



**22 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 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.

More grants for Freeport water system

Fehr Graham has delivered and delivered big for Freeport! Darin Stykel, an engineering partner at Fehr Graham, announced that Freeport has received confirmation of the grants Fehr Graham applied for on behalf of the City. These include \$7.3 million from contaminants funding for Well House 12 from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency or IEPA as a fully funded grant and another \$6.7 million loan from IEPA for the same project with forgiveness of \$4.76 million. Stykel also applied for and received a fully funded grant for Phase 4 lead service line replacement from IEPA for just over \$3 million.

These amounts are in addition to a \$960,000 fully funded grant secured by Congressman Eric Sorensen for Wellhouse 12 in 2024 and additional \$1.6 million in funding he has secured for water main replacement in 2025. Any remaining funding for the projects will be handled within the City's budget.

Add it all up and Freeport has received \$14 million in funding grants towards our monumental water infrastructure projects. That is a huge step forward for all of Freeport! Thank you, Darin Stykel and Congressman Sorensen!

Street work update

Roadwork continues throughout the City. The reconstruction of Adams Avenue is still being worked on daily and curbs have been poured in some parts of the project. Oak Avenue from South Street to Galena Avenue is being repaved now.

Work on Ridge Drive and Westwood Avenue that will continue through year-end includes tree removal, water infrastructure repairs, and paving, and lead service line replacement is being done on Whistler Avenue.

Road-closed signs give crews the proper space and safety to work. Ignoring them could result in injury, project malfunction, and other construction issues. The City asks that drivers pay attention to road-closed signs and obey them with the utmost caution. At the end of each day, construction areas are reopened so that residents are able to pull in and out of driveways, but there may be delays maneuvering the area.

If you have any questions, please refer to the City of Freeport's Facebook page or call City Hall at 815-235-8200.

Early Childhood Education

The Freeport League of Women Voters is sponsoring a presentation by Sara Latimer, Director of Early Childhood Education for Freeport School District #145. Latimer will focus on the importance of getting young students off to a good start in their early school years and how that can be accomplished through cooperative efforts by students' parents and other family members as well as teachers.

The event, scheduled for next Tuesday, August 27th at 6:30 p.m. in one of the Early Childhood Education classrooms at Blackhawk Elementary School, is open to the public and discussion will be encouraged.

Slapped Cheek virus

Federal health officials are warning that a respiratory virus known as parvovirus B19, also known as "slapped-cheek virus," is on the rise throughout the country.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have reported seeing a spike in infections, especially among children ages 5 to 9. Infections generally pop up during late winter, spring and early summer, but this year the infection is spreading as back to school gets underway.

The virus spreads from person to person three ways: in respiratory droplets or exposure to blood of an infected person, or during pregnancy from mother to fetus. Most infected persons are asymptomatic but for those who do show symptoms, they can vary depending on age.

In children, the illness can first cause flu-like symptoms, including fever, headache, and cough. That's when children are the most contagious, and this typically lasts several days. Afterward, children may develop a facial rash, which is why the disease caused by the virus is sometimes called "slapped-cheek disease." In adults, the most common symptom is joint pain, which could last days to weeks.

Most people recover from the illness without treatment, and most adults have immune protection with over half of adults testing for antibodies by age 20. The risk is when parvovirus B19 affects the bloodstream and leads to complications like a severe drop in blood count, which is especially dangerous for people with weakened immune systems or blood disorders. An infection usually doesn't impact a person's pregnancy or their fetus except in rare cases.

Like with any respiratory virus, the CDC recommends practicing good hygiene to prevent the spread of this virus, including frequent hand-washing and cleaning commonly touched surfaces.

For those with dogs, it's important to note that canine parvovirus, which affects dogs, is different from parvovirus B19, and cannot pass from pet to person or vice versa.

For more information, head to the NPR website at <https://www.nprillinois.org>.

What's up with the crabapple trees?

Why do so many of our crabapple trees look like they're dying right now? According to a regional forestry expert, crabapple trees and some other tree species this year are experiencing a higher rate of fungal disorders due to the wet weather we've had throughout our Spring and Summer.

Fungal disorders can leave trees with discolored leaves, spots, premature leaf drops, and just an overall unhealthy appearance. For crabapple trees, this disorder is called "Apple Scab."

Apple Scab doesn't kill the trees and it's not something to worry about. Treatment for the tree also isn't necessary at this point in the season as the fungal disorder has already run its course. One thing you can do to help prevent trees from developing fungal disorders is to clean up leaf litter in your yard and then disposing it at a brush site. Everything should be back to normal next spring!

New Freeport police officers sworn in

The police force in Freeport grew significantly recently as five new officers were sworn in at a recent City Council meeting. Four men and one woman will now go to academy training before hitting the streets to protect and serve the City.

The newest officers are Julian Benedict, Brook Colberg, Jace Hail, Derek DeVries, and Diego Escobar. Hail is a second-generation officer as his dad, Lamar, was a deputy for the Sheriff's Department. Also sworn in was Freeport's new K-9 officer DJ. He and his partner, Richard McElmeel, have been on the beat for a while, but DJ is now an official member of the department.



Above, (left to right): Julian Benedict, Brook Colberg, Jace Hail, Derek DeVries, Diego Escobar. At right, K-9 officer DJ and his partner Richard McElmeel



Colby Smith 4-mile classic

The annual Colby Smith 4-mile Classic will be run, in person or virtually, this Saturday and Sunday, August 23rd and 24th. Online sign-up for the in-person race ends tomorrow, August 23rd, at 2:59 p.m. at www.runsignup.com.

The Classic is a 4-mile, course-certified Rockford Road Runners circuit race beginning at St. Thomas Church, 1400 Kiwanis Drive in Freeport, and ending on the Aquin School football field at 1419 S Galena Avenue. Transportation is available at the finish line, and further information is available on the website.

Trophies are awarded to the top overall male and female winners, and medals are given to the top three male and female runners in all age groups. All participants will receive a long-sleeved tech t-shirt.

This is the 17th year the Colby Smith Memorial 4-Mile Classic and Memorial Scholarship Fund honor the memory of Colby J. Smith. Proceeds from the race fund scholarships for students to attend Aquin Catholic Schools, with over \$158,000 scholarships provided since 2010. Donations can be made through the "donate" button at the website without participating in the race.

Freeport Area International Visitors Council (FAIVC) hosts guests from Peru

We mentioned last week about visits to Freeport from a number of international visitors, and promised to provide more information. So, here it is!

Typically, when people visit the United States from other countries, we expect them to choose vacation spots that we might also select, like New York, Miami, our national parks, or Washington, DC. But for the past 64 years, many foreign visitors put Freeport, Illinois, on their itinerary. Indeed, the 61032 zip code is a desirable destination for many reasons, thanks to the hard work of the Freeport Area International Visitors Council, working through the U.S. Department of State's Global Ties program.

The Freeport Area International Visitors Council is an organization of volunteers dedicated to providing tailored programming that meets the specific personal and professional needs of eager participants from many other countries. This week, the group is hosting seven current and future women leaders from Peru, along with three interpreters. They will meet with local leaders and stay with host families.

These visitors are scheduled to have local learning sessions on:

- Female professional leadership in traditionally male-dominated fields;
- Female political leadership at the local level;
- Youth leadership development;
- And home hospitality and service activity.

They will meet with a variety of female experts and influencers, including Freeport Mayor Jodi Miller and Andrea Schultz Winter from the Greater Freeport Partnership. Other sessions are planned with representatives from the League of Women Voters; the High School Servant Leadership Program, which is run by Highland Community College; the Stephenson County Farm Bureau; the Freeport Public Library; and the Boys and Girls Club of Northwest Illinois, among others.

Executive Director Kerrylyn Rodriguez says, "These visitors appreciate the small-town feel, casual settings, and friendly people from our area. It often reminds them of their own hometowns and provides examples they can relate to more easily. We have a great group of local citizens who are willing to share their expertise and coordinate all the sessions. And we end up learning just as much as they do, one handshake at a time."

Nancy and Leland Otte from rural Freeport were key to expanding the group and forming the foundation for its success. "They really put us on the national stage," says Kerrylyn. "We are the smallest unit in the United States, but I would put our group of volunteers up against anybody. Right now, Quincy Carter is our president, and he was also on the National Board. Other board members include Secretary/Treasurer Terry Ursin; Kim Fricke; Steve Fricke; Brendan Dutmer; Sarah Wilhelms; Elysia Rodriguez; and Katiana Rodriguez."

Hundreds of visitors from over 80 countries have visited Stephenson County, and they consistently rank Freeport as a favorite part of their visit to the United States. "We are doing it right," says Kerrylyn. "We take pride in bridging cultures and connecting the world with Freeport. We believe that Freeport's founder, William "Tutty" Baker, would appreciate and recognize our warmth and generosity as reminiscent of the hospitality he offered to visitors when Freeport was first founded."

Anyone interested in volunteering for the group can contact Kerrylyn at 815-541-5660 or check out their website at www.freeportinternationalvisitors.org.

United Way posts increase in giving over last year

The United Way of Northwest Illinois reports an increase of nearly 7% in giving over last year. Through the process of awarding funding for local non-profits, the United Way has brought together local partner agencies who are working to solve our communities' most pressing needs.

Throughout the past several months the Community Impact Committees and United Way Board of Directors met and awarded over \$227,000 For Education, Health, Financial Stability and Basic Needs Initiatives in our region. Thank you, United Way contributors!

Pretzel City Authors' Fest

Freeport has quite a cadre of published writers and this Saturday, August 24th, talented local authors will meet their readers and the public to talk about books, writing, publishing, and more at the Freeport Public Library at 100 East Douglas Street in Freeport.

Confirmed authors so far include Catherine Baldwin (also known as Kit), Deb Borys, Ed Finch, Tom McKay, Kim McIver-Sigafus, Adam Moderow, C.L. Paur, Stephanie Pollock, Vicki Schroeder, Roger Schulz, and Rod Vick.

This event will be held in Debate Square right next to the Library or in the main meeting room of the Library in case of rain. There will be live music provided by four members of the Freeport High School Orchestra from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and of course Union Dairy right next door is ready to provide tasty treats during your visit.

YMCA Youth Sports Calendar

The Family YMCA of Northwest Illinois has published its Youth Sports Calendar for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year with area families in mind. This comprehensive calendar provides all the essential dates and details for a wide variety of sports activities including indoor and outdoor soccer, volleyball, outdoor flag football, basketball, and indoor T-ball.

The Y notes that participating in youth sports is more than just physical activity—it's about building confidence, learning teamwork, and making lifelong memories. Their programs are designed to support young athletes' growth, whether they're discovering a new passion or honing existing skills that will enable resilience and discipline that will serve them in the future.

The calendar can be downloaded from the Y's website at <https://freeportymca.org> – just click on “programs” and then “youth sports” from the home page.



FAMILY YMCA OF NORTHWEST ILLINOIS
 Youth Sports Director – Alyssa Gross – Agross@freeportymca.org

HOLIDAY BREAKS:
 Nov. 30, December 21 and 28, April 19

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| <p>OUTDOOR SOCCER 2024: <small>SATURDAY MORNINGS</small> Prekindergarten – 4th Grade September 7th – October 19th Early Registration Begins: August 1st Early Registration Ends: Sept. 1st Registration: Sept. 2nd – Sept. 6th Coach's Meeting: Sept. 3rd</p> | <p>OUTDOOR FLAG FOOTBALL 2024: <small>SATURDAY AFTERNOON</small> 1st – 4th Grade September 7th – October 19th Early Registration Begins: August 1st Early Registration Ends: Sept. 1st Registration: Sept. 2nd– Sept. 6th Coach's Meeting: Sept. 3rd</p> |
| <p>VOLLEYBALL 2024: <small>SATURDAY MORNINGS</small> 1st – 6th Grade October 26th – December 14th Early Registration Begins: Sept. 1st Early Registration Ends: October 13th Registration: Oct. 14th – 18th Coach's meeting: October 15th</p> | <p>INDOOR SOCCER 2024: <small>SATURDAY AFTERNOONS</small> Prekindergarten – 4th Grade October 26th – December 14th Early Registration Begins: Sept. 1st Early Registration Ends: October 13th Registration: Oct. 14th – 18th Coach's meeting: October 15th</p> |
| <p>BASKETBALL 2024: 3rd – 4th Grade January 4th – February 15th Early Registration Begins: November 1st Early Registration Ends: December 8th Registration: Dec. 9th – 13th Coach's Meeting: December 10th</p> | <p>BASKETBALL 2025: Prekindergarten – 2nd Grade Feb 22nd – April 5th Early Registration Begins: January 1st Early Registration Ends: February 2nd Registration: February 3rd – 7th Coach's Meeting: February 4th</p> |
| <p>INDOOR SOCCER 2025: <small>SATURDAY MORNINGS</small> Prekindergarten – 4th Grade April 26th – May 24th Early Registration Begins: March 1st Early Registration Ends: April 13th Registration: April 14th – 18th Coach's meeting: April 15th</p> | <p>INDOOR T-BALL 2025: <small>SATURDAY LATE MORNINGS</small> Prekindergarten – 2nd Grade April 26th – May 24th Early Registration Begins: March 1st Early Registration Ends: April 13th Registration: April 14th – 18th Coach's meeting: April 15th</p> |

