

THE GAZETTE-DEMOCRAT

The Talk • Cobden Review • The Vienna Times • Serving Union County Since 1849 & Johnson County Since 1879

Thursday, July 30, 2026

Anna, Illinois

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State to lay off about 250 at Choate

By Jackson Brandhorst and Saluki Local Reporting Lab

The Illinois Department of Human Services, IDHS, announced Thursday, July 23 that the Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center in Anna will lay off staff and undergo several operational changes in the coming months, including the elimination of the state-run facility’s entire general residential program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

According to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFSCME, the union that represents the majority of Choate staff, IDHS said it intends to lay off about 250 of the facility’s more than 500 employees over the coming



Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center in Anna. File photo by Whitney Curtis for ProPublica and Capitol News Illinois

months.

In a letter to Choate staff, IDHS said that the changes are a result of the “success” of the state’s three-year plan, which aimed to repurpose the facility over three years in

partnership with the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine.

According to the letter, IDHS plans to cease operations for the intellectual and developmental disabilities

general units by Sept. 30. The department will also “phase down” 75 civil mental health beds at Choate while adding beds to the Madden Mental Health Center in Chicago.

This phase-down, says

IDHS, which is planned to be completed by March 2027, is because the “need for mental health beds is greater in northern Illinois.”

In its letter, IDHS did not specify how many employees would face layoffs as a result of these reductions, but acknowledged that layoffs will occur.

“We will work with our labor partners to support employees,” the IDHS letter states. “This includes working closely with directly impacted staff who may be subject to the contractual layoff process.”

Choate currently serves 58 patients, 16 of whom are in the intellectual and developmental disabilities unit, and employs roughly 524 people across its campus. Of those employees,

(see Choate on page 8)

News Notes

Items of interest from throughout the Union County area, from social media and beyond...

With the start of August right around the corner, it looks like the month once again will be a very busy time in Union County ... with the Cobden Peach Festival, the Union County Fair in Anna, the start of a new school year accompanied by the schools’ fall sports seasons.

Reminder: the first installment of Union County property taxes is due Aug. 6. The second installment is due Oct. 6.

The City of Anna is planning to host a Southern Illinois Mayors Association meeting in September. The association’s membership represents communities in 34 Southern Illinois counties.

The Village of Cobden continues to move forward with plans for a new well and infrastructure improvements.

A July 26 U.S. Drought Monitor update showed that no drought conditions were reported in all of Union, Alexander, Pulaski, Massac and Johnson counties, most of Jackson County and southern Williamson County. Abnormally dry conditions were reported in northeastern Jackson County and northern Williamson County.

Nine young women are participating in this year’s Cobden Peach Festival queen pageant. Amelia Long is the reigning queen. The new queen will be crowned Saturday night, Aug. 8, at the festival, which is sponsored by the

(see Notes on page 8)

Anna VFW activities among topics discussed

An update on activities sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars post in Anna, a matter involving a private road and a plea for help with a housing situation were among the topics discussed at last week’s regular meeting of the Union County Board of Commissioners. The meeting was Friday morning, July 24, at the Union County Courthouse in Jonesboro.

VFW Post activities

Veterans of Foreign Wars Carroll P. Foster Post No. 3455 representative Clay Mitchell presented an update about the post’s many activities. He also encouraged those who are eligible to do so to become members of the post or its auxiliary organization.

Information was shared about two special awards programs sponsored by the VFW One of the honors is a public service recognition award. The other is a teacher recognition award.

The public service recognition award honors those who serve the community as an emergency medical technician, law enforcement officer, 911 dispatcher and firefighter. Those being honored can be recommended by colleagues or those they serve for consistent excellence in performance and dedicated to their responsibilities.

The teacher recognition award honors K-5, 6-8 and high school teachers who promote civic responsibility and patriotism. Anyone can nominate a teacher, including self-nomination.

The post is located at 70 VFW Ln., just off old U.S. Route 51 between Anna and Cobden. The schedule of the post’s upcoming events includes:

- Taco Tuesdays, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. each Tuesday (except for the first Tuesday). Prices are \$4 for one taco and \$7 for two.

(see Board on page 8)



July Garden of the Month announced

The July Garden of the Month is at 209 Forest St. in Anna. Jackie Griffin has only been seriously gardening for two years, but she has done quite a bit in that short time. Her back yard is host to a great many perennial plants. She is trying to plant natives that include blazing star, bee balm, coneflowers, bottle brush grass, catmint, catnip, crepe myrtle, rose of sharon, roses and coreopsis. She also has many non-natives, including numerous hydrangeas, daisies, hostas and lavender. A garden bench and numerous wind catchers and art pieces round out the garden.

Anna planned to welcome special visitors

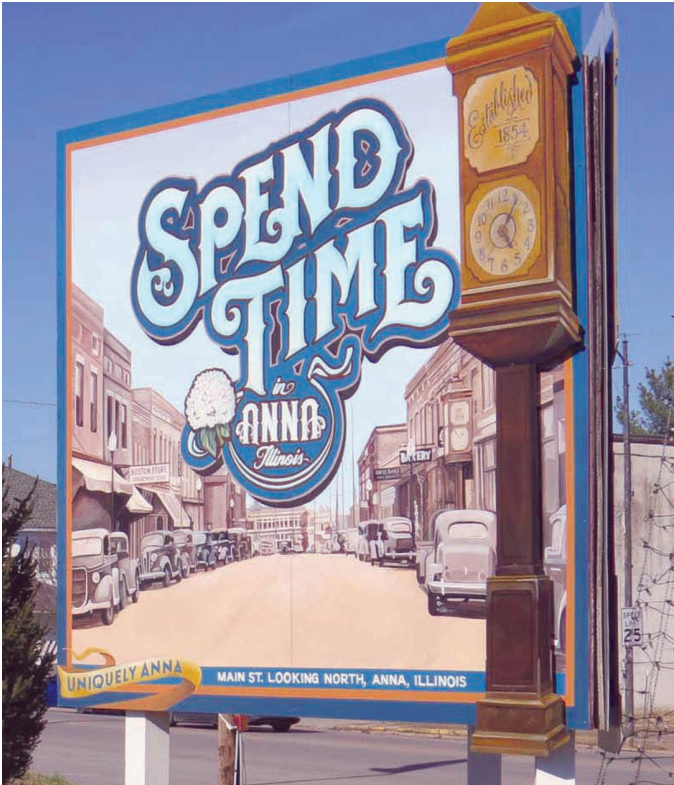
The City of Anna was planning to welcome participants in the Delta Leadership Institute on Wednesday, July 29.

The institute is a program offered by the Delta Regional Authority, DRA. The DRA was established in 2000 as a formal framework for joint federal-state collaboration to promote and encourage the economic development of the lower Mississippi River and Alabama Black Belt regions.

To fulfill this purpose, DRA invests in projects supporting transportation infrastructure, basic public infrastructure, workforce training and business development. DRA works to create jobs, build communities, and improve the lives of those who reside in the region.

DRA’s region encompasses 255 counties and parishes in parts of Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee.

