



**6 March
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. Thanks for your support!

Upgraded street lights coming to high-crime areas

The City is working with ComEd to replace 63 street lights on the Police Department's list of areas with high crime activity. The lights have increased 149 LED wattage and cost \$374 each, including installation, for a total cost of over \$23,000.

The streets include portions of Oak Avenue, Locust Avenue, Broadway Street, Chicago Avenue, State Avenue, Winneshiek Street, Winslow Street, Iroquois Street, Carroll Avenue, Pleasant Street, Float Avenue, Kenwood Avenue, Frank Street, High Avenue, and Galena Avenue.

The estimated increase in lighting program costs \$5.00 a month in rental maintenance and is less than \$3.00 additional in electrical cost per light per month to the City contracts. ComEd staff will install the lights as soon as they arrive. Solar lighting options were researched but while they are potentially an option for City areas without existing utility-powered lights and poles, they are far more expensive to maintain over time if existing poles and utilities are not already available.

In related City news, residents are invited to complete surveys or otherwise help point out ways that streets in the City can be made safer. Suggestions could include stop signs, crosswalks, lights, speed limits, street lights, damaged or defaced signs, potholes, and so much more. Surveys are available at www.cityoffreeport.org by searching on "safe street survey" or visit https://qualtricsxmn22whq9qz.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0HdcoCUENgmhFrM?Q_CHL=qz

In other City news, Freeport is exploring the purchase of land and easements along Fairgrounds Road for water Well #12, and surveys are now available for public input. We'll report on that in the future.

Stephenson County part of safe rural roads project

The County is participating in a project called *Safe Streets 4 All* with five other rural Illinois counties to identify roads and intersections where serious accidents have taken place over the past ten years. Even

though autos are safer now than ever before, fatalities and serious injuries have increased significantly. Fatal accidents are up 17% nationwide, 32% in Illinois, and 7.1% in the 6 county area. Not surprisingly, the worst accident results are in rural areas involving fixed objects such as trees or telephone poles which represented 44% of the worst accidents. Animal collisions represented the highest frequency of all accidents, but only 2% of fatal or serious injury accidents.

Residents can learn more at a virtual public meeting event on Wednesday, March 12th, from noon to 1:00 p.m. or Thursday, March 13th, from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. You can find the link in the print version of this episode to reserve your space at the meeting.

The next step will be submitting plans for grants that will help pay for road improvements in these designated areas. Notice of successful funding is expected in late March.

In other County news, June Dillman, 911 coordinator, was recognized for 33 years of service, and five Sheriff's deputies received awards for outstanding results in 2024. Also, Matrix Care, the new billing and collection company for Walnut Acres nursing facility that's currently home to 43 residents, began billing in January.

Highland Community College news

Following the approval of an eight-dollar tuition increase from \$151 per credit hour to \$159 per credit hour, which also includes from \$113 to \$119 for senior citizens, the board reported that Illinois has approved a state budget increase of three percent for fiscal year 2026 with a projected \$9 million increase for community colleges.

President Kuberski also reported that the fall semester represented the fifth consecutive enrollment increase since the pandemic.

Two FHN Nurses Receive Ferguson Nursing Scholarships

Kiley Weltzin and Paige Gallentine are the recipients of the 2024 Mildred F. Ferguson Nursing Scholarship. The scholarship was endowed in 2003 by Ferguson's daughter, Nancy Ferguson Seeley, in honor of her mother's contributions during her decades of nursing service to the people of Freeport. Recipients receive full tuition as they pursue an associate's degree in nursing.

Including Weltzin and Gallentine, 53 FHN team members have received scholarships since 2003. One of the original scholarship recipients still serves as a nursing supervisor at FHN.

New Cafe and Collective to Open in Library

A new cafe and collective will open soon in the Freeport Public Library, filling the space recently vacated by Capybara Cafe.

Partners Amera Striegel and Kate Frautschy are excited to open Full Circle Cafe and Collective later this month, introducing locally sourced and organic foods to their patrons along with educational classes focused on building a sense of community. A soft opening is anticipated even sooner, and their

“collective” has already hosted sessions on subjects such as gardening, apple cider, sourdough bread starter, and seed sorting and swapping.

The two women met at a “barter market” in Rockford, and found they shared many interests and values, both selling items through the Jo Daviess Local Foods initiative. When the library cafe space became available, Amera saw an opportunity and discussed her idea with Kate, who quickly got on-board.

Both Amera and Kate love to cook using local ingredients and seasonal flavors. Their menu will reflect that philosophy. Oatmeal, quiche, soups, scones, and a robust beverage list will be regular offerings, and the full menu will be posted on their website and on Facebook, along with class lists. The cafe will not offer single-use disposable cups, so patrons are encouraged to bring a 16 oz. cup or buy a cup from the café’s Huskee swap program.

To start, hours will be 10 am until 3 pm Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. The last Monday of every month will offer a roundtable tea where everyone is invited to enjoy a cup of tea and share conversations about a topic of the month. Hours will be posted online. Catered in-house events will also be available. Amera and Kate are ready to come full circle with their new space, providing nourishment for the body, mind, and soul. Keep your eye on www.fullcirclecafecollective.com for complete details.

Library enhancements

In other Library news, bathrooms at the Freeport Public Library will soon be remodeled thanks to a \$30,000 donation from the estate of Lila Harnish. Thank you, Lila Harnish! The Library also reported that as a result of becoming a fine-free Library, about 6,000 fines totaling roughly \$12,000 were erased from its records, and circulation is the highest it has been since September.

Water Polo at the Y

Water polo began on Tuesday, March 4th at the Family YMCA of Northern Illinois on the Highland campus. This sport enhances teamwork, endurance, and overall fitness while also improving swimming skills. Water polo is open to all ages and ability levels in a friendly and supportive environment that will ensure everyone has a great time.

The program continues every Tuesday and is free for members and \$5 per night for non-members. Registration is required and can be done by calling the YMCA at 815-235-9622 or by visiting <https://operations.daxko.com/Online/5016/ProgramsV2/Home.mvc>

Deadline for tickets to Foundation for Northwest Illinois fundraiser

A Gatsby Gala is this year’s Spring fundraiser for the Foundation of Northwest Illinois, with proceeds directly funding the Jane Addams Legacy Fund which supports the needs of women and girls in Northwest Illinois.

The Gala will take place on March 22nd at the Freeport Club but the deadline for tickets is this Saturday, March 8th. The event will feature Celebrity Bartender Mike Marten of Mort’s Bar & Grill as well as Mr. Ed performing live in the Hole-in-One Speakeasy downstairs and DJ Lance providing the music upstairs. Food stations will be available throughout as well as 1920s-era cocktails.

Tickets are \$50 per person and can be purchased online at www.gatsby-gala.org. For more information including sponsor, contact Sarah Flashing Clow at sarah@fornwil.org or visit the same URL (www.gatsby-gala.org -- flyer below)



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Senior Resource Center programs

Freeport's Senior Resource Center will host a Medicare Basics Class on Monday, March 11th, at 10:00 a.m. to provide information and answer questions. All ages are welcome. Please register by calling 815-235-9777. That's calling 815-235-9777.

The Center is also beginning a new monthly series called Lunch and Learn next Thursday, March 13th at 12:00 p.m. The program will bring informative topics and guest speakers to those attending, who are asked to bring their own lunches. Freeport Fire Department Fire Marshal Hillary Broshous will speak about fire safety at this first session.

Morrow Plots at University of Illinois

Next Tuesday, March 11th, the University of Illinois Extension is hosting a presentation at the Stephenson County Bureau about the Morrow Plots at the University location in Champaign. The Morrow Plots are the oldest experimental agricultural field in the United States.

Led by Dr. Andrew Margenot, associate professor of soil science and director of the Morrow Plots, the historical journey will cover how the plots have evolved over the years, how the University has adapted to preserve this vital resource, insights into the Illinois Centennial Soil Archive Project, and updates about the new Alma Mater plots that will research soil management practices.

The evening begins with a meal at 6:00 p.m. and registration of \$30 per person is required. Go to <https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/morrow-plots-and-illinois-centennial-soil-archive-project-event> to reserve your space or call the Extension office at 815-235-4125 for more information.



Final One Book One Freeport presentation

Next Thursday, March 13th, this year's One Book One Freeport community reading project will wrap up with a free program at 6:30 p.m. at the Freeport Public Library. Ty Rohrer ([roarer](#)), the Manager of Cultural Arts at Waukegan Park District, will present *Ray Bradbury: Waukegan's Influence on a Visionary*, which tells the story of the life of the author from the time he was growing up in Waukegan, Illinois to details about his prolific career.

