

THE GAZETTE-DEMOCRAT

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News Notes

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

Happy Valentine's Day to all of our readers. The "big day" is Friday, Feb. 14.

WIBH Radio in Anna has wrapped up its 14th annual New Coats, New Hope Campaign. The new coats were delivered to their distribution sites in early February. Through a partnership with Operation Warm, a non-profit organization, the WIBH fundraiser collected over \$7,000. With the addition of shipping costs covered by Shipping Saint of Anna, the radio station purchased a total of 348 coats for area children in need in Southern Illinois. More on this to come.

Various ailments, including flu and COVID, continue to circulate in the area.

Cobden High School's 2025 homecoming royalty includes queen Mackenzie Jackson and king Randy Calderon.

Cobden School District's Hall of Fame inductees for Saturday, Feb. 8, included Dick Ruggles, Ronald "Doc" Casper and Wayne Witthoft. Due to cancellation of a homecoming ballgame, Cobden High School's 2015 baseball team will be inducted into the hall of fame next season.

Seniors in Anna-Jonesboro Community High School's Advanced English program continue to excel in the Advanced Placement Literature and Composition test. Students who pass the AP test can also earn free college credit. A-JCHS shared on social media that the students' success "is a testament to the dedication of A-J's incredible English teachers, who have worked hard to create an accessible and effective curriculum that empowers students to thrive. Their efforts are paying off, and our students are achieving great things."

A-JCHS yearbooks are on sale.

Anna School District 37 announced on social media that new security measures went into effect on Feb. 4.

Anna School District is hosting a Father/Daughter... Mother/Son Dance for grades pre-K through 4 Friday evening, Feb. 14, and a Valentine's Day Dance for grades 5 through 8 on Saturday, Feb. 15. Sponsors include the Anna District 37 PTO, the Beta Club and the Student Council.

Kindergarten students in Anna School District 37 celebrated the 100th day of school on Feb. 10.

"Appleknockers Take Broadway," a "Wendy Ronna Original Production," is planned Friday evening, March 21, in Cobden High School's new gymnasium.

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Community art project revisited by Anna City Council



Zack Rowatt, representing the Shawnee Hills Arts Council, shared drawings of a proposed beautification project last week with Anna city officials.



Concrete pillars once used by the railroad stand along East Vienna Street in Anna.

Plans for a proposed community art beautification project were again discussed at last week's regular meeting of the Anna City Council.

The meeting was Tuesday evening, Feb. 4, at Anna City Hall.

The proposed project had been presented at a previous city council meeting.

The project involves the possible creation of art work on 13 concrete pillars which are located along East Vienna Street and railroad tracks not far from downtown Anna.

Shawnee Hills Arts Council representative Zack Rowatt introduced the project to city officials at a recent council meeting. Rowatt was in attendance at the council's Feb. 4 meeting to share drawings which depicted what might be done with the pillars.

The pillars are located on railroad property. At one time, the pillars were reported to have been part of a system which provided water for steam-powered locomotives used in the railroad transportation system.

While the proposed project is in its early stages, city officials have voiced their support to move forward.

"I truly appreciate the idea," Mayor Steve Hartline said. "I think it's a great idea."

Rowatt noted that the arts council is open to suggestions regarding the project.

Other business discussed at the Feb. 4 meeting included:

Festivals and other special events planned in Anna during 2025 were highlighted. The schedule includes:

The Annabelle Festival, scheduled for Saturday, June 14.

Independence Day activities on Friday, July 4, at the Anna

City Park.

ColorFest, scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 11.

Christmas in Downtown Anna, set for Saturday, Nov. 29.

Downtown block parties, which are planned Friday, June 20; Friday, July 18; and Friday, Aug. 15.

Work continues to draft the city's Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget. The city's new fiscal year begins May 1.

The city will pursue establishing guidelines for ground-mounted solar energy arrays.

Dyno Nobel completes major solar project in Wolf Lake



A dedication and ribbon cutting were held recently for a new solar at Dyno Nobel Wolf Lake. Among those who were on hand for the dedication and ribbon cutting were the following, as provided by Dyno Nobel: holding the ribbon, Mauro Neves (MD and CEO), cutting ribbon: Annette Myers (NONEL operator)/Jason Hacker (booster operator), holding ribbon: and Johnny Miller (GMO Wolf Lake).

Also among those in attendance were Max Miller (Union County Board of Commissioners chairman); Ben Wampler (electronics technician), Kevin McNeill (VP, HSEOE), Scott Bell (senior VP legal and business affairs), Todd Meunier (VP manufacturing), Carl Earnhart (Wolf Lake operations manager), Mitchell Holshouser (booster operator), Nathan Lichtenegger (booster operator), Clayton Smith (booster operator), Hunter Smith (booster operator) Brian Chapman (booster operator), Jim Homco (energy sourcing manager DNA), Larry Smith (booster Operator), Chad Dougherty (booster operator), Greg Hayne (president DNA), Johnny Miller (GMO Wolf Lake), Mauro Neves (MD and CEO), Todd Meunier (VP manufacturing DNA), Scott Couch (Wolf Lake NONEL lean process engineer and supervisor), Mark Dry (Wolf Lake maintenance and facilities manager).

Dyno Nobel, a global leader in commercial explosives, has completed construction on a \$1.7 million ground-mounted solar array at its Wolf Lake, Illinois, facility.

Dyno Nobel shared in a news release posted on its website that the project marks a significant step in the company's ongoing commitment to sustainability, reducing greenhouse gas, GHG, emissions and increasing the use of renewable energy across its global footprint.

The Wolf Lake solar project began in 2023 and began generating electricity in January 2025.

The project is expected to generate more than 500kW of renewable energy annually, representing nearly 45 percent of the facility's current electrical demand and avoid approximately 320 metric tCO₂e annually.

The anticipated reduction in purchased grid electricity will reduce operating costs by more than US\$100,000 annually.

At a ribbon-cutting ceremony with key stakeholders on Jan. 21, Incitec Pivot Limited, IPL, CEO and managing director Mauro Neves said,

"The Wolf Lake solar project is a testament to our ongoing investment in sustainability and reliability across our global operations. The Wolf Lake facility is a leader in our portfolio for its commitment to implementing innovative solutions that deliver benefits to our customers, employees and the region. I'm excited to see this project power the future of this site."

Dyno Nobel Americas president Greg Hayne also celebrated the achievement and highlighted the expertise of the local team in Wolf Lake, saying, "This celebration is twofold – not only are we celebrating our team's dedication to environmental stewardship, but also the incredible expertise and work to realize this project by the Wolf Lake team. Their efforts will serve as a benchmark for future initiatives within Dyno Nobel, and we're proud to celebrate this achievement with them today."

The Dyno Nobel facility at Wolf Lake manufactures non-electric detonators and cast boosters and is a key distribution center, providing the products to hundreds of domestic and international

customers.

The facility sits on 456 acres of land and employs 105 people. It has been recognized by the Illinois Historical Society as a Centennial business and recently celebrated 100 years of operations in September 2024 with a small banquet and dedicated restoration of an Atlas era tram truck that used a small gauge track to move materials around the grounds.

The Dyno Nobel team at Wolf Lake also assembled a time capsule with various items including safety equipment, business cards and photos to be opened in 2054.

The Wolf Lake solar array project is one of several decarbonization projects providing IPL with a pathway to a 30 percent operational GHG reduction by 2030, supporting the company's ambition to be Net Zero by 2050 or sooner.

An ASX100 company, IPL has two industry leading businesses, Dyno Nobel based in the Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) regions and Incitec Pivot Fertilisers (IPF), a leading integrated manufacturer and distributor

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Masquerade gala

Union County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development hosted its tenth annual Chamber Awards Gala on Saturday night, Feb. 8. The event took place at the Havisham House in Alto Pass. This year's theme for the event was a masquerade ball, with many of those in attendance wearing classic Venetian carnival masks as part of the festivities. Catering for the event was provided by Culinary Fire Fine Catering from Buncombe. Entertainment was provided by Diamond Dog.

The chamber announced its annual award winners at the gala. Melanie Smith of the Union County CEO program was named citizen of the year. Honey Heist Mead Co. was honored as the best new business. Dodd Architects was recognized as business improvement of the year. Business of the year honors went to Deaconess Hospital. Photo by Benjamin Marxer.



Cooper Johnson receives second degree black belt



Second degree earned
Cooper Johnson of Dongola has tested for and earned his second degree black belt in ChunJiDo. Photo provided.

Cooper Johnson recently received his second degree black belt in the art of Chun-JiDo at Coffman’s Martial Arts Academy in Anna.

Cooper Johnson is the son of Wes and Crystal Johnson of Dongola.

He started martial arts, specifically Taekwondo, at the age of 9. Through hard work and dedication, Johnson, 21, now holds black belts in three different arts. He is a third degree in Taekwondo, a first degree in Bujutsu, and now a second degree in ChunJiDo.

ChunJiDo is an art that was created by Grandmaster Robert Cutrell in 1996 consisting of Karate, Taekwondo, Nippon Jujitsu, and Hapkido. The art teaches kata, sparring, self-defense, rolling/falling, throwing, breaking, and escrima (stick fighting) along with honor, integrity, perseverance,

self-control, and indomitable spirit.

The second degree black belt test in ChunJiDo is reported to be the most strenuous, physically and mentally. The two-hour test pushed Johnson, but he showed exemplary skill and spirit.

The judges’ panel included Grandmaster Robert Cutrell of ChunJiDo International, Master Heather Coffman (owner of Coffman’s Martial Arts), Sensei Jerry Richey (Ambassador of ChunJiDo International), and Sensei Nathan Steele (owner of Evansville ChunJiDo Academy).

