



**1 August
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.

City road work update

The City is working on finishing up work on Locust Avenue, just east of Freeport High School, from South Street to Lincoln Boulevard. Helm Group contractors are wrapping up work on manhole covers and are about to start painting.

Further west, the side streets of Greenfield Drive have moved into the final phase of reconstruction. Roads such as Quail Ridge, Sioux, and Yellowstone all had infrastructure work done over the last month and a half and are now repaved with completion of final elements planned to be complete soon.

County pay raises and new hires

At a recent Stephenson County Board meeting, a salary increase of \$7,400 was approved for the Stephenson County Sheriff by the Board. The State of Illinois reimburses 66% of increase amount. In other Sheriff's department news, three new deputies are in training and some auxiliary members of the Sheriff's office had to be posted in the County Treasurer's office due to unruly taxpayers verbally abusing and harassing county employees. The board also approved a pay raise of \$9,000 for the State's Attorney and noted that the Public Defender has resigned effective year end.

Additionally, Marcos Perez was approved as the new Walnut Acres Nursing Center Administrator. Perez has 15 years' experience and describes himself as a traditional administrator. He starts immediately.

Anti-Gun Violence March

As we reported in our in-depth interview with organizer William Brown last week, Freeport area residents are invited to participate in an anti-gun violence march this Saturday, August 3. The March

will start at the corner Main Street and State Avenue in downtown Freeport, the location of the old Germania Club, at about 10:15 a.m.

Organizer Brown said there will be two stops during the march where mothers who have lost children to gun violence will speak briefly. Walkers will then proceed to the Ferguson Pavilion behind the Post Office, where various resources related to reducing and handling gun violence will be available. The march will finish with a moment of silence and a balloon release to honor those victims lost to gun violence in our community.

Greater Freeport Partnership receives grant

Greater Freeport Partnership Report Executive Director Andrea Winter has reported that the Partnership has received a grant from the Illinois Department on Tourism to support the objective of retaining and expanding existing businesses, attracting new business, attracting visitors, and increasing membership. Although lack of child care facilities is a major issue for the area, she noted that employers seeing more applicants than a year ago.

Winter reported that the Partnership currently has 410 members and the retention rate for members is 96%. She also said that January to June hotel occupancy is down slightly compared to 2023.

Highland Community College news

At a recent special meeting of the Highland Community College board, the board continued to assess the feasibility of building an Athletic and Events Center on campus, either as a new stand-alone structure or as an addition to the existing YMCA.

The task force recently walked through with architect Scott Johnson of Richard L. Johnson Associates and Architects in Rockford, who summarized the construction of such a Center and concluded that 226,000 feet would be needed to accommodate all the proposed plans of Highland and the YMCA. By comparison, the existing YMCA building has 76,000 square feet and even if renovated does not have enough space for all of the potential uses envisioned for an Athletic and Events Center.

Costs range from \$15 million to over \$90 million, depending on the decision to renovate existing structures or combine the needs of the College and the YMCA into one new facility, as well as exploring different square footage options and the types of facilities to be included.

President of Highland Community College Chris Kuberski reported that while the YMCA doesn't see much growth in its fitness center, additional space is needed for after-school programs and the child-care center. Additional conversation involved the partnership between the College and the YMCA and how that would be impacted if a joint facility goes forward. Stay tuned to FREEPOD for more news as this project discussion progresses.

Threshing Show this weekend

Another popular annual event is on the schedule this weekend as the The Stephenson County Antique Engine Club hosts the Freeport Antique Tractor and Engine Show this Saturday and Sunday, August 3rd and 4th from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day.

There's a lot to see at this look into the past, including many makes and models of antique tractors; antique gas engines, some of them made in Freeport; classic automobiles including Henneys made in Freeport; the club's fire truck collection; and the huge Cooper Corliss engine.

Attendees can also enjoy a flea market, an antique tractor pull on Sunday, and tours of the museum as well as train rides. Admission to the show grounds is free and for this event only, you can tour the museum and ride the train for the bargain price of just \$5.00 with children under age 6 riding for free.

