



**4 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.

Locust Avenue road work

Work has begun on the Locust Avenue street project, which will greatly improve the condition of the street as well as improve sewer and water mains. The construction work will begin with updates on the water and sewer lines and then will involve a complete repaving of the street.

The project stretches from South Street to Lincoln Boulevard. All of the work should be done by the start of the school year. Helm Group is doing the work and the funding comes from the City and Stephenson County. Locust Avenue will be closed during the day while crews are at work, but open at night.

Music on Chicago adds to Fourth of July weekend festivities

Music on Chicago’s second appearance of the season is tomorrow, Friday, July 5th featuring *Mimi on the Mic* and *Harlan Jefferson* in downtown Freeport at the Freeport Art Museum Plaza across from the Freeport Public Library.

Harlan Jefferson will take the stage at 7:00 p.m. with his own unique style of soul, jazz, funk, and hip hop on his saxophone. He also welcomes vocalist Kandrice Jackson. Freeport-native Tamika Smith headlines at 8:00 p.m. with *Mimi on the Mic*. The high-energy show will bring the best of Top 40 hits from the 80’s to today and keep everyone dancing.

Local food trucks will be on hand as well as beverages available for purchase. Admission is \$5 per person with children age 5 and under free.

The Greater Freeport Partnership is co-hosting July’s Music on Chicago with Freeport’s Flight Radio to encourage new talent to come to Freeport.

YMCA lease, salary increases approved at Highland Community College

The Highland Community College Board unanimously approved a 3.5% salary increase for non-union staff as well as a two-year lease agreement with YMCA Family Childcare Center that includes an option for a third year.

The salary increases for non-union employees follow increases of 2.0 % in fiscal year 2022 and 3.0 % in fiscal year 2023. Explanation for the increases included findings from the Compensation Range and Salary Adjustment System at Highland that compares Highland's salaries to national averages to ensure that the college is fiscally responsible.

The Human Resources Department at Highland found that more than one out of five of recent non-union job offers was rejected by the applicant because of a low salary. The survey also revealed that only 40% of Highland's non-union employees were satisfied with their salaries.

A major problem contributing to dissatisfaction that was identified in the study was that Highland jobs took 13 years, on average, for employees to reach the midrange of salary in their careers compared to only 5 to 10 years nationwide. The Highland administration has recommended that the midrange salary range be moved up to 10 years of service instead of 13.

Fehr Graham on Top 500 Design Firms list

Fehr Graham, a leading Midwest engineering and environmental firm headquartered in Freeport and with 10 locations across the Midwest, again secured a spot on the *Engineering News Record* Top 500 Design Firms list. Ranking in at number 474, this distinction marks the third consecutive year the firm has been featured on the prestigious list.

Midwest Engineering, a 34-person engineering firm based in east Peoria, has recently merged with Fehr Graham and the merger is planned to make Fehr Graham an even stronger, more competitive firm for the future.

Illinois is the third-best state to move to!

As we celebrate our nation's birthday, we wanted to make note of a story recently reported by the Peoria Journal Star that indicates that a recent study says Illinois is the third best state to move to in the United States.

The study was conducted by immigration lawyers from ManifestLaw, an Employment & Immigration Law Firm in New York City, and graded states on crime, disposable income, student-to-teacher ratios, cost of living, and available housing.

According to their study, Wyoming is the best state to emigrate to in the U.S., followed by Minnesota and then Illinois, which scored a 64.8 out of 100 points. Hawaii, Mississippi, and Louisiana were the bottom three states in the study.

Illinois, however, is also a state that consistently loses population rather than gaining it. In 2023, Illinois marked its 10th consecutive year of losing population. In celebration of Independence Day, though, we're focusing on the positive news this study provides. Way to go, Illinois!

Fishing at Krape Park

Krape Park is a favorite destination for many area folks, and fishing fans are included in that count.

