



**15 August
2024**

Welcome to FREEDPOD, 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 that's 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.

Meet International Visitors at the Library

Local citizens have an exciting chance to learn more about the Freeport Area International Visitors Council and interact with seven women leaders from Peru who are visiting Freeport in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State.

Those interested should mark their calendars for one of two sessions next Thursday, August 22nd at the Freeport Public Library. The first session is from 10:00 to 11:30 am with the League of Women Voters; and the second is from 11:30 am to 12:45 pm at a roundtable of local professional women. Both meetings will be held in the library's public meeting room. For more information, contact the Library at 815-233-3000.

The Freeport Area International Visitors Council is an organization of volunteers dedicated to providing programming tailored to meet the specific personal and professional needs of eager participants from a myriad of other countries. Over the past 64 years, hundreds of visitors from over 80 countries have visited Stephenson County, and they consistently rank us as a favorite part of their United States visit, according to Executive Director Kerrylyn Rodriguez.

Find out more about this dynamic organization – like who is involved, why they find it rewarding, and what kind of benefits international visitors glean from their time in Freeport – in a future episode of FREEDPOD.

Krape Park Art Walk

This Saturday, August 17th, is the Art Walk at Krape Park! From 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. attendees will enjoy browsing this artisan marketplace for unique, handmade treasures.

Artists and crafters from across the region will showcase and sell paintings, glass work, photography, jewelry, sculptures, woodworking, crafts, and more. There will be live music, carousel rides, and tasty refreshments from local food vendors.

The Krape Park Art Walk is free to the public and designed for the whole family to enjoy. Additional activities that will also be available include paddling on Yellow Creek in a variety of character paddle boats, mini-golf in the new Wing It! mini-golf course, and climbing and other fun activities in a number of play areas.

School is in session

Although Freeport kids do not start school until next Wednesday, August 21st, Stephenson County students are getting a head start on the new school year. Aquin kids are the earliest with classes beginning today, August 15th, followed shortly by Dakota, Pearl City and Tri-County Christian tomorrow. Lena-Winslow students start August 19th, while Orangeville and Immanuel Lutheran match the Pretzels on August 21st. Drivers are reminded to watch out for kids in crosswalks and school buses with their stop signs out while on their routes.

For parents of students in Freeport School District 145 there's a handy Back to School Guide on the school district's website with all the information needed to get students registered and ready for everything from school dress requirements and bus routes to school meals info and athletic team schedules. Here's the exact URL for the guide: <https://www.fsd145.org/domain/1245> You can also easily find it just by heading to www.fsd145.org as it is linked to from the home page.

Drive-through backpack distribution

As families ready for school, the Boys and Girls Club of Freeport and Stephenson County is ready to help! The Club is hosting a drive-through backpack giveaway this Saturday, August 17th to help families get ready for back-to-school. All of the backpacks will be distributed in a drive-through process at the King Community Campus at 511 South Liberty Avenue in Freeport beginning at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday.

The backpacks are available for students in kindergarten through eighth grade and each grade-level backpack is filled with the suggested supplies for that grade. There is a limit of three backpacks per family while they last. A dozen generous sponsors have provided the materials for this give-away – FREEPOD will list them in the show notes for this newscast and we shout out a big thank-you to them!

Event sponsors include State Bank, Freeport School District 145, The Helm Group, Dimond Bros. Insurance, The Bocker Group, Spartan Community Education, Honeywell, Dennis and Mary Book, Amity Society, Lions Club, Titan Tire Co., and Sharon Shelton.

Freeport Police to provide School Resource Officer

The Freeport Police Department has worked with the Freeport School District to supply a School Resource Officer, or SRO, starting on a part-time basis this Fall, with plans to provide a full-time officer in Spring 2025.

An SRO provides expertise in dealing with youth involvement in crime and substance abuse, participates in preventative programs to deter the use of alcohol and drugs, helps prevent crime within the school, can assist with the development and practice of the school's emergency plans, and also can help enhance student perceptions of law enforcement.

In the past, the Freeport Police Department has provided an SRO to both the Freeport School District High School and Middle School. Due to a shortage of officers, though, the last time the Department had an SRO assigned to the school district was in early 2020.

Since 2020, the administrative staff of Freeport High School has worked with the Freeport Police Department to arrange for an SRO for the schools once the Department was in a better-staffed position. In the spring of 2024, the Department posted an opening for an SRO with the intent for that Officer to be assigned to the schools this Fall. The school district and police department jointly selected an Officer to be the SRO and that Officer has attended the training necessary to be a certified SRO in the State of Illinois. The Department SRO will be provided on a part-time basis until staffing allows the position to be full-time, currently planned for the Spring semester.

No additional funding is required for this position, and the expense of the SRO's wages and benefits will be shared 50/50 between the school district and the police department.

Code Red

We mentioned a free alert service from the City of Freeport last week and with school starting we thought we'd just remind our listeners once again how useful it can be. The Code Red alert service can keep you up to date on road closures and other important City emergency information such as weather warnings, boil order advisories, and criminal activities.

Sign-up for this free service is easy – just go to the City website, www.cityoffreeport.org/, and search on Code Red or Freeport Alerts. You can also sign up on your smart phone by texting FREEPORTALERTS, all as one word, to 9941. That's FREEPORTALERTS, all as one word, to 9941. Here's the exact link for online registration: <https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/BFE9C203F980>.

