – at Oregon Invite – 4 p.m.  
 April 28 – at Bureau Valley – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 1 – at Pecatonica Invite – 4 p.m.  
 May 14, 15 or 16 – Sectional

### Boys' Track

March 13 – at Westwood Indoor – 5 p.m.  
 March 15 – at Byron Indoor – TBA  
 March 28 – at Westwood F-S Invite – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 1 – at Westwood Varsity Invite – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 8 – Kewanee – 4 p.m.  
 April 12 – at Mendota Gooden Invite – 9:30 a.m.  
 April 15 – at Fulton Invite – 4 p.m.  
 April 17 – Amboy Tournament – 4 p.m.  
 April 19 – at Hall Morris Invite – 9 a.m.  
 April 21 – at Forreston – 4 p.m.  
 April 28 – at Bureau Valley – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 2 – at Oregon Invite – 4 p.m.  
 May 6 – at Pecatonica Invite – 4 p.m.  
 May 21, 22 or 23 – Sectional

### Softball

March 17 – Mendota – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 18 – at Oregon – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 19 – Newark – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 21 – at Bureau Valley – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 24 – Pecatonica – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 27 – at Ottawa Marquette – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 2 – Dixon – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 4 – Putnam County – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 5 – at Dakota Var/JV (DH) – 10 a.m.  
 April 8 – at Ashton-Franklin Center – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 10 – Ashton-Franklin Center – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 12 – Indian Creek (DH) – 10 a.m.  
 April 15 – Morrison – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 19 – at Lena-Winslow – 11 a.m.  
 April 22 – at Polo – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 24 – Polo – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 26 – at Serena Var/JV (DH) – 11 a.m.  
 April 28 – Forreston – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 29 – Eastland – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 1 – at Eastland – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 6 – at Milledgeville – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 8 – Milledgeville – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 12 – Newman – 4 p.m.  
 May 19-24 – Regional

### Varsity Baseball

March 17 – Mendota – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 19 – Newark – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 21 – at Bureau Valley – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 22 – Pearl City – 11 a.m.  
 March 24 – Pecatonica – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 29 – Mercer County – 11 a.m.  
 March 31 – Oregon – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 3 – at Forreston – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 5 – at Ottawa Marquette (DH) – 11 a.m.  
 April 8 – at Ashton-Franklin Center – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 10 – Ashton-Franklin Center – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 12 – at River Ridge – 11 a.m.  
 April 14 – Putnam County – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 15 – Morrison – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 17 – at Morrison – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 19 – at Lena-Winslow – 11 a.m.  
 April 22 – at Polo – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 24 – Polo – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 26 – Orangeville – 11 a.m.  
 April 29 – Eastland – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 1 – at Eastland – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 6 – at Milledgeville – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 8 – Milledgeville – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 12 – Newman – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 14 – at Serena – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 19-24 – Regional

### F-S Baseball

March 17 – at Mendota – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 19 – at Newark – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 21 – Bureau Valley – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 22 – Pearl City – 1 p.m.  
 March 24 – at Pecatonica – 4:30 p.m.  
 March 29 – Mercer County – 1 p.m.  
 March 31 – at Oregon – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 3 – Forreston – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 8 – Ashton-Franklin Center – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 10 – at Ashton-Franklin Center – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 12 – at River Ridge – 1 p.m.

April 16 – Morrison – 4:30 p.m.  
 April 19 – at Lena-Winslow – 1 p.m.  
 April 22 – at Polo – TBA  
 April 24 – Polo – TBA  
 April 26 – Orangeville – 1 p.m.  
 April 29 – at Eastland – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 1 – Eastland – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 6 – at Milledgeville – TBA  
 May 8 – Milledgeville – TBA  
 May 12 – at Newman – 4:30 p.m.  
 May 14 – Serena – 4:30 p.m.

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tion District  
Tom Menzel- President  
Wes Englehart- Secretary  
No. 0303  
(Mar. 05 and 12, 2025)

### NOTICE TOWN MEETING NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

To the legal voters, residents of the Town of East Grove in the County of Lee and State of Illinois, that a Town Meeting of said Town will take place on April 8th, 2025 at the hour of 7:30 o'clock P.M. at East Grove Township Building

The purpose of said meeting is as follows: To audit the books for the 2024-2025 year and decide on such measures as may, in pursuance of law, come before the meeting; Dated March 11th, 2025.  
Charlie Gonigam  
East Grove Twp. Clerk  
No. 0304  
(March 12, 2025)

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TOWNSHIP and ROAD BUDGETS

Notice is hereby given that Tentative Budgets and Appropriation Ordinances for the East Grove Township, Lee County, Illinois, for the fiscal year beginning April 1st, 2025 and ending March 31st, 2026 will be on file and conveniently available for public inspection at the East Grove Twp. Bldg. from and after 8 a.m. on March 05th, 2025.

