



**3 April  
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. Thanks for your support! Now let's see what's going on.

#### **Updates from County Board meeting 20 March**

At the County Board meeting on March 20<sup>th</sup>, Chairman Scott Helms reported on a bill moving forward in Springfield that would dissolve townships in counties with less than 50,000 people, which would include Stephenson County.

The idea behind the bill is that townships and counties are redundant in their services and those services could be provide by cities and counties alone. No increase in funding is planned for the affected counties in the bill and if it passes, 17 of 18 townships in the County would be served just by the county with only Freeport Township being served by Freeport. Helms expressed his opposition to the proposal.

In Committee Reports, it was noted that the courthouse elevators project should be completed shortly. Bids for courthouse basement restrooms have been received with a low bid of \$65,000 but as the grant to fund this project is only \$39,000, the \$26,000 shortfall was approved to be funded by through Sheriff's department budget. A large grant for over \$636,184.40 was also approved to pay for information technology updates for almost all court departments, and an additional grant allocation will bring in \$58,000 for tourism and convention services through a Rockford connection.

#### **Farm Bureau offers Rural Nurse scholarships**

The Illinois Farm Bureau® Rural Nurse Practitioner Scholarship Program is now open for applications, which are due May 1st. This program offers 15 scholarships, each valued at \$4,000, to support nurse practitioners committed to serving rural communities in Illinois.

Scholarship recipients are expected to practice in an approved rural area within the state for a minimum of two years. Eligibility criteria include being a resident of Illinois and either accepted into or currently enrolled in an accredited Nurse Practitioner Program as a Registered Nurse.

Those interested can obtain application forms from county Farm Bureaus® throughout the state or at the Rural Illinois Medical Student Assistance Program website at [www.RIMSAP.com](http://www.RIMSAP.com).

### **Your yard is calling...**

According to Nikki Keltner, Program Coordinator for the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Services at the University of Illinois Extension in Freeport, early spring is a great time shape up our lawns and garden so that they look nice and are ready for the growing season.

Because most plants are not out of the ground yet, now is the perfect time to top-dress your perennial beds with mulch without worrying about disturbing plants that are just sprouting, but still pay attention so you don't break off any plants that may be starting to show signs of life. Mulch helps conserve soil moisture, moderated soil temperatures, and most importantly helps control weeds.

Spring is also a good time to repair those bare spots in your lawn. Rake off any dead grass that remains and use a garden rake, not a leaf rake, to loosen up the top layer of soil. Over-seed the area with a good-quality grass seed blend that contains perennial seeds designed for either sun or shade, depending on the location. Make sure the newly seeded areas have plenty of moisture either through rainfall or watering until they are established.

We'll have more Spring gardening tips in future podcasts, but if you have garden related questions in the meantime, just call the Master Gardeners at University of Illinois Extension (815) 235-4125.

### **New exhibit at Freeport Art Museum**

The Freeport Art Museum is once again hosting the Aspiring Artists Show with over 450 works of art showcasing the talent and creativity of students in regional elementary, middle, and high schools as well as home-schooled students.

Opening receptions for the exhibit will be held tomorrow, Friday April 4<sup>th</sup> beginning with exhibits from students in kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade at 4:30 p.m., followed by opening the works of students in grades five through eight at 5:30 and grades nine through twelve at 6:00 p.m. In addition to student works, the Contemporary Gallery on the second floor will feature art from area art instructors.

The exhibit and awards for each category are sponsored by Blick Art Materials and The Morse Group.

### **It's Showtime!**

Showtime, the beloved Freeport High School Spring musical program, kicks off this week. The program is entitled *Showtime 45: Mic Drop Melodies!* and features the High School's Varsity Choir and Jazz Band,

who will dazzle attendees with a journey through timeless hits and contemporary chart-toppers, with captivating choreography and powerful vocals.

Performances are tonight, tomorrow night, and Saturday night, April 3rd, 4th and 5th at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, April 6th at 2:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 each and can be purchased at the school's website at [www.fsd145.org](http://www.fsd145.org). It's Showtime 45, and it's time to drop the mic!