A candlelight ceremony was held at Coffman’s Martial Arts on January 20 to officially award Johnson his second degree black belt. The ceremony was attended by many students, family and friends.

Union County

By Suzan Harvel
Chicken Enchilada Dip

- 1 1/2 8-oz blocks of cream cheese
- 1 1/2 cups shredded rotisserie chicken
- 1 15-oz can of black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 1/2 cups shredded pepper jack cheese, with 1/2 cup set aside for later
- 1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese, with 1/2 cup set aside for later
- 1 cup enchilada sauce
- 2 4-oz cans of green chilies
- 2 teaspoons taco seasoning
- Mix all ingredients together except reserved cheese. Place in a baking dish sprayed with cooking spray. Top with reserved cheeses and bake for 20 to 25 minutes at 350 degrees.
- Serve warm and refrigerate leftovers.

Union County sheriff to offer scholarship

Union County Sheriff David Wilkins announces that the Illinois Sheriffs’ Association, ISA, will be awarding over \$58,000 in college scholarships throughout the State of Illinois to students who are wanting to pursue higher education during the 2025-2026 academic year.

The scholarships are to be applied to tuition, books and fees only.

The student must be enrolled full-time at a certified institution of higher learning within the State of Illinois, full-time. Online learning at an Illinois-based school is also acceptable.

Sheriff Wilkins will be awarding one scholarship in the amount of \$1,000.

There will be no restriction on any applicant by reason of race, age, creed, color, sex or national origin.

The only limitations are as follows:

- Applicants must be permanent Illinois residents.
- Scholarships must be utilized at institutions of higher

County Line News

(Mill Creek and Upper Elco)

Flu Bugs Pay a Visit
The flu hit our household this past week. The only one who escaped was the cat. To make life even more difficult we had two strains...type A and the stomach flu.

I drew the cards for the latter. I can attest you don’t want it. Both are vicious and have left us all with weak bodies, sore throats, lousy appetites, weird sleep patterns, short tempers and cabin fever.

We were sick during the best of the weather and are recovering just in time for winter to dump more snow and possibly ice. Yuk again.

I also missed a week of work and that ticks me off, because I enjoy my job. Oh well...nothing much to do about it, but pick up and go on.

Civil War Weekend
Make sure you sign up for the Civil War Weekend event

at the Shawnee Hills Arts Council/Anna Arts Center, if you haven’t already.

Tickets for the Blue and Gray Dinner are \$25 and the deadline is Feb. 18. Call Lee Hackney at 904-625-1109 for reservations.

Dinner will be catered by South Pass Supper Club. Menu choices are rabbit pot pie, bison pot pie or veggie pot pie, plus salad, drinks and dessert. Doors open at 5 p.m. and dinner is at 6 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 22, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., speakers and exhibits are planned for the “Journey to Freedom-Illinois’ Underground Railroad” event.

Lunch is offered at 11 a.m. for \$9 for barbeque, chips and drink or \$7 for a hot dog, chips and drink.

Mill Creek Baptist Church

Mill Creek Baptist Church planned to have its annual Valentine’s dinner Wednesday night, Feb. 12.

I was looking forward to it and I am also looking forward to the potluck dinner we plan to have Sunday, Feb. 16, after morning services.

Our church family needs some good times and fellowship of late. Two families in our church have experienced tragedy and the loss of loved

ones way too soon.

Please keep the family of Cheryl Davis in prayer, as her family lost her this past week to cancer. Kevin Sullens’ family also need our prayers as he lost a son after a heart attack at a very young age.

Also keep the following in prayer for various concerns: Patty Barra, cancer; Cookie Tripp-Godwin, infection; Rachel Chamness, health; Jim Helton, tests; Pauline Neighbors, health; and the Harvel household as we recover.

Brother Bobby Richardson gave his sermon this Sunday on what true love is.

The Bible mentions love repeatedly. John 3:16 tells us that ... “God so loved the world, that he gave his only son” for us. 1 Corinthians 13, gives us the definition of love and tells us what love isn’t. It’s quite a list.

Luke 23: 34 showed us Jesus’ love when He asked God to “...Forgive them, for they do not know what they do” as He was crucified. Unimaginable, isn’t it. Love that strong.

If we each just used but a tiny portion of the love and compassion expressed in these passages, the world would be transformed.

Happy Valentine’s Day, everyone.

Donation supports effort to combat food insecurity

The Fowler Bonan Foundation reports that it has received a generous donation from Laborers’ Local 773 Union, continuing their long-standing partnership to combat food insecurity across Southern Illinois.

Laborers’ Local 773 has been dedicated to improving the lives of those in their community since 1940 and their ongoing collaboration with the Fowler Bonan Foundation has made a significant impact on families in need.

In 2024, the two organizations worked together to distribute thousands of meals, including the delivery of 300 turkeys during the Thanksgiving season.

Their combined efforts have been instrumental in addressing food insecurity in some of the region’s most underserved areas.

Founded 24 years ago, the Fowler Bonan Foundation focuses on two main initiatives: Clothes for SI Kids

and Heaven’s Kitchen.

Last year, they clothed over 900 children with new school clothes and served over 14,000 hot meals to individuals and families throughout Southern Illinois.

“This donation from Laborers’ Local 773 allows us to continue our work and reach even more people in need,” said Dale Fowler, Fowler Bonan Foundation founder and chairman, in a news release.

“We’re grateful for their ongoing support and partnership as we work together to strengthen our communities.”

Donations like these help Heaven’s Kitchen continue its mission to provide free, hot meals to those in need every week, ensuring that no one in the community has to go hungry, Fowler said.

For more information visit the foundation’s website at www.fowlerbonanfoundation.com.

Change notice below is a correction to published statements on January 23, 2025. NOTICE OF 2024 ASSESSMENT CHANGES

The following is a list of all real estate assessment changes for townships 11-1W, 11-2W, 11-3W, 11-4W, 12-1W, 12-2W, 12-3W, 12-4W, 13-2W and 13-3W. Real estate assessment changes for the remaining Townships of 11-1E, 12-1E, 13-1E and 13-1W are located in the Quadrennial Reassessment Publication. All assessed values are subject to revision by the Union County Board of Review, as well as by local and state equalization.

This publication is made in accordance with section 12-10 of the Property Tax Code and serves as public notice to property owners that the median level of assessment in Union county for the 2024 tax year payable in 2025 is 30.75% based on three years of sales transactions from 2021-2023. The statutory median level is 33.33% of fair market value for all property other than farmland.

In accordance with section 9-210 and section 10-115 of the property tax code, an equalization factor of 1.08 has been applied to bring assessments to the statutorily required three -year median level of 33.33% for the townships of 11-1E, 11-1W, 11-2W, 11-3W, 11-4W, 12-1E, 12-1W, 12-2W, 12-3W, 12-4W, 13-1E, 13-1W, 13-2W and 13-3W as follows:

Farm Land	1.0000
Farm Improvement	1.0000
Non-Farm Land	1.0800
Non-Farm Improvements	1.0800

You may check the accuracy of your non-farm assessment by dividing your non-farm assessment by the median level of assessment. The resulting value should equal the estimated fair market value of the property. If the resulting value is greater than the estimated fair market value of your property, you may be over-assessed. If the resulting value is less than the estimated fair market value of your property, you may be under-assessed.

Property owners who consider their property to be incorrectly assessed may submit a written complaint with the Union County Board of Review in accordance with section 16-55 of the Property Tax Code. All complaints must be filed with the Supervisor of Assessments within 30 days following the date of this publication at: 309 W. Market Street, Room 128 Jonesboro, Illinois 62952. All publications can be viewed at unioncountyiil.gov. Please call our office if you have any questions. You may reach us at 618-833-8051 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The equalized assessed value of your property minus exemptions is multiplied by the tax rate to arrive at the taxes you will pay. The tax rate is determined by the amount the taxing bodies levy in your tax districts.

Tammy Robinson, CIAO
Supervisor of Assessments
Union County

Change notice below is a correction to published statements on January 23, 2025. NOTICE OF 2024 QUADRENNIAL REASSESSMENT

The following is a list of all real estate assessments for townships 11-1E, 12-1E, 13-1E, and 13-1W in Union County. All assessed values are subject to revision by the Board of Review, as well as by local and state equalization. All properties are subject to equalization in accordance with Section 9-210 of the Property Tax Code other than those assessed as farm under Sections 10-110 through 10-140 and 10-170 through 10-200 of the Property Tax Code.

This publication, which is made in accordance with section 12-10 of the Property Tax Code, serves as public notice to property owners that the median level of assessment in Union county for the 2024 tax year payable in 2025 is 30.75% based on three years of sales transactions from 2021-2023. The statutory median level of assessment is 33.1/3% of fair market value for all property other than farmland.

In accordance with section 9-210 and section 10-115 of the property tax code, an equalization factor of 1.08 has been applied to bring assessments to the statutorily required three-year median level of 33.33% for the townships of 11-1E, 11-1W, 11-2W, 11-3W, 11-4W, 12-1E, 12-1W, 12-2W, 12-3W, 12-4W, 13-1E, 13-1W, 13-2W and 13-3W as follows:

Farm Land	1.0000
Farm Improvements	1.0000
Non-Farm Land	1.0800
Non-Farm Improvements	1.0800

You may check the accuracy of your non-farm assessment by dividing your assessment by the median level of assessment. The resulting value should equal the estimated fair market value of the property. If the resulting value is greater than the estimated fair market value of your property, you may be over-assessed. If the resulting value is less than the fair cash value of your property, you may be under-assessed.