As a young boy, author Ray Bradbury was influenced by his hometown and many of his experiences there made their way into his writings. In three books, *Dandelion Wine*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, and *Farewell Summer*, Bradbury writes of events that take place in the fictional town of Green Town, his pseudonym for Waukegan. The presentation focuses on the three Green Town books and compares actual people, places, and events from Waukegan's past.



This presentation will also be held the Senior Resource Center at 2:00 p.m. the same day, Thursday, March 13th. No registration is required for either location.

*Ty Rohrer with the Ray
Bradbury statue in Waukegan*

Freeport Student Garden CSAs available for purchase

Community Supported Agriculture shares, also known as CSAs, are again available for purchase from the Freeport High School Student Gardens. Your purchase of just \$250 for a whole season's worth of garden produce supports the garden and in return, you will get seven half-bushel boxes of produce during the growing season. Click <https://fsg2024csa.cheddarup.com> to find out more and reserve your share today.

World Fest Concert: A Moving Sound at Freeport Art Museum

Next Friday, March 14th the Freeport Art Museum is hosting a performance of the award-winning Taiwanese ensemble *A Moving Sound*. Fusing traditional influences with a global sensibility, this group has built a worldwide following through their joyous mix of original music and dance. Featuring the distinctive timbres of the Taiwanese fiddle and lute along with transcendent vocals, *A Moving Sound* has been described as a Taiwanese whirlwind that veers between the meditative and the exuberant with irrepressible spirit.

The event begins at 7:00 p.m. with tickets at \$10 for the general public and \$8 for museum members. Tickets can be purchased online at www.freeportartmuseum.com by clicking on "events."



A Moving Sound

The week ahead...

There's still lots going on in the week ahead that we haven't covered in detail, including the 20th annual Moonlight Serenade dance featuring the Freeport High School Jazz Ensemble and the Highland Community College Big Band. The dance is this Saturday, March 8th from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. at the Freeport Masonic Temple. Tickets are \$7.50 at the Masonic box office or at the door.

There are two events later today that we've already covered, but want to remind you about. First, remember that you can learn how you may be able to save money on your utility bills in a presentation from the Citizens Utility Board, also known by the acronym CUB, today from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Freeport Public Library. Also at the Library, the *Journey to Freedom: Illinois' Underground Railroad* museum-quality exhibit opens at 4:00 p.m. Opening remarks will be given by the *Looking for Lincoln* Program Manager Heather Freezor who will highlight the years-long journey it took to bring this historic exhibit to life.

Don't forget that the Senior Resource Center in Freeport is providing free federal and state 1040 tax counseling, preparation, and filing services for low and middle-income senior taxpayers 60 years and older residing in Stephenson and Jo Daviess counties as well as adults with disabilities through April 15th.

We'll also have more information next week on the Freeport Mayoral Candidate Forum coming up on March 20th. This could be something you'd like to attend before voting, although we also want to remind you that early voting for the April elections for all city and village races is already available in the lower level of the Stewart Centre, 50 West Douglas Street in Freeport from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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 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.



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In closing...

In closing, if you haven't already done so be sure to listen to this week's in-depth interview that aired on Tuesday featuring FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors visiting with John Voelz ([voles](#)) about easy ways for elderly or physically challenged folks to stay in shape.

Next week, tune in as FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel chats with Tricia Mickley, CEO of the Frontier-Mt. Carroll Mutual Insurance Company about why the cost of insurance premiums. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, March 11th.

With that, time's up for this week. Tune in again next Thursday at noon for more about what's happening in Freeport, and be sure to subscribe to us on your favorite podcast platform to receive alerts on your as each new pod airs. You can also always click through to our pods through our Facebook page or the website of our National Public Radio partner, WNIJ in DeKalb, at www.northernpublicradio.org.

As always, we remind you that FREEPOD couldn't come to you without the Mass Communication Department at Highland Community College and our community liaisons and reporters. We're also grateful to WNIJ for partnering with us in reaching even more listeners, including Spanish-speaking community members. Thank you, Team FREEPOD! For more info, including how to make a tax-deductible contribution to support our work, visit our website at www.freepod.org.

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