



**17 April  
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. Thanks for your support! Now let's see what's going on.

#### **City news: EV chargers, more LED streetlights, and more**

There are eight "Level 3" electric vehicle chargers coming to Freeport as a result of a \$320,000 grant to the City through the Illinois EPA's Climate and Equitable Jobs Act program. With this funding and \$240,000 from ComEd for installation, the City will install four chargers each in two locations: the municipal lot along North Chicago Avenue in downtown and the City lot behind the Lindo Theater. Out of the total funding for this project the City only needs to contribute \$90,000, and the funds from charger users will come to the City.

Theses Level 3 EV Chargers will be highly visible on maps for drivers needing a charge, encouraging travelers to stop in Freeport. Right now there is only one charger in Freeport, located at a local dealership, promoted on maps.

In other upgrades for City infrastructure, 70 incandescent and failing streetlights in Illinois Department of Transportation corridors will be upgraded to LED output thanks to funding from the Department of Transportation and ComEd. These corridors include West Avenue, Galena Avenue, and South Street. This project will be complete by June and intersections may be temporarily closed during the transitions.

In additional news, Freeport was also awarded \$65,000 through the 2021 Rebuild Illinois Grant for the installation of video security systems on Pretzel City Area Transit buses.

#### **Be a Part of Record-Breaking History in Pretzel City, USA**

Pretzel Fest is coming up next Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, which is also National Pretzel Day, and just one of the many events planned for the day is the City's attempt to create the "Largest Pretzel Image Created by Humans" and make history for Pretzel City, USA.

To join in the fun, gather at the Freeport Arts Museum Plaza across from the Freeport Public Library at 10:00 a.m. and receive your commemorative pin for being part of the record-breaking attempt. At 10:30 a.m., a drone will capture the aerial image of the pretzel masterpiece for a once-in-a-lifetime photo to forever symbolize Freeport's identity as the true PRETZEL CITY!

According to Katie Gentz, Events and Engagement Manager at the Greater Freeport Partnership, the current record for people making a pretzel shape is 443 people in Germany. "We know Freeport and all our Midwestern friends will show up to blow that record out of the water!" says Gentz.

### **Pretzel Fest next Saturday!**

Continue the fun after the human pretzel event as the fun continues next Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup> with the Pretzel Fest annual celebration from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. throughout downtown Freeport with pretzel-themed vendors, talented entertainers, and many family-friendly activities. As visitors enjoy all the fun in the Downtown Freeport Festival District, they can purchase alcoholic beverages from participating restaurants and bars and carry the drinks with them as they explore the festivities. Dozens of boutiques, shops, and restaurants will offer pretzel merchandise and food options.

Then from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., celebrate Freeport's German heritage and dance the day away at the inaugural Pretzel City Polka Fest with the best polka band in the Midwest, the Zweifel ([zwy-fell](#)) Brothers. Hosted by the Lincoln-Douglas Society and the Greater Freeport Partnership, doors at the Freeport Masonic Temple open for the event at 3:30. A cash bar will be available with special German-inspired selections from Lena Brewing Company and sausages, pretzels, and German-fare food from The Traveling Chef. Tickets are \$10 per person or \$15 per couple and can be purchased at the door or online at [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com) by searching on "pretzel city polka fest."

After polka it's time for punk! The final show of the pretzel-packed day is at the Winneshiek Playhouse where Winnie Rock City multiple punk bands will perform, starting with The Lobbin Robbins at 7:00 p.m. They'll be followed by Polka Punk Sensation from Chicago, then Dead Freddie, Flaccid Pickle, and Hot Lemon. A satellite bar will be provided by Mort's Bar and Grill. The event is open to all ages and tickets are just \$10, available at the door or at Mort's in downtown Freeport prior to the event. Proceeds from the evening support the Winneshiek Playhouse.

For additional information and updates on all Pretzel Day activities, visit [greaterfreeport.com/pretzelfast](http://greaterfreeport.com/pretzelfast) or contact the Greater Freeport Partnership at 815-233-1350.

**PRETZEL CITY USA,**  
**WE NEED** you  
 to break the record for  
**"WORLD'S LARGEST PRETZEL**  
**IMAGE MADE BY HUMANS"**

Be at the FAM Art Plaza (15 E. Douglas St., Freeport) on National Pretzel Day (April 26) at 10 am to sign-in. You will be given a commemorative button for your participation! Everyone will be arranged in the pretzel outline for the drone shot at 10:30 am!