Property owners who consider their property to be incorrectly assessed may submit a written complaint with the Union County Board of Review in accordance with section 16-55 of the Property Tax Code. All Complaints must be filed with the Supervisor of Assessments within 30 days following the date of this publication at 309 W. Market Street, Room 128 Jonesboro, Illinois 62952. All publications may be viewed at unioncountyiil.gov. Please call our office if you have any questions. You may reach us at 618-833-8051 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The equalized assessed value of your property minus exemptions is multiplied by the tax rate to arrive at the taxes you will pay. The tax rate is determined by the amount the taxing bodies levy in your tax districts.

Tammy Robinson, CIAO
Supervisor of Assessments
Union County

"The Preaching Pen"

Living a Full Life

2 Timothy 4:7 reads, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Do you have regrets? It might be from wrong choices or bad choices. Perhaps, we have made a choice that hurt others, even offended others, or caused them to stumble. Paul was a man who did, but he was able to live a full life 1 Tim 1:12-14. We can learn from his example. To live a full life, we are required to accomplish 3 tasks.

First, we are required to fight the good fight. To accomplish this task, Christians must possess the proper attitude. We must remember that not all causes are worth fighting. However, Christians cannot be spectators. Christians must be active, engaging with the world, Acts 17:16-17. Also, we must be properly equipped for this fight Ephesians 6:10-11.

Secondly, we are required to finish the course. It has been said many times that Christianity is a marathon, not a sprint. To begin a race, one must find the starting point, enroll for a spot among the competitors, and agree to follow the rules of the race. A failure to observe any of those elements will cause one to be disqualified. The same goes for the Christian race. Jesus has sent the starting point Acts 2:38, has enrolled us into the race Acts 2:47, and has given us his rules John 8:24. To finish the race it takes patience and practice to see the end of the line.

Thirdly, we are required to keep our faith. The most valuable possession that a Christian can have is the truth of God's word in their heart Proverbs 23:23. We must possess a strong, secure place in which to place the truth; our heart. We must also guard this heart with a watchful eye. If we want to be free then we must value the truth and obey Hebrews 5:9.

To live a full life, man must understand why we are here Ecclesiastes 12:13. Have you thought about it lately?

Ryan Thornsberry,
Anna Church of Christ

WIBH New Coats, New Hope campaign collects over \$7000



Coat campaign a success

The 2024 WIBH New Coats, New Hope Campaign ended a successful year collecting over \$7000 to purchase 348 coats for kids in Southern Illinois. Coats were delivered to their sites in early February and are now available for families in need to pick-up at Arrowleaf, the Children’s Medical & Mental Resource Center, Rural Health, Inc., and Southern 7 Head Start. In the 14 years of the radio station’s partnership with Operation Warm, over \$85,000 has been raised; purchasing over 4300 coats. Pictured Top row: Moury Bass, co-owner of WIBH Radio and Angela Temke with Arrowleaf; Chase Hileman and Jodie Stewart with Rural Health, Inc., and Moury Bass. Second row: Ginger Meyer, Moury Bass, Elaina Spalt, Abi Cowser-Barnett, and Tiffany Vincente; Dakota Ticer and Deztimee Godwin with Duck Works Lawncare. Bottom row: Emilee Awbrey with Shipping Saint; Head Start. All agencies wish to thank the many donors that make this campaign possible. Photos provided by WIBH Radio.

On December 20, WIBH Radio in Anna wrapped-up its 14th annual New Coats, New Hope Campaign. The new coats were delivered to their distribution sites in early February.

Through a partnership with Operation Warm, a non-profit organization, the WIBH fundraiser collected over \$7,000. With the addition of shipping costs covered by Shipping Saint of Anna, the radio station purchased a total of 348 coats for area children in need in Southern Illinois.

Over the past 14 years, the New Coats, New Hope Campaign has raised more than \$85,000 and purchased over 4300 coats.

Since 2011, WIBH has partnered with local agencies in this effort to raise awareness and distribute the coats.

T&I Office Equipment printed the outreach flyers, while transportation of the coats was provided by Shawnee Mass Transit and Duck Works Lawncare.

Coat distribution part-

ners are Arrowleaf, Children’s Medical and Mental Health Resource Network (CMMHRN), Rural Health, Inc. and Southern 7 Head Start.

“We want to thank everyone who contributed to the New Coats, New Hope Campaign,” said Moury Bass, WIBH Co-Owner. “We continue to be amazed at the generosity of our listeners. We look forward to continuing this beneficial campaign for many years to come.”

The coats, which arrived in early February, have been distributed through the partnering agencies to kids ages 3 to 16 living in the lower 45 counties in Illinois affected by abuse, neglect, disaster and family need. No paperwork or proof of income is required to receive a coat.

It is estimated that 20% of Southern Illinois children live in poverty and a warm coat is an essential item for each of them. A new coat promotes self-esteem, school attendance, outdoor play, and

gives parents and children a sense of security.

Operation Warm is a national nonprofit that creates brand new, high-quality coats for children in need. This organization partners with compassionate individuals and organizations across North America to give a gift of warmth, confidence and hope to millions of children.

In addition to coats, this April WIBH and its partners will hold its 4th annual Warm Soles, New Hope shoe drive to purchase new shoes for kids as part of Child Abuse Prevention Month. More details about this effort will be released in coming weeks.

For more information call Arrowleaf at 618-658-3079, CMMHRN at 618-833-6488, Rural Health at 618-833-4471,

Southern 7 Head Start at 618-634-2297, or visit the WIBH New Coats, New Hope Campaign on Facebook. To learn more about Operation warm, visit operationwarm.org.

Farmers, landowners share concerns about deer damage

By Hannah Spangler
FarmWeek

Facing escalating crop damage, the Jasper and Clark County Farm Bureaus hosted a meeting for local farmers and landowners to voice their concerns to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, IDNR.

During the Jan. 21 meeting in Newton, IDNR shared information and answered questions regarding local deer populations and hunting regulations.

“The deer nuisance problem is very serious in my district. It’s something that needs attention,” state Rep. Adam Niemerg, R-Dieterich, told FarmWeek at the start of the meeting.

“We’re here today to make sure that those voices are heard and to make sure we’re doing the right thing moving forward on the deer population issue.”

There are two legal ways to remove deer in Illinois: licensed hunting and deer removal permits issued by IDNR. Deer removal permits can be granted if deer are damaging property or threatening public health and safety.

“When it comes to limited quotas (on the harvest of deer per hunter), we see those come into place in the firearm level or season,” IDNR forest wildlife program manager Dan Skinner said at the meeting.

“In Illinois, our management unit for deer is set at the county level. So, we make our management decisions at the county level.”

Skinner said IDNR is reassessing how it calculates an area’s deer population to ensure an adequate number of



A white-tailed deer in a Southern Illinois corn field. File photo.

tags are available.

This includes updating and standardizing the deer-vehicle accident, DVA, reporting system used to help decide quotas during the firearm season.

In recent years however, Skinner said IDNR has discovered the DVA data “might not be telling the whole story of what’s going on.”

An objective of IDNR’s research with Southern Illinois University, which will begin in July 2025, is to look for additional ways to estimate county-by-county deer population density. Skinner said this research is expected to wrap up in June 2026.

“There is no doubt we are facing devastation in our fields,” Jasper County farmer Bruce Lewis told FarmWeek.

“It was very important for IDNR and our representative to be at this meeting and take our ideas to the state to help us control the population.”

IDNR encouraged farmers who are facing crop damage like Lewis to submit photos of the damage to their district biologist.

After proving damage, they can receive 10 permits to remove deer from the field.

Each Illinois district biologist can be found online at wildlifeillinois.org/idnr-district-wildlife-biologist/.

“Farm Bureau members throughout the state have made it clear that this is a top issue for them, and we have made it a legislative priority this spring,” said Anna McKinley, Illinois Farm Bureau assistant director of state legislation, addressing IFB’s ongoing efforts to find a solution.

“We have been working with legislators and stakeholders to introduce legislation that gives landowners more tools for deer management on their own properties, while also encouraging doe harvest during regular hunting seasons.”

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.

Shawnee Community College hosts documentary film festival

Shawnee Community College is set to host an inspiring documentary film festival on Saturday, March 22, from 12 to 6 p.m. at the college’s Educational Center in Ullin.

This festival, facilitated by Legacy Training, Inc., collaborates with the Illinois Humanities Council and Foreground Rural Southern Hub. The event is dedicated to showcasing compelling non-fiction films that inform, inspire, and engage audiences through the power of storytelling.

Attendees will experience a carefully curated selection of diverse documentaries covering social issues, politics, art, human rights, culture and more.

Through real-life stories and unique perspectives, this festival aims to highlight underreported topics and foster meaningful community discussions.

A key event highlight will be local filmmakers engaging directly with audiences

to share insights into their creative processes, the stories behind their films, and the broader societal issues their work addresses.

Featured films will include: “I, Too, Dream American” by Tomas Cortez (10 minutes). A moving short documentary on the impact of DACA’s ending on two Southern Illinois University students.

“Footprints in the Sky” by Daniel Rodriguez (39 minutes). An exploration of the first group of Purepecha families that arrived in Cobden, from Cherán, Michoacán, Mexico.

“On the Battlefield” by P. Sniadecki (16 minutes). A tribute to Cairo, Ill. and its historical significance in the fight for racial justice.

“Kathryn and Her Daughters” by Sandra Pfeifer (45 min). A compelling look at a Southern Illinois rural homemaker who raised 7 children in a traditional rural lifestyle in the 1950s and whose life exemplifies the history of the changing role of women in rural America.

“Walk with Me: The Story of Judge Damon J. Keith”

by Jesse Nesser (103 min). A powerful film on the life and legacy of the civil rights judge.

“The Adventures of Robert Russell’s Blues” by Dan Johnson (47 min). The combination of stories and songs examines the Southern Illinois musician’s travels and experiences.

“Juneteenth: A Long Walk to Freedom” by Abby Asher, (30 min). A deep dive into the history and significance of Juneteenth.