Notice is further given that a public hearing on

said Budgets and Appropriation Ordinances will be at 7:30 p.m. on April 09th, 2024 at the East Grove Twp. Bldg. and that final action on these ordinances will be taken at the public hearing.

Dated on this 5th day of March, 2025.  
Brian Blaine  
Supervisor  
Charles Gonigam  
Clerk  
No. 0305  
(March 12, 2025)

### 101 LEGAL NOTICE

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2018 Chevy 1500 Crew Cab LTZ, Z71 4x4, 6.2L, 95K Miles, Maroon.....\$29,900	2015 Chevy 2500 Crew Cab LTZ 4x4 Z71 Longbox, 6.0L gas, 77K Miles, Red.....\$33,900

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# Opinion

## Shoutout to those in the fire service; it's not an easy job

I've been able to do some awesome things through my journalism career.

I've rode in a racing boat. I've met celebrities. I've been in press boxes during professional sports events. I'm a regular on radio and podcast waves. I've written for Yahoo!, 15 different newspapers, and six numerous magazines. I've taken behind the scenes tours of awesome events and buildings. I could go on and on, you get it.

Maybe it's recency bias, but one of the coolest (OK, hottest) things I've ever done happened on Sunday, March 9 when the Sublette Fire Department allowed me to put on fire fighter gear and join cadets during their training program and enter the training trailer, which was ablaze a fire of temperatures 500-plus. I literally meant hottest.

Believe it or not, at one point in my life, not very long ago, I had grabbed an application to become a Mendota firefighter, but I never turned it in because training would affect my ability to work and pay bills.

With that said, this was an opportunity I wasn't going to turn down or fight against when Assistant Chief Nick Dinges asked me if I wanted to be a cadet for 20 minutes.

I learned a few things.

First, the gear is heavy. Dinges said the boots, pants, jacket, gloves, protective head gear, the safety equipment, the oxygen tank, and other apparatuses weigh somewhere between 50-60 pounds. With the gear on, I maneuvered 300-plus pounds through the trailer.

### Column

By Brandon LaChance



After climbing the steps to enter the training trailer, cadets have to crawl through a hallway to get to the area where the fire has engulfed the structure. My knees didn't touch the floor more than three times during the crawl, and I was already sweating. It was hard to see as your mask fogs up, it's pitch black, and you don't know which way to go, at least your first time through the training. In a real fire, I'm guessing firefighters are never, or very rarely, in locations they can navigate easily without visuals.

Never wearing an oxygen mask and breathing through a hose and tank and feeling this type of heat, it was hard to breathe at times. I pushed myself along because, if these high school students could do it, I could do it. I'm uber competitive.

Once I found my destination, on the side of the trailer behind Dinges, I got to watch the real cadets go to work as they approached the fire with a hose and began trying to secure the flames, the heat, and the structure.

It was an awesome experience to say the least. I watched in amusement as these kids communicated with each other and asked Dinges questions about proper procedure.

I did realize why Sublette Fire Chief Kevin Schultz said being a fireman is a young man's game. Crawling back toward the exit, my knees ached and popped through the hallway. After I took the gear off, my back yelled at me for a few seconds about the extra strain I put it through. I smiled and thought to myself, 'It's worth it. And if I did this on a regular basis, those pains wouldn't exist.'

They went away quickly, but if I was 19 instead of 39, well, you know.

What will stick with me the most is the appreciation and gratitude I developed for what these cadets were doing and what firefighters all over the country do on an everyday basis. Only a fool would call anything they do as easy, but once you've had the experience, you can truly see how challenging and tough the job is. I give kudos to every individual who has ever volunteered or worked for a fire department.

I thank Dinges, Schultz, Assistant Chief Brian Dallam, Byron Fire Chief Andy Politsch (a 1996 Mendota High School graduate) for guiding me through, Lt. Brian O'Malley for helping me gear up because I wouldn't have been able to figure it out without him.

Maybe it's time to get back in shape and join a department...

WHAT GOOD IS CHINA'S AI PLATFORM IF IT CAN'T BE HONEST?



## ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

**100 years old**  
**March 13, 1925**

An unlimited number of shares of stock at \$10 per share is being offered by the board of directors of the Lee County Fair Association in a campaign being conducted to sell stock in the organization to Lee County residents.

Supt. Thomas Brew, Principal and Mrs. L.W. Wittler, Miss Elizabeth Edwards, Byron Treadwell and "Pop" Rosier attended the basketball tournament in LaSalle last week.

**75 years old**  
**March 16, 1950**

Efforts of those Amboy High School students who provided news of AHS to the community through "The Livewire" each week in The Amboy News were rewarded when "The Livewire" won a second-place award in a contest of school pages in city newspapers conducted at Columbia University.

