



**3 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) 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.

Street closures update

Road work continues with a number of streets in Freeport 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.

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 could result in injury, project problems, and more. Please pay attention to and obey signs for everyone's safety.

Electronic recycling event

In other City news, the City of Freeport is hosting an electronic recycling event on Saturday, July 19th at the Stephenson County Fairgrounds from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Freeport residents can bring up to three items with monitors. This includes TV's, laptops, computer screens, and smartphones. Other accepted items without any limit include keyboards, computer towers, speakers, printers, and fax/copy machines. Appliances will not be accepted.

This recycling event is only for Freeport residents and attendees will be required to present a Freeport ID before dropping off their items. This collection is another step toward ensuring the community is free of illegal dumping and the City appreciates all who participate in accomplishing that objective.



Fourth of July Traffic Safety Campaign

The Freeport Police Department will focus on impaired and unbuckled drivers during July Fourth traffic enforcement. This safety campaign is running through next Monday, July 7th.

Police Chief Chris Shenberger is asking all residents and visitors to celebrate Independence Day safely by not driving under the influence of alcohol, cannabis, or other impairing substances. Officers will be working diligently to keep impaired drivers off the road and ensure everyone is buckled up.

The Freeport Police Department joins the Illinois State Police and more than 200 local police and sheriff's departments for the statewide effort. The campaign is made possible by federal traffic safety funds administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation.

New athletic director at Highland

Highland Community College has announced that Michael Broskowski has stepped into the role of the Cougar's Athletic Director. Highland President Christina Kuberski says that with Midwestern roots, a strong history in college athletics, and enthusiasm for community-building, Broskowski is eager to build upon the momentum driven by the college's coaches, culture and program growth.

Originally from Wisconsin, Broskowski's parents live just 80 miles from Freeport in Jefferson, Wisconsin and he's very familiar with Highland. A graduate of Western Illinois University with a degree in Broadcasting, he began his professional career in sports media, serving five years as a director for broadcasting and media relations in minor league baseball. He pursued a master's degree in Sports Administration from Arkansas State University and made a successful transition into athletic administration as Associate Athletic Director at Arizona Western College.

Broskowski is a firm believer that athletic success starts with meaningful relationships between coaches and athletic staff, athletes, administration and the community. Said Broskowski, “Our athletes are here for a crucial two years. It’s a great opportunity—not just to build athletes, but to build great people.”



*Highland Community College Athletic
Director Michael Broskowski*



A former sports broadcaster, Michael Broskowski brings a fresh perspective to the administrative role. A stepfather to two teenage sons, he and his wife Ta Leasa, who is also an educational administrator, recently welcomed their newest family member, a baby boy.

Highland names Erik Walton Head Coach of Cougar men’s basketball

In other coaching news at Highland Community College, Erik Walton has been appointed Head Coach of Cougar Men’s Basketball. With deep roots in community college basketball and a unique professional background in social work, Walton brings a blend of coaching experience, understanding, and leadership to the role.

A former standout at Joliet Junior College in the late nineties, Walton helped his team achieve a third-place finish at nationals. He went on to play at Eureka College, where a leg fracture shifted his perspective from player to coach. He later earned his degree in history from Aurora University.



*Head Coach of
Cougar Men’s
Basketball Erik
Walton*

Walton has a strong coaching resume at both the junior college and high school levels. He served as an assistant coach for Joliet Junior College during their National Junior College Athletic Association national runner-up and national championship seasons and later contributed to high school basketball programs in Coal City and Oregon, Illinois. He has been assistant coach for the Cougars since the 2022-23 season,

helping the team navigate highly competitive National Junior College Athletic Association Division I ranks.

Since 2007, Walton has also worked as a social worker. In 2020, joined Malcolm Eaton Enterprises in Freeport where he supports individuals with mental and physical disabilities. This facet of his career has shaped his philosophy and his patience as a coach and mentor, and Walton says that work taught him the power of patience, resilience, and understanding.

Walton has set four goals for his players: Graduate. Be a good citizen. Give back to the community. And wherever they go next, send Coach Walton a t-shirt.

VOICES earns national grant to revamp pet program

VOICES of Stephenson County will be upgrading and refreshing its shelter pet program., thanks to a \$38,000 grant from RedRover, a national animal welfare non-profit. VOICES assists survivors of domestic and sexual violence and assisted more than 800 survivors last year.

VOICES Executive Director Beth Maskell says that the grant will enable the organization to revitalize and expand capacity in their shelter pet program. They will renovate two bedrooms in the shelter so that they are more pet friendly, upgrade the outdoor dog play area, and fund veterinary care and short-term boarding for pets who cannot stay in the shelter with their owners. Maskell went on to note that only 19% of shelters in the U.S. are pet friendly and statistics show that survivors will stay in an abusive relationship rather than leave their pets behind and that this grant should help stabilize the program at VOICES for the next few years.