“Against All the Odds: A Story of Courage, Community, and Spirit in East St. Louis” by Sandra Pfeifer (60 min). A powerful narrative of resilience and community strength. This film is a commentary on how racial discrimination in a once rising Industrial city eventually produced the only all Black city in America.

This festival is an opportunity for Southern Illinois residents and beyond to connect, learn and celebrate the art of documentary filmmaking. Admission is free, and all community members, students, and film enthusiasts are encouraged to attend.

NASA invests in creation of Illinois grasslands map

By Hannah Spangler
FarmWeek

A University of Illinois doctoral candidate received a \$150,000 investment from NASA to create a detailed grassland map using remote sensing.

Wendy Dorman, the recipient of the prestigious three-year research grant, plans to map grassland habitats across Illinois, where 99 percent of the prairies have vanished.

Her goals include finding out which habitat features are most important for endangered birds to maximize best practices to protect them in the small amount of grassland available.

“I’ve been really frustrated by the lack of available data to use when trying to understand what’s happening to birds,” Dorman said, adding that current research is not at the level needed for making management decisions and

conducting effective modeling.

Dorman will use remote sensing, which involves using satellite imagery to collect information, to produce a high-quality map of the cold and warm season grasses in grasslands across the state.

She believes this will help provide targeted support to individual bird species based on their survival needs.

“It’s important for conservation and for management and wildlife or other environmental reasons that we have a good idea of where grasslands are and what their qualities are,” said Mike Ward, U of I professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, NRES.

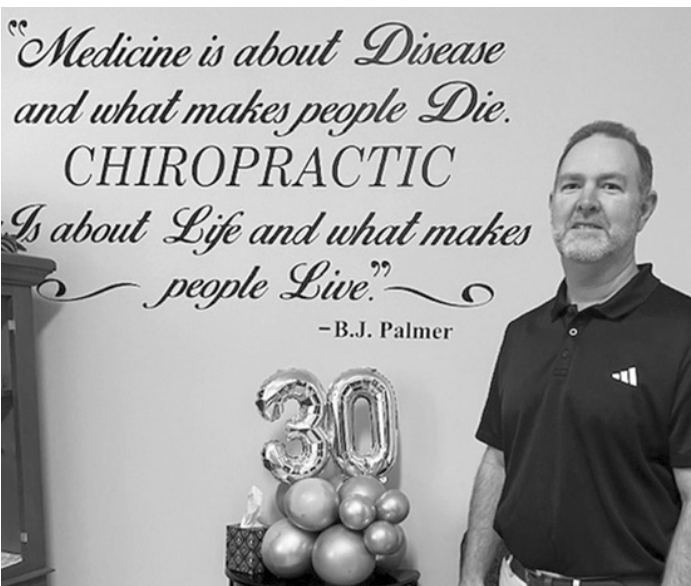
The research can also benefit farmers enrolling in conservation programs and help enhance habitats for birds like quail and pheasants, Ward

explained. The detailed maps can show where to place grasslands to maximize agricultural and new environmental benefits.

Ward told FarmWeek that the use of remote sensing in grasslands is a lot like the use of precision technology in agriculture. They are working with small amounts of grassland and using technology to optimize conservation practices.

“A strategic placement of habitat can go a long way,” he said. “Right now, it’s kind of overwhelming to have so much information and so much data. But as we go on, all this information will keep on coming in and we’ll be able to do a better job of managing our resources.”

Research has already started on a small scale, and Dorman and her team are preparing to ramp things up. This semester, she will work



30 years of care
Dr. Aaron Hepp celebrated 30 years of providing chiropractic care and serving Union County on Feb. 1. Photographer Martha Ann Webb.

News from

Camp Ground Church, Community

Due to all the sickness in our church family and community, all services were canceled at Camp Ground on Feb. 2, including our Heritage Day potluck.

Our attendance this past Sunday was down as some are still under the weather.

Bro. Easton's sermon was titled "Grand Plans," based on Jeremiah 29.

The sermon stated: "We make plans all the time – about food, clothes, job, retirement, etc. We are always looking forward.

"But do we get ahead of ourselves? Only God knows what He has for us. God's

plans are for our good and for His glory.

"Human concerns are our downfall. We must ask for God's guidance when we plan each day rather than focus on what we want.

"As recorded in Matthew, Jesus told his disciples that if anyone would follow Him, they must deny themselves, and take up their cross.

"When we put aside what we want for what God wants, we are denying ourselves.

Callie and Caroline Pind rang the bell to begin the worship service. Raelynn Bonner and Conner Pind received the tithes and offerings.

Camp Ground Church's elder for February is Sandra Boaz.

Tymber Roach's birthday was Feb. 12.

Camp Ground Church invites anyone who does not have a church home to join them in study and worship any or every Sunday.

Fellowship and coffee are at 9:15 a.m., followed by Bible study for all ages at 9:30 a.m. and morning worship at 10:30 a.m.

The church is located at the intersection of Camp Ground Road and Tunnel Lane east of Anna and just north of Illinois Route 146.

Auditions scheduled for new regional chorus

A new musical opportunity is coming to Southern Illinois.

The Southern Illinois Regional Concert Chorus is preparing to launch its inaugural season.

Founded by Harold S. Jones and under the direction of Nighel Byrd, the chorus aims to bring together talented voices from across the region to perform classical choral masterpieces.

Auditions for the newly formed chorus are planned at the Harold S. Jones Fine Arts Center at 815 Commercial Ave. in Cairo.

The auditions are scheduled from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 22, and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 23.

The chorus is open to individuals from high school to adults, and there is no cost to participate.

The chorus plans to perform works by Mozart, Verdi, Vivaldi, and other choral masters, Jones said in a news release.

He said the chorus will offer singers an opportunity "to participate in an inspiring musical experience."

"This is an exciting oppor-

tunity to unite voices from across the region and create something truly special," Jones said. "We welcome anyone with a passion for choral music to join us as we embark on this journey."

Jones added that the Southern Illinois Regional Concert Chorus "is set to become a cornerstone of the area's musical landscape, providing a platform for singers to develop their talents while performing timeless works."

For more information about the chorus, call 618-306-5785

The sponsors on this page urge you to attend the church of your choice.



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The greatest valentine you and your love can share is not one that money can buy. Knowing the Lord as a couple is the greatest gift you can give each other to ensure the closeness you crave and to strengthen your bond when worldly things threaten to separate you. If you don't yet have that special person in your life, that's all right, too; God has a plan for each of us that belong to Him. Worship this week and celebrate the greatest love of all.

Weekly Scripture Reading						
John 3.1-21	John 3.22-36	John 4.1-26	John 4.27-42	John 4.43-54	1 Corinthians 13.1-13	John 10.1-21

Scriptures Selected by the American Bible Society

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Obituaries

Michael Gene Youngblood

Michael Gene Youngblood, 79, of Mt. Pleasant area, passed away on Saturday, Feb. 8, at his residence.

He was born on Aug. 31, 1945 to Andrew Pruitt and Vassa Lee Youngblood in Anna, Ill. He married Sharon Liesemeyer and together they spent over 18 years together until her passing in June 2012.

Michael was a proud United States Army Veteran. He worked as an ironworker and retired from the Ironworkers Local 782.



Michael loved his farm. He was a member of The Masonic Lodge, a 32nd Degree Scottish Rite Mason of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, and member of the Ainad Shrine of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine.

Survivors include his sons, Darren (Amanda) Youngblood and Mark (Vickie) Youngblood; daughter, Kenna (Dom) Anderes; grandchildren, Kelsey Youngblood, Hali Youngblood, Tegan Anderes, Kalaina Anderes; four great-grandchildren; and one sister, Judy (Lonnie) Dunn.

Along with his parents and wife, Sharon, he is preceded in death by his brother, Robert Stevens.

Funeral services were held on Tuesday, Feb. 11 at Crain Funeral Home in Anna with Scott Harner officiating. Visitation was held the day of service from at the funeral home.

Inurnment will be held at a later date at McGinnis Cemetery.

The cremation of Michael Gene Youngblood will be personally handled by the staff of Crain Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests with gratitude that memorial contributions be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and/or McGinnis Cemetery.

Crain Funeral Home in Annam is in charge of arrangements.



Bette Jo DeJournett

Bette Jo DeJournett, 95, of Anna, passed away on Wednesday, Feb. 5, at integrity Healthcare in Anna.

She was born on July 1, 1929 to Osa Lee and Alma Viola (Sifford) Lawrence in Tamms, Ill. She was married to Luther DeJournett.

Bette worked at and retired from General Motors in Flint, Mich. After retiring, she and her husband, Luther moved to Virginia Beach, Va., where she spent her days happily gardening. She cut her own grass until the age of 91.

Bette moved to Anna in 2020 and continued gardening until she could no longer do so. She had a wonderful sense of humor and she will be sorely missed.

Survivors include two sisters, Janice Glenn of Virginia Beach, Va. and Cynthia (Kurt) Pfau of Anna; and 12 nieces and nephews.

Crain Funeral Home in Anna, Illinois is in charge of arrangements.



with her parents and husband, she is preceded in death by her sisters, Virginia Lee, Hester Maxine, Bonnie June, Alecia Marie; one brother, Billy Frank; one niece; and one nephew.

Cremation rites will be accorded. No services will be held.

The cremation of Bette Jo DeJournett will be personally handled by the staff of Crain Funeral Home.

Crain Funeral Home in Anna, Illinois is in charge of arrangements.

Camden Smith

Camden Smith, 18, of Cobden was born Jan. 16, 2007 and left us Jan. 31, 2025.