- Volunteer meetings start at 6:00 p.m. at the Y – all volunteers are required to attend
- Spots fill quickly and are first come, first served
- Parent signature and email is required for every waiver to complete registration
- Forms and payment are accepted ONLY at the Family YMCA of Northwest Illinois

2998 W. Pearl City Rd.,
 Freeport, IL 61032
 815-235-9622
www.freeportymca.org

City Council meeting for input to 2025 budget

Mark your calendar for an opportunity to weigh in on the 2025 budget for the City of Freeport. At 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 3rd, the public is invited to the Council Chambers at City Hall, 314 W. Stephenson Street in Freeport, to learn and provide input. City Manager Rob Boyer and Finance Department staff will provide general information on the budget process and then meeting attendees can share their thoughts on what they would like to see funded in their neighborhoods and the community at large.

The City's 2025 budget timeline extends from September to November with the final 2025 document to be approved in December 2024. The public will have another opportunity to offer input during a similar meeting on Monday, October 28th.

City photo contest

You've got just over a week to enter the City of Freeport's inaugural Photo Contest! Entries are due by August 31st and photographers can share up to three photos that adhere to the contest guidelines, which can be found on the City website. The City will host a public poll in early September for residents to cast votes for their favorites. The winning entry will be featured in a fall City newsletter and showcased in the City Hall lobby for a year. We look forward to seeing all the entries!

The week ahead...

We're looking forward to Paint the Port tomorrow, Friday, August 23 with all its colorful paintings on Main Street, Stephenson Street, State Street, and Chicago Avenue in downtown Freeport. If you'd like to participate but haven't reserved your square yet, you can do so at the Paint the Port registration booth at 22 East Exchange Street tomorrow, where you will also pick up your artists' bag with everything you need to create your unique work of art.

Painting may be done any time between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., and also in your artists' bag are two Eats & Beats tickets and wristbands!

Eats & Beats also starts tomorrow and continues through Saturday, August 24th. Live musical performances begin at 5:00 p.m. each day at the Arts Plaza across from the Freeport Public Library, and the "eats" element of the event includes 10 vendors offering everything from sweet treats to nachos and walking tacos, pulled chicken and pulled pork sandwiches, stuffed baked potatoes, cheese curds, poke bowls, pizza, and grilled burgers. Sounds like great family fun to us!

We want to remind everyone that school is now in session so watch for students walking to and from schools and buses both in the City and out in the country. And speaking of school, here's an historical tidbit from our history pros: on September 1st 1859, the voters of Freeport passed a referendum establishing the first school in the city supported by taxes. Completed in 1860, the new school cost \$10,000 to build and was located on the corner of North van Buren and Ringold Street. It was known as the River School and remained open until 1926.

The site is currently home to Mary Hosmer Apartments. Hosmer, for whom the high-rise apartment building for senior citizens was named, was the school's principal at one time. You can learn more about River School and much more about the history of Stephenson County at www.genealogytrails.com, clicking on "Illinois" and then choosing "Stephenson County."



Until next week

In closing, we're pleased to share that next week's Tuesday In-Depth Interview will be FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel talking with Tim and Charity Heiden about beekeeping! These retired Freeport residents became interested in beekeeping about three years ago and discuss how they started their own small beekeeping operation at their home. They share the steps they took to get started in the business of keeping bees and the rewards and challenges they've faced. This conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, August 27th.

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!

