



**20 June  
2024**

Welcome to FREED POD, 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.

Please continue to share about us on your social media and thank you for your enthusiasm – now here’s local news you’ve been missing.

### **Waste Water Treatment Plant groundbreaking**

The City of Freeport hosted an official groundbreaking on Tuesday for the Freeport Waste Water Treatment Facility Phase 1 upgrade project in Freeport at 308 S. Hancock Ave.

This \$60 million Phase 1 Plant upgrade includes chemically enhanced primary treatment, new head works, a new lab building with offices, and installation of ultraviolet treatment equipment. The upgrade will increase the quality of water that is returned to the environment and will help to protect aquatic life and the environment. This project is phase 1 of 5 needed at this facility. The City is receiving infrastructure funding from an Illinois Environmental Protection Agency State Revolving Fund to construct Phase 1 as well as \$5 million in forgivable loans.



### **Roadwork update**

Road construction is wrapping up on Pearl City Road and starting on Locust Ave. Pearl City Road has been closed off to traffic since April 15. That project, costing over million-dollar project, has detoured a majority of the Freeport community as they travel through western Freeport and out to Highland

Community College and beyond. Hot-mix asphalt has already been laid and now all that's left is ditch remediation. Regular traffic should return by July 1. The next City project is Locust Avenue, east of Freeport High School. Crews plan to use the summer to get this project complete before school is back in session in the Fall.

### **Gran Fonda Bike Ride Against Cancer**

The FHN Gran Fonda Bike Ride Against Cancer is coming up on June 29! Enjoy a healthy bike ride through some of the most beautiful roads in northwest Illinois while fighting cancer! The ride begins at 8 a.m. at the Tutty's Crossing Trailhead at 250 E. Stephenson Street with your choice of 30-, 50-, and 75-mile paved routes as well 40- and 50-mile gravel routes and a short 5-mile out-and-back Family Fun Ride.

Dave Fonda, the founder of and inspiration for this event, loved cycling and his community. He started this fundraiser in 2007, dedicated to parlaying his passion into a cause that could help those fighting cancer even after losing his own battle with the disease in 2018.

Dedicated cyclers may recognize the term "Gran Fondo," which means 'big ride' in Italian. In Europe, Gran Fondos are mass participation cycling events that have enjoyed huge popularity for decades and have spread around the globe. We have kept Dave Fonda at the heart of this event by editing the name of these world-famous rides to name the Freeport event in his honor.

Participants are encouraged to dedicate their rides to those who are battling or have battled cancer. In lieu of registration fee, donate online at [fhn.org/granfonda](http://fhn.org/granfonda). Find out more, including links to GPS maps and cue sheets, and register online at [www.fhn.org](http://www.fhn.org).

### **Dessert With Dad at Krape Park**

Kids and their dads will have a chance to spend some quality time together and also enjoy a treat in the process as the Dessert With Dad event takes place from 5-7 pm tomorrow, Friday, June 21<sup>st</sup> at Krape Park. Participants should pack a meal and dessert will be provided along with games and other activities, and can locate the event in the Park by looking for the red balloons. All Dads, Grandpas, Uncles, and friends in Stephenson, Carroll, and Jo Daviess counties are invited.

The All Our Kids Network is sponsoring the event and anyone interested in coming or with questions about Dessert With Dad should call Jessica at 815-599-8435.

### **VOICES Garden Walk Fundraiser**

VOICES of Stephenson County is showcasing five gardens and offering a variety of activities with its annual fundraising Garden Walk on Saturday, June 22. According to Beth Maskell, Executive Director for VOICES of Stephenson County, the gardens and activities represent a little bit of everything. "Two gardens have touches of history, another is rural and expansive, one is more compact, one is set at a

school and another is designed to heal. The gardens truly are stunning, each in their own way,” said Maskell.

Garden Walk 2024 will run from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. The cost is \$20 per person, with those 12 and younger free. Tickets are now on sale at Cub Foods, Deininger Floral and the VOICES Book Nook, all in Freeport. Tickets also will be available the day of the sale at each of the gardens. If needed, a rain date is set for Sunday, June 23 and will be announced on VOICES’ Facebook page.

Each featured garden will include a related activity, such as a silent auction, a pop-up Book Nook store of garden- and flower-related books, advice from University of Illinois Master Gardeners, and even an Iced Tea Part with Barbies!