Pankhurst Memorial Library will be re-opened after an enforced vacation because of the coal shortage.

Pvt. Leo F. Eisenberg, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Eisenberg, arrived home from Yokohama, Japan after

spending a year as conductor on a Japanese railroad.

**50 years old**  
**March 13, 1975**

Cecil Emery and Frnak Long will receive 50-year pins when members of Illinois Central Lodge No. 178, AF&AM, meet next in the Masonic Temple. Emery is secretary and Long is marshal of Illinois Central Lodge.

Amboy High School came home from IHSA Music Contest with 10 first-place awards and 13 second-place awards during solo and ensemble contests at Oswego High School.

Auditions are nearly completed and rehearsals are ready to begin on Amboy High School's seventh musical. This year's production is the newly revised "Annie Get Your Gun."

Pat Jones of the Mihm-Jones Funeral Home announced their ambulance service in Amboy will be discontinued March 15. That will be the last day they will be available for ambulance service.

Winning the sectional championship in the 60-pound weight class at DeKalb, Jon Hawes of Amboy Junior High School will return to DeKalb to wrestle in the state finals of the

Illinois Kids Wrestling Federation Tournament. Jon, 11, is a sixth-grade student and the son of Mr. and Mrs. Larry Hawes.

**25 years old**  
**March 8, 2000**

Amboy Central School volunteer Hazel Lovegren gets in character for Dr. Suess' birthday by dressing up as The Cat in the Hat and reads one of the author's stories to Mary Knowles' second-grade class.

Dana Nauman, Nick Nauman, Hetta Grasser and Louis Grasser stood honored the memory of Lisa Nauman, who passed away as a result of an accident in 1999. The family made a donation to the Amboy Civic Organization as part of the group's annual "Adopt a Street" program. The street will remain named "Lisa Nauman Boulevard" through next year.

Amboy's Little Wrestlers have begun their 2000 season by sending 55 wrestlers to participate at Oregon. Earning first-place trophies were first graders Gabriel Rodriguez, Joseph Klein, and Evan Akre; fourth graders Travis Nauan, and George Scully; fifth grader Joe Dickinson; seventh grader Randy Anderson.

Established in 1854  
**The Amboy News**  
The Depot Museum

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## SOMETHING TO SAY?

The Amboy News encourages responsible letters to the editor on subjects of interest to our readers. Editing may be necessary for space, clarity or to avoid obscenity or libel, but ideas will not be altered.

The limit is 300 words. Letters exceeding this will either be edited to fit or not published. The deadline for letters is noon on Friday.

Letter writers may only have two letters published per month, and the letters will be published on non-consecutive weeks. Letters are printed on a space-available basis.

All letters must bear the handwritten signature of the writer and include address and phone number or e-mail address for verification purposes. Neither the street address nor phone number will be printed. Letters should be typed or legibly handwritten, and no anonymous letters will be published.

Any comments 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 or individual 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 Amboy News office, 703 Illinois Ave., Mendota, IL 61342, mailed to the Amboy News at PO Box 300, Mendota, IL 61342, or emailed to [blachance@mendotareporter.com](mailto:blachance@mendotareporter.com).

The Amboy News 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, its management and or ownership.

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Closed Saturday, Sunday and major holidays.  
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# LOCAL/STATE NEWS

## Remembering the deadliest tornado in Illinois history during Severe Weather Preparedness Month

**SPRINGFIELD**—On March 18, 1925, the deadliest tornado in U.S. history tore through southeast Missouri, southern Illinois, and southwest Indiana, leaving a 219-mile path of destruction.

“During this Severe Weather Preparedness Month, I want everyone in Illinois to recognize the dangers of tornadoes and other weather disasters,” said Illinois Emergency Management Agency and Office of Homeland Security (IEMA-OHS) Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau. “That tornado, 100 years ago this month, killed 234 residents in Murphysboro alone, making it the hardest-hit town in Illinois during that storm. A total of 695 people lost their lives across the tri-state area. We want Illinoisans to take preparedness seriously—know the risks, have a plan, and review your insurance coverage.”

National Weather Service Lincoln Warning Coordination Meteorologist Ed Shimom emphasized the importance of preparedness. “Devastating tornadoes have occurred in every month of the year. We encourage everyone to have a tornado safety plan and practice it regularly. When a tornado is approaching, seconds can save lives.”

**Flooding: Another Major Threat in Illinois**

In addition to tornadoes, flooding remains one of Illinois’ most significant weather threats. In 2024, Illinois experienced a major presidential disaster

declaration for severe weather and flooding, resulting in over \$150 million in damages.

