



**16 May
2024**

Welcome to FREEMOD, 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 new 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.

New internet provider coming to town

As part of its goal to ensure access to high-speed internet in every home in Freeport, the Freeport City Council has approved easements for Surf Internet, a new internet provider for the City. Surf is planning to build out the Freeport utility Right of Ways with a fiber duct and internet system that will provide more competition in Freeport to enable options for lower cost and faster speed internet services.

In order to build out the local system, the internet provider needs locations at three City-owned properties where the junction boxes will be placed. These locations are on Burchard Avenue in the water tower area, on Park Blvd. at Park & Laurel, and on Walnut Avenue. The service will be open to every address in town and Surf Internet provides up to four different packages, along with options for low-income residents. Even with the necessity of underground installation, the new service could be half the cost of other internet providers in town while providing faster internet. The total build-out is anticipated to take about two years.

Other internet options for Freeport residents include JCWIFI, Frontier Internet, Aero, and national cable providers like Comcast -- also known as Xfinity – and satellite providers like DISH. Competition is nearly always good for consumers, so we're happy to welcome Surf Internet!

\$400,000 for road safety comes to Freeport

Congressman Eric Sorensen (IL-17) and the Department of Transportation are announcing \$400,000 for the City of Freeport to study ways the community can increase traffic safety.

The funding is being awarded from DOT as part of its Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program, also known by the acronym as SS4A, which helps communities across the nation address roadway safety. This grant program will allow the City of Freeport to conduct a study on ways to implement safety-

specific infrastructure projects. As part of this round of funding to communities across the country, Freeport earned the second highest SS4A grant award in the state of Illinois.

Sorensen said, "Bringing tax dollars back home to invest in infrastructure is one of the best ways we can make our neighborhoods safer and more sustainable. I'm proud to join the Department of Transportation to announce this critical investment in Freeport that that will help the City improve its roads and protect drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians."

We'll report more on this as plans are confirmed.

2024-2025 school physicals

Will your child start Kindergarten, 6th or 9th grade this fall? As a reminder, they will need a school physical to register, so avoid the last-minute hassle and give their provider's office a call today!

If you need to find a provider for your child, FHN can help you find one and have an appointment before you hang up the phone. Just call the FHN Physician Referral Line at 815-599-7060 Monday through Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Fridays from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

That number again is 815-599-7060. Be sure to get your kids off to school in good health with these easy-to-schedule physicals!

Freeport Speech team receives additional award

In Freeport High School news, the Freeport High School Speech Team has outdone themselves with another award they received just last week.

Along with a regional championship, a Top Five sectional finish, and having four State Speakers from the group, the team has been designated an IHSA All Academic Team, recognizing their academic achievements outside of speech class with an unweighted GPA of 3.85 out of 4.00.

This award certainly demonstrates the dedication and work ethic of this team not only in competition but also in the classroom. Congrats, Freeport High School Speech Team!

Spring clean-ups continue

Spring cleaning remains in full swing in Freeport, with the City sponsoring an East Side Clean-up Day on May 24 from 8:00 a.m. to noon.

This annual Community Clean-Up Day is a great volunteer event for families, individuals, and service group. This year's project area is located just south of Taylor Park, and volunteers should meet at the intersection of East Jackson Street and South Hancock Avenue.

Clean up materials such as garbage bags and gloves will be provided. Volunteers are encouraged to bring bug spray, boots and hand wipes. To sign up call Randi Kohlbauer at 815-396-3548. Sign-ups are not required but appreciated.

Freeport Fire Department is hiring

If you're looking for a rewarding, community-focused job, the Freeport Fire Department now is taking applications for new firefighters. Applicants must be between age 21 and 35, U.S. citizens, have a valid driver's license and a high school diploma or G-E-D. Starting pay is about \$51,000.

Applications will be taken until July 6 and can be found online at freeport.org/fire-jobs. Starting pay is about \$51,000.

New police officers sworn in

Freeport Mayor Jodi Miller recently swore in three new Freeport Police Department Officers. They are Kyle Thompson, Marielys Sanchez and Madaline Perez.

The three new Officers will report to the Sauk Valley Community College Police Academy, where they will be enrolled in the 16-week long program. Training focuses on real-life simulations officers will face on the job. Deputy Chief Travis Davis said Sauk Valley is preferred due to its close location.

We've included photos of the new officers in the script at our website. Congratulations and welcome to the Freeport Police Department!



From left, Thompson, Sanchez, and Perez

HCC International Athletes

We are all familiar with the concept of international athletes coming to the United States to study and master their sport, but you might not be aware that Highland Community College has 35 such student athletes this year.