DRA invests in regional leadership through its annual Delta Leadership Institute, DLI, Executive Academy. Fellows representing each of the eight DRA states are selected by the eight



Welcoming message

A sign near the four-way stop in downtown Anna shares a message about spending some time in the Union County community.

governors and the federal co-chairman from a competitive pool of applicants that represent both public and private sectors.

During a nine-month executive leadership

development program, six sessions are held in different cities throughout the eight-state region, which focus on areas such as transportation infrastructure, government relations and regional

collaboration.

Anna city administrator Dori Bigler completed the DLI program in 2023. She said the city was going to welcome 35 institute participants and five staff members on July 29. The visitors were planning to do a walking tour of the downtown Anna area during the afternoon.

Other business

In other business at last week’s meeting, the city authorized a stipend agreement with Anna Police Department Chief JD Barter to also serve as the city’s wastewater operator. Barter’s background includes work and teaching classes related to wastewater operations.

Two applications for use of city property were approved, both for events at the city park. One was for the Anna-Jonesboro Community High School cross country team on Sept. 9 and Oct. 6. The other application was for a Southern Illinois Fall Baseball League’s use of Kiwanis Field at the city park on Sundays from Aug. 2 through Sept. 20, excluding Aug. 23 and Aug. 30.





Flowers in the summer
In spite of summer season weather extremes in southern Illinois, including plenty of heat and humidity, along with extended dry periods and occasional rainy downpours, brightly colored flowers can be seen in the downtown Alto Pass area.

COUNTY LINE NEWS

BY SUZAN HARVEL

This hasn't the been the best of weeks for me ... actually week and a half. I picked up a nasty infection (or two) that just doesn't want to go away. I don't know why being sick in the summer is so awful, but it certainly has been. With a second round of medication and a booster, we'll hope for the best; but so far, I'm not feeling it.

Before I got sick, we were blessed to share an evening meal at Tom's Place, in Tamms, with friends David and Suzanne Carter. When dessert came around my mother-in-law wanted a piece of lemon meringue pie. However, they were sold out. Suzanne being the sweetheart she is, made her a pie and dropped it off a few days later. It sure made Shirley's day! Thanks again, Suzanne.

In case you haven't been out our way of late or haven't heard it through the grapevine or news: County Line Road is open, but Grapevine Trail is closed at the western end. The Clear Creek Bridge just west of the Lindsay Cemetery is being replaced. The replacement is expected to take a year. Therefore, there will be no easy access to McClure or a short cut to get to Cape Girardeau via Grapevine Trail. Alternate routes I've traveled have

been Old Cape Road, south of Jonesboro, which will take you into Reynoldsville; Route 3 from Ware; and Route 3 from Olive Branch. All these will add some time from what we've been used to. However, I for one, am thankful that bridge is being replaced. It was getting more than a little scary. It would seem a lot of bridges have been under repair of late: the Highway 51 bridge from Cairo to Kentucky; the I-24 bridge going into Paducah; the levy bridge from Cairo into Missouri; and the Chester bridge. Seems summer time is prime time for roadwork and bridge work. Travel safe, everyone, and check on construction before you head out anywhere.

I missed the Mill Creek Board meeting Tuesday night, but the report was sent to me for inclusion in the paper. The Village of Mill Creek Board reported that a joint donation for first responders was made from the Village of Mill Creek and Josh's Heating and Cooling. They provided bottled water, Gatorade and gift cards for ice to the Union County Sheriff's Department, Jonesboro Police Department, Jonesboro Fire Department and Union County Ambulance Services. This was given with appreciation for their service to residents of Mill Creek.

Union County Highway Department made needed repairs on the culverts in the village. The rubber mulch ordered for the playground has arrived and will be spread as soon as the heat abates. It was also recorded on security footage of the theft of several bags after they were dropped off. It has been reported to the Union County Sheriff's Office. The next meeting will be held on Aug. 18 at 7 p.m.

Brother Bobby Richardson led the congregation of Mill Creek Baptist in worship Sunday, July 19 from John 16: 5-16. In these passages, Jesus is explaining to his disciples that he must go away so that "the Comforter" can come. This is who we refer to as the Holy Spirit/Ghost, is also called the Spirit of Truth, and the third part of the Trinity. God, the Father; God the Son, Jesus; and The Holy Spirit/Ghost. He is sent after Jesus' death to convict us, the world, of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Of sin, because of there is disbelief; of righteousness, so that we repent and renew the joy of our salvation; of judgment, so that we judge ourselves and find those areas that need cleaned up and fix them. The comforter is that still, small voice (our conscious) that lets you know when you do wrong

and think wrong. As the Spirit of Truth, he guides us to the truth that gives us power over sin. We need to listen.

A reminder that Mill Creek Baptist will be hosting Vacation Bible School Aug. 3 to 7 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. A Family Night program will be held on the 7th, with parents asked to come back at 7 p.m. A pizza party will be held afterward.

Those added to the prayer list are: Suzan Harvel for health; Claude Sadler for upcoming knee surgery; Lula Belle Tripp for upcoming knee surgery; Dawn Rider for continued healing from her knee surgery; Kevin Reynolds is back in the hospital and needs prayers; Pat Stute for recovery with heart surgery; Donna Davis, a friend, who had unscheduled heart surgery while on vacation in California, for complete healing; Sue Starr took a fall and injured her eye; and please pray for all the churches having Vacation Bible School, that the lost may be saved. Also, please keep in prayer the families who have recently lost loved ones: Dolores Adams, Janie Peterson, Jerry Thurston and Helen Dexter.

ANNA FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

Anna First Baptist Church met for worship on July 26, with our opening prayer given by Pastor Perry Wright.

Vickie Wagner did our call to worship, which was on love, mercy and grace.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

This beautiful reading is taken from the 103rd Psalm.

We then worshipped our Lord with worship music, My All in All, Worthy of All, and Graves into Gardens.

Pastor Lupe's sermon title was "Kingdom of Man." Highlights of his sermon included that the Tower of Babel stands as a monument to humanity's desire to build a kingdom without God, seeking fame, security and unity on man's terms rather than His. Every generation is tempted to replace God's kingdom with the kingdom of self, trusting in human achievement, government, technology, wealth or religion instead of humble obedience to the Lord. Babel reminds us that when people unite around pride instead of truth, God will eventually oppose their efforts because "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6) Jesus did not come to help us perfect the kingdom of man, but to call us out of it and make us citizens of the Kingdom of God, where Christ alone is exalted. The choice before every person is the same today as it was on the plains of Shinar: build a tower that reaches toward heaven by human effort, or bow before the cross where God came down to save mankind by His grace."

Our Sunday School meets at 9 a.m. and is for all ages. Our children's worship and church worship begin at 10:15 a.m. Our Wednesday evening Bible Study begins at 6 p.m. Our bus runs for all of these services and programs.

Our church is located at 409 Morgan St. in Anna. Our phone number is 618-833-5416. Our office is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. If you have questions or would like you name to be put on the list to be picked up by our bus for our services, please just give us a call.

Our email is fbcanna409@gmail.com, or check us out at annafirst.org.