Nationally, flooding is the most common natural hazard, yet many homeowners remain uninsured against flood damage. The Illinois Department of Insurance (IDOI) and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) recommend that homeowners, renters, and businesses consider flood insurance to protect their property and belongings.

“Flood insurance must be purchased separately from most homeowners and renters policies and typically takes effect 30 days after purchase,” said IDOI Acting Director Ann Gillespie. “If your community is not eligible for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), private flood insurance may be available from a licensed agent or insurer. Our IDOI insurance analysts can help answer questions about coverage options.”

Flood insurance is available through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) for residents of nearly 23,000 participating communities nationwide. A list of participating flood insurance providers can be found here.

**Consider Earthquake Insurance**

Illinois residents should also review their earthquake insurance options. Standard homeowners insurance policies may not cover earthquake damage,

and coverage varies by provider. When evaluating earthquake insurance, consider whether your policy includes all structures (home, garage), contents, and any exclusions or limitations.

**Be Prepared: Steps to Protect Your Home and Family**  
IEMA-OHS recommends that you:

Keep all important records and documents in a secure waterproof container

Make an inventory of possessions using lists and photos/videos

Insure your property and personal items

Know how to shut off your home utilities like electricity, gas, and water

Assemble an emergency kit and “go bag” to help your family for at least three days during extended power outages or in case of evacuation

In case power is out, make sure flashlights with fresh batteries are ready

Generators should only be run outside, never indoors or in enclosed spaces

More tips and preparedness kit ideas can be found at <https://ready.illinois.gov/plan/emergencykit.html>

Details of the 1925 tornado can be found in a report by the Illinois State Water Survey, Urbana-Champaign:

<https://climateillinois.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/reduced-iswsc-103.pdf>

## Mardi Gras comes to SRCCF, LaSalle County

**LaSALLE** — The Starved Rock Country Community Foundation’s recent “Mardi Gras Carnivale” in LaSalle was a sell-out success.

The event featured over 200 guests in elaborate Venetian masks and purple, green and gold beads, a stilt-walker, face painter and New Orleans-style food.

SRCCF President Fran Brolley thanked guests for supporting “Local giving, by local people, for local benefit” and for “helping facilitate philanthropy across Starved Rock Country.”

Founded in 2015, SRCCF has established 125 funds and distributed over \$3 million across La Salle, Bureau and Putnam counties and beyond.

The evening showcased four foundation



**A Mardi Gras Carnivale guest tosses a die as SRCCF board member Michael Stutzke of Princeton observes. Photo courtesy of Annette Barr**

funds: the John Ross Donor Advised Fund, Maitri Path to Wellness Fiscal Sponsorship, the Arts of Starved Rock Country (ASRC), and

Women Inspired Network. ASRC administrator Rene Wendinger and Maitri Chief Operating Officer Brenden Fasken each spoke.

For information, visit [srccf.org](http://srccf.org) or contact SRCCF Director of Operations Janice Corrigan at (815) 252-2906, ext. 2 or [janice@srccf.org](mailto:janice@srccf.org).

## Illinois Supreme Court appoints Sonni Choi Williams as circuit judge in 12th Judicial Circuit

**SPRINGFIELD** — Justice Mary K. O’Brien and the Illinois Supreme Court have announced the appointment of Sonni Choi Williams as a Circuit Judge in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, Third Subcircuit.

Ms. Williams is being appointed to fill the vacancy created by the election of Judge John C. Anderson to the Third District Appellate Court. Ms. Williams’ appointment is effective February 10, 2025, and will conclude on December 7, 2026.

“I believe Sonni Williams’ professional and personal experiences make her uniquely qualified for the judiciary. Ms. Williams has over 25 years of experience in municipal law, having served as city attorney for Lockport and Peoria, covering virtually every area of the law, including civil, criminal and appellate litigation,” said Justice O’Brien. “In addition, Ms. Williams has always been personally committed to improving the legal community through her involvement with the Illinois State Bar Association, the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission and numerous legal foundations. She will serve the citizens of Will County with distinction in this new role.”

Ms. Williams has been the City Attorney for the city of Lockport since 2017, serving as chief legal officer and representing the city in all cases before the federal and state courts and administrative agencies. From 2000 to 2017 she served as an attorney for the city of Peoria where she supervised the legal department staff attorneys, paralegals and administrative assistants in providing timely professional responses and legal advice, among other duties. She currently serves as President of the Illinois State

Bar Association (ISBA).

“I am immensely grateful for the appointment and I thank Justice O’Brien and the Illinois Supreme Court for the honor of serving residents of Will County,” said Ms. Williams. “I look forward to continuing my career as a public servant for the fair and equitable administration of justice.”

Ms. Williams earned her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Iowa and earned her Juris Doctor from the Northern Illinois University College of Law.

In addition to being the first woman of color to serve as President of the ISBA, Ms. Williams’ professional affiliations include the Will County Bar Association, the Will County Women’s Bar Association, and the Will County Black Lawyers Association. She is a board member of the Korean American Bar Association of Chicago and an honorary board member of the Asian American Bar Association of Greater Chicago. Since 2012 she has served as Hearing Chair for

the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission, and she was previously a Commissioner of the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism and a Commissioner of the Illinois Supreme Court Special Committee on Professionalism.

Her awards include receiving the 2020 Alumna of the Year Award from the Northern Illinois University College of Law and the 2015 ISBA Diversity Leadership Award for her long standing, continuing and exceptional commitment to the critical importance of diversity within the Illinois legal community, its judiciary and within the Illinois State Bar Association.

## Don’t let Spring Break leave you broke

**ROCKFORD** — As spring break 2025 approaches, travel experts are predicting a significant increase in spending on premium vacations by families and college students. This year, travelers are more eager than ever to embark on bucket list trips, adventure travel, and international destinations.

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) is issuing a strong reminder to consumers: this heightened interest in premium vacations presents a prime opportunity for scammers. Fraudulent vacation rentals, third-party booking sites, and travel agencies are on the rise, targeting those seeking great

vacation deals.

Dennis Horton, Senior Director BBB Rockford Regional Office, says, “Given the increased expense of these vacations, caution is the key word. Consumers who do not do their due diligence when making their spring break travel plans and finalizing payments can end up falling directly into the hands of con artists.”

Following the trends, scammers often take advantage of consumer habits, observe internet searches, and then entice consumers with great deals on popular destinations or all-inclusive packages. While these

frauds happen year-round, now is peak time.

Horton notes, “This year, 159 Travel, Vacation, and Timeshare-related scam reports have been filed in BBB Scamtracker, costing consumers nearly \$55,000.”

The Federal Trade Commission reports nationwide that in 2023, there were 55,000 reports of travel scams, and travelers lost more than \$122 million.

To protect yourself, Horton says, “It all begins with planning, so you are not rushing to make last-minute arrangements. When you are in a hurry and may not have the time to verify you are booking with a legitimate location or business

that puts the scammer in the driver’s seat. Always verify and be sure to check for customer complaints or reviews on BBB.org.”

“Free” vacation scams  
• When a cruise or travel company advertises a vacation as “free,” it does not necessarily mean the trip is without cost or restrictions. Watch out for add-on fees for air transportation, port charges, taxes, tips and other undisclosed fees.

Hotel scams  
• When staying in a hotel, beware of scammers who use various techniques to obtain credit card information, including fake front desk calls, “free” wi-fi connections and fake food delivery.



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Watch for our early start-up Spring auctions beginning of March. Good/clean consignments always welcomed.

**Make sure you’re  
prepared if a tor-  
nado were to come  
through,  
tis the season**

# LOCAL/STATE NEWS

## Illinois DCFS launches Ally-IL, first-of-its-kind app to enhance communication, collaboration to support youth and families

CHICAGO—The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in collaboration with Microsoft, unveiled Ally-IL, a custom application enabling DCFS caseworkers to connect and engage with youth and support networks virtually using a Microsoft Teams platform.

Ally-IL is the first-of-its-kind tool developed to provide a free, real-time collaborative platform. This groundbreaking application offers chat-based tools, enabling DCFS caseworkers, families, children, youth and their trusted circle of alliances—including teachers—to stay connected and streamline communication, all while protecting sensitive information. By fostering secure and timely communication, Ally-IL enhances the support network around every child and family involved.

“Through this public-private partnership with Microsoft, we are changing the way our children and youth in care can stay connected to their families and their DCFS caseworkers,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Ally-IL enhances communication, ensuring that our caseworkers

can provide timely and effective support to the children and families they serve. This collaboration underscores my administration’s commitment to leveraging innovative technology to improve the well-being of our communities.”

“Ally-IL is a state-of-the-art tool designed to help children and youth connect with their ‘alliances,’ which include their parents and other family members, foster parents, DCFS caseworkers and others in real time. This app not only empowers children and families but also reduces the administrative burdens on caseworkers, allowing them more time to concentrate on the children and families they serve,” said Illinois DCFS Director Heidi E. Mueller. “This innovative tool introduces new opportunities for maintaining important relationships and deepening bonds within the entire support system, ensuring a lasting positive impact on the lives of the youth in our care.”

Connecting with families and coordinating meetings with support teams has always been time-consuming for caseworkers. Ally-IL provides accessi-

bility via an app on phones, tablets or computers, providing secure channels and chat options to facilitate easy and efficient communication. Instead of relying on phone calls, caseworkers can instantly connect with the entire team through a single message, share documents and photos and ask questions. Additionally, Ally-IL serves as a record-keeping tool, providing a digital log of all conversations for caseworkers and supervisors to review.

“We know it is extremely important for the youth in our care to remain connected to their families and a strong support network, and we also know it can be difficult to get everyone in the same room at the same time for face-to-face meetings—so DCFS worked to find a solution and Ally-IL was born,” said DCFS Mobility Product Owner, Information Technology, Laura Van Horne. “It’s the first application of its kind, offering tools that allow social workers to create teams and act swiftly to help them streamline collaboration, strengthen connections and ultimately enhance the care and support we provide to children and families.”

“Microsoft is incredibly proud to support the groundbreaking Ally-IL initiative. By leveraging cutting-edge communication and collaboration technology, we are enhancing engagement and positive outcomes for youth and families across Illinois. We are honored to contribute to such impactful work that strengthens connections and supports the well-being of our communities,” said Carol Workman, General Manager, State and Local Government, Microsoft.

“This innovative and secure tool revolutionizes communication by enabling continuous collaboration between youth in care, their families and DCFS caseworkers, thereby enhancing support for Illinois youth and families,” said Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology Secretary and State CIO Sanjay Gupta. “Our commitment to leveraging technology ensures better engagement and positive outcomes for those we serve. With Ally-IL, we are setting a new standard for efficiency and effectiveness in our services.”

## OSFM urges immediate fire safety action following deadly fires

SPRINGFIELD – The OSFM is urging Illinois residents to review and practice their fire escape plans while testing and inspection smoke alarms following a wave of recent deadly home fires.

Sadly, since Friday, February 14, there have been eight deadly fires claiming the lives of 10 people in Illinois. So far in 2025, Illinois has seen 16 fatal fires resulting in 19 fire related fatalities.

“During the winter months we see an increase in home fires caused by heating deceives or malfunctioning heating equipment,” said Illinois State Fire Marshal James A. Rivera. “This is why it is so important for people to test and inspect all smoke alarms monthly, review and practice their fire escape plans, and follow manufactures instructions on all home heating devices.”

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), heating equipment is one of the leading causes of home fire deaths. Fire departments responded to an estimated average of 44,210 fires involving heating equipment per year from 2016-2020, accounting for 13% of all reported home fires during

this time, and these fires resulted in annual losses of 480 civilian deaths.

Space heaters were the type of heating equipment responsible for the largest shares of losses in home heating equipment fires, accounting for one-third of the fires, but nearly nine out of ten deaths and four out of five of the injuries in home fires caused by heating equipment.

Half of the home heating fire deaths were caused by having heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing mattresses or bedding. Nearly half of all home heating fires occurred in December, January, and February.

Here are some other tips to keep in mind when it comes to winter heating safety:

Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional and change furnace filters frequently.

Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters, or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturers’ instructions.

Keep interior and exterior air vents clear of blockages or obstructions.

Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, like a furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.

Purchase units with an automatic shutoff in case the unit tips over or you forget to shut it off. Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room. Ashes should be cool before being placed into a metal container. Keep the container a safe distance away from your home.

Create a three-foot “kid-free zone” around open fires and space heaters. Test smoke and CO alarms at least once a month and be familiar with the sounds they make. Never use an oven or range to heat your home.

Remember to turn off portable or space heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.

Install carbon monoxide and smoke detectors on each floor of your home and within 15 feet of each sleeping area. CO detectors have a limited life span; check the manufacturer’s instructions for information on replacement.

Keep interior and exterior air vents clear of blockages or obstructions.

## State of Illinois recognizes March as Problem Gambling Awareness Month

CHICAGO – Governor JB Pritzker, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), the Illinois Lottery, and the Illinois Gaming Board (IGB) recognize March as Problem Gambling Awareness Month in Illinois and are highlighting ways the state is working to prevent gambling disorder and support those in need of recovery.

To raise awareness around gambling disorder and honor those in recovery, participating buildings in downtown Chicago will be lit teal, and a statewide art contest will shine a spotlight on the power of recovery. Throughout the month, IDHS will also partner with providers across the state to raise awareness around treatment options for those in need.

“Individuals who struggle with gambling disorder often hide their behavior from family and friends, but we want all Illinois residents to know there is hope and a path to recovery,” said Dulce M. Quintero, Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services.

“Problem gambling awareness and responsible gambling education demand our attention, effort, and action,” said Illinois Gaming Board Administrator Marcus D. Fruchter. “The IGB maintains its commitment to the safety of Illinois gaming and is pleased to collaborate with IDHS, Building Owners and Managers Association of Chicago, and other entities during this month and throughout the year, to encourage and facilitate responsible gaming, address problem gambling head on, and ensure that those who need help get the support, resources and services they deserve without stigmatization and undue barriers.”

During March, the Illinois Lottery will raise awareness about problem gambling across the state through radio spots, billboards, digital and social media, and direct outreach to players and lottery retailers.

“March is the month when the concentrated efforts of the state can amplify and bring attention to this important is-

sue and is a continuation of the work we do all year round. In collaboration with IDHS, our focus is to raise awareness and show people where they can go to seek help,” said Illinois Lottery Director Harold Mays.

IDHS’s Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery (SUPR) continues to work with gambling providers to expand outreach and raise awareness for the problems gambling can cause.

As part of its “Are You Really Winning?” Campaign, IDHS/SUPR has launched the third annual gambling disorder art contest to raise awareness of gambling issues and to deliver a sense of hope to those who are struggling.

Open to all Illinois residents ages 14 and over, the art contest highlights Problem Gambling Awareness Month. Accepted media include drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media, collage, digital art, fiber art, textiles, glass art, photography, ceramic art, assemblage, sculpture, graphic design, and illustration. The winning submissions will be unveiled in June and will be featured in several public exhibits throughout the state.

According to research by Health Resources in Action, 4%, or nearly 400,000, of Illinois residents, have a gambling disorder, and another 7%, or 700,000, are at risk of developing a gambling disorder. To meet this need, IDHS/SUPR has helped providers prepare for an increase in problem gamblers coming in for treatment. Illinois is now the fourth largest state in terms of total

calls/texts/chats to the 1-800-GAMBLER helpline. In State Fiscal Year 2024, 57,478 screenings were conducted by treatment providers, representing a 19% increase over the previous year.

Over the past five years, there have been over 815 clinicians trained to provide gambling disorder treatment services in Illinois. This year, IDHS/SUPR will provide monthly webinars focused on gambling disorder, a two-day Summit on Problem Gambling, a 30-hour Gambling Counselor Training, three community and culturally focused conferences (Black/African American, Latinx, and Asian cultures) on gambling disorder, a physician focused conference on gambling disorder, as well as a virtual introduction to the Eisenberg Disordered Gambling Emphasized Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (EDGE SBIRT) tool.

IGB hosts the State’s Self-Exclusion Program for Problem Gamblers which allows individuals who have determined they are problem gamblers to exclude themselves from all casinos and sports wagering in Illinois. As of February 2025, a total of 15,590 individuals were on the self-exclusion list.

If gambling has become a problem for you or someone you know, call 1-800-GAMBLER. Help is also available through the website AreYouReallyWinning.com and by texting GAMB to 833234.

## IDOC partners to expand cadet training with new regional academies

SPRINGFIELD—Recently, the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) established two new partnerships to address needs and expand training opportunities for cadets across Illinois.

To support corrections facilities in the Southern Region, IDOC has signed an intergovernmental agreement with John A. Logan Community College in Carterville to prepare cadets for careers at Big Muddy River, Centralia, Pinckneyville, Menard, Shawnee, and Vienna Correctional Centers. Following that agreement, IDOC signed another intergovernmental agreement with Elementary School District 54 in Morris to support training efforts for cadets in the Northern Region, who will go on to serve at Joliet Treatment Center, Joliet Inpatient Treatment Center, Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center, Pontiac, and Sheridan Correctional Centers.

These agreements are a result of collaborative discussions with AFSCME Council 31.

“These new partnerships underscore our dedication to meeting the staffing needs of facilities across all regions of Illinois while strengthening our connections in those communities,” said Acting Director Latoya Hughes. “By

working with local institutions like John A. Logan Community College and Morris Elementary School District 54, we’re preparing the next generation of correctional officers and supporting the regions they will serve. We look forward to continued collaboration with AFSCME Council 31 to ensure the successful development of these training locations. This effort underscores our commitment to building a stronger workforce and providing the necessary resources for our staff and the individuals in our custody.”

These new pilot locations will serve as temporary training facilities to help fill much-needed vacancies. While the Training Academy in Decatur remains the Department’s primary training hub, the new regional academies in the Northern and Southern regions demonstrate IDOC’s dedication to strengthening its workforce by offering accessible and localized training opportunities.

IDOC anticipates that this initiative—partnering with schools and community colleges to utilize additional training space—could increase training class capacity by up to 300%.

