



Happy Leap Day!

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 news specific to our community.

We're getting more listeners every week, and much of that is thanks to you. Please share about us on your social media and thank you for your enthusiasm – now here's news you've been missing.

Outstanding achievements recognized

The Greater Freeport Partnership announced the winners of its annual awards at its annual dinner last week. The awards recognize significant community contributions from outstanding individuals and businesses. Nine awards were presented.

The LeBaron Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to David Snyders, the longest-serving Sheriff in Stephenson County history, who is now retired.

The Economic Achievement Award recognizing economic revitalization went to The Meadows shopping district that includes Marshalls, Pet Supplies Plus, Applebee's and a number of other establishments.

The Freeport Club was named Business of the Year. The Club is part of one of the oldest golf courses in Northern Illinois.

Start-up of the Year was The Exchange, which identifies itself as an indoor market in the making on South Chicago, and Berner Food & Beverage was named Manufacturer of the Year. The Not-for-Profit of the Year award went to the Freeport Art Museum.

Megan Howard was recognized as Greater Freeport Partnership Ambassador of the Year and Ryan Walton, who is also an Ambassador, received the Rising Star award for his many contributions on the Planning Commission.

Todd McKenna was named Volunteer of the Year for his dedication to Malcolm Eaton Enterprises, the Knights of Columbus, The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul Society, and the Lincoln Douglas Society.

We at FREEPOD appreciate the contributions of all these Freeport area winners. Congratulations!

Greater Freeport Partnership funding

In other news about the Greater Freeport Partnership, the organization looks forward to future business development following a budget agreement with the City of Freeport. In an agreement approved unanimously by the City Council, the Partnership will receive \$400,000 per year for three years, beginning now in 2024 and running through year-end 2026. A one-year extension option is also part of the agreement.

The payments are funded from appropriated Tax Increment Financing, or TIF, revenues from various City TIF Districts, the City's Hotel Motel Tax's Tourism Promotion Fund, and the City's General Fund.

A bonus of \$25,000 may also be paid to the Partnership in first quarter of each year if certain goals from the previous year are met. These goals deliverables are agreed upon annually by the Freeport City Manager and the Executive Director of the Greater Freeport Partnership for each contract year and are based on the Partnership's Economic Development Strategic Plan.

You can now text 911

Mobile phone users can now text emergency messages to 9-1-1 throughout Stephenson County. Text to 911 should only be used in an emergency when placing a call is not possible. Examples include those who are deaf, speech impaired or when talking on the phone would place the caller in danger.

For now, texts should be in English with simple words including the location and type of emergency. Texters should be prepared to answer questions and instructions, also by text, from a telecommunicator at the 911 office.

Freeport Pretzels win Regional basketball title

Freeport High School's boys' varsity basketball team beat Rochelle 82 to 77 last week to propel them to their first Class 3A regional title in 14 years.

Guard Kazion Morehead scored 22 points, Dedric Macon added 15 points, and Andrew Seward added another 10.

Sadly, that game ended their season as the Pretzels lost 80-49 to Crystal Lake South Gators last night in the IHSA Kaneland Sectional semifinal. Dedric Mason finished that game as one of the top three scorers in Pretzel history. Willie Veasley and Dedric's dad, Demetric, are the other two.

In our first in-person audio interview, FREEPOD host Matt Mullen talked with Pretzel Coach TJ Jackson about the Pretzel's outstanding season. Here's an excerpt of their conversation, and the full interview can be found at the end of this podcast.

Basketball Tournament at HCC

In other basketball news, Highland Community College will host the Region 4 - Division 1 Men's and Women's basketball tournament March 4th through the 9th at the HCC Sports Complex. Sixteen teams will compete at the tournament, and championship games will be played on March 9th.

The complete tournament schedule will post on Highlandcougars.com on March 3rd, when seedings are completed. Go see some exciting basketball at HCC and support the Cougars!

Looking ahead...

Once again, there's a lot going on around Freeport!

As a reminder, the second classical music concert from The Freeport Community Concert Association is coming up on Sunday, March 3. The Sinta Quartet will present classical saxophone selections at 3 p.m. at the Masonic Temple in downtown Freeport. Tickets are \$10 and students are invited to attend for free.

The Hitch-Hiker is the next film in Lindo Theatre's Select Pix classic film series hosted by Ed Finch and Alan Wenzel at the Lindo Theatre. Directed by Ida Lupino, this 1953 film is a noir thriller. Lupino was the first woman to direct a feature film for a major Hollywood studio. It screens next Wednesday, March 6th at 1:00 and 7:00 p.m. 2024 is the 14th year for the popular film series.

Also next week on Thursday, Dr. Andy Dvorak and former Freeport Mayor Jim Gitz will present "The Warren Commission at Sixty: Was it Right About the Assassination of President Kennedy?" Reviewing details from the Warren Commission Report issued sixty years ago in 1964, the free program is part of the Lectures on American History series hosted by the Freeport Public Library Foundation. It will be held in Freeport Public Library and begin at 6:30 pm on Thursday, March 7th.

And last but definitely not least, deliciousness is coming right up in at least two places! Union Dairy in Freeport opens on Friday, March 1st! They have new hours this year: Thursday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. They still have 51 flavors of ice cream and so many other yummy goodies – we can't wait to enjoy this Freeport tradition again!

Then this Saturday, March 2nd be sure to head to the Masonic Temple for the 70th annual Freeport Kiwanis Pancake and Sausage Day. Seventy years! Serving from 7 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., the meal will be served cafeteria style in the Temple ballroom or you can pick up your food at their drive-thru station off Cherry Avenue. Tickets are \$12 and your dollars not only help further the many great causes supported by the Kiwanis but get you a darned delicious meal!



Top three scorers in Pretzel history (L-R) Willie Veasley, Dedric and Demetric Macon

Until next week...

FREEPOD is proud to be part of a growing movement to stop and reverse the decline of local news sources in Illinois, and we invite you to tune in for news about Freeport businesses, City plans and progress, area rewards and recognition, local impacts related to state and national news, and more.

As we've said before, FREEPOD couldn't come to you without the help of many local supporters. As always, we're especially appreciative to the Mass Communications Department at Highland Community College for all of their help producing this podcast, and to our many liaisons and reporters for the time they volunteer to bring the news to you. Thank you, Highland and Team FREEPOD!

If you have story suggestions or would like to donate to support FREEPOD, check out our website at www.freepod.org.

Check back next week for more news you've been missing and thank you for listening!