He is survived by his father, Cale Smith, his grandmother, Maribeth Smith, sisters, Kadence Smith and Kimber Meirndorf and brother Xander Smith; uncle Garrett (Lori) Smith of Charlotte N.C. and Aunt Jessica Kirk of Virginia Beach, "Pappy", Milan Jurka, and "Nana" Pamela Jerrell and many relatives and friends.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Kristi Jerrell; and grandfather Donovan Smith. There is a special place in our hearts for Amelia Long and her family.

Cam's priorities in life were his family and friends and his education. He loved school and especially Cobden. He was a member of CYCA, Beta Club, AV Club, Outdoor Club, FCA, Art Club, Forensic Science Club, Cheerleading Team, Stage Crew and Math team.

He loved exploring and trying new things like riding a unicycle or skateboard to school, doing back flips off our propane tank, climbing to the top of our pine trees 30 feet high, walking on 3 inches of ice on stilts, roller skating at the Ole skate Barn and dying his hair to match his clothes. He loved to have fun and



organized legendary gatherings at Pappy's Lake.

Cam's sweet, loving, kind nature brought him many endearing friends. He truly never met a stranger, and he will be dearly missed by all who knew and loved him.

As we search for comfort, we believe that we all come into this life with a mission, and when that is finished, we go home. He finished his far too soon for those of us who loved him. Cam loved the woods and trees, and we ask that you plant a tree in your own yard in his memory.

A celebration of life is tentatively planned at Cobden High School Gymnasium Saturday March 1, from 12 to 2 p.m.

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

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

Everett Lee Bittle

Everett Lee Bittle, 74, passed away on Tuesday, Feb. 4, at his home surrounded by his loving family.

Everett was born on Feb. 20, 1950 to Bob and Virginia (Hickam) Bittle in Alto Pass. He married Christina Heern on Dec. 27, 1971 at the Boskydell Church.

Everett is survived by his wife, Chris; parents, Bob and Virginia Bittle; children, Jennifer (John) Windings; Candice (Anthony) Meadows; and Brocklin Bittle; grandchildren, Tessa, Christopher, Caleb and Connor Windings, Victoria (Jacob) Bittle, Jasmine and Jada Meadows; great-grandchildren, Josh, Matthew, Lexi, Isabella, and Eden; brother, Richard (Marcia) Bittle, sister, Jean Ann (Gerald) Lindsey; sister-in-law Monica (Matt) Heern Crouse, furbabies Kodi and Rufus, many nieces, nephews, cousins, friends, and a special friend and mother of Jennifer, Pat.

He was preceded in death by his daughter Virginia Lee Bittle.

Everett served his country in the US Army during the Vietnam War from 1968-1970. He was an avid outdoorsman who loved to hunt and fish. Everett worked in several Southern Illinois coal mines in reclamation until he retired in 2007.

After retiring, Everett and Chris enjoyed traveling in their RV during the winter months and boating in the summer. He was actively involved in the Jackson County Disabled American Veterans Chapter 69 and the Alto Pass Area Veterans group.

Funeral services for Everett were on Saturday, Feb. 8, at Meredith Funeral Home in Carbondale with Pastor Danny Miller officiating. Entombment followed at Pleasant Grove Memorial Park in Murphysboro with full military honors.

In memory of Everett, memorials may be made to Disabled American Veterans and will be accepted at the funeral home.

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



ing in their RV during the winter months and boating in the summer. He was actively involved in the Jackson County Disabled American Veterans Chapter 69 and the Alto Pass Area Veterans group.

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In memory of Everett, memorials may be made to Disabled American Veterans and will be accepted at the funeral home.

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



Richard Lee Henderson

Richard Lee Henderson, 80, of Mounds, died Monday, Feb. 3, 2025, at the Missouri Veterans Home in Cape Girardeau.

He was born on Jan. 19, 1945, in Cairo, the son of Charles and Evelyn Jett Henderson.

He attended and was baptized at Cairo Baptist Church, now Mighty Rivers, where he began his Christian walk as a teenager.

Richard graduated from Cairo High School in 1963. He was quite the athlete, playing both baseball and basketball.

During High School, he worked as a Soda Jerk at The Dairy Treat after school.

After graduation, he married Gayle Vines and they moved to the St. Louis area, where he took a job at McDonell-Douglas building aircraft for the war effort in Vietnam.

He was offered a waiver for the draft since he was building the aircraft for use in the war, but he respectfully refused, and along with many of his friends joined the United States Marines, where he earned the rank of Corporal, with Rifleman Status, and received a Purple Heart for injuries he received in combat.

Following his time in the Service, he returned to Mounds and started his career as a mechanic with his Father-in-Law at Vines Garage, working there until he and Gayle divorced.

He then bought that business and it became Henderson Automotive at a new location on Blanche Street in Mounds, where he worked for over 40 years until suffering a stroke in 2023.

He was a St. Louis Cardinals fan, and very seldom missed watching a game. He enjoyed golfing when he was younger, loved classic cars and was quite a good cook.

In 2014, he met and started a life with his sweetheart and fiancée' of 10 years, Julia Duff-Thrower. They built a wonderful life together and enjoyed eating at various restaurants, visiting local tourism venues, with Rendleman Orchards being their favorite, and spending time with the animals at their farm in Pigeon Roost, near Olive Branch.

He was a member of the Southern Grace Community Church in Mounds, where he served as a Trustee for many years.



years, and also a member of the Mounds VFW Post, the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans and the Marine Corps League. He was a loyal Patriot to his Country and was proud to have served

Also surviving are his sister, Gwendolyn Marie Sevier of Pekin Ill.; his nieces, Kittra Zantout of Sahuarita, Ariz., Lisa Henderson of San Francisco, Calif., and Debra Morris of Pekin, Ill.; his nephew, Kenneth Henderson of Covington, Ky.; several great-nieces, great-nephews and cousins; Julia's children, whom he claimed as his own, Heather, Ben and Joshua Cowsert; her Grandchildren, Houston, Inge and Emma Porter, Kit and Wiley Cowsert; his best friends, Tammy St. Arbor and Kevin Beegle; and his beloved neighborhood cats, which he enjoyed, his favorite being Adolf.

Along with his parents, he was preceded in death by his older brother, Jerry Henderson.

Funeral Services were Monday, Feb. 10, at noon at Southern Grace Community Church (formerly Mounds United Methodist), with the Rev. Doug Atkins officiating.

Interment followed the funeral service at Mound City National Cemetery, with Military Honors by the American Legion Post No. 178.

Memorials can be made to Southern Grace Community Church and/or Mounds VFW Post and/or the Mounds Public Library and/or the Smiles Senior Center, who provided him with many good lunches through the years.

Crain Funeral Home in Cairo was in charge of arrangements.

To view the obituary or to leave an online condolence for the family, visit www.crainsonline.com.



Mary Kaufman McIntosh

Mary Kaufman McIntosh, 96, of Dongola, passed away on Sunday, Feb. 9, at her residence surrounded by her family.

She was born on July 21, 1928 to Jake F. and Vida B. (Workman) Daubs in Cairo, Ill. She was married to Vancil Kaufman until he passed away in 1967, then on July 4, 1969, she married Irvin McIntosh and were together over 35 years until his passing on Aug. 3, 1994.

Mary was a member of Wetaug Church of Christ. She belonged to the American Legion Auxiliary, DAV Auxillary, and the Rural Letter Carriers Auxillary. Mary also served on the Dongola Homecoming Committee for many years and she served on the Dongola City for Action Committee, which was instrumental in building the Dongola Clinic.

Survivors include her children, Tony (Susan) Kaufman, Mark (Sandra) Kaufman, Phyllis Karraker, and Marcia Bailey; 11 grandchildren, Mary Beth, Patrick, Donna, Nicholas, Jessie, Michelle, Stacy, Joshua, Jill, Andrew, and Stephanie; 21 great-grandchildren; and nieces, nephews, and other relatives.

Along with her parents and



husbands, she is preceded in death by her son, Dan Kaufman; daughter, Ginger Kaufman; brother, Jim Daubs; and sister, Dorothea Stevens.

Funeral Services will be held on Friday, Feb. 14, at 2 p.m. with Brent Miller officiating at Crain Funeral Home in Dongola. A visitation will be held the day of service at the funeral home from 12 p.m. until 2 p.m.

Interment will follow the funeral Service at Christian Chapel Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests with gratitude that memorial contributions be made to Christian Chapel Cemetery.

Crain Funeral Home in Dongola is in charge of arrangements.

To view the obituary or to leave an online condolence for the family visit www.crainsonline.com.



View Obituaries Online at
annanews.com

Robert 'Bob' Kenney Livesay

Robert "Bob" Kenney Livesay, 77, of Wolf Lake, died Sunday, Feb. 2, 2025, at Deaconess Illinois Union County Hospital in Anna.

He was born on Sept. 15, 1947, in Anna, the son of George Virgil and Clara Kenney Livesay.

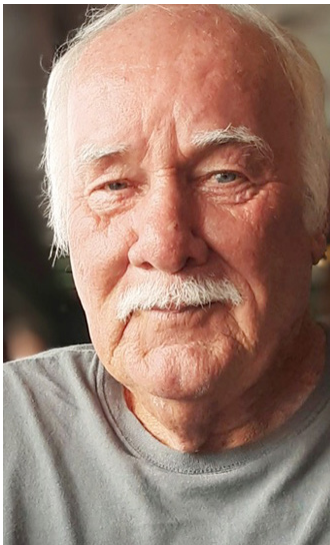
On Aug. 2, 1968, he married Betty Powless, and they spent over 56 years together. She survives.

He was a 1965 graduate of Shawnee High School at Wolf Lake. He worked as a truck driver for Dyno-Nobel and worked as an over the road truck driver for many years.

Mr. Livesay served in the Army National Guard for six years. He enjoyed hunting, fishing and repairing small engines.

Prior to its closing, he was was member of Galilee Baptist Church. He was a down to earth guy and preferred casual attire and camo.

Survivors include his wife; son Kenney (Julie) Livesay; daughter Kim Harris; grandchildren Kalen (Caitlin) Livesay, Nathan (April Kutak) Livesay, Jakob (Eva Myers) Sharp, Amanda Harris (Austin Garrett) and Julian Busby (Seth); great-grandchildren Falynn Livesay, Sawyer Livesay, Gracen Brant, Aiden Garrett and Payton Garrett; sisters Pat Ferguson, Nancy Hobbs and



Katie "Sis" Carver; and Binky, Bob's dog, who loved to sit in the recliner with him.

Along with his parents, he was preceded in death by his great-granddaughter, Nova Skye Garrett; brothers Ben, Wayne and Jim; and sisters Dorothy, Bonnie, Betty, Shirley and Linda.

A graveside service was held at noon Friday, Feb. 7, at Lindsey Cemetery, with Mindy Livesay officiating. Memorials can be made to the family.

To view the obituary or to leave an online condolence for the family, visit www.crainsonline.com.

Crain Funeral Home in Anna-Jonesboro was in charge of arrangements.



Cheryl Davis, 76, of Jonesboro, died Sunday, Feb. 2. She was born July 19, 1948 in Anna, the son of Dexter Leon and Hazel Verneal (Barker) Cobb.

She married Bernard "Berny" Davis on April 17, 1967 in Cape Girardeau, Mo. He preceded her in death on April 20, 2020.

Cheryl is survived by her son, Benny (Sally) Davis of Anna; two granddaughters, Amber Nicole (Bryce) Orr and Amanda Jo Davis; great-granddaughter, Braelynn Grace Orr and a great-grandson on the way; beloved fur baby, Maggie; three brothers, Larry Cobb of Anna, Jerry (Debbie) Cobb, Ty (Dena) Cobb all of Buncombe; numerous nieces and nephews; other relatives and many friends.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Berny Davis; sister and brother-in-law, Emma and Richard Reynolds.

Cheryl was a mem-



ber of the Carroll P. Foster Ladies Auxiliary for many years. She always enjoyed going out to play bingo and having a good laugh with her friends. Cheryl worked for a number of years at the Revlon tending bar before retiring. She will be dearly missed by her family and friends.

No services will be held at this time.

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

Rendleman & Holeman Funeral Home in Jonesboro is in charge of arrangements.



Obituaries

Steven Wayne Pearman



Steven Wayne Pearman, 66, of Buncombe, went to be with his Lord and Savior on Sunday, Feb. 2.

He was born April 17, 1958 in Cairo, the son of Raleigh F. and Kathleen (Rivers) Pearman. He married Tammy Morgan in 1991.

Steven is survived by his wife, Tammy Pearman of Buncombe; daughters, April Pearman (Robert Smith) of Anna, Andrea (Ron) Kosydor of Alto Pass, and Jane (Andrew) Inman of Anna; grandchildren, Taylor (Joseph) Goins of Ullin, Zachary Kosydor of Alto Pass, and Evan Inman of Anna; great-grandchildren, Bryson, Aubrey, and Brexton Goins; brother, Stanley (Nita) Pearman of Meridian, MS; sister, Cindy (Rick) Flamm of Lake of Egypt; numerous loved nieces and nephews; sisters in law, Cindy (Anthony) Edwards of Anna, Shari (Tim) Spurlock of Buncombe and Tricia Morgan of Buncombe; other relatives, and many friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Steven was a member of the First Pentecostal Church in Goreville. He was a man of great faith and loved his Lord and Savior.

He loved his family beyond measure; spending time with his grandchildren, nieces and nephew was always the highlight of his day. Whether it was giving them rides on the tractor, letting them drive the old pick up in the pasture, playing games or just having a good laugh, he loved time with his family.

RENDELMAN & HILEMAN FUNERAL HOMES Steven

Kenneth Woods



Kenneth Woods was born Aug. 25, 1940 and died Dec. 21, 2024 at the age of 84.

Ken was the seventh of ten children born to Lawrence and Lois Woods of Anna, both of whom preceded him in death. Also preceding him were four brothers and two sisters, all of Illinois.

He is survived by three brothers, Gene Woods of Elgin, Ill.; Carl Woods of Anna; and Ray Woods of Elizabethtown, Ill.

Ken and Carol were married in Phoenix, Ariz. on Feb. 14, 1976. Carol survives him after almost 49 years of marriage. They have one son, Andrew (wife Holly) of Pace, Fla.; grandson, Ethan of Bolivar, Mo.; granddaughter Kayleigh and daughter-in-love Lindsay, both of Manhattan, Kan.

Ken was 24 years old when he asked Jesus to come into his heart and be his personal Savior and life leader. In the decades that followed, Ken served in various ministries in the churches of which he was a member: bus ministry director, Sunday school director, and Bible study leader. He also served as a deacon minister and Stephen Ministry encourager for many years at North Phoenix Baptist Church in Arizona. Ken was never happier than when he was helping someone.

Ken spent his career in the manufacturing industry and worked as a quality control manager, both in Elgin, Ill., and Phoenix, Ariz. Supervisors and co-workers alike said he was a man who could be trusted—his word was his bond.

RENDELMAN & HILEMAN FUNERAL HOMES Ken enjoyed work-

News from

First Baptist Church, Jonesboro

On Sunday, Feb. 9, Pastor Perry Williams spoke in the morning service.

His message addressed further the issue of complaining contrasting it with the attitude of thankfulness. When we are thankful, we release joy and blessing into our lives. His text was found in the 107th Psalm and in the 17th chapter of Luke in the Bible.

The service was sent by transmitter station 87.9 for those who wanted to listen on the radio. The service was also live streamed on Facebook. The church’s Facebook page, Jonesboro FBC, has videos and the latest information about church events.

Music Director, Dee Rose, led worship accompanied by Praise Team members Rodger Goines, Joyce Hill, Marion Hill, and Sharon Morgan. Debbie York was our pianist. Lauren Jackson sang “God is in this Story,” as a special.

This week’s activities include our Ladies and Men’s Bible Studies on Monday, Feb. 10, at 6 p.m. and Senior

Adult, “LLL,” group meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 11 a.m. with special guest, Dr. Jason Ozbourne.

And on Friday, we will have a Feb. 14 potluck and game night beginning at 6 p.m.

Birthday: Peyton Clymore, Feb. 10; Lloyd McCann, Feb. 11; Grace Rich, Feb. 12, Eileen Cline, Feb. 13; Madyson Ellis, Feb. 14; Cindy Pender, Cole Whitaker and Liz Wilkins, all born on Feb. 15; and Marilyn Hale, Feb. 16.

Anniversary: Joe and Martha McRaven, Feb. 6, 27 years.

The 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. and Sunday evening worship at 6 p.m.

Youth meet from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Sundays and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Wednesdays.

The Dig-In program for children meets at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays.

An adult prayer meeting and Bible study are scheduled on Wednesdays at 6 p.m.

News from

Anna First Baptist Church

Anna First Baptist Church met for worship on Sunday, Feb. 9, after Sunday School.

The call to worship was done by Vickie Wagner and was on “The Church.”

The worship team led in the singing of “Raise a Hallelujah,” “Graves into Gardens” and “Amazing Grace.”

Pastor Lupe’s sermon was titled “Smyrna” and was in keeping with a continuing study of Revelation.

The seven letters in Revelation, found in chapters 2 and 3, were written by the Apostle John to the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

Each letter contains Christ’s commendations, correction and a call to overcome, reflecting the spiritual state of each church.

The letters serve as both historical messages to first-century congregations and prophetic warnings applicable to churches today.

The letters emphasize faithfulness, repentance and perseverance in the face of

trials and spiritual complacency.

After the service, a church potluck meal was shared with food and fellowship.

Sunday School for all ages begins at 9 a.m. on Sunday morning.

The church’s worship services start at 10:15 a.m. on Sunday.

The church has a prayer time at 6 p.m. on Wednesday. The church has a youth program which meets at 6 p.m. on Wednesday.

The church has a bus which runs for all of its programs and services. Information is available by calling the church’s office during the day.

First Baptist Church is located at 409 Morgan St. in Anna. The church’s phone number is 833-5416.

The church’s Facebook page is Facebook.com/AnnaFirstBaptistChurch. The church’s email address is fbcanna409@gmail.com. The church can be found on YouTube at Anna First Live Stream.

News from

Anna Nazarene Church

A morning worship service was held Sunday, Feb. 9.

Announcements were given by Jessica Elkins. Music was led by Pastor Randy Wright and the worship team.

A message titled “The Beatitudes” was brought by Pastor Wright. Scripture was from Matthew 5:3-12.

Birthday: Alex Wright, Feb. 12.

Sunday, Feb. 16
Breakfast, 9 a.m. Sunday

School, 9:30 a.m. Morning service, 10:35 a.m. Evening worship service, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 19
A Wednesday night service is planned at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. A youth group meeting is planned at 6:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall.

The church can be contacted by calling the church office at 833-6702 and leaving a message if necessary or by calling Pastor Wright at 618-534-7103.

Cobden

Women’s Club to meet

The Cobden Women’s Club plans to meet on Thursday, Feb. 20 at the Family Life Center in the first Baptist Church in Cobden.

Shawn Rhines from the Southern 7 Health Department will be holding a training session on NORCON from 12 to 1 p.m. This training session is open to anyone interested.

The club’s regular meeting will begin at 1 p.m. The main topic of the meeting will be planning out the 2025 calendar year for the club.

Hosting the meeting will be Carol Nebrugh and Janis Corrington. For more information, call Dianna Yates at 618-534-8935.

Food pantry supported

Those involved with the food pantry at Salem Lutheran Church in Jonesboro voice their appreciation for the community’s support.

They thank Anna Police Department Officer Adam Tripp and the community for stuffing his squad car for two days in a row which helped the food pantry to help those in need. “What a generous place we live in! We are so grateful!” the church shared.



Trish Moehring sorts some of the donated items.



Pastor Mark Hasty with some of the donations.



Items donated to the food pantry.

Academic Challenge event held at Shawnee College

Seven high schools in the Shawnee Community College district competed Feb. 6 in seven subject areas for the Academic Challenge.

The subject areas in the competition included English, math, physics, biology, engineering, graphics, chemistry and computer science, the college shared on social media.

Academic Challenge, formerly known as WYSE, is a test-based competition for high school students which is hosted by the physics department and engineering program at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston.

More than 40 community colleges and universities in Illinois and Missouri serve as sites for the tests, which are designed to challenge the brightest high school students and presented in multiple-choice format.

Students have 40 minutes to complete tests ranging from 30 questions (computer science and math) to 80 questions (English).

The test material is drawn from 12th grade and college freshman curricula to present a bridge between secondary and higher education.

Teams write tests of professional engineers and faculty members at colleges and universities across the United States.

Each team produces tests that increase the difficulty level from regional to sectional to state finals.

The guiding philosophy of the Academic Challenge is to acquaint high school students with the course content and the level of competition that they will experience upon entering a science or engineering curriculum at the college or university level.

Shawnee Community College shared on social media that “This year’s event was a huge success; the local high schools performed excellently in the competition. The first- and second-place winners in each subject and the first- and second-place team winners advanced to the sectional round” which is scheduled at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

The college thanked the teams for their participation and gave “pecial thanks to Shawnee Community College science instructors Sheryl Ribbing (biology), Lori Armstrong, Dr. Brenda Brown, student engagement coordinator Erin King and the other volunteers “for making this year’s event a great success.”

View Obituaries
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The Gazette-Democrat

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The City of Anna, IL is accepting applications for the position for a Part-Time School Resource Officer. Under the direction of the Chief of Police and in coordination with School Administration, the School Resource Officer will work to improve school safety and security. This is a part time position with an hourly rate of pay of \$20.00. The hours of this position coincide with the school calendar, not to exceed 1,560 hours per calendar year. Minimum qualifications for an interested candidate are as follows; must be a U.S. citizen, have a valid driver's license, possess a valid Illinois FOID card, have certification from the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board, must pass a medical and criminal background check, and reside within 30 minutes of the corporate limits of Anna. Applications will be available for interested candidates at Anna City Hall or online at cityofanna.org. Please return resume and employment application to the Human

62906. The estate will be administered without Court supervision, unless any interested party terminates independent administration at any time by mailing or delivering a Petition to terminate to the clerk under 755 ILCS 5/28-4.

Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Circuit Clerk of the Court at the Union County Courthouse, 309 W. Market St., Jonesboro, IL 62952, or with the representative, or both, within 6 months from the initial date of publication, and any claim filed with the clerk must be delivered to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed. Any claim not filed within that time will be barred.

January 14, 2025 /s/ Matthew Benson
Matthew Benson, IL ARDC 6282507
The Benson Law Firm, PC
601 S. Washington St. DuQuoin, IL 62832
(618) 542-5500
notice@mbensonlaw.com 8221-950159

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT UNION COUNTY, ILLINOIS

ANNA-JONESBORO NATIONAL BANK, A National Chartered Bank,, Plaintiff, vs JEREMIAH O. DAVIS, UNKNOWN OWNERS and NON-RECORD CLAIMANTS, Defendants. Case No.: 2025FC1

PUBLICATION NOTICE

The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, notice is hereby given to you, Jeremiah O. Davis, Unknown Owners and Non-Record Claimants, Defendants in the above entitled suit, that the said suit has been commenced in the Circuit Court of Union County, Illinois, by the said Plaintiff against you and other defendants to foreclose a certain Mortgage covering the following described premises, to-wit:

Legal Description LOT 21 AND THE WEST HALF OF LOT 13 IN D.W. BROWN'S FOURTH ADDITION TO THE CITY OF ANNA, SITUATED IN UNION COUNTY, ILLINOIS. P.I.N. 14-00-08-796 COMMON ADDRESS: 309 EAST CHESTNUT STREET, ANNA, IL 62906 and for other relief, that summons was duly issued out of the said Court against you as provided by law, and that said suit is still pending.

Now, therefore, unless you, the said Defendants, Jeremiah O. Davis, Unknown Owners and Non-Record Claimants, file your answer to the Complaint in the suit, or otherwise make your appearance therein, in the Circuit Court of Union County, Illinois, in the County Courthouse in the City of Jonesboro, Illinois, on or before the 24th Day of May, 2025, default may be entered against you and each of you at any time after that day and a decree entered in accordance with the prayer of said Complaint.

Keri Clark Clerk of the Circuit Court Prepared by: JOHN R. SCHNEIDER JOHNSON, SCHNEIDER & FERRELL, L.L.C. 212 North Main Street Cape Girardeau, MO 63701 Tel: (573) 335-3300 Fax: (573)335-1978 8221-950068

NOTICE UNDER ASSUMED BUSINESS NAME ACT State of Illinois SS County of Union

Notice is hereby given pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Name in the conduct of Transaction of Business in the State," as

Amended that a certification was filed by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Union County, Filed this 28th day of January, 2025, under the Assumed Name of The Bread Basket, with the place of business located at 1155 E. Vienna St., Ste. D, Anna, IL 62906, and that the True Name(s) and Residence Address of the Sole Owner(s) and Proprietors of said Business is:

Owners: Vincent Millard Hahn and Naomi Rose Hahn
Address: 2880 Friendship School Rd., Anna, IL 62906
Lance Meisenheimer Union County Clerk 8221-949971

Rural education programs get 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 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

SIU Craft Shop sponsoring Valentine's Day sale

The Craft Shop at Southern Illinois University Carbondale is sponsoring a Valentine craft sale on Valentine's Day.

Dozens of artists and crafts people from throughout the region will offer their works at the sale, which is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Feb. 14 in the Art Gallery on the first floor of the SIU Student Center.

Admission is free. Featured items will include pottery, paintings, jewelry, fibers, drawings and much more.

A wide assortment of spring workshops are planned at the SIU Craft

Shop, which is located on the lower level of the SIU Student Center.

The spring session opened Saturday, Feb. 1, and workshops run through the end of April.

All arts and crafts activities are open to the public, but classes sizes are limited so early registration is encouraged. Sign-up for classes closes one week before each session begins.

Activities include building by hand with clay, tie-dying Valentine hearts, creating prints with linoleum, making stained glass with copper foil, crafting fused glass suncatchers, wheel-throwing pottery and more.

Some projects will be completed in just one class while more complex designs require multiple sessions. Most workshops are open to ages 7 or 8 and older. The costs vary, and SIU students receive reduced pricing.

Find the complete workshop schedule, along with details about pricing and online registration, on the Craft Shop website.

The Craft Shop reserves the right to cancel or reschedule workshops if necessary.

Email craftshop@siu.edu or call 618-453-3636 for additional details.

ing 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 FarmWeekNow.com.

SIU reports spring enrollment increase

Southern Illinois University Carbondale's spring 2025 enrollment is up 3.3 percent, or 344 students, compared to last year.

The increase, the second year in a row of over 3 percent, follows a fall that saw the highest overall boost in the number of students in 33 years.

"This exciting news is the result of strategic planning and the ongoing, dedicated efforts of many Salukis – our faculty and staff, our alumni and friends, and members of the community – who imagine ambitious goals that often defy the odds and then work to achieve them," SIU chancellor Austin A. Lane said.

"I personally thank everyone in Saluki Nation for all they have done to attract students and help them succeed from orientation to graduation."

A total of 10,869 students are pursuing their degrees at Southern this spring.

Spring enrollment is usually less than fall because of December graduations.

This past fall, the university enjoyed a second year in a row of rising enrollment for the first time since 2000. And the freshman class increased for the fifth consecutive year. This is the fifth consecutive semester that the university has enjoyed rising enrollment.

Enrollment for undergraduates this spring is up 3.6 percent from spring 2024, including a 4 percent increase of transfers, while graduate enrollment rose 2.5 percent.

Fully online new and transfer students increased 24 percent and continuing students rose 11 percent.

More Illinois students are choosing Southern.

Opinion and Commentary

Southern 7 encourages everyone to be prepared for an earthquake

The worst earthquake in Illinois history occurred on Dec. 17, 1811. The quake blew smoke, sand and coal 30 yards into the air and made the Mississippi River flow backward.

February is Earthquake Preparedness Month. According to the Central United States Earthquake Consortium, CUSEC, earthquakes continue to occur on a daily basis in the central United States, with nearly 200 occurring each year.

Southern 7 Health Department is encouraging everyone to follow steps from www.ready.gov/earthquakes to keep themselves and their families safe.

Start by being prepared for after an earthquake. Create a family emergency communications plan that includes an out-of-state contact.

Plan where to meet if you get separated. And make a supply kit that includes enough food and water for several days, a flashlight, a fire extinguisher and a whistle.

There can be serious hazards after an earthquake, such as damage to the building, leaking gas and water lines or downed power lines.

Once you are safe, pay attention to local news reports for emergency information and instructions via battery-operated radio, TV, social media or from cell phone text alerts.

Next, practice with your family what to do during an earthquake. When the ground starts to shake, protect yourself right away:

If you are in a car, pull over and stop. Set your parking brake.

If you are in bed, turn face down and cover your head and neck with a pillow.

If you are outdoors, stay outdoors away from buildings.

If you are inside, stay and do not run outside and avoid doorways.

Drop, Cover and Hold On! is the best way to stay safe with earthquakes.

The phrase reminds people to:

Drop down to the floor.