There will be a biscuits and gravy breakfast available for purchase each day, and a lunch stand will be on the show grounds. All transactions must be made in cash or by local check as the Club is unable to accept credit or debit cards.

End of Summer Party at the Library

On Thursday, August 8th, the Freeport Public Library will host an End of Summer Party from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. on the Library grounds at 100 E. Douglas in Freeport.

The free party, which celebrates the end of the summer reading program, will feature bounce houses, face painting, games, and much more! In case of rain, the party will move inside the library.

Police and Fire Departments community event

On Tuesday August 6th from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. the Freeport Fire and Police Departments are hosting a National Night Out at Read Park by the pavilion. This is a nationwide community event to encourage outreach and foster good communications between the departments and residents. A number of family- and children-friendly activities are planned.

Freeport Cruise Night returns

Freeport Cruise Night returns to Downtown Freeport next Saturday, August 10th from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. The event begins with the car show, merchandise vendors, music, and food vendors with cars being displayed in the municipal lot along Douglas Street, the east lot at the corner of Adams and Exchange Street, and overflow parking on Exchange Street.

Reserved parking spaces are still available for the east lot for \$12 and can be purchased online at greaterfreeport.com/events. Parking spots will also be for sale the day of the event for \$10 on a first-come, first-served basis.

As one of the original and remaining true “cruises,” the Freeport cruise will begin at 6:00 p.m. The route runs from downtown Freeport west on Stephenson Street, then south on Park Boulevard, east on Empire Street, north on newly repaved Locust Street, east on Main Street and finally north on State to complete the route. Signage will be posted throughout the route to help with traffic flow.

Greater Freeport Partnership Brand Director Nicole Haas noted that the cruise has become so popular that no more cars could be fitted in the original sixteen-block route. The classic cars sat idle and then overheated and it didn’t continuously move as had been intended. This expanded route has worked out well to keep cars moving and residents and viewers love sitting along the streets throughout the city to watch the amazing display of automobiles. Drivers are invited to enter the cruise route at any point. For more information on Freeport Cruise Night, visit greaterfreeport.com/events.

100 Women Who Care

If you are looking for an easy way to help the community, you are invited to join one of two local organizations that only meet quarterly and select a non-profit recipient for donated funds during an hour-long meeting

The organizations are 100 Women Who Care – Stephenson County and 100 Men Who Care for Stephenson County. Both are giving circles, with members donating a set amount each quarter. The amount for both groups is \$100 per quarter and the pooled donations are designed to be significant enough to make a measurable impact for a non-profit organization that is selected to receive funds each quarter. The next quarterly meeting for both groups is in August.

In its nine-year history 100 Women Who Care – Stephenson County members have donated over \$440,000 to organizations in Stephenson County. Julie Hilliger, a 100 Women Who Care Steering Committee member, says that the group has helped launch a non-profit organization, bought a bookmobile, supported flood relief efforts, helped saved a historic landmark, and made history by supporting the first domestic violence shelter in Stephenson County.

The group is accepting new members and next meets on Thursday, August 8th at the Muse on Cedar Creek in Cedarville. A social hour begins at 5:30 p.m., followed by the meeting at 6:30 p.m. More information for members and organizations that would like to be considered in future meetings can be found on the group’s website at <https://100wwcstephensoncounty.weebly.com/>

100 Men Who Care was founded in June 2022 and has been meeting quarterly since then. Their next meeting will be August 20th. Nominations for donations to non-profit organizations do not have to be submitted in advance to 100 Men Who Care.

Lincoln-Douglas 5K

The Lincoln-Douglas 5K, One-Mile Fun Run and Kids Races returns next Saturday, August 10th for the twenty-first year. It starts at 8:00 a.m., beginning and ending near the Abraham Lincoln Statue in Taylor Park at 900 East Stephenson Street and consists of three loops around the historic paved road inside

Taylor Park. A one-mile Fun Run of one loop around the Park follows, as well as a series of kids' races that will ultimately crown the "Fastest Kid in Town."