Jeyson Polanco is one of them. From Santiago, Dominican Republic, he plays shortstop on the Highland Cougars baseball team, the same position as his favorite all-time player, Jose Reyes – also a switch hitter, also from the Dominican Republic.

He admires his coach, Chance Sharp, and has great memories from his two years at HCC. He looks back on the first game of this year, played at Roane Community College in Harriman, Tennessee, as a special moment. "I hit two home runs and had eight RBIs, including a Grand Slam to help us win the game. It was exciting!" he shares. Highland's baseball team finished the season with a record of 24 wins and 25 losses, with a 12-3 record at home. They completed Region 4 postseason tournament play with a loss on Saturday.

Jeyson says his dream is – and we quote him -- "baseball, always." He has played since age 6, and was thrilled to get the opportunity to come to Highland. Enthusiastic about the school and the Freeport community, he says, "I love Highland. It feels like a second home to me now. Of course I miss my family – my dad, mom, and brothers. But I like the quiet and peaceful town. And I will always remember the people here, especially Rhonda Perry, who was like a second mom to me."

His favorite class at Highland was speech, which he credits for helping him hone his English skills. His favorite new American food? The Chipotle bowl (which is, obviously, delicious)!

Of course, there are things Jeyson misses about the DR – fried plantains among them, which he will enjoy when he visits home this summer. When he returns to the United States, he will transfer to his new college, Faulkner University in Alabama, as required by his visa. "I wish I could stay here longer," he says. It's very sad to leave, but I plan to come visit and am excited to keep on following my dream."

Stay tuned to FREEPOD for conversations with other international athletes from HCC.

Stephenson County Historical Society plant sale

If you have some corners of your yard that could use a little sprucing up, be sure to head to the annual perennial plant sale at the Stephenson County Historical Society Museum today, tomorrow, or Saturday, May 16, 17, or 18. That's today, tomorrow, and Saturday on the grounds of the museum at 1440 S. Carroll Avenue in Freeport. Hours are 9:00 to 4:00 today and tomorrow, and 9:00 to 3:00 Saturday.

"Perennial plants" are those that come back every Spring so you don't need to plant again every year, and the sale will offer a wide variety that thrive in both sun and shade as well as native plants. A wide variety of succulent plants will also be available. All plants are locally grown.

In other Spring planting news, we'll have a story yet this month on what to safely plant if you have dogs or children playing outdoors at your home. Some plants are dangerous and others can be downright poisonous so if you have dogs or kids, you'll want to be listening.

Bring your gardening thoughts to the sale and see you at the Historical Society Museum!

Longer format interviews coming to FREEPOD

We're excited to announce that beginning in the next week or two, we'll be adding a talk-show style interview program to FREEPOD's line-up! We'll have three hosts doing interviews that will air Tuesdays at noon, in addition to our regular newscast pod on Thursdays. Topics will be quite varied and include

stories with broad appeal. There'll only be a couple of stories each week but this additional format will allow our interviewers to spend more time on their stories to explore them in more detail.

To give you a sneak preview of what lies ahead, we're kicking off this effort with an interview by Tim Connors with Delbert Bunker, a partner in the project, about the new Beef-a-Roo restaurant coming to Freeport. Tim is half of the podcast duo TimBeck2 – the other half is Becky Connors, who is also planning to conduct these interviews on behalf of FREEPOD. Ground-breaking for the new Beef-a-Roo is scheduled for tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. in the Meadows shopping center parking lot!

We're including this first interview as part of our Thursday podcast this week to give you an example of what these interviews will be like. We're sure you'll enjoy them as much as we enjoy broadcasting them! Here's the sneak preview....

(Tim Connors interviews Delbert Bunker)

Until next week...

As we close, we're reminding everyone of the Workforce Connection Job Fair this afternoon, May 23, from 2:00 to 5:00 at the Boys and Girls Club of Freeport and Stephenson County at 511 South Liberty Avenue in Freeport. This is an opportunity to meet in person with a variety of local employers looking for both summer and full-time staff. On-site interviews will be available so if you or someone you know is looking for work, bring plenty of resumes and dress for success!

With that, time's up for this week but tune in again next week for more about Freeport businesses, City plans and progress, area rewards and recognition, local impacts related to state and national news, and more.

As we say each week, FREEPOD couldn't come to you without the help of many local supporters. We're especially appreciative for the Mass Communications Department at Highland Community College for producing this podcast. We also appreciate our liaisons and reporters for the time they volunteer to bring the news to you – we couldn't do FREEPOD without you. Thank you, Highland and Team FREEPOD!

If you have story suggestions or would like to donate to support FREEPOD (now tax-deductible), visit our website at www.freepod.org.

Listen next week for more news you've been missing!