



6 November  
2025

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 updates on what's happening in our community.

You can find us on Facebook as well as our website ([www.freepod.org](http://www.freepod.org)) and the website of our NPR partner WNJI Northern Public Radio ([www.northernpublicradio.org](http://www.northernpublicradio.org)), so please visit us there and continue to share about us on your own social media. Now let's see what's happening.

### City news

At a recent Freeport City Council meeting the Council created the position of Operations Superintendent by combining the Utility Superintendent and Street Superintendent into the one role. This is designed to help streamline these operations and maximize the many parts of their roles which are related.

The Council also did not pass an ordinance that would have only allowed short term rentals like Air B&Bs in areas zoned for multiple family buildings.

Freeport has also begun publishing a new Public Works Newsletter with more in-depth information on the many utility projects and activities that are important to the City's residents. It is available on the homepage of the City website at [www.cityoffreeport.org](http://www.cityoffreeport.org) in the "recent news" section.

As a couple of reminders from the City, ***please remember that if you do NOT want to be part of Freeport's Electrical Aggregation program and stay with ComEd, you must opt out of the Electrical Aggregation program.*** There are several options for accomplishing this from online to phone calls to postal mail, per a letter you should receive in the mail with instructions. You can also call City Hall for more information. FREEPOD provided a detailed description of the program and options in a recent episode – to revisit that information, just visit our website at [www.freepod.org](http://www.freepod.org) and search on "electrical aggregation."

The City's annual leaf collection has also begun. Here are a few reminders to keep in mind...

- Leaves are collected in repeating cycles from west to east in the city until the first snowfall. Specific requests for leaf pile pickups are not accepted as a part of the Leaf Collection Program. If you missed a given cycle of leaf collection, your leaves will be collected on the next cycle.

- Leaves must be placed in a continuous row at the curb line.
- Only leaves are accepted; no grass clippings, yard waste, sticks, brush, or trash, all of which can clog the collection equipment. If such waste is placed curbside city crews will refuse collection.
- Storm sewer grates should not be covered with leaves. Also, even if you're not raking leaves yourself, please do not park vehicles on or immediately next to any leaf piles to ensure they can be easily picked up.

A collection map is available on the City website at [www.cityoffreeport.org](http://www.cityoffreeport.org) – just search on “leaf collection” or click <https://cityoffreeport.org/galleries/leaf-collection-map/>

Remember that City residents can take woody waste to the Timber Industries location on Walnut across from the County Fairgrounds on Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to noon. This service is free to Freeport residents so please bring proof of residency.

### **New well for City water**

In other City news, work has begun on a 1,300-foot-deep production water well and treatment facility what will serve the low zone of Freeport. The low zone is the largest area of Freeport and serves 65% of the community.

This construction of this well, to be known as Well #12, will replace the 140-year-old Brick Avenue Water treatment plant. Once construction is complete, the Brick Plant, which had low levels of chemicals detected, will be completely decommissioned. The process to provide a new well began as soon as those chemicals were detected. In 2023, Well #11 was drilled and brought online and together with the new Well #12, these new wells will provide Freeport with water that is completely contaminant-free.

Crews at the new well site near the south entrance of Krape Park are currently working on drilling a test well which will let the City ensure that this land is not contaminated. Once testing is complete, the drilling will commence down to the full depth of 1,300 feet. FREEPOD will continue to report on progress with this project as it is completed.

### **SNAP benefits run out for Stephenson County**

SNAP benefits were paused on Saturday for participants in Stephenson County and approximately 1.9 million Illinoisans overall. There are almost 9,000 SNAP participants in the 44,000 population of Stephenson County. SNAP stands for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps.

Following two federal court rulings, the Federal government announced that it would use emergency funds to partially finance the benefits but the matter is in the courts and as such, a delay of up to several weeks must be expected. In addition, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker has directed \$20 million in state funds to food banks to help replace SNAP benefits.