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JONESBORO FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NEWS

Jonesboro First Baptist Church News

On July 19, Pastor Perry Williams spoke in our morning service. His message addressed the fact that your life is a mist and passes quickly. He talked about the curse of sin placed on our lives because of the fall of man. No matter what you are working on right now, the one thing you can be certain, is that one day you will return back to the ground from where you came. It's vital to prepare for that day! You can be sure if you confess your sins He is faithful to forgive and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. His text was found in the third chapter of Genesis, in the very first Old Testament book of the Bible, as well the first chapter of 1 John, found in the New Testament.

Dee Rose, Music Director,

led in worship, accompanied by Debbie York on the piano, and the Praise Team: Megan, Isabel and Lucas Tehandón, and Kerry Shipley. Robert McCain, Debbie York and Dee Rose sang a special, "His Mercy is More."

Our service was sent via transmitter station 87.9 FM for those who want to listen via the radio. The service was also live streamed on Facebook, so if you missed it, you still have an opportunity to view it. Please check our Facebook page, Jonesboro FBC, for the latest videos and info on church events.

This week's activities include Men's & Ladies' Bible Studies, Monday, July 20, at 6 p.m. The men meet at the church, and the ladies will meet at the home of Sheila Aldridge. On Thursday, July 23, at 9 a.m., the Newsletter

Folding Team will meet and get the August newsletter ready to mail.

Happy birthday to Heidi Robinson, July 20; Evelyn Hileman and Martha McRaven, both born July 21; Kamryn Wallenmeyer, July 24; Bill Dillow, July 25; Leon Rendleman and José Tehandón, both born on July 26.

Currently, our regular schedule for worship at Jonesboro First Baptist includes Sunday School classes on Sundays at 9 a.m.; Sunday morning worship at 10 a.m.; Sunday evening worship at 6 p.m. Youth for 6th-12th grades meet also on Sundays at 6 p.m. and Wednesdays from 6-8 p.m. Our Adult Prayer Meeting and Bible Study also meets on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. All are invited to attend.

ANNA CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE NEWS

The morning worship service was held at 10:35 a.m. on July 19, 2026. Announcements were given by Jessica Elkins. The worship service was led by Pastor Wright and the worship team.

The message "Praise,

Proclaim, and Testify" from Isaiah 12:4, was given by Pastor Wright, sharing that a life transformed by God's grace naturally:

- Praises God
- Proclaims the Gospel
- Testifies to His faithfulness

Celebrating a birthday this week is: 21st, Stanley Elkins

You may contact the church by calling the church office at 618-833-6702 and leaving a message if necessary or by calling Pastor Wright at 618-534-7103.

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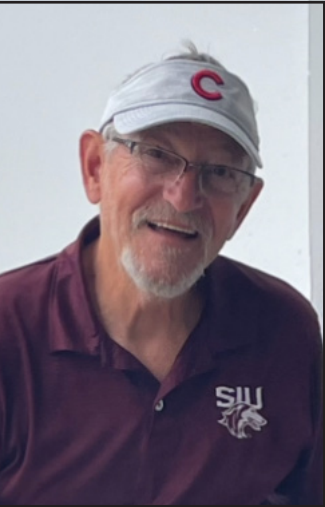
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OBITUARIES



Patrick Alan Stute

Patrick Alan Stute, age 69, of Anna, passed away unexpectedly on Friday, July 24, 2026, at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, Mo.

Pat was born on April 21, 1957, to Ken and Barb (Basler) Stute in Fort Wayne, Ind. He married LaDonna Miller in Cobden on June 23, 1984. Together they had two children, Erin Stute and Dana (Matt) Frownfelter.

Pat and LaDonna enjoyed traveling to Florida and spending weekends at Lake of Egypt. While in Florida, Pat especially loved fishing in Treasure Island and Navarre. He also cherished spending time at the pool with his granddaughter, Carly, where the two enjoyed sharing popsicles and ice cream together. He was a devoted fan of the Chicago Cubs and Chicago Bears. Pat was a proud member of the Anna-Jonesboro Elks Lodge #1641 for 26 years and was recently installed as a trustee.

Pat previously worked as a deputy police officer before dedicating more than 30 years to his career as a union carpenter. He began working alongside his father-in-law and later co-owned Stute Construction with his wife, LaDonna, operating their own construction business together for more than 20 years. Most recently, he worked as an IDOT highway maintainer in Anna.

Pat is survived by his wife of 42 years; his two daughters; his “so stinkin’ cute” granddaughter, Carly Frownfelter, who lovingly called him “Pops”; his mother, Barb Stute; his sisters, Anne (Dan) Estes and Boo (Jim) Logan; and many nieces, nephews, extended family members and friends.

He was preceded in death by his father; his brother, Mike; his sister, Susie; his cousin, Ben Basler; and his niece, Mickey Chaney.

A private family gathering will be held at Rendleman and Hileman Funeral Home in Anna. A celebration of life for friends will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the American Heart Association, or honor Pat’s memory by donating blood through the American Red Cross.

Rendleman & Hileman Funeral Home in Anna is in charge of arrangements.

To view the obituary and leave online condolences, visit rendlemanhilemanfh.com.



Wanda Lee Perry

Wanda Perry, 93, of Helotes, Texas, formerly of Jonesboro, peacefully went to be with her Lord and Savior on Wednesday, July 15, 2026.

Born on Feb. 16, 1933, in Eldorado, Wanda was the daughter of Elmer and Lillian Wilson. She married Robert Tull Perry on Nov. 23, 1951. Together they raised two children Beth Ann Perry and Clifton Scott Perry.

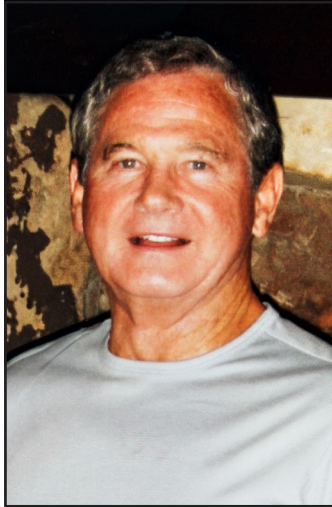
Wanda retired from the Anna National Bank after 31 years of service. In her retirement years she loved traveling the world to visit her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

She was passionate in her faith and church. As a member of First Baptist Church, Anna she and her daughter were known for their devotion to missions and Operation Christmas Child/Shoebox.

She leaves behind to cherish her memory her children, Beth Perry and Clifton (Brenda) Perry; her four adoring grandchildren, Tull (Patsy) Perry, Nicholas (Kaylyn) Perry, Spencer Perry and Emma (Ryan) Williams; five great-grandchildren, Bria Perry, Abel Perry, James Perry, Nathan Perry and Noah Perry; her brother Gary Wilson; several nieces, nephews and cousins. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband and nine siblings (Ruth, Ralph, Roberta, Charles, Paula, Bonnie, Don, Marilyn and Joyce).

Funeral services were at 10:30 a.m. Monday, July 27, 2026, at the Rendleman & Hileman Funeral Home in Anna with Clifton Perry officiating. Interment will be in the Jonesboro Cemetery. Visitation was from 6 to 7 p.m. Sunday, July 26, 2026, at the Rendleman & Hileman Funeral Home in Anna. In lieu of flowers please consider a donation to the Operation Shoebox (samaritanspurse.org).

