



**4 September
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) and the website of our NPR partner WNJI Northern Public Radio (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.

City updates

Improvements are now underway in the Shawnee Street and Hancock Avenue area, creating the need for the Hancock Viaduct to be closed to all traffic until further notice. This project was delayed due to the need for Nicor to secure permits from CN Railway to complete the work. The viaduct is a preliminary project to renovating the Hancock Bridge where improvements will include replacing the water main, storm sewer, and lowering the road by 2.5 feet to allow semi-truck traffic and safety equipment to enter the Arcade area from this viaduct location permanently going forward. Please recall that as road work begins here and is wrapping up throughout the City, road-closed signs give crews the proper space and safety to work and ignoring them creates safety risks for all. Please pay attention to all signage.

The City has also updated its processes for trash and recycling collection in a new brochure. Created in cooperation with the community's Environmental Study Group, the new "Got Trash" brochure includes updated information regarding reusable products, recycling, and what to put in your garbage; names and addresses of local businesses who accept reusable items; tips on how to manage waste in and around your home; composting information; and a listing of hazardous products and how to dispose of them. A copy of the information is included in the print version of this episode, as well as a QR code where you can download a copy for printing.



Finally, the City also reports that 7,147 tires were collected last Saturday at its Tire Recycling Event! That's a lot of miles going to a good end. Thank you to everyone who helped keep Freeport clean!

Lena Fall Festival

2025 LENA LIONS FALL FESTIVAL

September 5 & 6

"the Cadillac of small town festivals"

Parade
Community Pride
Noon Sharp
Saturday, Sept 6

Carnival
Rides & Games
Friday @ 6pm
Saturday after parade

Entertainment
Free Live Music
Friday Night
Grass Attack
Saturday Afternoon
Eukele Express
Saturday Night
The StingRays

RAFFLES
50/50
UTV

- Parade
- Lions Pork Chop on a Stick
- Skinner Amusements Rides & Games
- Lions Merchandise Bingo
- Lions Famous Ham Stand
- Food & Craft Vendors

Fall Festival Chair - Media Chair
Marcia Meyers
815-821-2300

Streets Chair
Connie Kraft
815-941-0020

Parade Chair
Bill Crichton
815-291-9361

Contact Lena Lions
LenalionsLionsClub

One of the most popular Fall events, the Lena Fall Festival, begins tomorrow, Friday, September 5th and continues through Saturday.

Activities include rides and games, a parade at noon on Saturday, and music on Friday and Saturday nights. Food and craft vendors will offer taste treats galore and lots of items that could make great holiday gifts.

This annual event is hosted by the Lena Lions and enjoyed by many every year.

Event showcases Freeport's hidden potential



Have you ever wondered what's behind the doors of many of downtown's buildings that are usually closed to the public? Come and find out! Next Thursday, September 11th, the Greater Freeport Partnership will host Downtown Unlocked, a one-of-a-kind event offering exclusive access to the interiors of Freeport's historic downtown buildings from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Participants will begin their journey at the Karcher Block Pocket Park at 17 W. Stephenson Street where they'll check in and receive a map of featured properties. From there, they can tour buildings with potential for retail, office, residential, or creative use. The goal is to promote spaces in the downtown district for new and existing business owners to view and ask questions in a commitment-free format.

The free event is a self-guided tour. Participants are encouraged to visit as many properties as they would like within the timeframe allotted. Information about each property will be available in a short-form booklet with representatives on hand at each property to guide you and answer questions. Registration is appreciated to ensure there is enough material available for everyone. Register at www.greaterfreeport.com/availableproperties or call 815-233-6301. That's 815-233-6301.

Updates from Highland Community College

At a recent meeting the board of Highland Community College reviewed the extensive construction on campus, involving the remodeling and repurposing of space in the Sciences and Business Tech buildings as well as the athletic field parking lot.

Agriculture, welding and nursing continue to be the main programs of interest at HCC Board meetings. Agriculture has received major gifts of land and support locally, and several construction projects to support the program are underway.

Another major topic was the proposed Athletic and Events Center. A great deal of discussion has been happening regarding the relationship between Highland and the YMCA and the location of the Y on the Highland campus. More information on this subject will be covered in future FREEPOD episodes.



In other Highland news, as school began the college's nursing students hit the road offering free school physicals for local kids. Highland Nursing and Allied Health Programs teamed up with the Stephenson County Health Department and Carroll County Health Department to help students start the year off strong, and thanks all those who visited their mobile van, pictured at left.

Freeport High School and Middle School team receives award from Eastern Illinois University

Freeport High School and Middle School were awarded this year's Cebrin Goodman Teen Institute Action Team of the Year Award. The Cebrin Goodman Teen Institute is a student leadership camp that takes place each July at Eastern Illinois University and brings over 300 middle school and high school students from across the state and beyond together to collaborate on substance use/misuse and mental health prevention, leadership development and student-led community advocacy.

The Freeport Action Team attended CGTI for the second summer this year and has made incredible strides in recruitment and engagement, nearly tripling in attendance. The Action Team of the Year Award is presented to an Action Team that has gone above and beyond in their group efforts to create an impact in their community before and during their time at CGTI.