The majority of people choose to fish in the spring, when the Illinois Department of Natural Resources releases trout in Yellow Creek. This release happens the first weekend in April every year, and hopeful anglers need a special stamp on their fishing license to keep a trout if they catch one, in the spring or later in the season.

However, anyone with a fishing license can cast their pole anywhere along Yellow Creek at Krape Park all summer long. Their catch might include bass, crappie, bluegill, catfish, or carp. If they catch a trout and don't have a stamp, it should be released back into the creek according to fishing regulations.

"Fishing is popular in Krape Park," says Bruce Cubberly, Interim Executive Director at the Freeport Park District. "People fish there almost every day when the weather is good." The only caveat? "Fishing is not allowed off bridges."

Word has it there are a lot of small-mouth bass just below the dam, so if your holiday weekend includes a bit of fishing, head to Krape Park. Good luck to all area fishermen and fisherwomen!

Pool-a-Palooza

For a different kind of water recreation, if you're looking for some cool family fun over the weekend, head to the Freeport Park District's Read Park Family Aquatic Center, also known as the Read Park Pool, tomorrow night!

On Friday, July 12th the pool will be open for a night swim and poolside party from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. with beachball volleyball games, poolside games, and music. Concessions will be available and regular admission fees apply. Participants age 12 and younger must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian and proper swim attire is required.

This sounds like a splashing good time!

Downtown Farmers Market expands experiences

Amera Striegel, the new administrative manager of the Stephenson County Farmers Market in downtown Freeport, is adding a number of offerings to the market in addition to fresh produce, baked and canned goods, artisan crafts, flowers and plants, and other traditional farmers market items.

Regular market goers may know Amera as the sourdough bread lady and she says that farmers markets have always meant a lot to her and she hopes to cultivate a spirit of community at the market by adding

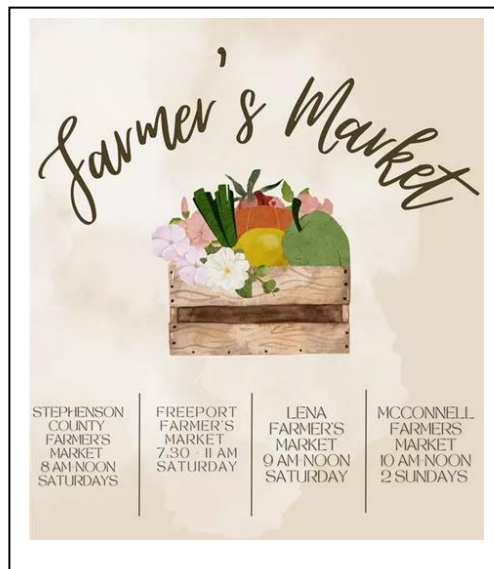
community education, interactive experiences, and entertainment every Saturday morning from 8:00 to noon. Plans include magicians, open mic music, hula hoop yoga, and even Narcan training to show how to use this product. Narcan is an over-the-counter nasal spray treatment that can save a life in an opioid overdose emergency.

The market also offers hospitality for market-goers including water from the artesian well in Winslow, a box to recycle old batteries, and coming soon, reusable canvas Stephenson County Farmers Market tote bags for purchase.

Amera looks forward to hearing from the public with other ideas, organization recommendations, and other comments to enhance the farmers market experience. You can reach her on Facebook at the Stephenson County Farmers Market page, send her a message at the market's email address, stephensoncountyfarmersmarket@gmail.com, or just stop by and chat with her and pick up a delicious loaf of sourdough bread!

Just as a reminder, we have four farmers markets in our county. In addition to the Stephenson County Farmer's Market downtown, there's the Freeport Farmer's Market on South St. and the Lena Farmer's Market near Main Street, both of which are open every Saturday, as well as the McConnell market in the McConnell VFW lot on the second Sunday of each month. We'll include the times for all of these in a graphic in the script for this episode of FREEPOD on our website.

Eat local, eat healthy, and support our local farmers markets!