Sign-up can be done online at www.lincoln-douglas5k.com with fees for the 5K at \$25 until midnight August 5th; we'll include that URL in our show notes for this newscast. Sign-up fees increase after that time. Proceeds benefit programs for the United Way of Northwest Illinois and the Family YMCA of Northwest Illinois.

Stephenson County Fair

The Stephenson County Fair wrapped up last Saturday. It's been an important event here for 170 years, and one of the gate attendees recalls that rain seems to be a regular Fair. In fact, in looking back on how the weather has impacted the Fair, flooding in 1951 forced the event to move from its original location at Taylor Park to its current location on Lamm Road in 1952.

One of the volunteers at the entry gate for the tractor pull on Tuesday night was caught in the driving rain and was as disappointed as the people who were there for the event when it was cancelled. She commented that everyone understood the situation, though, and everyone remained polite.

FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel went to the Fair on Saturday to interview State of Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza. Mendoza has tried to visit all 102 Illinois counties during her eight years as Comptroller and Alan caught up with her to ask what two or three items from the recently approved State budget she would highlight for our listeners. Here's what she had to say:

(Mendoza clip)

While he was there, Alan also ran into one of our country's founding fathers, Ben Franklin! He had a number of insights for the listeners of 2024 that we thought would be fun to share, so here's Alan interviewing Ben!

(Ben Franklin interview)

Music on Chicago

Music on Chicago is concluding the summer music season with a repeat performance by Boogie & The Yo-Yoz tomorrow night, August 2nd, in downtown Freeport. Boogie & The Yo-Yoz has been entertaining crowds since 1995 with their high-energy performances at events like Cheese Days in Monroe and Riverfest in La Crosse. Their diverse line-up pleases music lovers of all ages. They will headline the show starting at 7:00 p.m., preceded by DJ Cup kicking off the evening at 5:30 pm.

Gates open at 5:00 pm, and with a \$5 admission fee for ages 12 and older. Lawn chairs and blankets are welcome, and local food trucks and cold beverages will be available for purchase. Music on Chicago is a community arts and entertainment collaboration hosted by the Greater Freeport Partnership.

The week ahead...

As always, there's plenty going on in the Freeport area during the coming week! First up, we're looking forward to a performance by Southpaw Stance at Music on Debate Square tonight, August 1st. Bring your lawn chairs and blankets as well as pocket money for a free-will donation...and a treat from Union Dairy next door.

Then on Saturday, August 3rd, check out the Family Wellness Expo from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Join FHN, SSM Health, the Stephenson County Health Department and the FMFA Barbershop for health screenings, yoga sessions, speakers, and plenty of fun activities for the kids, all to help boost your family's health and wellness.

Next up is *Harmony Among the Treetops*, a performance by The Freeport Choral Society from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. this Sunday, August 4th, at the Koenig Amphitheater in Krape Park, also informally known as the Krape Park Bandshell. Admission is free.

Then on Wednesday, August 7th, movie goers can enjoy "Sing 2", the last movie in the Lindo Theatre's Wednesday Morning Movie Series. A highly rated animated family movie that premiered in 2021, "Sing 2" will air at 10:00 a.m. for only \$2 per ticket. Doors open at 9:00 a.m. for entertainment and games, and one auditorium in the theatre is dedicated for guests who may need more freedom than a traditional cinema setting allows.