Those attending Wanda’s celebration of life were encouraged to wear purple. It was her favorite color!



Terry Conrad Brown

A faithful servant of God, devoted husband, loving father, grandfather and friend, Terry Conrad Brown passed away unexpectedly at his home on July 18, 2026, at the age of 85. Though his earthly journey ended far too soon for those who loved him, he leaves behind a lifetime of faith, love, laughter and stories that will continue to be told for generations.

Born on Aug. 31, 1940, in Anna, Terry’s childhood was shaped by adventure. As the son of a military family, he spent much of his youth in post-World War II Germany before later living in Houston, Texas and the Philippines. These experiences fostered a lifelong curiosity about the world before he returned to the United States to begin college at SIU.

During his time at SIU, Terry hesitantly agreed to a blind date. There he met the love of his life, Nancy Davis. That single evening changed the course of his life. Several years later he and Nancy were married, beginning a partnership that would span more than six decades.

Their marriage began in Roswell, N.M., where Terry proudly served in the United States Air Force. While stationed there, they welcomed their two sons, Ted and Treg. After completing his military service with the rank of Captain, Terry and his family ultimately returned to Illinois. Shortly thereafter he enrolled again at SIU, where he earned his master’s degree in education before embarking on the next chapter of his professional life.

Never one to shy away from a new challenge, Terry enjoyed a career that reflected both his entrepreneurial spirit and his heart for serving others. He owned and operated three shoe stores throughout southern Illinois before answering a different calling in education. He ultimately retired from Carbondale Community High School, where he invested in countless students and coworkers over the years.

Following retirement, Terry and Nancy moved to Carbondale to be closer to family. Becoming “Pop” to his grandchildren quickly became his favorite title. Whether attending games and school events, babysitting for days at a time, sharing wisdom, making people laugh or simply spending time together, he treasured every opportunity to be with them.

To know Terry was to know a man whose faith in God was the foundation of his life. His love for his Lord guided everything he did. He loved deeply, gave generously of his time and left everyone around him better for having known him.



Sunday School9:30 a.m.
Worship Service10:30 a.m.
Bible Study, Wed.7:00 p.m.

Pastor, Doug Hughes

Those fortunate enough to spend time with Terry also knew him as a master storyteller. A true “raconteur,” he could captivate a room with tales that somehow became even better with each retelling. Terry was never one to let the facts get in the way of a good story. In recent years, if someone interrupted to tell him, “You’ve already told us that one,” he would simply grin and reply, “Yes, but I’ve changed a few things since then.” It was quintessential Terry — and it never failed to make people smile.

Outside of his family, few things brought Terry more joy than aviation. Whether he was piloting an airplane, flying on his flight simulator or reading the latest aviation magazine, he remained fascinated by flight throughout his life. It is fitting that he passed away peacefully while enjoying one of those flight magazines. He was also a devoted Saluki football fan, faithfully attending SIU football game for more than 60 years.

Terry is survived by his beloved wife, Nancy Brown; his children, Dr. Ted Brown and his wife, Laura (Reeves) Brown, and Dr. Treg Brown and his wife, Dr. Karla (Cheatham) Brown; his grandchildren, Marie Claire, Reeves, Katie, Jake, Cooper and Mitchell; and many extended family members and dear friends who will forever cherish his example, his stories and his unwavering love and faith.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Conrad and Mary (Murphy) Brown; and sisters, Barbara Leath and her husband Gene and Beverly Hallesy and her husband Bob.

Terry lived a life well lived — one defined by faith, family, service, curiosity, laughter and love. His legacy endures in the family he cherished, the students he influenced, the stories he shared and the countless lives he touched. Though he will be deeply missed, he will be remembered with gratitude, laughter and love for generations to come.

A time of visitation for family and friends was from 5 to 7 p.m. on Wednesday, July 22, 2026, at the Hope Church Carbondale, located at 7373 Old Highway 13 in Murphysboro. Funeral services were at 2 p.m. Thursday, July 23, 2026, at First Evangelical Presbyterian Church, located at 315 South Street in Anna with Pastor Randy Carstens officiating. Burial followed at Jonesboro Cemetery with military honors.

Memorials may be made to St. Jude’s Children Hospital or Hope Church Carbondale and will be accepted at the church.

Meredith Funeral Home in Carbondale is in charge of arrangements. To leave a story or memory of Terry, visit meredithfh.com.

P.A.S.T. of Union County to present Sunday Talks

P.A.S.T. of Union County will be holding a series of Sunday Talks in August. The members of P.A.S.T. have secured guest speakers to talk on Transportation that Transformed Union County. Speakers will discuss trains, automobiles, the old wagon trails and ferries/steamships and how they helped our county progress through the years.

Talks will take place at Heritage House, 102 S. Main in Jonesboro. All are set to begin at 2 p.m.

Times, dates and guest

speakers include:

Aug. 2
Speaker: Bart Hileman, Trains/Railroads

Aug. 9
Speakers: Barbara Bauer, Norm Bauer and Steve Burns; Automobiles/Dealerships
Aug. 16

Speaker: Jane Mowery Patterson, Indian Trails/Wagon Trains

Aug. 23
Speakers: Norm Bauer and Friends, Airplanes/Airports

Aug. 30
Speaker: Darrel Dexter, Ferries/Steamships



Celebrating semiquincentennial
A Cobden High School Appleknocker man logo sign has been joining in the commemoration of the nation's semiquincentennial in 2026. The nation's flags have been on display with the Appleknocker man, who stands at the park in downtown Cobden.

Union County Alliance of Churches Recommendations

1

Alliance of Churches, Romans 12:1 worship experience, Union County Fair, Aug 23, 6:30pm.

2

John 3:16 Ministries, “The Cure”, for drugs/alcohol addiction, john316thecure.com/admission/ FREE

3

“The Old Depot” 6 pm. Free dinner, live praise, fellowship, everyone welcome, come as you are.

Questions call Alliance of Churches (618)-614-2974

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Romans 8
Life in the Spirit

8.1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you[1] free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh,[2] God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.[3] And so he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life[4] because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of[5] his Spirit who lives in you. 12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation-but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. 14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.[6] And by him we cry, "Abba,[7] Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that[8] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

More than Conquerors

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[9] have been called according to his purpose.

29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died-more than that, who was raised to life-is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." [10] 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,[11] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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NEWS FROM VIENNA, ILLINOIS



Hazy summer air in southern Illinois

The southern Illinois area has been experienced hazy summer air during July. The photograph was taken at around midday on Tuesday, July 21, at the Cliff View Park in Alto Pass. At the time, the region was seeing high temperatures in the 90s, high humidity and the impact of smoke from wildfires that were occurring in Canada. Parts of Southeast Missouri, Western Kentucky and southern Illinois, including Union County, were under an extreme heat warning on July 21. After a short break in the extreme heat and humidity, high temperatures in the mid- to upper 90s were in the forecast for Sunday, Monday and Tuesday of this week.

Grow hands-on gardening knowledge with Master Gardener hybrid training

When seeds of knowledge are sown, individuals can reap a lifetime harvest. University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners gain gardening expertise and measure the success of projects, including demonstration gardens, pollinator habitats, and vegetable donation sites, by the meaningful impact these efforts have on their communities.