Classic Film Series: The Matrix

For all the classic movie lovers out there, be sure to attend the big-screen showing of "The Matrix" next Wednesday, July 10th at the Lindo Theatre. "The Matrix" is the next entry in Lindo Theatre's Select Pix classic film series hosted by Ed Finch and Alan Wenzel at the Lindo Theatre. A widely acclaimed sci-fi/action flick, this 1999 picture stars Keanu Reeves and Laurence Fishburne. "The Matrix" screens next

Wednesday at 1:00 and 7:00 p.m. at regular ticket prices. 2024 is the 14th year for this popular film series at the Lindo.

Wednesday morning kids' movies at the Lindo

For the younger set of movie-goers – and also the young at heart – the Lindo is once again offering family movies all summer long on Wednesday mornings for just \$2! You can buy tickets and reserve seating online, or just handle at the theatre when you arrive. Doors open at 9:00 a.m. for entertainment and games, and showtimes are at 10:00 a.m.

One auditorium at the theatre is dedicated for guests who may need more freedom than a traditional cinema setting allows. With the lights turned up and sound turned down, attendees can talk and move around, which can be helpful for young families or guests with special needs.

For extra fun, group reservations for 20 or more include admission with reserved seating and a kiddie refreshments combo with popcorn, a juice box or kiddie drink, and a fruit snack for \$8 per person. The reservation form for groups can be found at the Lindo website.

Next week's movie on July 10th is the box office hit "Shrek" – we'll mention the other movies each week, or you can find the whole line-up on the website. What a great option for a hot summer morning!

Healthy Heart Hustle

With pre-race registration ending soon, we have a quick reminder for you about FHN's Healthy Heart Hustle 5K, 7 a.m. on Saturday, July 20th. Pre-registration is open now and registration the day of the Hustle is also available for an additional \$10. Proceeds from the race will benefit heart patients in northwest Illinois through the FHN Cardiology Department. For more info, visit www.fhn.org/5k.

Tutty is on the way!

Freeport's annual Tutty Baker Festival begins next Friday with a full weekend of family fun, community celebrations, and opportunities to support local businesses with special sales and events.

From July 12th to 14th you can enjoy fireworks, a classic car show, live music performances, a lively parade, a diverse selection of food trucks, and a craft fair featuring local artisans as well as a 5k run and kayaking opportunities.

Our in-depth interview next Tuesday, July 9th, will give you lots more reasons to enjoy something for everyone at this event, for which admission is free! For more information about the Tutty Baker Festival, including a detailed schedule of events, please visit the official Facebook and Instagram pages ([@TuttyBakerFestival](https://www.facebook.com/TuttyBakerFestival)).

The week ahead....

In addition to looking forward to all that Tutty Baker Fest has to offer, we're reminding everyone that fireworks in Freeport will be part of Tutty this year instead of happening on the Fourth of July weekend. We'll be looking forward to lighting up the skies next Saturday night, July 13th.

There's no Music on Debate Square tonight, but plan to be there next Thursday, July 11th, for Big Band music with conductor Bill Petersen.

We're not without more music for the July 4th holiday weekend, though, as the weekend wraps up with Music Under the Stars Music on Sunday, July 7th at 7:00 p.m. in the Koenig Amphitheatre at Krape Park. The conductor for this evening's performance by the Freeport Concert Band is Bill Petersen. The featured vocalist is Britney Kieselhorst ([KEEZ-el-hurst](#)) and there will be a clarinet solo by Ken Stein. What a great way to end the weekend!

Until next week...

As we close, we're pleased to announce that as mentioned earlier, next week's Tuesday In-Depth Interview will feature FREEPOD host Tim Connors interviewing Freeport Mayor Jodi Miller and Tutty Baker Fest committee member Nakita Woods about all the fun and food you'll find at the Tutty Baker Fest starting next Friday, July 12th. Their conversation will be posted at noon on Tuesday, July 9th.

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!

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