This record belongs to  
**PRETZEL CITY!**  
 Join Us April 26!  
[greaterfreeport.com/pretzelfast](http://greaterfreeport.com/pretzelfast)



### Program on rank choice voting

At 6:30 p.m. next Tuesday, April 22nd the League of Women Voters of Freeport will host a program on rank choice voting at the Freeport Public Library.

"Rank Choice Voting - What is it and How does it Work?" will be presented by Barbara Laimins, a League member from Wheaton who served on Illinois Task Force to study the concept of rank choice voting. She will cover both the pros and cons of this idea as well as its impact on voter turnout.

The presentation is open to the public and refreshments from the Full Circle Café at the Library will follow the question and answer end to the presentation.

### Freeport recognized by WorldAtlas

A newly released list from WorldAtlas recognizes nine Illinois cities and one village to recommend to their readers looking to avoid the hustle and bustle of big cities like Chicago.

The list notes Freeport's "unique German roots and close-knit bonds between the townspeople." It also highlights lower home costs and community offerings like Pretzel Fest, performances at the Winneshiek Playhouse, and outdoor nature settings such as Oakdale Nature Preserve.

Other Illinois locations on the list include Mendota, La Salle, Olney, and six others.

### Carroll County Farm Bureau Young Leaders raise funds to reduce food insecurity

For the past 20 years, the Carroll County Farm Bureau Young Leaders have been committed to reducing food insecurity in Carroll County. In January, they collected donated corn that was then sold to Eastland

Feed and Grain to support this effort, and in addition to corn donations the Young Leaders accepted monetary donations. The group raised over \$33,000, which provided the county's food pantries with over \$8,000 each along with 110 pounds of ground beef for each location.

A list of all the contributors appears below. Thank you, Carroll County Farm Bureau Young Leaders and all the generous donors!

*Donors include: Kevin & Diann Adolph, Kurt Alexander, Larry Alexander, Harold Andresen, Aaron & Melinda Appel, Randal Appel, Badtke Farms, Gerald & Diann Cassens, D & R Stoner Farms, Daehler Farms, Durward Farms, Eastland Feed and Grain, Sheldon & Julie Ebersole, Faulkner Farms, Chris & Deanna Fink, Rod & Gerald Fink, Ronald & Marsha Foltz, Trevor & Taylor Fransene, Freedom Hills Ranch and Adolph Red Angus, John & Susan Hopkins, Hopkins Family Farm, Ideal Farms, J & J Farms, Janssen Farms, Lamoreux Farms, Linker Farms, Ludwig Family Farm, Martz-Spear Farms, Miller Farms, MKA Farms, Walter & Levonne Nelson, Alyssa Nelson, Les & Michelle Nelson, ODK Farms, Brent & Carrie Pollard, Bill & Denise Pilgrim, Curtis & Anna Pilgrim, White Oak Agri Solutions, Jon and Lisa Meade, Allen Rahn, Elmer & Annette Rahn, Justin & Ellen Rahn, Correy & Kellie Rahn Family, Kyle & Nicole Ruter, Bryan & Chelsea Schoeny, Kent & Julie Schoeny, Schoeny Family Farms, Austing & Marti Schriner, Dennis Schriner, Keith & Joanie Schriner, Smith Farms, Steve Queckboerner, Stitzel Hog Farm, Steve & Jamie Stoner, Sturtevant Grain Farms, Rod & Gerald Fink, Tom Fink Family, Vos Farms, Bill Weber, White Oak Agri, Brian & Sharon Witt, Witt AG Solutions, Brad, Brett & Ben Woessner, and Ray & Melissa Woessner.*

### **Salvation Army Family Night**

The Salvation Army of Freeport will hold Family Night at 5:00 p.m. at the Salvation Army location at 106 West Exchange Street on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. This gathering includes dinner and a movie for families and individuals, as well as spring and summer clothing giveaway of seasonal coats, pants, shirts, shoes and other warm weather clothes. Parents must stay with their children during the event.

### **Arbor Day celebration at Krape Park**

Rain or shine, next Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, the Freeport Kiwanis Club and the Freeport Park District will host their annual Arbor Day Tree Planting celebration from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Krape Park. In partnership with Kiwanis K-Kids, Builders Club, Key Club, the City of Freeport and Freeport School District 145, the public is invited to help plant trees and celebrate the spirit of community and conservation.