Take cover under a sturdy desk, table or other furniture.

Hold on to that object until the shaking ends.

Details on how persons with disabilities reduce injury and death during an earthquake are listed at www.shakeout.org/dropcoverholdon/.

For more information on earthquake preparedness, contact Bobi Cavins at Southern 7 Health Department at 618-634-2297 or visit www.iemaohs.illinois.gov/preparedness/earthquake.html and <http://www.cusec.org/>.

Annual observance focuses on heart health

The Illinois Department of Public Health, IDPH, is highlighting a month-long focus on heart health during American Heart Month in February.

The annual observance serves as a reminder to the public about the dangers of cardiovascular disease and the resources that are available to help people maintain heart health.

“Heart disease remains the number one cause of death both nationally and right here in Illinois,” IDPH director Dr. Sameer Vohra said in a news release.

“But heart disease can be preventable when we are aware of our own personal risk factors. The first step in prevention is identifying what can make your heart unhealthy, such as untreated high blood pressure, high cholesterol and high levels of stress. Next, create a heart-healthy action plan. Finally, schedule a check-up with your medical provider and take control of your heart health today.”

IDPH’s men’s health program will also have targeted messaging during the month, with an emphasis on disproportionate rates of early-onset heart disease in young males generally, and specifically among young Black males.

IDPH social media channels will also be busy during the month, with frequent messaging about heart disease risks and prevention strategies, including:

- The benefits of regular checkups and frequent monitoring of blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- The symptoms of a heart attack.
- The heart benefits of adequate sleep, proper diet, physical activity and giving up smoking.

SIUC Chancellor’s Scholarships awarded to high school seniors

Thirty-four high achieving high school seniors are receiving Southern Illinois University Carbondale 2025 Chancellor’s Scholarships, which cover tuition, mandatory fees, on-campus housing and food for four years.

Students from the Union County area are among those receiving the scholarships.

SIU chancellor Austin A. Lane and other university officials paid surprise visits over two days to present the scholarships and congratulate 31 students from 20 high schools in the Southern Illinois and Metro East regions Feb. 3-4.

The remaining scholarship recipients learned about their awards during a Zoom session.

“Chancellor’s Scholars

imagine bold goals and then work to make them a reality, even when it defies the odds,” Lane said. “I am excited to personally congratulate these Salukis on receiving Southern’s highest honor for freshmen.”

Lane presented scholarships to students in Carbondale, Carterville, Du Quoin, Herrin, Marion, Murphysboro, Nashville, Pinckneyville and Red Bud.

Other scholarship recipients in Southern Illinois received surprise visits from university officials and Brown Dawg.

More than 600 high school students competed in the selection process. Winning students demonstrate high academic achievement, have a strong record of leadership in their communities and

Please read this...

This week...a little bit of this...a little bit of that...

It’s been a while...and with that being said...once again this week...we will offer a little bit of this...and a little bit of that... Let’s start with a bit of an update... yes, indeed, yours truly has retired...as editor of this publication.

At Bob’s request, and with his support, I plan to continue to write a column each week. You see, Bob has a whole cat-alog of stories to tell...

Meanwhile... Did you enjoy the Big Game? Yours truly thought the game was a Big Dud. Which has not been unusual for the spectacle that the event has become over the years. At least some of the commercials were entertaining...and some just left the two of us scratching our heads.

The Big Game did give this writer an opportunity to learn about something called Superb Owl Sunday. Maybe you have heard of Superb Owl Sunday, especially if you happen to be a bird person.

Superb Owl Sunday is a bit of a play on words. Move the “b” at the end of “Superb” over to the beginning of “Owl” and you get the name of the big and pretty much boring professional football game which unfolded last Sunday night in front of an audience of gazillions of people and, perhaps, other creatures on Planet Earth and various unnamed orbs in the universe.

As near as I could determine, Superb Owl Sunday may have come to be thanks to a typographical snafu, but it’s now a way to appreciate those wise old birds we call owls, along with other birds of prey which inhabit our planet. Sometimes, when the weather is much warmer, Bob and I will hear owls calling in the dark on a warm spring or summer night when we sit on the front porch.

Speaking of birds of prey, how ‘bout a Critter Sighting Update...or two...

Superb Owl? Yup. Well, kind of. Please see the photograph which accompanies this week’s column.

Eagles. Yup. Well, once again, kind of. I saw a whole bunch ‘em, on television last Sunday night inside a stadium in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Swift. The bird. Nope. Swift. The singer. Yup. In the same stadium as the Eagles. The night did not turn out well for Swift the singer...

Meanwhile... I don’t know about you, but I am ready to see a crocus in bloom. They seem to be late this year...

Meanwhile... I wanted to share a very nice message which was sent to the local newspaper:



Watching a slug crawl across an icy slab of concrete on a cold winter afternoon may have been more exciting than watching the Big Game last Sunday night.

Farms provide local food to underserved communities

By Hannah Spangler FarmWeek

Farms are growing while providing fresh, local food to underserved communities through the Illinois Equitable Access Towards Sustainable Systems, IL-EATS, grant program.

Participants in IL-EATS reflected on the impact of the program’s first year on Jan. 29 during a breakout session at the Everything Local Conference in Springfield. Farmers, business owners and other stakeholders shared their

success stories and provided input to shape the future of IL-EATS.

“This program is allowing farmers to do really great things,” Makala Bach, University of Illinois outreach associate, told FarmWeek. “Even though, for now, this is a limited-funding program, if it’s doing anything, it is catalyzing a lot of relationships and an interconnection of the food system that we haven’t seen in Illinois.”

Funded by the USDA’s Local Food Purchasing Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program, LFPA, IL-EATS aims to boost statewide food systems.

Reflecting on the first year, Bach noted that the program has achieved this goal and more, including building relationships between farmers and food banks, helping producers enter larger wholesale markets and providing consistency and opportunity to producers by offering them fair market value.

In 2024, 176 Illinois farmers from 83 counties sold their products to IL-EATS lead agencies. According to Bach, 58 percent of these farmers have been farming for less than 10 years, and 63 percent reported their farms are growing.

“Magic happens when you buy local food for the prices you should be buying food for,” Bach.

Several farmers and businesses benefiting from the program shared their stories:



A Superb Owl, of sorts, was spotted on Sunday, the day of the Big Game, when the photographer was on his daily walkabout. More about this fascinating topic can be found in the accompanying word salad...which would be good with some Hellmann’s Mayonnaise...based on the interesting commercial that aired during the Big Game last Sunday night.

‘Sharing community’

Greetings I, and many others, are so grateful for all that Geof and Jill have done for this community.

We are grateful for each of them, who they are and have been as individuals here, sharing community.

I hope the fine work that he has created (along with the previous owners and all the staff that makes all of it possible) persists and endures as the wonderful gift that it is.

The Anna Gazette, The Talk and the Cobden Review are blessings to all of us and we are grateful.

Faithful news reporting and a clear commitment to communication which is truthful, positive and simple, (which is to say, honest) are a wonderful gift.

Kind and generous sharing of the community happenings keeps us all connected and contributes to kindness and sharing, everywhere.

All of Southern Illinois and especially all of Union County can be grateful.

Thank you, Geof Skinner

Kind regards and I hope that ongoing life brings every good direction to fruition and new possibilities to life for each and both of you.

The message was shared by Julie Osborn Murphy of Cobden. Julie has frequently shared letters to the editor with this public, and for that I am grateful. I am also grateful that she mentioned The Other Half, who really, really does have a name, and has been a big reason for what I have been able to do, and accomplish, for all of these years.

With that in mind, once again I will wish a Happy Valentine’s Day to my sweetheart...

...oh...and to all of the folks who are kind enough to read this column...

The big day is Friday, February 14, so there’s still time to pick up some chocolate...and flowers...

Wayne Sirles, Rendleman Orchards

Rendelman Orchards in Alto Pass already had an established farm before IL-EATS. Sirles, the orchard’s president, told FarmWeek that the program is “the gravy” because of the prices IL-EATS pays producers.

“We already have a packing facility, we’ve already been labeling, so we really didn’t have to do anything different,” he said. “It’s just another outlet to sell our product at an extraordinary price.”

Matt and Alex Klein, Klein’s Quality Produce

The Kleins had to make some changes at their business in Elgin (Kane County) before joining IL-EATS.

Owner Matt Klein said it required more labor to pack and label their produce for IL-EATS, but the prices they received helped them invest in the extra labor needed to adjust their system.

“Instead of just bulk packing our green beans after washing, now we have to bag them, weigh each and label it,” said Alex Klein, Matt Klein’s son and partner in the family business.

Matt Klein added that their lead agency, Rooted for Good, has made their IL-EATS experience extremely positive. The Kleins know how much produce Rooted for Good will need from them every month.

Ben Jaffe, Earthlore Farm

Jaffe grows fresh produce such as lettuce, squash and basil on his small family farm in Iroquois County.

He shared there were some challenges early on when IL-EATS was still trying to work out some logistics. The lead agency the farm was connected with was not able to purchase all the lettuce Jaffe was trying to sell. Now, he has multiple agencies to sell to through IL-EATS, preventing this issue from recurring.

“At the end of the day, IL-EATS gives us a win-win situation,” Jaffe said.

Kerry and Ashley Kehrer, Mulberry Creek Meats

“This has all just kind of been a whirlwind,” Ashley Kehrer said of their jump into IL-EATS.

Before IL-EATS, the Kehrerts sold live animals or custom shares to family and friends in the Clinton County area. Now, they have expanded into a larger market, launched the Mulberry Creek Meats Brand and obtained their meat broker license.

“This has given us the opportunity to start selling individual products and individual cuts of meat,” Kerry Kehrer said. “That is something we definitely would not have done without this program.”

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit Farm-WeekNow.com.