



**11 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](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.

### **Downtown Freeport Pocket Park doubles its size with support from Marianne Garvens**

Freeport's downtown pocket park plans have entered a new phase of expansion thanks to the generous support of longtime community advocate Marianne Garvens.

Located in the heart of Freeport's downtown, the pocket park originally planned for 15 West Stephenson Street was first announced in June with the impetus of a T-Mobile Hometown Grant and plans included a patio and greenspace for community use. Thanks to Ms. Garvens' contribution, the park will now double in size, providing the potential for new amenities and opportunities.

Garvens believes in the historical integrity of downtown Freeport and the importance of remembering the contributions of previous building owners and entrepreneurs. The pocket park will be named Karcher Block Pocket Park in remembrance of the building that once stood in the space.

John H. Karcher and Louis Karcher were among the first to purchase land for development in downtown Freeport. John's daughter-in-law, Luella Karcher, was known as "Mrs. Garden Club" and was integral in establishing three garden clubs in Freeport, as well as the Garden Club of Illinois. The park will honor her favorite floral variety, the iris, with many planted in the design.

Construction on the The Karcher Block Pocket Park kicks off with a groundbreaking ceremony honoring the contribution of Garvens on Tuesday, September 23rd at 10:00 a.m. to which the public is invited. Construction will be completed in 2026.

### **Sculpture Walk in downtown Freeport**

On Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup> the Freeport Art Museum and the City of Freeport will host a downtown walk featuring the new sculptures that are being installed throughout the downtown. Next week's in-depth

interview with Jessica Modica, Executive Director of the Freeport Art Museum, provides more information about these downtown art installations and we'll have a more detailed article about the whole project in next week's FREEPOD but we wanted to give everyone a heads-up to get it on your calendars. We're looking forward to it!

### **Funding restored for Highland Community College programs**

Highland's Adult Education program recently faced a budget scramble as the new fiscal year was about to begin. The program, like the rest of the HCC offerings is funded with local, state, and federal funds. Both state and federal funds flow through the Illinois Community College Board and enable the vitally important GED and English as a Second Language, or ESL, programs to continue operating without charge to students.

However, due to federal budget uncertainties, Highland was instructed to revise previously submitted budgets and remove the federal funds which created a significant funding challenging. This budget revision necessitated class, program, and staff cuts even as planning for the new school year was already underway.

Fortunately, the federal program funding was eventually restored, which will allow the college to gradually add back GED and ESL classes that had been cut due to the lack of federal funds. For more information contact Adult Education Director, Rachel Feldaus at 815-599-3455.

### **Northwest Illinois Airshow canceled**

Days before the Northwest Illinois Airshow was set to take off organizers canceled the event, which was planned for next Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup> at Albertus Airport. A message on the Airshow's website says the event was canceled due to unforeseen health issues impacting the event's promoter.

The Airshow organizers are working to reimburse those who have already purchased tickets and will post an update when they have more information from their ticketing service.

### **FHN gives back through sports physical clinics**

Every year, FHN offers many opportunities for sports physicals required for participation in high school sports in area schools. The complete \$25 fee for each physical was donated back to the schools by FHN, which hosted the physicals at clinics at FHN offices across northwest Illinois.

The clinics, held throughout the spring and summer, provided 554 physicals and generated more than \$13,000 for 11 area schools. Freeport School District 145 received \$3,775 of that total.

Providers who donated their time included Dr. Clarence Parks, Dr. Justin Young, Dr. Jeffrey Schleich, Dr. Drew Johnson, Dr. Zachary Fulton, and Nurse Practitioners April Jessen and Tamisha Bonvillain.

FHN encourages families to consult their primary care, orthopedic, podiatry and rehab professionals for sports injury needs, and wishes good luck to area athletes as they begin their sports seasons. For more information about sports medicine and other services available at FHN, visit [www.fhn.org](http://www.fhn.org).

### Freeport School District 145 4th Annual Community Resource and Wellness Fair

The FSD 145 Student and Family Engagement Department is sponsoring its 4th Annual Community Resource and Wellness Fair next Thursday, September 18th from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. A number of organizations will be present to outline how they can assist families in a variety of ways. The theme for this year is, "Saving Lives with Boots on the Ground" and attendees are encouraged to celebrate country western style by wearing their favorite cowboy boots, hats and gear.



A free light meal with dessert will be provided for families who attend the event. There will be activities for children who attend with their parents, including a bubble maker, bounce house, face painting, a coloring station, shooting baskets into an inflatable basketball rim, and much more. There will also be a DJ and a 360-degree photo booth. The event will take place at Freeport Middle School at 701 West Empire in the cafeteria and back lawn area.

### National Hispanic Heritage Month celebration

Next Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. the public is invited to celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month at the Jehova-Nissi Church at 1421 West Galena Avenue in Freeport next to the Big Apple restaurant. This fun day will be filled with music, special beverages, and delicious taste treats from the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Columbian, Mexico, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Venezuela, and Costa Rica.



The theme for National Hispanic Heritage Month this year is "Collective Heritage: Honoring the Past, Inspiring the Future" and is intended to recognize the rich cultural traditions of the Hispanic community while also looking forward to the creativity and promise of future generations. For more information, call the event's organizers at 815-505-5415. That's 815-505-5415.

## Protein, Physical Activity, and Aging: What You Need to Know

Next Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, the Senior Resource Center and the University of Illinois Extension are teaming up for a presentation about the importance of protein and physical activity as we age. The event is scheduled for 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Senior Resource Center in Freeport.

