



**2 May  
2024**

Welcome to FREEDPOD, 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 more 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.

### **Do drink the water!**

It's been estimated that almost half of the nation's tap water is contaminated with one or more types of the chemicals known as per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances, or P-F-A-S, commonly referred to as "pee-fahs", according to a study completed last August by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Known as "forever chemicals", the more than 12,000 types of PFAS are widely used, long lasting chemicals which break down very slowly. They are found in many different consumer, commercial, and industrial products, in a variety of food products, and in the environment. They are also found in the blood of people and animals all over the world.

Scientific studies have shown that exposure to some PFAS in the environment, water, and food may be linked to harmful health effects in humans and animals.

That's the bad news.

The good news is that Freeport has some of the cleanest water in northern Illinois, thanks to forward thinking by the Water and Sewer Department.

Randi Kohlbauer, Environmental & Regulatory Compliance Officer at the Department, says "Freeport is actually sitting in a really good spot as far as being ahead of the ballgame on this one. We started abandoning potentially contaminated wells before EPA was really even starting to monitor PFAS".

Only two old, shallow wells that serviced Freeport drinking have ever tested positive for PFAS and those were put on standby since the new well Number 11 on south Burchard Ave. came online last fall.

The wells that currently supply Freeport's drinking water, Numbers 8, 9, and 11 are all free of PFAS chemicals. The old "standby" wells are to be used only for firefighting flows or after a catastrophic failure of any of the main wells and will be permanently put out of service once another new well, Number 12, is constructed, which will probably happen in 2026.

FREEPOD also notes that in the first large-scale peer-reviewed investigation of PFAS in U.S. bottled water in 2021, PFAS were detected in nearly half of bottled water products. Reverse osmosis-treated water contained less PFAS than other bottled water products, but it's good to also remember that you're likely drinking microplastics that can leach from plastic water bottles, to say nothing of the fact that it takes about 500 years for those bottles to decompose.

So – DO drink the tap water in Freeport!

### **Teacher receives Golden Apple nomination**

Eugene Calingacion, a teacher at Jones Farrar, an International Baccalaureate World School Elementary school in Freeport, was named a finalist for an Illinois Golden Apple Award.

A highly competitive award process resulted in the selection of 30 Pre-K to 3rd-grade teacher finalists from throughout the State. The Golden Apple Awards for Excellence in Teaching honor outstanding teachers for having lasting, positive effects on students' lives and school communities. In both their teaching and results, teacher finalists demonstrate significant, positive impact on their students' growth and learning. The final 2024 Golden Apple Award recipients will be announced later this spring.

Congratulations, Mr. Calingacion!

### **Arbor Day Foundation Names Freeport A 2023 Tree City USA®**

Freeport has been named a 2023 Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation to honor its commitment to effective urban forest management. The community also received a Tree City USA Growth Award for demonstrating environmental improvement and an outstanding level of tree care.

Freeport achieved Tree City USA recognition by meeting the program's four requirements: maintaining a tree board or department, having a tree care ordinance, dedicating an annual community forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita, and hosting an Arbor Day observance and proclamation.

The Tree City USA program is sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters.

According to the Arbor Day Foundation, the trees being planted and cared for by Freeport are ensuring that generations to come will enjoy a better quality of life. Additionally, participation in this program brings residents together through volunteer engagement and public education.

### **The Totality: A First-Person Eclipse Story**

Several folks from the Freeport area traveled to other parts of the Midwest to experience the recent solar eclipse in totality. In other words, they were in locations on the path of the eclipse where the sun was completely blocked out for several minutes. Julie Hilliger, one of FREEPOD's reporters, sent us a first-person report of what that was like. We thought it was great, so in her words...

"Natural phenomena intrigue me and I truly do love and respect the beauty of our environment. So, on April 8th, I was in my sister's southern Illinois backyard, witnessing the total solar eclipse. We were

lucky enough to escape the crowds gathered 12 miles away at Garden of the Gods State Park and throughout the Shawnee National Forest. With eclipse glasses perched on our noses, we watched Mother Nature's show from 12:44 p.m. when the moon first began obscuring the sun until the moon departed at 3:18 p.m.