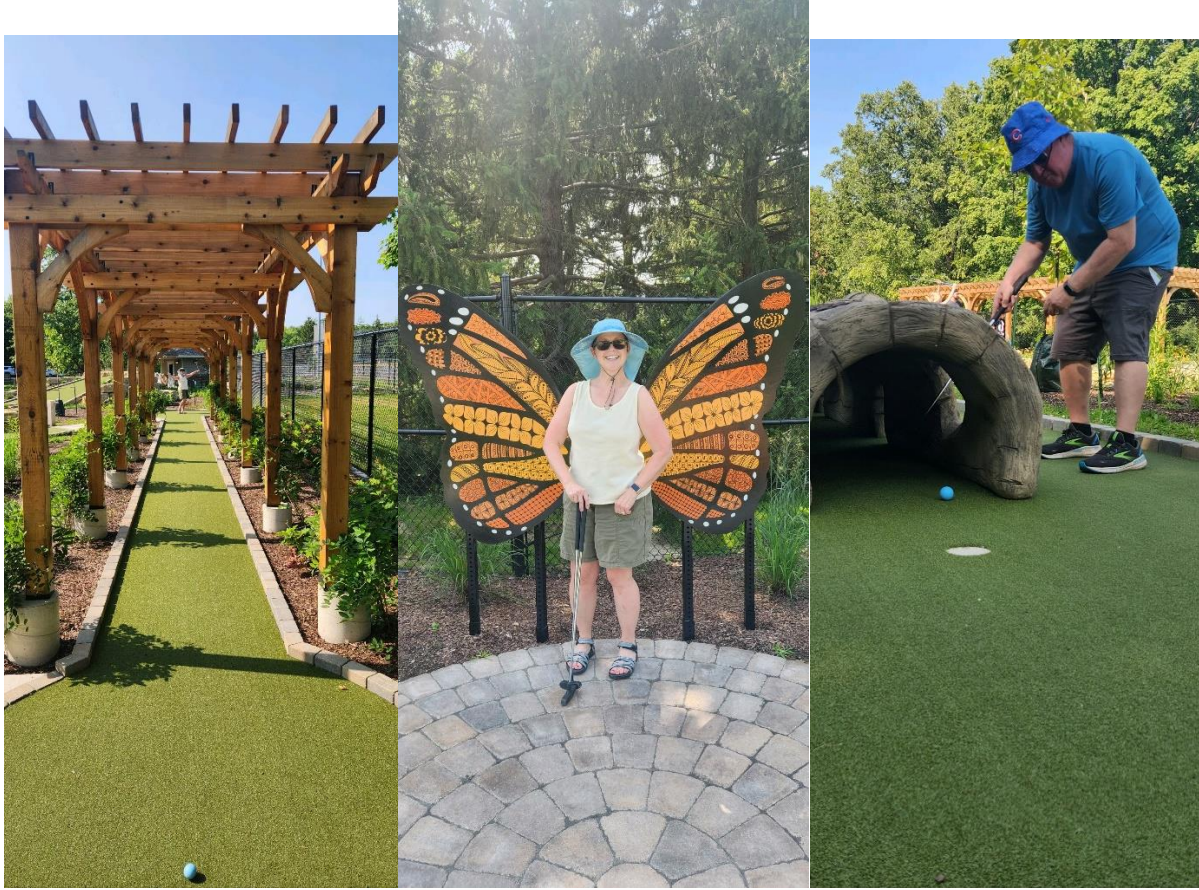
Later in the day next Wednesday, August 7th, classic movie lovers can look forward to "Some Like it Hot", a 1959 hit film starring Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon, and Marilyn Monroe. This film was voted by the audiences of the Select Pix Classic film series as a favorite comedy, and indeed it set the standard for many comedic films to follow. "Some Like It Hot" 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 is hosted by Ed Finch and Alan Wenzel at the Lindo Theatre in Freeport.

Until next week...

As we close, we're pleased to announce that next week's Tuesday In-Depth Interview will be in two parts with FREEPOD and TimBeck2 hosts Becky Connors and Tim Connors. Tim interviews Magen Busker, local resident, about showing cattle at last week's Stephenson County Fair. Then host Becky Connors and Tim converse about the new Wing It! miniature golf course at Krape Park. These conversations will post at noon on Tuesday, August 6th. Accompanying photos appear below.



Magen Busker



Becky and Tim Connors enjoyed the new Wing It! miniature golf course at Krape Park

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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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!