The program will review how aging impacts muscle health, key nutrition tips, and lifestyle strategies to help people stay strong and independent. University of Illinois Extension Nutrition and Wellness Educator Diane Reinhold will cover proper nutrition, particularly adequate protein intake, and regular physical activity that can slow the rate of muscle loss and support bone health, metabolism, and blood sugar control. There is a \$5 fee for the event and attendees can register at [extension.illinois.edu/events](https://extension.illinois.edu/events)

## Sourdough class

In other news that includes the University of Illinois Extension, the Stephenson County Farm Bureau is hosting a Sourdough 101 class on Tuesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Diane Reinhold, the Extension Educator in Nutrition and Wellness who is leading the program at the Senior Resource Center we just talked about, will also be leading this session.

She will review the science of sourdough, its benefits, how to develop a starter dough, how to maintain it, and provide plenty of tips in her bread how-to discussion. This class is limited to 25 participants and is free to attend. Due to limited space, reservations must be made by September 17<sup>th</sup>. The class will be held at the Stephenson County Farm Bureau building. If you're interested, please call the office at 815-232-3186 for more information and to reserve your space.

## Friends Forever annual car show

This Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup> is the annual Bruce Nielsen Memorial Car Show at Friends Forever Humane Society at 966 Rudy Road just south of Freeport.

### Friends Forever Humane Society's Bruce Nielsen Memorial CAR SHOW

Saturday, September 13, 2025  
8 am - 3 pm (Rain or Shine)

- Free admission for spectators
- Open house at the shelter and animals at the event
- Food and 50/50 raffle
- Music by 3D Sound
- Working dog demonstrations by High Flying Huskies, Police K9 Unit, and others
- Door prizes and silent auction
- Awards to the Top 40
- 8 "Best of..." awards
- "Best of Show" trophy to the winner
- \$10 pre-registration for participants before 9/1/25; \$15 thereafter and at the gate



At Friends Forever Humane Society, 966 Rudy Road, Freeport, IL

The event runs from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and includes a lot more than cars. An open house throughout the shelter, music, food, a silent auction, and working dog demonstrations by the High Flying Huskies and Police K9 Unit as well as others are just a few of the fun activities that are planned.

There is no admission fee for spectators and there will be lots of furry friends waiting to greet everyone.

## Tai Chi in the Park

Do you feel the need for a little more balance in your life? The Freeport Park District is here to help! Find your balance, inside and out at Tai Chi classes that are just beginning on Monday nights from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. through the end of October.

Tai Chi is the gentle art of movement that builds strength, focus, and calm that's perfect for all ages and fitness levels. Register by calling the Park District at 815-235-6114 or go online at [www.freeportparkdistrict.org](http://www.freeportparkdistrict.org) and find the class by searching on "Tai Chi." Come as you are and leave feeling centered!



## Agriculture helps to start the school year off right

According to the Stephenson County Farm Bureau, there are a lot of things involved with the start of school that depend on farmers and the agricultural industry overall...and we don't even think about many of them. As school begins, here are just a few examples of how agricultural efforts contribute to school success outside of providing nutritious food for school lunches:

- The average American owns seven pairs of blue jeans made from cotton.
- There are 150 yards of cotton in a regulation baseball.
- California cedar trees provide the most used wood in making pencils and notebooks.
- Hand sanitizer can be made with alcohol produced from Illinois corn.
- Illinois wheat is used for chocolate chip cookies, Illinois Specialty Growers produce apples, and Prairie Farms Dairy farmers provide thousands of ½ pints of milk.

Whether or not your family has students getting started in a new school year, we all have lots of reasons to be proud to be part of a rural community with a strong agricultural presence. Happy Fall!

## The week ahead...

As we look at the week ahead, we hope you'll stop by the open house at the Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. to appreciate both the technology and personal touch in cancer care that this important part of FHN has provided for 30 years. Meet providers and staff as well as cancer survivors and their families, tour the state-of-the-art cancer treatment facility, and enjoy heavy hors d'oeuvres and beverages. The event is free to the public and no registration is needed.

If you're hungry tomorrow or Saturday, the Cub Foods Brat Stand this weekend will be run by supporters of the Immanuel Lutheran School Boosters Club. 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. 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.

The Freeport School District Student Garden also wants to remind everyone that while they're not at the farmers market, their fresh produce stand at the soccer fields on the southwest corner of Locus and Empire Streets is well stocked! They offer freshly picked fruits, veggies, and eggs on a self-service basis.

We featured the owner of Autosmart, the new classic car business in the former location of the Stephenson County Convention and Visitors Bureau on Route 20 just east of Freeport, in a recent in-depth interview and they're hosting their last cruise-in of the season this Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. The public is invited to enjoy a wide variety of classic vehicles in celebration of Movie Cars, which is the theme of the event. All vehicles are welcome and there is no charge for spectators.



And of course, be sure that Brewfest is on your calendar for Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup>. This very popular annual event hosted by the Greater Freeport Partnership lets attendees enjoy variety of local beers as well as a whole afternoon of fun and entertainment to celebrate the season. Tickets are already available online at [www.greaterfreeport.com](http://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](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 visits with Risa Tyler, Director of the FHN Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center about its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary providing cancer care for the Freeport area. The interview is available online and can be listened to anytime.

Next Tuesday, Alan chats with Jessica Modica, Executive Director of the Freeport Art Museum about the Sculpture Walk being installed in downtown Freeport. This pod will post at noon on Tuesday, September 16<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.

Before we sign off, we have a favor to ask that will help FREEPOD reach more listeners. When listening on your favorite podcast platform, please “like” or “follow” us – this helps us to move up in the rankings of podcasts and enables us to better promote ourselves throughout the region. On Facebook, also please click on “like” as the algorithms there also depend on user input to help us increase our presence.

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](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 BELOW**

## What's Going on in Stephenson County?

**Subscribe to  
our weekly  
event guide!**



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