



**18 July
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.

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.

Road repairs after solar farm construction

The Freeport City Council recently approved a road use agreement that requires the company planning to install a solar farm on 18th Avenue in east Freeport to pay to repair the road after their development is complete. This comes after City officials put into action the concerns that citizens were voicing about 18th Avenue and its current condition. The City's road work will be reimbursed up to \$470,000 by the developer of the project.

Freeport leaders said road improvements are needed to support equipment for the solar farm and bring better roads for the residents who drive it daily. Wayne Duckmann, Freeport's Community and Economic Development Director, said that the City is happy to work with green-energy initiatives. He's also pleased at the opportunity to work with the developer both to ensure the completion of the solar farm and provide a positive benefit for local residents in the process. Duckmann said that residents are a top priority when it comes to working with companies wishing to set up business in Freeport.

The City hosted a town hall meeting last summer where residents expressed their concerns and now, almost a year later, it appears that the road will be fixed at no cost to the taxpayers. Duckmann explained that the whole road basically needs to be re-constructed, from foundation to asphalt, and the long-term benefits will outweigh the short-term inconvenience during construction.

The city plans to finish the initial construction on the road in late 2024 or early 2025 and will be reimbursed by the solar farm developer soon afterwards.

Pool-a-Palooza rescheduled to 3 August

Last week we reported on a fun event for cool family fun that was scheduled for Friday night, but Pool-a-Palooza has been rescheduled to Saturday, August 3rd. The Freeport Park District's Read Park Family Aquatic Center, also known as the Read Park Pool, will be open that night for a night swim and poolside party from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. with beachball volleyball games, poolside games, music, and concessions. So, a bit of a wait, but not long! Look forward to this rescheduled fun event on August 3rd.

No-appointment sports physical clinic

For those of you with students who need a new sports physical to participate in school sports in the coming school year, you can get one for them with no appointment next Monday, July 22nd. Just head to the FHN Family Healthcare Center – Burchard Hills from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. These exams meet both Illinois and Wisconsin eligibility requirements for all sports and are good through the 2024-25 school year. These exams also meet Wisconsin eligibility requirements.

Students are asked to come during the time scheduled for their sport, which can be found at FHN's website at www.fhn.org. Forms must be printed, completed, and signed prior to arriving for physicals, which are priced at \$25. Only cash or checks are accepted and the total amount of the fee is donated back to the student's school.

It's Fair Time!

Is anybody hungry for a corndog or thirsting for a lemon shake up?! If you have a craving for fair food – or can't wait for a ride on the ferris wheel – your wait is almost over! The Stephenson County Fair starts Tuesday, July 23rd and goes through Saturday, July 27th.

Traditional activities like carnival rides, tractor pulls, and a demolition derby are on the agenda, along with monster trucks, Bingo, vendor booths, goat yoga, an antique tractor parade and show, chicken and pig scrambles, farm animal exhibitions, and a huge variety of other activities for children and adults. Oh, and did we say there is FAIR FOOD – many of the traditional mainstays as well as new nibbles for you to try. Free admission is available over the noon hour if you want to check out the Fair for lunch – check the website for details.

Debuting this year is a hot dog eating contest, sponsored by 312 beef and sausage; a BMX bike thrill show; and a giant foam party, free every day, along with many other new events.

Fair hours are 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., and vendors are open from 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. The fairgrounds are located at 2250 South Walnut Road in Freeport. Gate admission is \$6 for age 8 and older, and grandstand admission is \$10 for those 8 and over. Season passes and super grandstand passes are also available and parking is free.

Check out the fair website at www.stephensoncountyfair.org for complete information.

And the Fair has been around quite a while...

Did you know the roots of the fair go back to 1853, when the Stephenson County Agricultural Society was formed? The first county fair took place on October 4, 1854, and was held in a pasture near the Halderman Steam Flouring Mill southwest of Freeport (which would now be the area between Locust, Blackhawk, Beaver, and Avon Streets). At that venue, a gentleman named Luman Montique entered 75 varieties of apples and won first place for his efforts!

Indeed, the Stephenson County Fair has a rich history. When the American Civil War began in 1861 the fairgrounds were used as a military camp called Camp Scott. Buildings were converted to officer quarters and stalls became sleeping quarters for the soldiers. Army training drills took place daily and soldiers were sent to Camp Butler in Springfield when they were ready to join the Union Army.

In 1910, former President Theodore Roosevelt spoke at the fair. He was traveling to different parts of Illinois to raise money for a retirement home for retired and disabled railroad men located in Highland Park, Illinois. Thirty thousand people were in attendance that day and \$2,000 was raised.

In 1949, the fair was scheduled for August, but was postponed because of the polio epidemic. It was eventually held in October that year.

Our current fairgrounds were established in December of 1951. Thirty acres were purchased from Albert and Henry Albertus and they donated ten acres for naming rights. The park's official name is Albertus Park, Home of the Stephenson County Fair. The first fair held on the new fairgrounds took place in August 1952. The Home Ec building was the only structure built at the time. The first commercial building was built in time for the 1953 fair and the current grandstands were constructed in 1968 at a total cost of just over \$50,000.