"The sun appeared thinner and thinner and then a hush fell as totality neared, which is unusual for us. Reverence seemed appropriate. All at once, the sun and moon were aligned, and the sight was mesmerizing. Seeing the dark sun surrounded by the glowing ring of light and red solar prominences was more than I expected.

"It was oddly like two layers of twilight, similar to about 9 p.m. in July up high and then at ground level, dark enough for the street lights to come on, which they did. The temperature dropped from 76 degrees to 69 and was noticeable.

"Ironically, the most stunning view to me emerged as totality ended. When the moon began to slip away, the sunlight burst from the bottom, creating a brilliant beam of light. It took my breath away to go from dark to light. From photos, I knew what totality would look like, but I was not expecting this surprise. It was the cherry on top. I am grateful to have witnessed this total eclipse and hope to see the next one in the U.S. in 2044 when I will be 80 years old. Remember, you are never too old to see the natural beauty all around you."

Listeners, you can find a few photos that Julie sent in the script for this episode online at our website. Thanks for your first-person story, Julie!



### **Cicadas are Coming**

First it was the eclipse, and now it is the cicadas! Have you heard the buzz?

Yes, folks, cicadas are coming, and they are coming in much larger numbers than usual. Millions are expected to hatch in northern Illinois, emerging from the ground where they spend most of their lives in the soil, feeding on tree roots.

In May and June, the cicada convention will begin. In this area, we have Annual cicadas that come every year. But Periodical cicadas are what we are talking about here. They are some of the longest-lived insects on earth, with either 13- or 17- year life spans.

This year, both broods hatch at nearly the same time – a very rare occurrence that will be once in a lifetime for most people. It occurs just once every 221 years – so the last time these two broods emerged together was in 1803. To give you perspective, Thomas Jefferson was President of the United States then, and Lewis and Clark were about to start their exploration of the Louisiana Purchase.

Brood 13, which is on a 13-year cycle, will be more prevalent in our area, while Brood 17 will be seen in central and southern Illinois, along with several other states. Central Illinois may have an overlap, where some researchers say there could be BILLIONS of cicadas. They are harmless, so even in large numbers they pose no danger, except occasionally to young trees. Some people wrap cheesecloth or fine mesh netting around the trunks and branches to prevent damage where the eggs are laid.

When cicadas hatch, they swarm on trees and you hear the familiar noise – from a quiet background buzz to a cacophony of summer sound. This year it will be even louder, and, according to Dr. Jonathan Larson, an extension entomologist and assistant professor at the University of Kentucky, “You should expect lots and lots of cicada exoskeletons to be covering your trees and shrubs. You should also expect to hear lots and lots of noise.”

And don't freak out if you see your dog eating a cicada as a canine appetizer. “It won't hurt them,” says Larson, “and dogs aren't the only ones tempted to nosh on cicadas; people have eaten them for thousands of years. They have kind of a natural, sweet nut flavor.” Others say cicadas taste like cold asparagus!

Would you be game to eat a cicada and report back to FREEPOD on how it tasted? There are plenty of cicada recipes online. If you're an adventurous eater, find a recipe, give it a go, and let us know about it in an email. We will put the names of all brave samplers into a drawing for a Cicada Recipes cookbook when the Cicada Convention is in full swing!

### **New Freeport First Responders**

Several new additions have joined our local first responder departments recently and are on the job keeping us safe. Jordan Lott (far left photo) is a new officer with the Freeport Police Department. William Klueg, Nicholas Wybourn and Daniel Hart have joined the Freeport Fire Department (center photo) and Tyler Knoup (far right photo) has completed his academy training and now is with the Stephenson County Sheriff's Department.

Congratulations and thanks to all for their service and commitment to Freeport. We wish them long and distinguished careers here.



### **Annual YMCA fundraiser**

The Family YMCA of Northwest Illinois invites you to join them on next Thursday, May 9th to enjoy some delicious cupcakes, paired with a variety of cocktails, at Big O's On The Hollow just east of Freeport on Route 75.

This is the YMCA's annual fundraiser. The event will take place from 6:00 - 8:00 PM and for just \$15.00, you can enjoy 4 different cupcakes paired with 4 different cocktails. For \$2.00 extra, you can try all 6! This year, we will offer the option to purchase a table (which seats eight) and get all 6 combos for the table for \$120 . There will be auction items for you to bid on as well.