VOICES uses gardening as therapy when working with survivors of domestic and sexual violence, and all profits benefit their clients. It also operates the VOICES Survivors Shelter and the VOICES Book Nook. Last year, it assisted more than 800 survivors. For more information about the Garden Walk, check the VOICES Facebook page or contact Julie at VOICES at 815-235-9421.

### **Walnut Acres star rating**

Walnut Acres Nursing Home in Freeport has earned a three-star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid according to Mike Phillippo, Chief Financial Officer for Transitional Care Management, a nursing home management firm that began work with Walnut Acres since June 2022.

The rating can be found online at Medicare.gov, which rates many but not all of the country’s nursing homes on a 1-to-5-star system, with 5 being the best. The rating is based on the building itself, staff, resident outcomes, and health inspection results. When Transitional Care Management started managing Walnut Acres in June 2022, they were rated a 1-star facility. By 1 October 2023 they received a 2-star rating and in April 2024 they received a 3-star rating. Phillippo noted that key data points are averaged over a 3-year period.

Phillippo attributed these results to having current, data-driven goals; a management that understands the changing rules and regulations of oversight bodies like the Illinois Department of Health, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, Centers for Disease Control, and others, and having a strong clinical training staff to assist local providers in meeting standards.

Congratulations, Walnut Acres!

### **Juneteenth celebration**

Enjoy local artists, food, vendors, and all-ages activities and to celebrate Black culture and history at The Cookout: A Juneteenth Art Celebration, on Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> from 1:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Stephenson County Fairgrounds at 2250 South Walnut in Freeport. For more on this, FREEPOD host Tim Connors has a short interview (interview is included in the audio version of this episode).

The Cookout is coordinated by Elevated Voices. Hope to see you on Saturday at the Fairgrounds!

## **Pretzel City 5K**

Lace up your sneakers and enjoy a scenic run or walk through Krape Park next Saturday, June 29<sup>th</sup>. The event begins at 8:00 a.m. and continues through 5 p.m. so participants can choose their time based on their schedule that day. Register online at [www.pretzelcity5Kfreeport.com](http://www.pretzelcity5Kfreeport.com) and come out to enjoy one of our wonderful public parks!

## **The week ahead...**

After hearing from Freeport Concert Band President Nicky Arn in Tuesday's In-Depth Interview, we're looking forward to the second Music Under the Stars performance of the Band this Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. in the Koenig Amphitheatre at Krape Park. The conductor for this evening will be Reuben Cooper and the featured vocalist is Davida Sanders. What a great way to end the weekend!

A week from today, Thursday June 27<sup>th</sup>, is Brats and Burger Night at the Boys and Girls Club of Freeport and Stephenson County, located at 511 South Liberty in Freeport. From 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. enjoy dinner and a special program with Club members. Tickets may be purchased by calling the Club at 815-233-1600 and asking for James Rhyne. The event is part of the Club's annual "Keep the Kids In the Club" fundraising campaign, and sponsorship opportunities are available. Sounds like a tasty evening for a worthy cause!

You still have time yet today to join in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward cleanup sponsored by Pretzel Pickers, the Boys and Girls Club, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward Alderwoman Rachel Simmons, Alderwoman at Large Joy Sellers, and Ronnie Bush and Samuel Newton representing County Board District B. Participants are encouraged to wear sturdy shoes, and gloves, trash bags, and refreshments will be provided. Groups will set out at either 1:00 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. to shine up the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward.

And tonight is the first Music on Debate Square featuring Kendra Swanson. Bring your lawn chairs or blankets, grab a treat from Union Dairy, and join us at 6:30 to enjoy one of the most talented performers in the Midwest. Dogs on leashes are welcomed. Debate Square is located right next to the Freeport Public Library whose address is 100 E. Douglas. There is no cost, although free-will offerings will be gladly accepted.

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

As we close, we're excited to let you know that next week's Tuesday In-Depth Interview will feature Shary Gibson interviewing Margaret Larson, University of Illinois County Extension Director serving Stephenson, Jo Daviess, and Winnebago counties, about the many services and events available through Extension. Their conversation will be posted at noon on Tuesday, June 25<sup>th</sup>.

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

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