The Freeport school participants were lauded for having gone above and beyond to do their own peer-to-peer outreach to create positive change while tapping into every resource available to them to ensure that their schools have access to the prevention and wellness education they deserve. The Freeport Action Team was presented the award at the camp's closing ceremony on July 17.



Cast Iron Chef at the Apple River Fort

This Saturday, September 6th, at the Apple River Fort near Elizabeth you can watch live cooking demonstrations utilizing authentic 1830s recipes, techniques, and cast-iron cookware over open fires from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. While tasting is not permitted for health and safety, visitors will receive recipe handouts so they can recreate these historic recipes at home.

The event is hosted by the Apple River Fort Historic Foundation, which raised funds to reconstruct the fort and supports the historic site by funding living history and other special programming as well as other special projects. Built in 1832 during the Black Hawk War, the original Apple River Fort played a pivotal role in defending early settlers. It was one of the few forts attacked during the war and uniquely targeted by Black Hawk himself. For more information on this event and many others, visit www.appleriverfort.org and click on "calendar."



An actor portraying a woman from the past carries water at the historic Apple River Fort.

It's time for mums!



VOICES of Stephenson County is hosting their fundraising Fall Mum Sale at the Lincoln Mall next Thursday, September 11th from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Friday, September 12th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. They're just \$12 each and are available in five great colors: red, orange, white, yellow, and a purple-pink.

You can pre-order by calling 815-235-9421. Don't miss out—these sell fast and are perfect for adding a pop of fall color to your home or garden.

Library boasts record participation in summer reading program

The Freeport Public Library reports that they had a whopping 523 grade-schoolers and middle-school-aged students as well as 91 teens sign up for their summer reading program this year, smashing previous records! The grand finale party was a hit too, with over 425 people celebrating their reading accomplishments.

The Library also broke a circulation record by checking out over 10,000 items for two months in a row. June and July were the busiest months in the history of the library, which continues to play such an important role in the community. Congratulations, Freeport Public Library!

Master Gardeners available to answer your home gardening questions

As folks begin their Fall lawn and garden work, don't forget that if you have gardening questions let the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners help you find the answers.

This free service provides research-based horticulture information for the home gardener. You can all the Stephenson County Master Gardener Hotline at 815-235-4125 or submit your questions online at <https://extension.illinois.edu/jsw/horticulture>. That's 815-235-4125 or find them under "horticulture" on the website for the University of Illinois Extension for Stephenson, Winnebago, and Jo Daviess counties.

The week ahead...

As we look at the week ahead, we hope you'll stop by *Art in Every Stitch: A Quilt Show* at the Freeport Art Museum bed turning event tonight from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. at the Museum at 121 North Harlem Avenue in Freeport. Featured artists will lift and "turn" quilts from a stack, sharing the personal stories, techniques, and inspirations behind each piece. Guests are invited and encouraged to bring their own quilts to add to the "bed pile" and share their histories in this community-centered tradition.

Pretzel fans, the first football game of the season is tomorrow night! The Pretzels will take the field against Belvidere North. Good luck, Pretzels!

If you're hungry tomorrow or Saturday, the Cub Foods Brat Stand this weekend will be run by supporters of the Baileyville Reformed Church. They'll be there both Friday and Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to serve up brats, burgers, hot dogs, and ribeye sandwiches. As always, don't forget the Farmers Markets tomorrow morning both in downtown Freeport and near Higher Grounds on the south edge of the City, as well as in Lena (<https://www.stephensoncountymarket.com/vendors>). The Stephenson County Farmers Market in downtown Freeport is continuing to collect donations for the Freeport Salvation Army Food Pantry. While food donations of any type are welcome, the Market is focusing attention on providing local produce for the Pantry.



There's also a birthday party on Saturday! The Cedarville Area Historical Society is hosting a Mother Daughter Tea from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. to celebrate Jane Addams 165th birthday. The event runs from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. and offers sandwiches, desserts, salads, tea, and lemonade as well as fun activities like a Best Hat Contest. Tickets are \$15 for each mom and daughter and \$5 for others in their party.

As another reminder, be sure that Brewfest is on your calendar in just a couple more weeks! This very popular annual event hosted by the Greater Freeport Partnership is coming up on Saturday, September 27th. As always, attendees will not only be able to enjoy a variety of local beers but also a whole afternoon of fun and entertainment to celebrate the season. FREEPOD will have more details in future episodes but tickets are already available online at www.greaterfreeport.com – just search on “Brewfest” to get yours today.



If you are looking for something to do this week or any week, visit the Greater Freeport Partnership website at 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. 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 with FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors visiting with Dr. Anna Alvarado, Superintendent of Schools for Freeport School District 145, about the recent changes in locations for lower grades that took effect for this new school year. The interview is available online and can be listened to anytime.

Next Tuesday, FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel will chat with Risa Tyler, Director of the FHN Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center about its 30th anniversary providing cancer care for the Freeport area. This pod will post at noon on Tuesday, September 9th 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, WNII in DeKalb, at 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.

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



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