### **Welcome, Grasshopper's!**

Speaking of other fun places to go, as we mentioned last week, the former Pub 219 on Stephenson Street has reopened under new management and a new name, Grasshopper's Bar & Grill. FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors stopped in for a short chat about their plans.

*(interview clip)*

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

Thank you, Tim, and new Grasshopper's owners Jeff Schultz and Michelle Davies!

Thanks As we look to the week ahead, don't forget that the stories of freedom seekers and the multi-racial conductors who assisted them on the Underground Railroad in Illinois are featured in the exhibit *Journey to Freedom: Illinois' Underground Railroad*. This exhibit at the Freeport Public Library is open and free to the public through this Saturday, April 5th. Using photos, videos, maps, personal stories, and illustrations, visitors will learn the about the people and communities in this hidden history.

This Saturday, April 5th, is also the day for the Bruce Johnson Memorial Run hosted by the Young Leader Committee of the Stephenson County Farm Bureau . Day-of-race registration begins at 7:30 a.m. at the starting point for the Run at 12662 N. Christian Hollow Road in Winslow. Funds raised by this event support the Agriculture in the Classroom program. Johnson was a previous president of the Bureau.

On Saturday night, don't forget *Jimmy Nick* and *Don't Tell Mama* at the Freeport Masonic Temple. Tickets for this blues and rock-and-roll event are just \$20 each and the venue opens at 6:00 p.m. with the show kicking off at 7:00 p.m. Food and a cash bar will be available. The show is hosted by the Greater Freeport Partnership so for more information and to register, visit their website at [www.greaterfreeport.com](http://www.greaterfreeport.com) and search on "Jimmy Nick."



Looking ahead to next Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, that will be a great day to get more info for your Spring home and garden projects at the Stephenson County Home Show at the Stephenson County Fairgrounds from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. we talked about last week.



And finally, time is running short for getting your taxes done, so remember that the Senior Resource Center in Freeport is providing free federal and state 1040 tax counseling, preparation, and filing services for low and middle-income senior taxpayers 60 years and older residing in Stephenson and Jo Daviess counties as well as adults with disabilities through April 15<sup>th</sup>.

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 subscribe to their free weekly newsletter there too, and we have a link to a QR code in the print version of this newscast if you’d like to sign up that way.



While you’re signing up for more of what’s going on in our community, you can also subscribe to the City of Freeport’s monthly newsletter at their website, [www.cityoffreeport.org](http://www.cityoffreeport.org), or by using their QR code that appears below.



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

In closing, if you haven’t already done so be sure to listen to this week’s in-depth interview that aired on Tuesday featuring FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Becky Connors visiting with Sarah Long, Artistic Director of Studio 121 dance in Freeport, which offers classes in ballet, modern, and pointe technique.

Next week, tune in as FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors chats with Nicole Haas, Brand Director and Katie Gentz, Events and Engagement Manager for the Greater Freeport Partnership, and Mike Marten, owner of Mort's Bar and Grill in Freeport and Winnie Rock City Promoter. They'll be talking about all the great elements of Pretzel Fest and Polka Fest coming up on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, including the World's Largest Human Pretzel. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, April 8<sup>th</sup> and we'll have more details on this fun Freeport festival in the next week or so.



With that, time's up for this week. Tune in again next Thursday at noon for more about what's happening in Freeport, and be sure to subscribe to us on your favorite podcast platform to receive alerts on your as each new pod airs. You can also always click through to our pods through our Facebook page or the website of our National Public Radio partner, WNIJ in DeKalb, at [www.northernpublicradio.org](http://www.northernpublicradio.org).

As always, we remind you that FREEPOD couldn't come to you without the Mass Communication Department at Highland Community College and our community liaisons and reporters. We're also grateful to WNIJ for partnering with us in reaching even more listeners, including Spanish-speaking community members. Thank you, Team FREEPOD! 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).

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