FREEPOD has provided a number of links below to a variety of services that can provide food and other necessities during the delay including social service organizations, church pantries, and other locations.

SNAP participants in our communities needing immediate food assistance are advised to check their current account balance and contact any local options or call 2-1-1 for emergency food sources.

#### *SNAP resources*

<https://www.facebook.com/100064862164080/posts/pfbid02teQs4xSFsgmeQuayArhEPWFCeLy5sKCjcGqueCSFUqBeagFnhmvu5ufNkDA2GvPjI/?d=n>

<https://solvehungertoday.org/get-groceries-resources/>

<https://mail.nicaa.org/Stephenson County Food Pantries20202021.pdf>

#### **Breadmaking class**

As one way of responding to the delay of SNAP benefits, Amera Striegel, manager of the Stephenson County Farmers Market, is hosting a two-hour yeast breadmaking class beginning at 2:30 p.m. this Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup> at the Stephenson County Farm Bureau building at 210 West Spring Street in Freeport.



The class will teach attendees how to make a simple yeast bread. All materials are provided and some will also be provided to take home. Snacks will be provided to enjoy as the bread rises. There is no charge but RSVPs are requested by texting the word BREAD to 270-970-5208 or responding to the invitation on Striegel's Facebook page in order to make sure that enough materials are available for all and hopefully for take-home as well. If you have a bread pan or a basic mixing bowl, please bring that along. The number again to text the word BREAD is 270-970-5208

Donations of materials, ingredients, baking utensils, and cash to be used for these items are also very welcome. Please contact Amera as outlined above if you would like to contribute to the event.

#### **Free jazz concert this Sunday hosted by the Freeport Community Concert Association**

Speaking of Highland, the Highland College Big Band and The Joel Baer Jazz Band will present a free community concert this Sunday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, at 3:00 p.m. at the Freeport Masonic Temple as part of the current season presented by the Freeport Community Concert Association.

Freeport has long been known as a city that supports the arts and this year the Community Concert Association celebrates its 94<sup>th</sup> season, making it the longest-running community concert association in the country.

The Highland College Big Band brings together many of Stephenson County's finest musicians performing classic selections from jazz greats like Count Basie, Stan Kenton, and Buddy Rich.

The Joel Baer Jazz Band, a professional ensemble based in Rockford, performs across the Chicago, Rockford, and Southern Wisconsin region and is known for its powerhouse lineup of jazz musicians, vocalists, and their mix of modern jazz pieces alongside creative takes on popular video game themes.

The Association's season opened on September 7 and there are five more shows still to come. To celebrate this momentous anniversary, the Freeport Concert Association is offering every concert **free** for all who attend. There are performances for many musical tastes in the remainder of the season, and a listing of future concerts appears below.

November 9	Highland Community College Big Band and the Joel Baer Band
November 16	Peter Bloom and John Funkhauser, flute and piano
March 22, 2026	Kate McMahon's Celtic Celebration
April 12, 2026	Cece Teneal's Divas of Soul
April 25, 2026	Jun-Hee Man on piano

Concerts are held on Sunday afternoons at 3:00 pm in the historic Masonic Temple except for the last performance, which is scheduled in April 2026.

Whether you're a long-time supporter and never miss a show or you're new to these wonderful performances, everyone attends free of charge this year. Choose your musical preferences, put these dates on your calendar and support live music in Freeport. For more information, check out the Freeport Community Association on Facebook.

### **New exhibition at Freeport Art Museum**

A new exhibition at the Freeport Art Museum showcases the talents of Native American artists in works that explore their identity, heritage, stories and power of resilience. Artists include Chelsea Bighorn – whose heritage includes Lakota, Dakota, and Shoshone-Paiute tribes as well as Irish American ancestors – and Hattie Lee Mendoza whose heritage stems from the Cherokee people.

The exhibition runs through December 27 at the museum at 121 North Harlem Avenue in Freeport.

### **Stephenson County Farmers Market continues over winter**

The Stephenson County Farmers Market will once again continue over the winter months! The first date is this Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup> and the markets will be held the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays of every month

through April from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Stephenson County Farm Bureau at 210 West Spring Street in Freeport.



The markets will feature a wide variety of vendors, from meat to mushrooms, baked goods to local art, and more! Be sure to stop in and browse the wares of local artisans. More information can be found on the Stephenson County Farmers Market Facebook page or by contacting them at [stephensoncountyfarmersmarket@gmail.com](mailto:stephensoncountyfarmersmarket@gmail.com)

### **Library sets food collection calendar**

The Freeport Public Library is just one of many local organizations hosting food collection drives during the holiday season that may also help local food pantries facing many new visitors in light of the SNAP benefits delay that has gone into effect.

Contributions to the Library's collection can be dropped off at the Library's circulation desk and will go to the Freeport Area Church Cooperative.

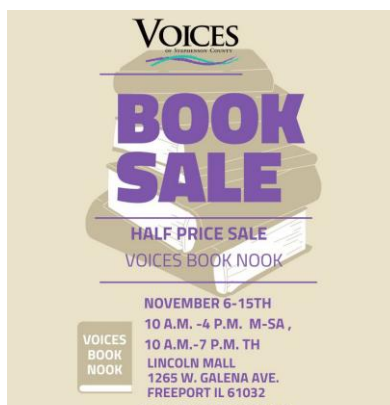
All non-perishable donations are welcome, with a focus each week on a most-needed pantry item including peanut butter and jelly, macaroni and pasta, sauces, and soups. The weekly focus calendar is included below. Please help support FACC during the holiday season and all year through!

- Week One (Nov 1-8): Peanut Butter & Jelly
- Week Two (Nov 9-15): Macaroni/Pasta
- Week Three (Nov 16-22): Sauces
- Week Four (Nov 23-30): Soups

### **VOICES Book Nook Fall half-price sale**

Get a good deal and help a good cause by supporting the annual VOICES of Stephenson County Book Nook Fall Half Price Sale. The sale will run from today through November 15<sup>th</sup> with proceeds benefiting services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault offered through VOICES.

According to VOICES Book Nook Manager Diane Leverton, the Fall half-price sale is the store's last major sale of the year and the last sale for five months, making it a perfect opportunity for customers to pick up items as gifts for the holidays or just to last themselves through the winter. The sale features gently used hardcover and paperback books, DVDs, records, and puzzles and books on CD, as well as some rare and collectible books. A silent auction of collectible packages including books, artwork and albums is running through the end of the half-price sale. Auction highlights include Green Bay Packers, Beatles, Dr. Who and Harry Potter lots.



The VOICES Book Nook is located at the Lincoln Mall in Freeport. Hours for the shop are 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. except for Thursday the 6<sup>th</sup> and Thursday the 13<sup>th</sup> when it remains open until 7:00 p.m. It is closed on Sundays. Patrons are asked to remember that no donations of books or materials are accepted the week of the sale although monetary donations are welcome any time. For more information on the sale, please contact the VOICES of Stephenson County Book Nook at 815-821-2665.

## Stephenson County Sheriff's Department Holiday Box Giveaway



**Sheriff Steve Stovall**  
Stephenson County Sheriff's Office

The Stephenson County Sheriff's Office is proud to serve our community, not only through public safety but also through meaningful outreach efforts that bring people together. As the holiday season approaches, we recognize that many families in our county are facing financial hardships and may struggle to put a holiday meal on the table.

To help meet this need, we are organizing our Holiday Box Giveaway, which will provide boxes filled with essential food items and holiday staples for families in need throughout Stephenson County. These boxes will be delivered directly to households by members of the Sheriff's Office just before Thanksgiving.

I am reaching out to request your support in making this program a success. Donations of non-perishable food items, grocery gift cards, or monetary contributions will directly help us provide holiday meals to those who need them most. With your generosity, we can ensure that families across our community experience the comfort and joy of the season.

