



**10 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.

### **Miller wins mayoral race**

Jodi Miller has won a third term as Mayor of Freeport against her opponent Joshua Atkinson. Miller wants to address Freeport's infrastructure with a bottom-up approach, for example fixing water mains and drains before looking at road improvements. She believes this focus will allow the City to first tackle underlying issues before what may be more visible problems.

Looking at Freeport's safety and crime, Miller wants to continue supporting the police department with technology like the Shot Spotter towers that alert the department to shots-fired locations and would like to introduce a live-camera system for officers. These and other technology enhancements will allow them to better monitor the city for safety.

Miller has lived in Stephenson County her whole life and has spent the past 20 years in the City of Freeport, and says she feels lucky to live close to her three children and six grandchildren.

### **New downtown businesses**

Two new businesses have opened in downtown Freeport! Dough Mama Bakehouse held its grand opening this past weekend with a hungry crowd filling the shop at 11 East Stephenson next to 9 East Coffee. The bakery features bread, pretzels, bagels, cookies and more. It opens at 7 a.m. Monday to Saturday and has self-serve kiosks to pay. You can order ahead on the Dough Mama Facebook page.

Also just in time for National Record Store Day on April 12<sup>th</sup>, Re-spun Records and Resale, a new record shop, is opening on Saturday at 119 E Stephenson Street in downtown Freeport. The shop will be open

8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and there will be special promotions for customers browsing through albums and DVDs for sale in the store. Fans of all music types will do doubt find something to give a listen.

Welcome to our downtown, Dough Mama Bakehouse and Re-spun Records and Resale!

### **Freeport after school program faces funding uncertainty**

Freeport Boys & Girls club is dealing with recent substantial financial uncertainty that could impact individualized support for students in their mentoring programs.

Last year, two of their funding sources went away at the same time. First, Illinois promised after school programs \$50 million in the state budget but so far none come through to Freeport. The Illinois State Board of Education also announced they would not be renewing a nearly \$1.5 million grant to the Boys and Girls Club Illinois Alliance, which has also not materialized.

The Freeport Club's education coordinator Becky Spindler says they were one of several Boys and Girls Clubs impacted. She says Freeport's previous 21st Century Learning Center grant was for \$215,000. They had the grant for 10 years and knew it was ending but Spindler says that based on their successes in academic and community work, they were optimistic about their chances for the next granting cycle. In fact, they were asking for more money to expand their services. Instead of on-site programs in just a few schools, they hoped to be in every Freeport elementary school, plus the middle, high school, their own location, and a local housing authority. But that's not what happened.

They had to scale back and because of the loss of that government funding, they're relying even more on community donors to keep their doors open along with drawing down on their cash reserves.

Executive Director James Rhyne says they had to cut staff from about 60 part-timers to around 22, although he's glad that a handful of people who were laid off come back as volunteers to help students.

The Club offers academic programs for kids of any age, but Rhyne says the Boys & Girls Club also has art classes, outdoor programs, a dance team, and a basketball gym. While many younger kids come after school because their parents are working, older students can choose whether or not they want to be there so the club is actually a safe and fun space for kids of all ages.

No matter what happens with state and federal funding, Rhyne says they're going to do their best to make sure they can keep providing that space for students.

### **Pretzel Fest nears**

Whether you are a graduate or a local resident, when you live in Pretzel City the pretzel is honored and revered. In celebration, on National Pretzel Day on April 26<sup>th</sup> the Greater Freeport Partnership will be hosting the best Pretzel Fest the salty snack has ever seen! Activities include a potentially record-breaking human pretzel formation, performances, food vendors, community organizations, and more.

Gather at the Freeport Art Museum Plaza across from the Freeport Public Library at 10:00 a.m. to be part of the World's Largest Pretzel formation! People are needed to stand in the shape of the pretzel in

the arts plaza to break this record. All participants will receive a commemorative button to show they were part of breaking the record.

Pretzel Fest will also be an opportunity to enjoy the Downtown Freeport Festival District, within which you can purchase an alcoholic beverage from participating restaurants and bars and carry it with you through the downtown festivities. Dozens of boutiques, shops, and restaurants offer pretzel merchandise and food options to celebrate your favorite salty snack.

### **New car dealership at former Visitors' Center now open**

After sitting empty for months, classic cars now are the new tenants at the former Stephenson County Visitor's Center on US 20 East. AutoSmart is a classic car consignment shop and used car dealership formerly located in the Chicago area.

Owner Brian Caldwell buys and sells classic cars and said his business will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Area residents are invited to stop out and take a look around.

### **HCC music concert**

On Sunday, April 13th at 3:00 pm, the Highland Chorale will be performing pieces composed by Mozart as they are accompanied by the Highland Orchestra.

The Highland Youth Choir will be performing selections written by Andy Beck, Emily Crocker, Jim Pappoulis, and many more. Come enjoy an afternoon of delightful music at this free event!

### **Farm Bureau Allies in Agriculture**

Carroll and Stephenson Counties are both participating in the Illinois Farm Bureau's Allies in Agriculture program, a partnership effort between county Farm Bureaus® and local government officials across the State. It is designed to improve communication between farmers and county officials and help enhance understanding for the significance of agriculture from both farming and local government perspectives.

To facilitate that effort, county Farm Bureaus are working with county officials to adopt Pro-Agriculture Resolutions, which were adopted in March by county boards in both Stephenson and Carroll counties. To learn more about this program or to see what other counties are participating, visit [www.ilfb.org/ifb-in-action/allies-in-agriculture/](http://www.ilfb.org/ifb-in-action/allies-in-agriculture/)

### **Trout fishing season opens**

Trout fishing season is now open and the enforced limit is five trout per day per person. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources recently released rainbow trout in 58 locations in Illinois, including Yellow Creek which flows through Krape Park in Freeport, as part of their Catchable Trout Program.



A fishing license and inland-trout stamp are required for anyone 16 years and older. Licenses can be purchased online. For more information, visit [www.dnr.illinois.gov](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov). Good luck, anglers!

### **Book Nook sale**

The VOICES of Stephenson County annual Book Nook Spring Half Price Sale is now open. The sale runs through this Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, with all proceeds going toward support services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. The Book Nook, located in Lincoln Mall, offers a large variety of donated books, DVDs, records and puzzles that are already offered at a steep discount and reduced even more during the sale.

### **Foraging program at Library tonight**

At 7:00 p.m. tonight, April 10<sup>th</sup>, the Illinois Libraries Present organization hosts *The Art of Foraging* with Alexis Nikole Nelson at the Freeport Public Library. This is a virtual event and watch party to help celebrate Earth Month. You can join the group at the Library to watch from there or watch from your own home by registering for the program at [www.freeportpubliclibrary.librarymarket.com](http://www.freeportpubliclibrary.librarymarket.com) and searching on “events” or [https://bit.ly/ILP\\_AlexisNikoleNelson](https://bit.ly/ILP_AlexisNikoleNelson)

Nelson, a forager, outdoor educator, chef, and influencer based in Ohio, uses her platforms to yell, sing and celebrate all the edible plants hiding in plain sight. