



**24 July  
2025**

Welcome to FREEPOD, a local news source for everyone in the Freeport area. This weekly podcast is brought to you by a large volunteer group dedicated to providing to objective, unbiased updates on what's happening in our community.

You can find us on Facebook as well as our website ([www.freepod.org](http://www.freepod.org)) and the website of our NPR partner WNJI Northern Public Radio ([www.northernpublicradio.org](http://www.northernpublicradio.org)), so please visit us there and continue to share about us on your own social media. Now let's see what's happening.

### **Walnut Acres news**

The years-long saga of Walnut Acres may be close to reaching an end soon. The Stephenson County Board has approved a letter of intent to pursue a sale agreement with Serenity Estates, a firm that has other facilities in the suburbs among other locations. That agreement led to a contract and at its July 17th meeting, the Board hired a legal firm to review the contract.

The sale agreement likely could be presented for a final vote from the board sometime in August. Even if the sale is approved, it still will need to get approval from the Illinois Department of Public Health which could take a few months but Serenity Estates would have control of Walnut Acres while awaiting State approval.

### **City roadwork update**

Road work continues on Carroll Avenue and Cleveland Street and a number of other streets in Freeport that are undergoing updates to water mains, sewer systems, and repaving. Carroll Avenue is closed from Galena to Empire for these upgrades and construction is underway on Cleveland Street between Burchard and Locust Streets and on Blackhawk Avenue between Empire and Dewey Streets.

As a reminder, work is just beginning on Stephenson Street between Sunset Avenue and Greenfield Drive and will soon begin at the intersection of Stephenson Street and Park Boulevard. Additional work is planned for Greenfield Drive as well as Hance Drive, Harvey Avenue, and Willow Avenue.

Construction areas are reopened at the end of each day so that residents in these areas are able to pull in and out of driveways during construction. Delays may occur and it may sometimes take longer to

maneuver in the area. Signage gives crews the proper space and safety to work, and ignoring them can be a danger to all concerned.

### **Stephenson County Fair**

The Stephenson County Fair has begun, and starting this year, remember that admission to the Stephenson County Fair is \$10 per person, and here's the best part: tickets now includes general admission to all grandstand events—at no extra cost!

For the first time in over 30 years, events like the Tractor & Truck Pulls, Tough Truck Challenge, Concerts, and Demolition Derby are open for attendance without additional ticket fees.

Hope you have the opportunity to enjoy one of the best – and few remaining – County Fairs in the State!

### **Stephenson County Health Department offering free back-to-school physicals**

The Stephenson County Health Department is offering free back-to-school physicals on Tuesday, August 19<sup>th</sup>. While walk-ins are welcome, appointments are highly recommended to avoid disappointment. Contact Ashley McKinney for more information and to schedule at 815-541-0996 or 815-599-8430, or by email at [amckinney@stephensoncountyil.gov](mailto:amckinney@stephensoncountyil.gov). Those phone numbers again are 815-541-0996 and 815-599-8430.



### **Second-grader conducts at Music Under the Stars**

This past Sunday, attendees at the Music Under the Stars concert at Krape Park were treated not only to the great music of the band they look forward to every week, but also the conducting stylings of Willow Moderow. Willow, who will be in second grade this year at Center School, won a fund-raising raffle conducted by the band where the winner was invited to conduct one song at the last concert. FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors caught up with Willow just before her conducting debut and here's their conversation.

*(audio clip)*



Good job, Willow!

This week is the final performance of the band for this summer season. It will feature the Freeport Early Jazz Society conducted by Bill Petersen and begins at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, July 27<sup>th</sup> at the Koenig Amphitheatre at Krape Park.

### **Mort's Bar and Grill hosts dinner theatre**

Mort's Bar and Grill, in partnership with Winneshiek Players, is hosting its first Dinner Theatre on Saturday August 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The production is simply titled *Mort's* and is an original adaptation of scenes from the classic sitcom Cheers to showcase Freeport history while introducing local characters and regular tavern banter.

The play is locally written, directed, and produced. The intimate night of entertainment at Mort's Bar and Grill will be accompanied by a cocktail hour and four-course dinner.