Paint the Port

The popular community event Paint the Port returns next Friday, August 23. Hosted by the Freeport Art Museum, local families and creative enthusiasts of this street-painting event can reserve a square downtown to fill with their artistic stylings on Main Street, Stephenson Street, State Street, and Chicago Avenue.

Squares are \$15 each and are available at that price online until 11:59 p.m. next Thursday, August 22nd. The website for sign-up is www.painttheport.com. Squares will also be available for \$20 each the day of the event and inventory may be limited.

The Paint the Port registration booth will be located at 22 E. Exchange St., the museum's future new location. That's where you can pick up your artists' bag with everything needed to create your

masterpiece, including chalk, paint brushes, cups for rinsing your brushes, and promo items from sponsors. The paint provided in the bags is the only type allowed for this event. Sinks will be set up to provide rinse water, and you may want to bring clothing to change into for the younger artists in your team as well as towels or kneepads to protect knees on the street surface.

Painting may be done any time between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., and must be completed by 8:00. Also in your artists' bag are two Eats & Beats tickets and wristbands, and we have more on that event coming up in the next story!

Volunteers are also needed to help make this year's Paint the Port event a success! Shifts for volunteers are available for both the day before Paint the Port, which is Thursday, August 22nd as well as the day of the event, Friday the 23rd. Volunteer tasks include marking and numbering the squares, stuffing bags, and clean-up. Details and shift times can be found at the event's website, www.painttheport.com as well as other useful information about the event. The event also hosts a Facebook page for further info.

Initially conceived in 2017 as a means to raise funds for downtown revitalization, Paint the Port has exceeded expectations in the years since then. Proceeds generated by the event are channeled into the development and maintenance of the downtown Arts Plaza for community gatherings.

Eats & Beats

As we just mentioned in our story about Paint the Port, Eats & Beats is also coming up next weekend, Friday and Saturday, August 23rd and 24th so once you've completed your masterpiece or strolled the streets of downtown Freeport to admire others' paintings, please stay to enjoy the live music and food at Eats & Beats where event proceeds benefit area non-profits.

Eats & Beats takes place at the Arts Plaza across from the Freeport Public Library, and the Beats begin at 5:00 p.m. both days. Enjoy multiple music genres including *Ukulele Express* and *The Usual Suspects* on Friday. On Saturday, *Ryan Casey* is followed by *Sparks Fly*, which presents The Taylor Swift Experience, on Saturday.

As for the Eats, there will be 10 vendors offering everything from cotton candy, giant cookies, mini pies, and snow cones to nachos and walking tacos, pulled chicken and pulled pork sandwiches, regular and chili cheese fries, stuffed baked potatoes, cheese curds, poke bowls, pizza, and hamburgers and hot dogs. We're hungry already!

For more on Eats & Beats tune in for our in-depth interview with Tim Cook and Brian Babcock next Tuesday, August 20th, at noon. And remember that if you've participated in Paint the Port, there are two tickets for Eats & Beats in your artists' bag!

Freeport High School Student Garden leads community composting effort

Through a partnership with the Freeport Environmental Study Group, Northwest Illinois Audubon Society, and University of Illinois Extension, the Freeport Student Garden is expanding its composting program.

The program helps households in the greater Freeport area reduce the amount of food waste they contribute to the landfill. The Freeport Student Garden uses this food waste to generate compost, which is a valuable soil amendment that provides nutrients to the soil. The Freeport Student Garden will also pilot collecting compostable waste from the high school's cafeteria.

Additional bays for the composting system were built and erected in early August. Interested in participating? Email ben.skipor@fsd145.org or deborahlischwe@hotmail.com – these email addresses will be included in the show notes for today's newscast. This expansion was made possible through a grant funded by the Foundation for Northwest Illinois.

The week ahead...

In addition to all of the great events described so far, here's a reminder to area bicyclists about the Saturday Morning Bike Shop Ride we mentioned last week, happening this and every Saturday. The ride starts at 8:00 a.m. at PHK Bicycles in downtown Freeport and follows a 24-mile all-paved route to Dakota and back. There are alternate routes for shorter routes. The ride ends up back at PHK Bicycles and everyone is welcome to join this fun event!

On Monday, August 19th, join the Freeport Park District and Pat Leitzen-Fye for a special summer yoga program to celebrate the first Super Moon of the year. The program is for all skill levels and runs from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. near Wing It!, the new mini-golf course at Krape Park. Yoga mats will be available for class use, or you can bring your own. Cost is \$10 for Freeport residents and \$12 for others, and you can register by calling the Park District at 815-235-6114.

We remind everyone again that school is starting, and in honor of that, here's a bit of school-related history trivia: In 1897 the Freeport High School cheerleaders were known as the "Koo Koos," and they were all men. Wow – a lot has changed since then, but we all still need to watch out for students and buses as the semester gets underway.

Until next week

In closing, as mentioned earlier we're pleased to share that next week's Tuesday In-Depth Interview will be FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors speaking with Tim Cook and Brian Babcock about Eats & Beats. They'll review news about the event itself as well as how it supports area non-profits. This conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, August 20th.

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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If you have story suggestions or would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to support FREEPOD (now tax-deductible), visit our website at www.freepod.org.

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