The Stephenson County Fair is an important rite of summer for many area residents. Local folks may have experienced their first dates at the fair, had first kisses on the ferris wheel, showed a grand champion hog or steer, entered their pickles for judging, competed in the fair queen competition, suffered their first queasy tummy on the old Round Up or another carnival ride, or saw a now-famous act at the grandstand, from Johnny Cash to Blake Shelton. It is a wonderful midwest summer tradition.

We hope you'll head out to the Fair next week to have plenty of fun and food and make some NEW memories as we all celebrate their 170th anniversary!

National Ice Cream Day!

You may not know it, but today is an important national holiday during National Ice Cream Month. So with a drum roll please, or maybe a drum stick, we're excited that it's National Ice Cream Day!

Freeport, of course, is home to a premier ice cream parlor, Union Dairy, which is celebrating its 110th anniversary this year. In 1914, Union Dairy found its origins during a time when Stephenson County held the largest number of creameries in the state.

A man named Albert J. Hill and his associate Conrad F. Kaiser met up while transporting milk to customers on opposite sides of town. They decided to join forces and establish the "Union" Dairy on East Stephenson Street and later moved to the current location on Douglas Street.

The production of ice cream was soon to follow in 1934. Many of the recipes were created by some of the innovative employees of that time, leading to the introduction of Orange Pudding, the most popular flavor invented at the Dairy and still a classic today.



Early Union Dairy delivery trucks

On this important holiday, FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors visited Union Dairy to find out more about why it's such a special part of our community's history. Let's hear what he discovered.

(Interview with Tim Connors—not transcribed but included in audio versions online)

Thank you, Tim! Who doesn't love Union Dairy?? But if you want to celebrate National Ice Cream Month at home, we have a fun way to try that out: Paper Bag Ice Cream! It won't be Union Dairy, but it does sound like fun.

No freezer is needed for this frosty treat, and you can find the super-easy recipe on our website. For vanilla ice cream, all you need is Half & Half, sugar, vanilla, some rock salt, a couple of zip-loc plastic bags, and ice cubes. Follow our simple instructions, shake for 5 to 10 minutes, and voila! You've made ice cream!

PAPER BAG ICE CREAM

1 cup half and half

2 T sugar

½ tsp vanilla

Combine in a quart-sized zipper bag #1 and seal tightly

3 cups ice

⅓ cup rock salt

Combine in a gallon-size zipper bag #2

Place bag #1 inside bag #2

Seal bag #2

Shake the bags for 5-10 minutes

Remove bag #1 from bag #2, discard the rock salt and any remaining ice cubes from bag #2, then remove your ice cream from bag #1 and enjoy your creation!

The week ahead....

As we look at the week ahead, we remind you that this Saturday is the FHN Healthy Heart Hustle. You can still register in the morning from 7:00 to 7:30 a.m. and the rolling-start 5K run begins at 8:00 a.m. at the FHN Family Healthcare Center – Burchard Hills. Proceeds from the race will benefit heart patients in northwest Illinois through the FHN Cardiology Department. For more info, visit fhn.org.

Next Tuesday night, July 23rd, the Freeport Public Library is hosting a presentation by John Lynn of the Friends of Lincoln Library called "Mayhem in the National Parks."

From your chair at the Library, you can enjoy the scenery, adventure, and general chaos of a 600-mile mountain bike ride and camping trip from Jackson Hole, Wyoming to West Glacier, Montana through Grand Teton, Yellowstone, and Glacier National Parks, as well as a big chunk of Big Sky Country. See how nature can bring down both man and beast but still moves ever forward. The presentation runs from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. and no registration is required.

Then of course there's more music to enjoy in the outdoors in the week ahead too! Alt Funk puts on a groovy funk-a-delic performance for Music at Debate Square tonight at 6:30, and this week's Music Under the Stars concert in Krape Park Sunday night at 7:00 p.m. will feature Nicky Arn as conductor, vocalist Kyla Reisenbichler, and a saxophone solo by Aleisha Leeper.

And finally, the next Wednesday Morning Movie at the Lindo Theatre is the 2023 film *Wonka* starring Timothée Chalamet as Willie Wonka. It will screen at 10:00 a.m. on July 24th and admission is only \$2. Doors open at 9:00 a.m. for entertainment and games, and one auditorium at the theatre is dedicated for guests who may need more freedom to talk and move around than a traditional cinema setting allows.

Until next week...

As we close, we're pleased to announce that next week's Tuesday In-Depth Interview will feature FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel interviewing Rocky and Eric Zuberbuhler. They talk about the challenges and rewards of restoring the old Black Dot building on South Chicago Street in Freeport which is now known as The Exchange and what it means to them, as well as plans for the future. Their conversation will be posted at noon on Tuesday, July 23rd.

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

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