Stay to have dinner, and 10% of the food proceeds goes back to The YMCA Annual Strong Kids Campaign. Tickets can be purchased at the YMCA or Big O's. Come out for a good time for a great cause!

### **Improve your emotional health**

Also on Thursday May 9<sup>th</sup>, the Barbershop Transformation and Wellness Center at 18 W. Stephenson St. in Freeport will host a presentation by LaMont Hall, LPC, a Licensed Professional Counselor. Hall's presentation is titled Navigating the Storm: Understanding Depression, Anxiety, and Stress and will help attendees understand positive ways to achieve better emotional health. The event begins at 6:00 p.m. and is free, fun, interactive, and educational!

Partners in The Barbershop Transformation and Wellness Center include the Freeport Ministerial Alliance, SSM Health Monroe, and Highland Community College.

### **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Two Spirit Gathering**

This Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, there will be a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Two Spirit Gathering, including a movie and numerous indigenous performances and activities. The movie, Wind River, will be shown at 10:00 a.m. at the Freeport Public Library. It is 2016 film about the hunt for the killer of a Native girl on a remote reservation. It stars Jeremy Renner, known to many as Hawkeye in the Marvel Studios movies based on Marvel Comics. Everyone who attends the film will enjoy a free fry bread snack.

Performances begin at 12:45 in Debate Square next to the Library, including flute music, a blessing, a pipe ceremony, drumming, singing, a healing jingle dress dance, and a Red Dress Ceremony with drawings done by children at the YMCA. Special event t-shirts designed and produced by Elliott Graphix will be available as a fundraiser. Please bring lawn chairs or blankets to sit on for the afternoon's activities. In case of rain, all events will be held in the Library. The events are sponsored by Quiet Souls, The City of Freeport, and the Freeport Public Library.

### **Rt 26 road work**

As you may have noticed, the Illinois Department of Transportation, or IDOT, has begun repairs on south Route 26. Repairs began on Monday and are expected to be completed by June 15th. The work zone will be from Lamm Road to South Street on Freeport's south side.

Work will repair curbs and inlets along the road. One lane of traffic will be open in each direction during the project. Motorists can expect delays and should allow extra time for trips through this area, so be watchful when on Route 26.

### **Looking ahead...**

In a comedy performance filled with hilarity, the Freeport High School Theatre Department presents MOON OVER BUFFALO at the Jeannette Lloyd Theatre on May 9th, 10th, and 11th at 7:00 pm.

Eight extremely talented cast members including Rachel Sdao, Noah Schiffman, Grant Barnes, and Max Krezeminski will present this farcical gem written by Ken Ludwig. This was Carol Burnett's last production on Broadway and is sure to bring much laughter throughout the evening. Tickets can be purchased online at [www.fsd145.org/tickets](http://www.fsd145.org/tickets) or by phoning 815-232-0428.

In good-eating news, we're sure that many folks are looking forward to the reopening of the restaurant formerly called Logan's Bar and Grill. Approval of a liquor license for the establishment has been granted and the new establishment, which will be called King's Bar and Grill, will open soon.

We also encourage everyone to check out the brat stand at Cub Foods every Friday and Saturday through late fall. The stand started in 2007 and has been open every year since then, except for 2020 when it was closed due to COVID. From late March through October, various nonprofits and community organizations work the stand on Fridays and Saturdays from 11 to 5, selling brats, hot dogs, burgers, steak sandwiches, and pork chop sandwiches along with chips and drinks. All profits, as well as donations, are received by the organization. Enjoy a great meal and support our local community organizations!

And finally, for those who have been missing their favorite Starbucks treats, the wait is over: the completely renovated Starbucks at the corner of South St and Route 26 in Freeport will be reopening this Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Be sure to stop by and enjoy their new digs!

### **Until next week...**

As we close, we thought we'd take a moment to talk turkey – turkey hunting, that is. Youth turkey hunters in Illinois just set a new harvest record for the State of Illinois! 2006 birds were harvested in 2024 on just two weekends during turkey hunting season. Over 6,000 youth turkey permits were issued, with a number of those issued in Stephenson County. That's a lot of turkeys!

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

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