Tickets are \$100 and proceeds from the production will benefit Winneshiek Players, one of the country's longest running community theatres. For more information stay tuned to Mort's Bar and Grill on Facebook.

### **National Night Out**

Join the Freeport Police Department and Freeport Fire Department for an evening of fun, food, and community spirit at National Night Out 2025! Attendees will be able to visit with local police officers, firefighters, and first responders and can enjoy family-friendly activities, games, giveaways, free food, and more. The event will be held at the Read Park Pavilion near the Read Park baseball fields on Tuesday, August 5<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

### **New kayak launch at Tutty's Crossing**

The Northwest Illinois Trails Foundation has donated a new EZ Kayak Launch to the City of Freeport for use at Tutty's Crossing. In making this \$3,000 donation, Foundation President Dr. Jack Herrmann said "It was clear that the old kayak launch was not a good solution for this location, so as a non-profit group that raises funds to provide financial support to all area trails including the Pecatonica River Water Trail, we are pleased to make this donation." The new EZ Kayak Launch is a safe way to access the river that has been proven in other locations that will also be less costly for the city to install and remove every year.

Pecatonica River Water Trail offers four paddle trips between six and eight miles in length with developed launches at each take-out point for safe and convenient access the river. More information can be found by searching on River Adventures at [www.greaterfreeport.com](http://www.greaterfreeport.com). (<https://greaterfreeport.com/visit/outdoor-rec/> )

### **Dean's List announced at Highland Community College**

Highland Community College has announced its dean's list for the Spring 2025 semester. Students who have completed 12 credit hours or more during the semester and have a minimum 3.25 grade point average (GPA), based on a 4.0 scale, are included on the dean's list. The Highest Honors are awarded to students with a perfect 4.0 GPA. High Honors are given to students with a 3.50 to 3.99 GPA, and Honors students have earned a GPA between 3.25 and 3.49. For a full listing, head to the Highland website at [www.highland.edu](http://www.highland.edu) .

### **Become a Certified Food Protection Manager**

The University of Illinois is offering a two-part class on how to become a Certified Food Protection Manager. This an accredited American National Standards Institute course that meets the requirements of the Illinois Department of Public Health's Food Service Sanitation Code. Participants will learn about the principles and recommendations of the FDA Food Code focused on food safety and contamination, employee health and hygiene, safe food handling practices, cleaning and sanitizing, and HACCP.

University of Illinois Extension Nutrition and Wellness Educator Diane Reinhold will be hosting this class on Tuesday, August 12th and Friday, August 15<sup>th</sup> at the Stephenson County Farm Bureau in Freeport. Two more classes will be offered later in the year. For more information, contact the University of Illinois Extension in Freeport at 815-235-4125. That's 815-235-4125.

### **Music on Chicago**

Music on Chicago continues next week with a performance on Friday, August 1<sup>st</sup> by Boogie & the Yo-Yoz with DJ Cup. This popular music event has been a tradition in Downtown Freeport for over 20 years and takes place in downtown Freeport's Art Plaza at the corner of Chicago Avenue and Douglas Street. The

grounds are ideal for a social gathering with friends or bring the family and blankets to take your spot on the lawn. A \$5 admission includes access to the summer's best party and access to local food vendors. Volunteers also serve alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages during the event.

## UV Safety Month

July is UV Safety Month and it's a great time to remind everyone about the dangers of UV radiation and the importance of protecting skin from the sun's harmful rays. From kids at the pool to agriculture workers, we should all consider taking precautions when outdoors to help prevent skin cancer. Sunglasses, sunscreen, and protective clothing are all good to keep in mind, and you can also check the UV index, which is a measure of the strength of the sun's UV radiation at a particular location, on many weather apps. If it's high, try to be extra cautious of spending too much time in the direct sun.

## News from our public radio partner WNJI in DeKalb

Since it's been a major topic in national news, we wanted to pass along this information from WNJI, our public radio partner in DeKalb who help disseminate FREEPOD news in both English and Spanish to a broad audience that goes well beyond Stephenson County and helps to promote our community throughout a geographic area that covers Southern Wisconsin and much of Illinois north of I-80.