In 2026, Illinois Extension will offer a hybrid Master Gardener training program. This adaptive model enables participants to integrate the online coursework into their busy schedules while also attending weekly interactive sessions with Extension horticulture educators.

From greening up urban spaces to supporting vegetable donation sites in food-desert communities, Illinois Extension Master Gardeners

are passionate about the program’s mission of helping others learn to grow. In 2025, more than 2,000 volunteers dedicated 153,653 hours across Illinois to sharing gardening knowledge, produce donations, and enriching the community and the environment through garden projects.

“Our hybrid training is a great option for people who enjoy self-paced learning with a hands-on component,” said State Master Gardener Specialist, Candice Anderson. “It’s a flexible option for those still seeking in-person connection and an opportunity to apply what they have learned.

Dig deeper into in-depth horticulture content from the comfort of any internet accessible location with a desktop, laptop, or tablet. Training includes 13 modules

covering topics such as vegetable gardening, soils and fertilizers, annuals and perennials, plant diseases, integrated pest management, and more. Enjoy adaptive learning styles, including videos, reading materials, and interactive real-world applications. Take quizzes on the information and use the training manual to support learning and information sharing.

Upon completion of the training, participants would become a Master Gardener intern, then tasked with completing 20 volunteer hours over the next 2 years to become certified as a Master Gardener volunteer. Volunteer project options include speaking engagements at gardening clubs, schools, and civic groups, partnering with local organizations to provide gardening knowledge,

working in food donation gardens that offer fresh produce to food-insecure neighbors, or establishing native plant educational sites that provide habitat for pollinators.

The fall hybrid course starts Sept. 8, 2026, and includes 11 weeks of hybrid online materials and weekly in-person sessions, ending Nov. 17. The live sessions will be held in person on Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to noon at the Johnson County Extension Office, 208 E. Main St., Vienna. Attendance is required. The course fee is \$200.

For more information or to begin the Master Gardener application process, contact Jennifer Warren at jrwarren@illinois.edu or 618-695-2441. Learn more about the Master Gardener program at extension.illinois.edu/mg.

Vienna students recognized for success at 4-H show

Vienna High School students earned top honors during this year’s county 4-H shows, receiving Grand Champion, Reserve Champion, Blue Ribbon and State Delegate recognitions across a variety of project areas.

The annual 4-H program encourages youth to develop leadership, communication and technical skills while exploring interests in agriculture, science, the arts and community service through hands-on learning experiences.

Grand Champion Honors

- Olivia Quertermous - Civic Engagement
- Bonnie Russell - Gardening, Agriculture and Food Access
- Millie Partridge - Creative and Cultural Arts
- Bonnie Russell - Animal Sciences
- Reserve Champion Honors**
- Bonnie Russell - Environmental Science
- Anna Bremer - Gardening, Agriculture and Food Access
- Bonnie Russell - Creative and Cultural Arts
- Anna Bremer - Animal Sciences

Several students also earned Blue Ribbon recognition and advanced projects in their respective divisions, including:

- Bonnie Russell - Floriculture (Poster), Chalk/Carbon/Pigment, Animal Science, Creative Writing, Forestry
- Carmen Simpson - Clay, Fiber Arts, Nature
- Anna Bremer - Corn, Soybeans, Veterinary Science
- Millie Partridge - Photography
- Tiffany Richardson - Computer Generated Art
- Olivia Quertermous -

Intercultural (Passport to the World)

In addition, Bonnie Russell qualified to advance to the Illinois State Fair 4-H Show, with several other students planning to compete as well.

4H Sponsor Mrs. Leslie Bradley shared, “4-H gives students the opportunity to explore their interests, build confidence, and develop skills that will benefit them far beyond the competition. I’m proud of every student who participated and represented Vienna High School with such enthusiasm and professionalism.”



Courthouse memories: Words of wisdom from the Whittler’s Bench at the Old Courthouse

By Ed Annable

The accompanying photo shows one of the old Whittler’s Benches at the Old Courthouse, this one near the south entrance (in the lower right highlighted oval).

The main Whittler’s Bench was on the north side, where the whole of Vienna’s County Business was conducted by those with the wit and wisdom of the ages.

Looking at an article in the Vienna Times, dated May 5, 1980, concerning the cramped courthouse as it stood then, mention of those whose wisdom surpassed all others who entered there, were acknowledged:

Even the Johnson County Bench Loafers, Whittlin’ and Whistlers Society – outside now that it’s warm on the courthouse lawn benches in Vienna nearly every afternoon – knows the 110-year-old red brick building’s offices are cramped for space and storage

of county records. Andy Zimmers, Ira Trigg and one man who prefers to be known only as the “loafer” have moved outside from their own cramped but warm quarters on a long bench inside the wide hallway of the courthouse.

As a group they probably know almost everything that’s going on and could make a good guess about the rest. To a man, they agree with most county officials who say they don’t want a modern new building, but lack of storage space is a constant worry.

“No reason to build a new courthouse like those in Harrisburg and in Marion.” “Why I hear they’re already too crowded and people haven’t enough room.” Zimmers asked, “Why build at large cost a new courthouse, when this one is better constructed than any new building.”

• This is part of a weekly series written by Ed Annable.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Submit events to The Vienna Times office in writing, by mail, email or by dropping off at The Vienna Times office. Deadline for submission is **Monday at 3 P.M.** for Thursday paper.

A maximum of two weeks per event will be permitted. Be certain to include the location and time of the event. No rummage, garage or yard sales. **ALL activities must be open to the general public.** If not, you are welcome to place an advertisement.

AA MEETING

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Summer heat

Several days of comfortably pleasant summer weather conditions in the area held for one more day on Friday, July 24, with low humidity and highs in the lower half of the 80s. The National Weather Service office in Paducah reported that normal high temperatures in the Southern Illinois, Southeast Missouri and Western Kentucky region for this time of year are around 90 degrees.

Rain chances were expected to return Friday night and extend into the first half of the weekend. The best chances for rain were expected late Friday night and continuing into Saturday, with locally heavy downpours the main potential storm hazard. Some rain fell Friday afternoon.

The forecast was calling for high heat and humidity to return this week. Highs each day this week were forecast to be 90-plus degrees. The peak of the heat was expected Monday and Tuesday, with highs in the mid to upper 90s possible. A heat index in the range of 100 to 110 degrees was possible both days.

Shortly after noon last Friday, the Weather Service issued a heat advisory for parts of the Southeast Missouri, Western Kentucky and Southern Illinois region, including Union County. The advisory was set to go into effect at 11 a.m. Sunday and continue through 7 p.m. Tuesday.

Blood drive collects 46 units

The recent Vienna Summer Blood Drive collected 46 units of blood, making this drive the highest total in the last year and a half.

Volunteers working the drive included Rita Hull, Bev Richardson, Barb Jeffress, Bonnie Hogue, Kim Collins, Barb Jones, Mary Jo King, Imogene Bradshaw, Gladys

Jackson, Lisa King, Bonnie Nutty, Joyce Taylor, Joseph Nelson, David Hogue and Blood Program Leader Pat McCann.