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**Wednesday** – Ravioli w/meat sauce, cauliflower, green beans, whole grain garlic bread, apricots

**Thursday** – (A) Pulled pork on whole grain bun, cheesy potatoes, winter blend veggies, fruit cocktail; (B) Ham/chicken noodle

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EBT/LinkCards

## PRODUCE

<p><b>Limes</b></p>  <p><b>4/\$3</b> /ea.</p>	<p><b>Clementines</b> 3 lb bag</p>  <p><b>\$4.99</b> Bag</p>	<p><b>Iceberg Lettuce</b></p>  <p><b>\$1.79</b>/ea.</p>	<p><b>Strawberries</b></p>  <p><b>\$2.99</b>/ea.</p>	<p><b>Bolthouse Baby Carrots</b> 12 oz Bag</p>  <p><b>\$1.99</b>/ea.</p>
<p><b>Green Cabbage</b> Pel lb</p>  <p><b>\$.79</b>/lb.</p>	<p><b>Dole Red Potatoes</b> 3 lb Bag</p>  <p><b>\$2.99</b>/ea.</p>	<p><b>Seedless Green or Red Grapes</b></p>  <p><b>\$2.29</b>/lb.</p>	<p><b>Tomatoes on the Vine</b></p>  <p><b>\$1.79</b>/lb.</p>	<p><b>Celery</b></p>  <p><b>2/\$3</b>/ea.</p>

## HOT BUYS

<p><b>81% Lean Ground Beef</b></p>  <p><b>\$4.49</b>/lb. <b>HOT DEAL</b> Reg. Price \$4.99/lb.</p>	<p><b>USDA Choice New York Strip Steak</b></p>  <p><b>\$10.99</b>/lb. <b>HOT DEAL</b> Reg. Price \$12.99/lb.</p>	<p><b>Just Bare Chicken Wingettes &amp; Drumstick</b> 32 oz</p>  <p><b>\$6.99</b>/ea. <b>HOT DEAL</b> Reg. Price \$8.99/ea.</p>	<p><b>Cook's Flat Corned Beef</b></p>  <p><b>\$5.99</b>/lb. <b>HOT DEAL</b> Reg. Price \$6.99/lb.</p>
<p><b>Deli - Any Premium Large Sub</b></p>  <p><b>\$8.99</b>/ea. <b>HOT DEAL</b> Reg. Price \$11.99/ea.</p>	<p><b>Jack's Pizza</b> 13.8 to 15.8 oz</p>  <p><b>2/\$9</b>/ea. <b>HOT DEAL</b> Reg. Price \$4.99/ea.</p>	<p><b>Tostitos or Ruffles</b> 5.5 to 13 oz</p>  <p><b>2/\$10</b>/ea. <b>HOT DEAL</b> Reg. Price \$5.99/ea.</p>	<p><b>Pepsi Products</b> 24 PK Cans</p>  <p><b>\$11.99</b>/ea. <b>HOT DEAL</b> Reg. Price \$14.99/ea.</p>

## WEEKLY SPECIALS

<p><b>Frank's Kraut</b> 32 oz</p>  <p><b>\$2.29</b> ea. Reg. Price \$2.59/ea.</p>	<p><b>Gold'n Plump Chicken Leg Quarters</b></p>  <p><b>\$.98</b> lb. Reg. Price \$1.49/lb.</p>	<p><b>Farmland Pork Sausage</b> 12 oz Roll</p>  <p><b>\$2.49</b> ea. Reg. Price \$2.99/ea.</p>	<p><b>Food Club Meat Balls</b> 26 oz</p>  <p><b>\$5.49</b> ea. Reg. Price \$6.59/ea.</p>	
<p><b>El-Monterey Taquitos</b> 18 to 21 oz</p>  <p><b>\$7.99</b> ea. Reg. Price \$9.99/ea.</p>	<p><b>Food Club Juice</b> 52 oz</p>  <p><b>\$3.99</b> ea. Reg. Price \$4.99/ea.</p>	<p><b>Food Club Butter</b> 16 oz</p>  <p><b>\$3.99</b> ea. Reg. Price \$5.99/ea. <b>HOT DEAL</b></p>	<p><b>Kraft MAC &amp; Cheese</b> 5.5 to 7.3 oz</p>  <p><b>4/\$5</b> ea. Reg. Price \$2.09/ea.</p>	<p><b>Kraft Dressing</b> 14 or 16 oz</p>  <p><b>2/\$6</b> ea. Reg. Price \$5.19/ea.</p>
<p><b>Pop-Tarts</b> 13.5 oz</p>  <p><b>2/\$6</b> ea. Reg. Price \$3.99/ea.</p>	<p><b>Kool-Aid Jammers</b> 10 lt</p>  <p><b>2/\$7</b> ea. Reg. Price \$4.69/ea.</p>	<p><b>Kellogg's Crackers</b> Townhouse or Club 5.75 to 16 oz</p>  <p><b>2/\$6</b> ea. Reg. Price \$4.99/ea.</p>	<p><b>Fisher Peanuts</b> 14 oz</p>  <p><b>2/\$5</b> ea. Reg. Price \$3.99/ea.</p>	<p><b>Bush's Best Beans</b> Select Varieties 8.1 to 16 oz</p>  <p><b>2/\$3</b> ea. Reg. Price \$2.29/ea.</p>

Sale Priced Valid March 12th - March 18th