



**30 May
2024**

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 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.

Storm aftermath

Cleanup still continues throughout Freeport after a violent storm rumbled through the city last week leaving many without power, huge trees uprooted, and branches down in many locations. Winds clocked at 90 miles per hour according to the National Weather Service, caused large trees to fall blocking several streets and causing widespread damage to homes.

City crews worked through the night and then other crews took over during the day to clear the debris. More than 3,000 households were without power but most of those were restored by the next day thanks to ComEd workers ready to handle whatever the storm would bring.

City crews began yesterday moving through Freeport to pick up branches knocked down in the storm and will continue to do that for at least the next few days. Residents who are able are asked to transport branches to 2133 Walnut Ave across from the fairgrounds, otherwise please pile them up on the curb as crews move throughout the city to pick them up.

FREEPOD reporters sent many photos of the damage, which we will post to the FREEPOD website.

Pretzels boys' baseball team loses in semifinal game

The Pretzel boys' baseball season ended last Thursday in a Class 3A semifinal loss to the Dixon Dukes at Veterans Memorial Field in Dixon. The fifth-seeded Dukes scored six runs in the top of the eighth inning and held on to beat the fourth-seeded Pretzels 9-7.

The regional game was tight for seven innings as Dixon senior starting pitcher Alex Harrison went toe-to-toe with Freeport senior Zachary Arnold. Freeport tied the score at 3 with a Payton Woker sacrifice fly to

force extras. Dixon had five singles and two walks in the six-run eighth, and held on for the win after Freeport left two runners on base to end the game in dramatic fashion.

Freeport has been on a historic rise. The Pretzels had not had a winning record in 10 years before Shaun Dascher went 20-12 in his first year as coach in 2017. He has won or shared two league titles, Freeport's only NIC-10 crowns since its fabled 1998 team went 30-4 behind future All-Big Ten pitchers Drew Dickinson and Matt Vorwald. This year's team gave Freeport three straight 20-win seasons for the first time in school history, so maybe the winning year will be 2025.

Good luck next season, Pretzel Boys!

The cicadas are here!

They're baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaack!! Billions of cicadas are appearing as part of a rare double emergence that hasn't happened since Thomas Jefferson was president 221 years ago.

After months of anticipation and news coverage, cicadas have finally emerged in the Freeport area, and it should be quite the experience. Brood XIII and Brood XIX, one of which emerges every 13 years and the other every 17 years, are burrowing up from their decades-long underground slumber at the same time. They're not everywhere yet, and the loud buzz that has been predicted hasn't yet begun, but they're starting to make their presence known.

In general cicadas are "not particular," meaning they will use a variety of trees and shrubs as hosts .According to the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, cicadas "tend to not prefer" plants where sap or gum could prevent an egg hatch. Some of those trees includes conifer trees like pine, spruce and fir and could also include cherry trees, peach trees, plum trees or persimmon trees. Certain trees they might like better than these include oak, maple, hickory, apple, birch, dogwood, linden, willow, elm, ginkgo, and pear trees, as well as some shrubs like roses, lilacs, and forsythia.

Generally, cicadas are harmless: they don't bite, they don't have stingers, and they're beneficial to the environment in providing a valuable food source for many birds and other animals, but they can cause damage to vulnerable and small trees and shrubs. Young plants between two to three years old are the most vulnerable, and so are smaller plants with branches less than two inches in diameter are at risk. They may not be able to recover from damage done by the female cicadas laying eggs.

To protect trees and shrubs you can wrap them with a fabric called tulle, which is the same type of material used in fancy dresses and some ballerina tutus. Tulle is specifically recommended because it is a breathable fabric that also allows sunset to reach your plants, but any type of netting can work as long as the openings are no bigger than quarter inch across because if they're any bigger the cicadas can climb through. If you choose to wrap any of your plants, you should probably do so soon and keep them wrapped through mid-June when the emergence ends.

Homeowners may also be able to prevent cicadas from making a home in their trees and bushes by wrapping the base in foil or barrier tape, but experts do not recommend pesticides as they are generally ineffective against cicadas because of their short lifespan and may harm other critters, including those that eat cicadas. They also cannot lead to infestations indoors if some should accidentally enter your home as they cannot breed indoors.

Still, experts say, it might not be worth the trouble. After all, there will be billions of them. According to Allen Lawrance, associate curator of entomology at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Chicago, "They're here. It's temporary, and there's really no escaping them."

Cicada weekend!

Now that they're here, you are invited to celebrate cicadas with The Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation. They will host a series of events for the entire family this weekend, beginning Friday May 31st and through Sunday, June 2nd called the "Emergence Convergence." Follow them on Facebook for more details, and stay tuned to FREEPOD for more events and opportunities to experience this event of nature!