This educational, hands-on event will rotate over 100 students through four interactive learning stations supported by the University of Illinois Extension staff and the Northwest Illinois Bird & Nature Alliance, with the Freeport Park District guiding tree planting. No registration is required.



### **FHN nurse recognized**

A national award is heading to Freeport as FHN Memorial Hospital nurse Laura Mack, MSN, RN, CNL, HF-Cert as been chosen to receive an honor from the Preventative Cardiovascular Nurses Association.

Mack received a Heart Failure Award recently during a conference for the Association in Orlando. The prestigious award recognizes a registered or advance practice nurse who has demonstrated an innovative, successful model of primary or secondary preventive care for patients with heart failure. Mack currently is a coordinator for the cardiac remote monitoring team and has been with FHN for 29 years.

### **Rawleigh products sale**

The Stephenson County Farm Bureau is collecting orders for Freeport-famous Rawleigh products through noon next Monday, April 21<sup>st</sup>. Products will be delivered just before Mother's Day and all proceeds from this order support scholarships and the Stephenson County Farm Bureau Foundation to fund Agriculture in the Classroom. Order forms are available at [www.stephensoncfb.org](http://www.stephensoncfb.org) or by calling 815-232-3186.

The Farm Bureau also wants to remind everyone of their Cubs versus Brewers bus trip on Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup>. There are a limited number of spots left for the Sunday, May 4th bus trip to Brewers stadium. To learn more, visit [www.stephensoncfb.org](http://www.stephensoncfb.org) and click on the "upcoming trips" tab or call 815-232-3186.

### **Earth Day is next week!**

Next Tuesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> is Earth Day! First celebrated in 1970, the event was created to increase public awareness of the world's environment and has been commemorated over the years by millions of Americans through rallies, marches, and educational programs.



Earth Day was the brainchild of Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, and In July of 1970, following the first events in 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency was established by special executive order. Hope you can get out and enjoy all our planet has to offer next Tuesday!

## Easter Egg hunts

With Easter coming up on Sunday, there are lots of Easter Egg hunts in the area. Two you might like to check out are at Krape Park in Freeport and Joe Westwood Park in Pearl City.

The Bunny Trail egg hunt hosted by the Freeport Park District in Krape Park is this Saturday, April 19th from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The trail begins at the Carousel and includes many fun activities, a petting zoo, and plenty of opportunities to interact with the Easter Bunny along stroller- and wheelchair-friendly walkways.

The Stephenson County Sheriff's Office and Pearl City Park District event is also on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Joe Westwood Park at 310 South Street in Pearl City and is also sure to offer plenty of fun for egg hunters age 12 and under. Both events are free and no registration is required.



## The week ahead...

As for the week ahead, we didn't want to overlook mentioning last week's Indivisible event at the Stephenson County Courthouse which was attended by over 300 people. This was a very large group for our community who took the opportunity to make their opinions heard. There will be another event at noon this Saturday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, hosted jointly by the area Indivisible group, the League of Women Voters, and the local NAACP branch. For more information, check out the Indivisible Freeport public page on Facebook.

We also wanted to be sure let you know that this week's group working the Cub Food Brat Stand tomorrow and Saturday from 11:00 to 5:00 is the Stephenson County Association for Home and Community Education. We love stopping by to enjoy delicious brats, burgers, hot dogs and rib eye sandwiches to support the community organizations raising funds for their good efforts.

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 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](http://www.cityoffreeport.org), or by using their QR code that appears below.



#### **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 when FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Becky Connors spoke with Jaime Elliott of the Winneshiek Players about their plans for the next theatre season and several upcoming events.

Next week, our next in-depth interview features FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel interviewing another FREEPOD host, Tim Connors, about Polka Fest, an energetic, fun-focused addition to Pretzel Fest coming up next Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> and be available for you to listen to then or at any time after that at your leisure – just head to our website or your favorite podcast platform and search on FREEPOD to select the programs of your choice.

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](http://www.freepod.org).

And 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 as each new pod airs. You can also always click through to our pods through our Facebook page or the website of our partner, WNIJ National Public Radio in DeKalb, at [www.northernpublicradio.org](http://www.northernpublicradio.org). Thank you for listening to FREEPOD!

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