RedRover awarded 12 Safe Housing grants for a total of over \$555,000 in their first grant round of 2025. VOICES was the only Illinois organization selected in this round.

FHN offers Safe Sitter class

FHN is once again offering Safe Sitter Essentials with CPR on Saturday, July 12th from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the lower level of FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport.

The class designed to prepare students in grades 6 through 8 to be safe when they're home alone or babysitting. The full-day course is \$50, which includes the Safe Sitter Essentials Student Handbook, completion card, and basic CPR skill practice. Please note that the class does not qualify attendees for full CPR certification. Financial assistance is available for eligible students so for more information on that or with other questions, call 815-599-6707. Registration is required and can be done online at www.fhn.org/safesitter.

Culver's drive-thru open again

The expanded drive-thru and parking for Culver's in Freeport now is open. Final touches still need to be done but the added space will increase the capacity for customers and provides more room for vehicles to line up. The added parking spots are to the right after turning into the original entrance.

Tutty will be here soon!



There's a lot to look forward to with this year's Tutty Baker Fest from July 11th through the 13th. Find out more about all the events to be enjoyed at this community celebration packed with fun for all ages by searching on Tutty Baker Fest on Facebook, and be sure to listen to FREEPOD's in-depth interview that was posted on Tuesday to find out more from Freeport Mayor Jodi Miller!

Fireworks!

There are a number of fireworks events planned to celebrate Independence Day in the Freeport area. The dates and locations include:

July 3rd in Hanover, Shannon and Warren;

July 4th in Stockton, Galena and Mount Carroll;

July 5th in Apple Canyon Lake, Warren and Savanna;

July 12th in Freeport as part of Tutty Baker Days;

and July 19th in German Valley.

Those with pets are reminded that many animals can become very disturbed with the loud noises associated with fireworks displays so it is probably best to leave your furry friends at home.

Music on Chicago

Music on Chicago continues tonight with a performance by *The Real Deal featuring the Synergy Band*. This popular music event has been a tradition 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.

There is a \$5 entry donation and children age 5 and under are free and give you access to the summer's best party and local food vendors. Volunteers also serve alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages during the event. Gates open at 5:30.

The week ahead...

Next Wednesday, July 9th movie-lovers can enjoy *The Great Escape*, the next offering in the Select Pix Classic Film Series at the Lindo Theatre. Hosted by Ed Finch and Alan Wenzel, this 1963 WW II action film, is based on actual events and features an all-star cast headed by Steve McQueen, James Gardner, and Richard Attenborough. Show times are 1:00 and 7:00 p.m. and both will be followed by a discussion about the movie. This year is the 15th year for the film series hosted by Ed and Alan.

If you're hungry tomorrow or Saturday, the Cub Foods Brat Stand this weekend will be run by the Rebuilding Together Stephenson County. 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. Also on Saturday morning don't forget to see what's fresh and delicious at the two Farmers' Markets in Freeport as well as one in Lena.

Then on Sunday, July 6th don't miss the Music Under the Stars annual Patriotic Concert by the Freeport Concert Band at 7:00 p.m. at the Koenig Amphitheater in Krape Park. The concert will celebrate our country and honor our Armed Forces and will include the added excitement of Battery G, 2nd Illinois Light Artillery and their live cannon fire. On that point, please leave your pets home as the cannon fire could startle them. Be sure this holiday concert is on your calendar!

We also realize we forgot to mention that June was Dairy Month but we're happy to celebrate ice cream and cheese any time. According to the Dairy AgMag, the average American eats 37 pounds of cheese each year, mozzarella and cheddar are two of the most popular cheeses in the country, and U.S. dairy farmers like those right here in Northwest Illinois provide the milk to make more than 7 billion pounds of cheese each year. Yes, we're really OK with celebrating the dairy industry any time.

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, as mentioned earlier, if you haven't already done so be sure to listen to this week's in-depth interview where FREEPOD host Matt Mullen visits with Freeport Mayor Jodi Miller at about Tutty Baker Fest coming up July 11th through the 13th. The interview is available online and can be listened to anytime.

Next Tuesday FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors interviews Xavier Lassandro, a Freeport High School graduate currently in his senior year at West Virginia University. Lassandro is a master puppeteer who makes his own puppets and has worked with a number of professional puppet masters, including

those involved in the creation of the Muppets. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday July 8th 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. 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, thank you for listening, and again, Happy Juneteenth!

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

LINKS TO OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS NEWSLETTERS

To find 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 subscribe to their free weekly newsletter there too, and we have a link to a QR code in the print version of this newscast if you'd like to sign up that way.



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, or with the QR at the right.

Subscribe to City of Freeport News



Join our list of subscribers and get City of Freeport's monthly e-newsletters and other important and timely updates sent directly to your e-mail using this QR code.