Your contribution will not only provide nourishment but also serve as a reminder that our community cares deeply about one another.

### List of Items needed:

Turkey/Ham	Dried Onions	Canned Fruit
Stuffing Mix	Canned Corn/ Canned Vegetables	Brownie Mix
Canned Yams/Sweet Potatoes	Gravy Mix	Fruit snacks
Mashed Potatoes	Pancake Mix	Hot Chocolate Mix
Canned Cranberries	Syrup	Marshmallows
Canned Green Beans	Cereal	
Cream of Mushroom Soup	Granola Bars	

If you are able to donate, please contact Erica Chapple, 815-599-1948, echapple@stephensoncountyil.gov to arrange drop-off or pick-up details. Monetary donations may be made payable by check to Sheriff's Office Social Services with "Holiday Box Giveaway" noted in the memo line.

On behalf of the Stephenson County Sheriff's Office, thank you for considering this request and for your continued commitment to our community. Together, we can make this holiday season brighter for our neighbors in need.

Sincerely,

*Erica Chapple, LSW*

Erica Chapple

Social Services Administrator

Stephenson County Sheriff's Office

The Stephenson County Sheriff's Office is requesting contributions for their annual Holiday Box Giveaway. Your grocery donations will help support local families in need and spread holiday cheer throughout our community. A copy of the letter from the Sheriff with the items they are collecting appears at left.

Donations must be received by Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup> and can be dropped off at the Stephenson County Courthouse at 15 North Galena Avenue during business hours or the Public Safety Building at 204 West Exchange Street any time.

For information on the items that are being requested or to arrange a pick-up or monetary donation, call the Department's Social Services Administrator Erica Chapple at 815-599-1948. That's 815-599-1948.

### **Warren Elementary is a Blue Ribbon School**

Warren Elementary School has been named a Blue Ribbon School in a Federal school recognition program celebrating schools that go above and beyond in helping their students reach their highest potential. Congratulations, Warren Elementary!

### **HCC news**

Highland Community College has been named one of the Top 200 community colleges in the nation by Aspen Institute College, making Highland eligible to compete for a \$1 million Aspen Prize. The Aspen Prize honors colleges that are achieving high and improving student outcomes and highlights the practices that drive their success. Good luck, Highland!

### **Testing required for deer taken by hunters**

Deer hunters in Illinois have been required to test their deer for a deadly neurological illness called chronic wasting disease. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources recently unveiled a testing notification system that will make it easier for hunters to stay updated on its presence in local deer.

Chronic wasting disease affects the nervous systems of elk and deer. It was first detected in a female deer in Boone County in 2002. Since then, almost 3,000 deer have tested positive for the disease and last year more than 500 deer tested positive. Nearly every county in northern Illinois was affected.

Hunters can test their deer at firearm deer check stations, or they can drop off deer heads at select drop-off sites. When they sign up for the new test result notification system at [www.ExploreMoreIL.com](http://www.ExploreMoreIL.com) hunters receive a text and an email with their test results. If they do not sign up, they can still receive their results by looking them up or sending a request to the Department of Natural Resources.

### **“The Art of Zentangle” at the Senior Resource Center**

The Senior Resource Center invites the public to its November Lunch & Learn event featuring “The Art of Zentangle” next Thursday, November 13th, from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m.

The Zentangle Method is an easy-to-learn, relaxing, and fun way to create beautiful images by drawing structured patterns. This simple, repetitive drawing technique uses dots, lines, and curves to form “tangles,” resulting in unique, meditative designs. There are no mistakes in Zentangle, making it accessible to anyone, regardless of artistic skill.

The workshop will be led by Mary Stayner, a certified Zentangle teacher with years of experience teaching this relaxing art form to everyone from preschoolers to seniors. It will include hands-on instruction and all necessary materials. The cost is \$7 per participant to cover materials. Payment can be made in advance over the phone, by mail or in person. Space is limited, so early registration is encouraged. To reserve a spot, call 815-235-9777. That’s 815-235-9777.