Please see their posting in the print version of this newscast, which details their response to the elimination of all Federal funding for local public media stations. This will impact WNJI in the amount of \$270,000. Donations are always welcome to help fund their commitment to regional news. For more, visit them at <https://www.northernpublicradio.org/>



The graphic features the Northern Public Radio logo at the top, which includes the call letters WNJI (99.5 NEWS) and WNIU (90.5 MUSIC) in colorful circles, along with a smaller NIBRIS logo. Below the logo, the text reads: "Congress voted to eliminate all federal funding for local public media stations, funding that had already been approved and was set to reach stations later this year. For WNJI and WNIU, that's \$270,000 a year - gone." This is followed by the statement: "But, it is not the end of WNJI and WNIU. As we move into an uncharted future, our commitment to you remains unwavering. We'll act quickly and thoughtfully to adapt as we always do, but we need your help." At the bottom of the graphic is a prominent orange button with the text "DONATE NOW" in white capital letters.

## The week ahead...

If you're hungry tomorrow or Saturday, the Cub Foods Brat Stand this weekend will be run by the Blackhawk Officials Association. They'll be there both Friday and Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to serve brats, burgers, hot dogs, and ribeye sandwiches.

We also ran across something that might come in handy with the heat wave that is expected to continue over the weekend. According to the BBC Science Focus Magazine, here are four science-backed things you can do to cool down fast:

1. Avoid cold showers, which may create more of a shock to your body than is a good idea when it's really hot, and the effect is not very long-lasting.
2. Choose hot drinks, which can actually help lower your overall body temperature by making you sweat more. That's also why many countries closer to the equator are known for their spicy foods.
3. Enhance the evaporation of sweat on your skin, which is a natural way to cool down, with a fan or enjoying a breezy area outdoors.
4. Perhaps most surprisingly, cool your hands first, not your face. Many times our first inclination is to splash our faces with cold water but your hands have a lot more blood vessels than your face and if you cool the volume of blood flowing through them that will help you cool down faster. Remember hands first, then face.

If you are looking for something to do this week or any week, visit the Greater Freeport Partnership website at [www.greaterfreeport.com](http://www.greaterfreeport.com) and click on "weekly events" for a comprehensive listing of many more entertainment and dining events and activities throughout Stephenson County. You can also subscribe to the City of Freeport's monthly newsletter at their website, [www.cityoffreeport.org](http://www.cityoffreeport.org). We have links to both in the print version of FREEPOD episodes.

### **In closing...**

In closing, if you haven't already done so be sure to listen to this week's in-depth interview where FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel interviewed Highland Community College President Chris Kuberski and YMCA Chief Executive Officer Rich Haight about plans for the 2025-2026 school year. We'd also like to take a moment to apologize for incorrectly stating Haight's position last week: he is the Chief Executive Officer of the YMCA, not Highland Community College. The interview is available online and can be listened to anytime.

Next Tuesday FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors takes a walk down memory lane about the many breweries that have added a sense of community and camaraderie in Freeport's history. This pod will post at noon on Tuesday July 29<sup>th</sup> and be available to listen to then or at any time after that – just head to our website or your favorite podcast platform to select the programs of your choice.

As always, FREEPOD couldn't come to you without the Mass Communication Department at Highland Community College and our community liaisons and reporters. Thank you, Team FREEPOD! You can always find us on our Facebook page or the website of our National Public Radio partner, WNIJ in DeKalb, at [www.northernpublicradio.org](http://www.northernpublicradio.org). For more info, including how to make a tax-deductible contribution to support our work, visit our website at [www.freepod.org](http://www.freepod.org).

With that, time's up for this week. Tune in again next Thursday at noon – or any time after that on our website or your favorite podcast platform – for more about what's happening in Freeport, and thank you for listening!

***Listen next week for more about what's happening in the Freeport area!***

## **LINKS TO OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS NEWSLETTERS**

**What's Going on in  
Stephenson County?**

**Subscribe to  
our weekly  
event guide!**



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While you're signing up for more of what's going on in our community, you can also subscribe to the City of Freeport's monthly newsletter at their website, [www.cityoffreeport.org](http://www.cityoffreeport.org), or with the QR at the right.

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