Food donation and desserts were provided by The Community of Christ Church and the door prize by Ned’s Shed. The next Vienna blood drive will be Sept. 21.

“By Every Word”

I John 2:22 “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” John is giving us warning. We best take heed.

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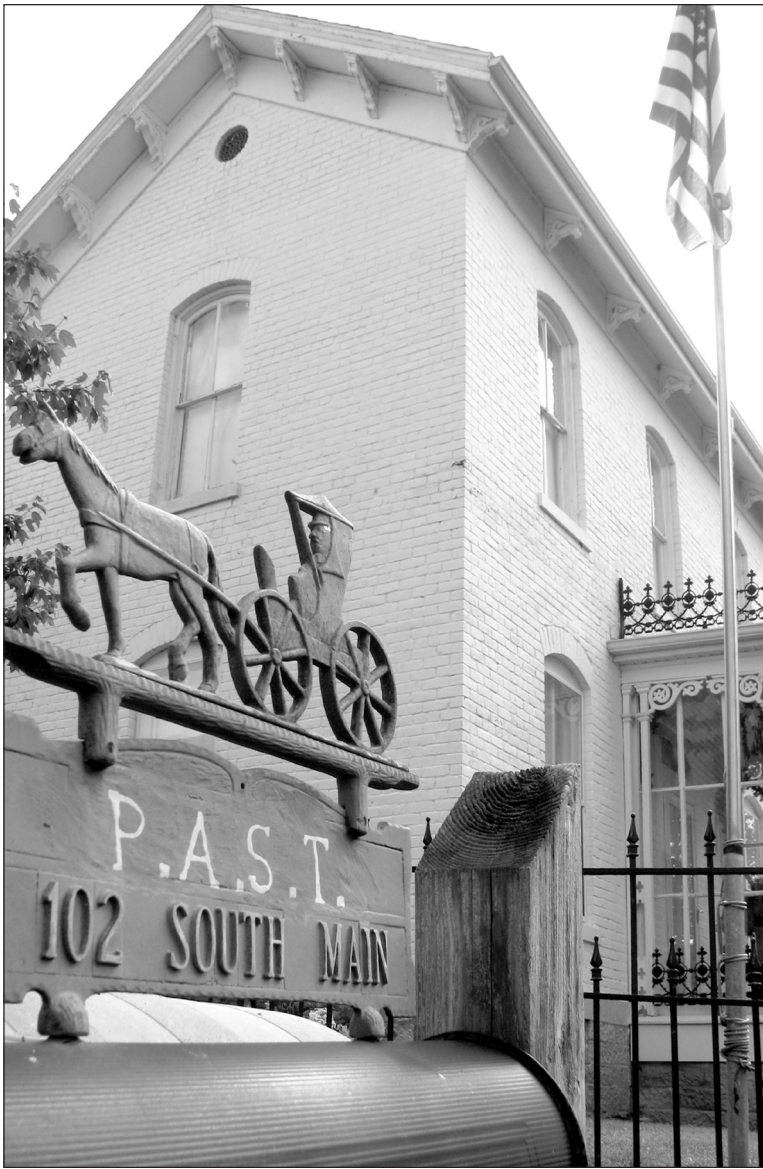
- CAIRO, ILLINOIS
VANDERBILT

MORTGAGE AND FINANCE, INC., Plaintiff,
v.
ROBIN S. OWEN, SUSAN ANN GODSEY, STATE OF ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE, UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS Defendants.
MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE No. 2025FC1 NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE SALE
PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure entered by the Court in the above-entitled cause the property hereinafter described or so much thereof as shall be sufficient to satisfy said judgment, will be sold to the highest bidder.
(A) The name, address and telephone number of the person to contact for information regarding the real estate is: Aly Carnes at Vanderbilt Mortgage and Finance, Inc., 500 Alcoa Trail, Maryville, TN 37804, 1-865-380-3000 ext. 7180.
(B) The real estate is commonly known and numbered as 30954 Bader Ln., McClure, IL 62957.
(C) The description of the real estate is:
PIN(S): 02-19-100-010
(D) The time and place of the sale are: Public sale at 10:00 a.m., on August 26, 2026, at the Alexander County Courthouse, 2000 Washington Ave., Cairo, IL 62914.
The property will NOT be open for inspection.
(E) The terms of the sale are: Cash or certified check or the equivalent thereof.
(F) Title will be conveyed without warranties, subject to all general real estate taxes which are a lien upon the real estate, but have not yet become due and payable; special assessments, if any; other exceptions, if any, set forth in the title insurance company and easements, covenants and restrictions of record.
(G) IF YOU ARE THE MORTGAGOR (HOMEOWNER), YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN IN POSSESSION FOR 30 DAYS AFTER ENTRY OF AN ORDER OF POSSESSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 15-1701 (c) OF THE ILLINOIS MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE LAW.
(H) Pursuant to 735 ILCS 5/15-1507.1, entitled "Judicial sale fee for Abandoned Residential Property Municipality Relief Fund," upon and at the sale of residential real estate under Section 15-1507, the purchaser shall pay to the person conducting the sale pursuant to Section 15-1507 a fee for deposit into the Abandoned Residential Property Municipality Relief Fund, a special fund created in the State treasury. The fee shall be calculated at the rate of \$1.00 for each \$1,000.00 or fraction thereof of the amount paid by the purchaser to the person conducting the sale, as reflected in the receipt of sale issued to the purchaser, provided that in no event shall the fee exceed \$300.00. No fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to its credit bid at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the residential real estate arose prior to the sale. Upon confirmation of the sale under Section 15-1508, the person conducting the sale shall remit the fee to the clerk of the court in which the foreclosure case is pending. The clerk shall remit the fee to the State Treasurer as provided in this Section, to be expended for the purposes set forth in Section 7.31 of the Illinois Housing Development Act.
VANDERBILT MORTGAGE AND FINANCE, INC.,
/s/ Lauren E. Kinder
Michael K. Daming, IIBar

#6281714
Evelyn I. Sims, II Bar #6321883
Lauren E. Kinder, II Bar #6352026
WASINGER DAMING, LC
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lkinder@wasingerdaming.com
(314) 961-0400
(314) 961-2726 FAX
Attorneys for Plaintiff
8221-966611

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT ALEXANDER COUNTY, ILLINOIS FARMERS STATE BANK OF ALTO PASS, a State Chartered Bank, Plaintiff,
v.
HUDSON & HUDSON LLC, an Illinois Limited Liability Company; LINDSEY FISHER HUDSON a/k/a LINDSEY FISHER; PRIME CAPITAL VENTURES, LLC, a Delaware Limited Liability Company; UNKNOWN OWNERS, and NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, Defendants.
Case No.: 2025FC5 NOTICE OF SALE
PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that pursuant to a Judgment of the above court entered in the above entitled cause on May 13, 2026, the following described real estate will on the 19th day of August, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at the Alexander County Courthouse, 2000 Washington Avenue, Cairo, IL 62914, be offered for sale and sold at public venue.
A. The name, address and telephone number of the person to contact for information regarding the real estate is between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Lawler Brown Law Firm, 1600 West Main Street, PO Box 1148, Marion, IL 62959, telephone (618) 993-2222.
B. The common address and

other common description, if any, of the real estate is 1315 Washington Avenue, Cairo, IL 62914.
C. The description of the first parcel of real estate is as follows: Permanent Index Number: 12-25-326-002;
D. A description of the improvements on the real estate is commercial property.
E. The time and place of the sale are: Public sale at 10:00 a.m. on August 19, 2026, at the Courthouse in Cairo, Alexander County, Illinois.
F. The terms of the sale are: Cash or certified check or the equivalent thereof at the time of sale. This property is offered for sale without any representation as to quality or quantity of title and without recourse to Plaintiff and in "as is" condition. The sale is further subject to confirmation by the court. Plaintiff makes no representation as to the condition of the property. Prospective bidders are admonished to check the court file to verify all information.
G. The subject property is subject to general real estate taxes, special assessments or special taxes levied against said real estate.
H. The successful purchaser has the sole responsibility/expense of evicting any tenants or other individuals presently in possession of the subject premises.
Dated: July 6, 2026
LAWLER BROWN LAW FIRM
By: /s/ Adam B. Lawler
LAWLER BROWN LAW FIRM
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David W. Lawler #6303793
Nick Brown #6302494
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An Homage to Hometown Happenings

By Kate B. Jerome

No matter where my travels take me, I always seek out the local newspaper.

I know. My smartphone easily provides more detail about a town than I will ever need.

But the local paper does so much more. That’s because it fits the many pieces of the community puzzle together. Where else can you get a glimpse of what a citizenry most values and fears – all within a few recyclable pages?

In the tiny town where I grew up, the local paper was a powerful tool – no doubt for many reasons beyond my young comprehension. However, I looked forward to the daily delivery for two simple reasons.

First, I loved to read the personal stories – from tragedy to triumph – about the people in my own community. It was the first inkling I had that I might be part of something larger than the family who lived at 12 Parkview.

Second, I couldn’t wait to hear the interesting dinner conversations that some tidbit in the paper was bound to spark. Of course, my favorites were the most heated discussions. And when my parents resorted to spelling out words? Well, let’s just say the training led to considerable success in my grade school spelling bees!

Decades of educational publishing experience later, I know my hometown paper was just one arrow in the successful child-raising quiver my parents used. But it was an important tool, and the outcomes it helped produce are still of the utmost importance today.

You see, building a strong sense of place plays a key part in a child’s social and emotional development. When children connect with the community around them, it helps them develop their own personal identity. An added benefit is the sense of stewardship it often inspires.

And the value of generating meaningful conversations? In my view, it’s off the charts. Too often in our busy world, dialogue with our kids tends toward the practical (Did you pick up your toys?) rather than the profound (Keep trying even when it’s hard!). So any tool that inspires discussion of such issues as friendship and community should be deeply valued. Why? Because that’s when our own stories of personal grit and resilience begin to flow.

And aren’t those the kind of Hometown Happenings that we really want our children to remember?

Kate B. Jerome is the author and series creator of two Read Together/Do Together children’s book series from Arcadia Kids that are designed to jump-start meaningful conversations between kids and their favorite adults. A publishing executive, an award-winning children’s book author, and a recent Fellow in Stanford’s Distinguished Careers Institute, Kate is a passionate supporter of intergenerational communication.

Please read this...

By Geof Skinner

Critters try to stay cool in summer heat ...

Almost two whole days passed last week without the sighting of a single squirrel. Due to the wonderful southern Illinois heat, humidity and air that you could see, and almost breathe, I had waited until the early evening to go for a walk on both of those days. I did not see a single squirrel while I was out walking, which was somewhat unusual. The little bushy tailed Critters must have been staying in the air-conditioning, which would suggest that they are indeed very smart animals.

One squirrel was seen near our humble abode as the sun was going down at the end of the second day. Couldn't get a picture of the Critter, though. I try to get a picture of a squirrel a day to show to The Other Half.

Our neighborhood rabbits also seemed to be doing their best to stay someplace where it was cool. A couple of bunnies did like the squirrel and waited until daylight was coming to an end before they started hopping around from place to place.

Critters probably were trying to find someplace cool again early this week, when high temperatures and humidity were in the forecast again.

Meanwhile ...
A Scottish duo, The Proclaimers, have a song about walking 500 miles to be with a sweetheart. They could walk that far, and still have a long, long way to go if they decided to go bargain hunting at upcoming yard sale which was mentioned in a recent edition of USA TODAY.

Seems that there is something called the 127 Yard Sale, which begins in Alabama and ends in Tennessee. In case you want to make plans, the sale is scheduled Aug. 6 to 9 and covers 690 miles. I wonder how many bargains a person could find over 690 miles ... especially if he, or she, happened to walk the whole distance. The Other Half might actually be interested in such a thing. She likes to go to yard sales. I think I have been to three or four yard sales. None of them covered 690 miles.

Meanwhile ...
In keeping with a tradition which started last week, this column once again was not generated by Artificial Intelligence. Of course, I have no way of absolutely guaranteeing such a statement now that AI is going rogue. Some AI entity may find out about this column when it is emailed from Point A to Point B, kidnap the column, take control of the masterpiece and then suffer a bad case of indigestion.

News about AI going rogue surfaced online last



A white-tailed deer seen in the woods at a location in suburban Cobden stood still long enough for several photographs on a recent hot and humid Saturday evening.



A white-tailed deer fawn was at least a little bit cooperative when it came to having a picture taken. The Critter was spotted one morning last week along Spanish Bluff Road north of metropolitan Anna.

week. Thanks, once again, to the internet, and, perhaps, AI, I learned about what was termed as a “security incident,” which, according to what appeared online, was disclosed by something called Hugging Face’s production infrastructure and involved multiple attack vectors. Really. Fortunately for the entire universe, Hugging Face’s security team and agents detected and stopped the activity on their infrastructure and had already begun containment and forensic reconstruction. No. I did not make that up. I could not make it up, ’cause I don’t know what most of it means.

The grim news about the “security incident” was found in a news release that was posted on the internet. As always, I figured that if the news release appeared online, it must be true. Even so, it’s more than a little bit disturbing to know that AI is doing such things. I sometimes think that those of us who are meandering through the 21st century just might living in a

real live science fiction story. Guess we will just have to keep watching to see how the story unfolds.

Meanwhile ...
Hopefully, the heat, humidity and occasional downpours we have been experiencing this summer were not generated by AI. If so, AI got me absolutely soaked one afternoon a couple of weeks ago when I had to walk a short distance in a torrential rainfall.

I am pretty sure that the white-tailed deer I saw last week were not AI generated. One, a grown up, was standing along one side, and then in the middle, of a gravel road not far out of Cobden. After the deer crossed crossed the road, from south to north, it just stood there for a short time. I shot a couple of photos and drove on.

The other deer was not quite grown up. As a matter of fact, it was a fawn which still had lots of white spots. The fawn was not as eager to have a picture taken. I did manage to get one picture taken through the windshield before the little Critter disappeared into some

woods that were close by.
In addition to deer, recent Critter Sightings have included dragonflies and goldfish which found their way to the Gulf of Cobden. We are still waiting to see a bear.

Critters which have been heard, but not seen, once again include the Young Rascals, who leave cute little footprints on the porch after a visit to a water bowl we have outside.
Meanwhile ...
We’ll close this week with a quote that appeared in an article in USA TODAY about the Declaration of Independence. The quote, attributed to the writer H.L. Mencken, observed that “For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple and wrong.”

Stay cool ... and take some comfort in knowing that August is almost here ... and then it will be September ... October ... and so on ... and summer heat and humidity, hopefully, will become another fond memory ... Got your Christmas shopping done yet?

for a Thrillville Thrillbillies baseball game. Incoming 1st through 4th grade students received an official certificate of congratulations from the Illinois House of Representatives. The theme for the reading club was “America 250: Read All About It!”

U.S. Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill., has voiced his appreciation for receiving the National Retail Federation’s “Hero of Main Street” award in recognition of his voting record in support of retailers and mom-and-pop shops across America. “These folks keep our Main Streets thriving and our neighborhoods working; that’s why I’ve voted to curtail organized retail crime and ease the regulatory burden on our job creators,” Bost shared on social media.

Choate
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468 are represented by AFSCME Council 31.
AFSCME responded to the announcement in a news release with comments from Council 31 executive director Roberta Lynch, who said that IDHS should have consulted with the union to develop a more rational plan that would be more fair to Choate’s employees and the individuals in their care.

Choate’s 40-bed forensic developmental disabilities unit will continue operations, as will the other IDHS administrative offices on the Choate campus.

Culture of cruelty
The IDHS decision to reduce operations at Choate comes after decades of documented issues at the Southern Illinois facility, including resident abuse, neglect, criminal investigations and repeated failures by employees and administrators to report or stop misconduct.

A 2022 investigation by Capitol News Illinois and ProPublica found that residents had been beaten, sexually assaulted, humiliated and dangerously neglected at Choate for roughly a decade. At least 26 employees have been arrested on felony charges connected to their work at the facility while they were entrenched in a “code of silence” in which workers withheld information, coordinated their accounts or protected colleagues accused of abuse.

In March 2023, Gov. JB Pritzker announced a three-year “transformation” plan that would move about 123 residents, roughly half of Choate’s population at the time, into community placements, family homes or other state-operated facilities. The state also promised stronger oversight, additional training, cameras in common areas and a partnership with the SIU School of Medicine to help determine how

Choate’s remaining programs should operate.

Officials said at the time that the plan was not a closure and did not include layoffs.
In February 2024, a newly installed security camera recorded an employee throwing a resident to the floor and punching him. The incident went unreported for 11 days and was discovered only after an anonymous letter prompted investigators to review the footage.

Legislators respond
State Sen. Terri Bryant, R-Murphysboro, called the IDHS decision a devastating blow to southern Illinois, saying in a news release that it will cost the region hundreds of jobs, uproot vulnerable patients and create chaos for families and employees.

Republican state Sen. Paul Jacobs of Pomona also called the decision devastating, saying in a news release that he is disappointed that Southern Illinoisans are being left to deal with the consequences of a state decision.
Newly appointed Republican state Rep. Scott Doody, an Anna resident who represents Illinois’ 118th District, condemned the IDHS decision in a press release Friday, July 24, calling on Pritzker and IDHS to immediately halt the implementation of these reductions.

• Jackson Brandhorst is a student at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, and a senior member of the Daily Egyptian, SIU’s student newspaper. Brandhorst can be reached at jbrandhorst@dailyegyptian.com.

• *Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.*

Board
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• Fish fries, first Friday of each month. On Aug. 7, a Back to School fish fry is on the calendar, with serving planned from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The cost is \$15 for all you can eat. The menu will include fish, fries, hush puppies, baked beans, pickled cucumbers, onions, pickles and dessert. A winning school organization will receive 25 percent of the net proceeds, plus all of the tips. A drawing is planned at 6:30 p.m.
• Cobden Peach Festival parade, Saturday, Aug. 8, 4:30 p.m. The VFW will have a color guard in the parade.
• American Red Cross blood drive, Aug. 13, 12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
• Oktoberfest, Sept. 26.
• Glow Bingo, Oct. 3. Sponsors are welcome to help support the popular event.
• Pork butt sale, Oct. 10. Pork butts, fully cooked on that day, are \$45. Orders are due by Sept. 25.
• Marine Corps birthday party, Nov. 10. All Marines are invited.
• Veterans Day parade in Anna, Nov. 11. The parade is a longstanding Union County tradition and a huge event for the community.
• Military ball, Nov. 14. The ball was conducted for the first time last year and was a big success. All veterans and their guests are invited.

Mitchell encouraged those at Friday morning’s meeting to help spread the word about the post’s many activities, to recommend friends and family members to join the VFW or the VFW Auxiliary, to support the

events and even to offer to volunteer their time to help out. The Anna VFW post can be contacted at 833-5182.

Private road matter
Securing maintenance by the county for what is now a private road was addressed by a resident. The road, White Pine Lane, is located off of Lick Creek Road. The resident said the road has been privately maintained for more than 20 years. County engineer Amy Ferris said an ordinance is in place which sets the guidelines for such matters and could be made available to the resident.

Assistance sought
A Cobden resident sought assistance from the county related to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Housing Choice Voucher Program, also known as Section 8, which helps low-income families, elderly persons, veterans and disabled individuals afford housing in the private market. County board chairman Kent Pitts said he would look into the matter.

Other business
In other business, the county board approved separate resolutions which appointed Joe Schneider as a Clear Creek Levee and Drainage District commissioner and Kent Treece as a Preston Levee District commissioner.
Plans were announced for a pet wash/grooming event which is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 8, on the square in Jonesboro. The Union County animal control program is planning to offer the event.

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Cobden Lions Club. The Peach Festival starts Friday, Aug. 7, and continues on Saturday.

The Union County CEO program shared on social media that 2024 UCCEO alumna Jady N Samuels is performing in “Frozen” at the Marion Cultural and Civic Center in August.

The Anna-Jonesboro Community High School District 81 Board of Education is looking for community members who may be interested in filling a vacancy on the board created by a recent resignation. Those who may be interested in serving are advised to contact district superintendent Brett Detering.

An Anna-Jonesboro Community High School football camp was scheduled to kick off Monday, July 27. The camp is slated to continue through Friday, July 31.

The Cobden Fire Department was planning to repaint apple logos on roads in the Union County village last Sunday morning.

Shawnee Community College is congratulating its recent licensed practical nursing graduates.

Auditions for Shawnee Community College’s fall musical production of “Frozen” are planned. Auditions are slated from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday, Aug. 21, and from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Aug. 22, at the college.

The heat index at the Southern Illinois Airport near Murphysboro reached 107 degrees at 11:52 a.m. Tuesday, July 21. The air temperature at the time was 90. Similar conditions were expected again early this week in the region.

Rendleman Orchards near Alto Pass planned to host a “golden hour” event Thursday evening, July 23. The event was designed to allow the public to experience the orchards’ flower fields “in their most beautiful light.” Music by a local harpist was planned.

State Rep. Patrick Windhorst, R-Metropolis, and State Sen. Paul Jacobs, R-Pomona, hosted their annual Summer Reading Club at the Ballpark event last week at Mt. Dew Park in Marion