Freeport Public Library Summer Reading Program begins

The summer reading program at the Freeport Public Library starts Monday, June 3rd. Sign up for all ages begins at the Library on Monday, where participants can also pick up their reading log. The free program continues through Saturday, August 10th.

This year's theme is "Adventure Begins at Your Library" and the Library encourages everyone to embark on a journey this summer as you dive into the pages of thrilling tales, explore far-off lands, and meet fascinating characters along the way. Readers of all ages can track their reading progress and meet reading goals and there will be lots of free programs for kids, teens, and adults including performers, book clubs, and more.

Studies show that children lose significant knowledge in reading and math over summer break. Families and friends can prevent this "summer slide" by engaging their students in educational activities throughout the summer so that kids can be ready to learn right away when they start the next school year. So get ready for your adventure and join the summer reading program beginning Monday!

Small Town Heroes

Do you know a Freeport Hero? There are lots of them, and now is the time to recognize their efforts in our community!

The United Way of Northwest Illinois started the Small Town Heroes campaign in 2016 as a way to acknowledge the unsung heroes in Northwest Illinois. Now in its eighth year, the FHN-sponsored campaign highlights the amazing contributions of individuals in Stephenson, Jo Daviess and Carroll Counties. The campaign, now in its 8th year, includes inspiring stories from the winners as well artistic photographs by Kurt Koester Photography.

Nomination forms, which are available on the United Way website, must be completed by July 1st and a recognition ceremony will be held after the Lincoln Douglas 5K run on August 10th, at Taylor Park in Freeport. For more information on what types of information to include in your nomination, visit <https://www.uwni.org/small-town-heroes>.

Food Fight for Cancer

Join friends of The Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital as they dish out some fun with taste-tempting treats, entertaining performances, and great company on Friday, June 14th from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Wagner House in downtown Freeport.

This year's Food Fight Against Cancer supports the FHN Foundation's campaign to purchase a new Linear Accelerator for Radiation Oncology.

Dine on delicious hors d'oeuvres and desserts from a variety of local caterers and restaurants. Each vendor will offer tastings representative of the food they serve and you can sample and then vote for your favorite vendor. A cash bar will be available.

For this year's entertainment, costumed FHN team members will be entertaining attendees with a variety of songs in an "Unmask the Singer" performance. Audience vote will determine which singers move forward in each round and ultimately decide who wins. Save your favorite singer from elimination with donations to the Cancer Center!

Admission is \$35 for a single ticket or two tickets for \$65, and table pricing is also available. For more information, or to purchase tickets, contact the FHN Foundation at 815-599-6441 or visit www.fhn.org/FoodFight.

Lindo Theatre adds alcoholic beverages to theatre refreshments

The Freeport City Council approved a special-use license for the Lindo Theatre in Freeport that will allow movie-goers to enjoy alcoholic beverages with their movies. Movie-goers must be attending a movie on the premises and may purchase only one beverage per performance. All drinks will be served in their original containers, including mixed drinks, and of course standard age restrictions apply.

The new Ordinance, which was created with the input of both the Liquor Commission and Classic Cinemas, covers any risks within a very restrictive new class for theatre alcohol sales. Classic Cinema's other 15 theatres in northern Illinois, all of which can sell alcohol, have never been cited for any violations of local alcohol ordinances.

This action is anticipated to further enhance attendance at the Lindo, which is an important anchor business in downtown Freeport. According to multiple surveys by the Greater Freeport Partnership, the two top reasons why people choose downtown Freeport as a destination are: #1, to go to the U.S. Post Office and #2, to attend the Lindo Theatre. According to GFP geo-tracking data, 73,000 people attended movies at the Lindo Theatre from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Highland International Athlete Diego Yopez Sosa

When Diego Yopez Sosa decided to go 4,000 miles from his hometown in Venezuela to play golf at a junior college in a state he had not even heard of, well, he was a little nervous. He thought most Americans were a little cold and standoffish. He wasn't sure he would feel welcome.

The junior college was Highland Community College in Freeport, and the warmth he received from the Highland community broke every stereotype he ever had about Americans. He says, "Everyone was so nice and helpful! My luggage got lost and Highland's Athletic Director Pete Norman took me to Marshall's to help me get a few clothes so I could get through the first few days. And my coach and teammates were so friendly! I knew right away I would love this place, and I was right. I want to graduate from here."

Diego explained that in Venezuela, sports and school are separate. He appreciates the opportunity to do both at one place, and has been blown away by the quality of golf facilities in America. "The courses are amazing here," says Diego. "So much more groomed and the greens are so fast. There is no comparison. When I first started golfing here, I felt like I was on TV! Playing at such a variety of places has been good for my game."