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

As we look at the week ahead, we're reminded that tomorrow and Saturday you can check out the Fall open house at the Stephenson County Farm Bureau. Hours tomorrow are 9:00 to 5:00 p.m. and on Saturday they'll be open from 9:00 to noon. The event features truck sale of McNess products, Farm Bureau updates and trip highlights, and a local vendor fair.

Following a fun Halloween weekend, we also thought it was great that nearly 1,700 brave souls rode the Train of Terror hosted by the Stephenson County Antique Engine Club. It's a community tradition and obviously not *that* terrifying with so many people taking the time to support and enjoy it.

On the lunar front, there's still time tonight to take a look at the November Super Moon! It crested Tuesday night but it'll still be visible for a few more days. A Super Moon happens when the moon's orbit is closest to the Earth at the same time the moon is full. According to NASA, the November moon appears bigger, brighter, and more golden than any other moon this year, and is the closest one of 2025 as it will be only 221,817 miles from Earth at its nearest point. This one is called the Beaver Moon because it's the time of year when beavers begin to take shelter in their lodges and was also the season to trap beavers for their thick pelts during the North American fur trade. There's another coming up in December that we'll tell you about then.

We also want to take the opportunity to recognize the many individuals in Stephenson County who have served in our country's armed forces. We will be thinking of you and appreciating all you've done for all of us on Veterans Day next Tuesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>. Thank you!

If you are looking for something to do this week or any week, visit the Greater Freeport Partnership website at [www.greaterfreeport.com](http://www.greaterfreeport.com) and click on "weekly events" for a comprehensive listing of many more entertainment and dining events and activities throughout Stephenson County. You can also subscribe to the City of Freeport's monthly newsletter at their website, [www.cityoffreeport.org](http://www.cityoffreeport.org). We have links to both in the print version of FREEPOD episodes.

We also wanted to remind everyone that we're really enjoying the great in-depth interviews you can hear every week on FREEPOD, and are sure you will too if you're not already! This week's interview featured FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel visiting with FHN President and CEO Mark Gridley about FHN's upcoming affiliation with Mercyhealth. The interview, which aired first the day before yesterday on Tuesday, is available online and can be listened to anytime.

Next Tuesday, FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors visits with local restaurant owner Sam Cimino about the restaurant's history -- including its expansion into Las Vegas Nevada and Laguna Beach, California -- and Sam's life in Freeport. This conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, November 11th and be available to listen to then or at any time after that -- just head to our website or your favorite podcast platform to select the programs of your choice.

### **In closing...**

In closing, as we've mentioned before, we need your help! When you're listening on your favorite podcast platform, please "like" or "follow" us -- this helps us to move up in the rankings of podcasts and



enables us to better promote ourselves throughout the region. On Facebook, also please click on “like” as the algorithms there also depend on user input to help us increase our presence.

And speaking of increasing our presence remember that FREEPOD is now on YouTube! The program is currently audio only but having it on YouTube gives you another super-easy way to listen. You can find both English and Spanish versions – just head to YouTube.com and search for FREEPOD or click the link in the print version at <https://www.youtube.com/@FREEPOD61032/podcasts>. Please tell all your friends and family members about our YouTube channel too – everything you do can help get local news out to our community!

FREEPOD couldn’t come to you without the Mass Communication Department at Highland Community College and our community liaisons and reporters. Thank you, Team FREEPOD! You can always find us on our Facebook page or the website of our National Public Radio partner, WNIJ in DeKalb, at [www.northernpublicradio.org](http://www.northernpublicradio.org). For more info, including how to make a tax-deductible contribution to support our work, visit our website at [www.freepod.org](http://www.freepod.org).

With that, time’s up for this week. Tune in again next Thursday at noon – or any time after that on our website or your favorite podcast platform – and thank you for listening!

***Listen next week for more about what’s happening in the Freeport area!***

## **LINKS TO OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS NEWSLETTERS BELOW**



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