His favorite local links are at the Park Hills West Course and he has a love/hate relationship with Hole #12. "It is challenging," explains Diego. "It gets the best of me way too often!" His best memory of last year's season was when he scored a medal at the fall conference tournament in Byron, where he got 6th out of 61 competitors. "That really encouraged me," he said, "and motivated me to keep working hard."

Diego will head back to Barquisimeto, Venezuela, for a nice long visit this summer, and can hardly wait to see his family and, of course, golf with his dad and brother at their home course. He is excited to drink some natural juices, like freshly squeezed melon juice, which are easy to access in Venezuela. "But I do like the food here," he says. "My favorite American dinner is Shepherd's Pie, and I love to get two double burgers and fries at Culver's – that is my favorite fast food."

When Diego returns to Freeport he will continue working towards his associate degree in Business, and hone his golf skills under the tutelage of his coach, Javier Jazo. Even though he thinks snow is "pretty, but not good for a golfer," he is grateful for his American home with its four seasons, and will be eager to come back in August. "I have no words to describe it," he says. "But I know it makes me smile."

Migratory bird support

Migratory birds can use your help! You can assist them along our regional route by reducing your use of pesticides and fertilizers; maintaining natural vegetation, such as forests and grasslands; and keeping pet cats inside or on a leash. Since lighting plays an important role in birds' migratory signals, it's also important to minimize any confusion due to artificial lights. You can help by turn off all unnecessary lights, including landscape lighting that lights up trees or gardens where birds may be resting, from 11 p.m. to sunrise until June 15th. You can also close blinds at night to reduce the amount of light being emitted from windows.

The week ahead...

There's always lots going on in Freeport, and we've got at least three events we're looking forward to this coming week!

First, at a **community forum** next Wednesday, June 5th, Mayor Jodi Miller, County Board Chair Scott Helms, and Township Supervisor Patrick Sellers will address local issues affecting our business and community. The forum will run from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. at the Stephenson County Farm Bureau at 201 West Spring St. in Freeport. All are invited to attend and learn more about how these groups are working on behalf of the citizens of Freeport.

That evening, June 5th, the Freeport Branch of the **NAACP is hosting a program “Healing Together, One Story at a Time”** where local panelists will share stories of their lived experiences of racism. The program, which begins at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 5th at Freeport High School’s Jeanette Lloyd Theatre at 701 West Empire, is promoted as a step in the process toward achieving racial healing in the community.

The evening includes guest speaker and panelist Vicky Stott, Senior Program Office for Racial Equity and Community Engagement at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan. In her role, Stott is responsible for developing and coordinating grantmaking for positive systemic change in historically marginalized communities and with vulnerable children. All are invited to the event to learn ways to help bring our community together.

Then on Friday, June 7th, **Music on Chicago** in Freeport kicks off for three months of downtown entertainment with a performance by *In The Stix*, one of the hottest Modern Country cover bands to emerge from the Chicagoland area.

The event is held at the Freeport Art Museum Arts Plaza at 15 S. Douglas Street. Local food trucks will be on hand and beverages will also be available for purchase. Admission is \$5 per person with children 5 and under free.

Music on Chicago is a community arts and entertainment collaboration hosted by the Greater Freeport Partnership.

Until next week...

As we close, we’ve got a shout-out ahead for the Tutty Baker Festival, which is returning to Freeport again on July 12th for a fun-filled long weekend of live music, a carnival, fireworks, a car show, a parade, food trucks, a craft fair, vendors, a 5k run, and kayaking. We’ll have more to share closer to the opening and in the meantime, you can find more at the official Facebook and Instagram pages for the event.

We also want to let you know that our Tuesday in-depth interviews begin next Tuesday, June 4th! First up will be FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel interviewing Jessica Modica, Executive Director of the Freeport Art Museum about the many exciting plans for their future. The interview will air at noon on Tuesday and if you are subscribed to FREEPOD through a podcast platform you will receive notification of it as soon as it’s posted. It will also be posted on the FREEPOD website for a limited time, as are all our previous newscast episodes. Next Thursday, June 6th, we’ll be right back here again with our regular newscast at noon. Both of these FREEPOD productions will continue, with the long-format interviews on Tuesdays and the newscasts on Thursdays, and we hope you’ll join us for both. If you haven’t yet subscribed to FREEPOD through the podcast platform of your choice, please visit our website at www.freepod.org for super-easy instructions on how to do it so that you’ll never miss notification of a new episode.

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 as well as our many liaisons and reporters for the time they volunteer to bring the news to 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!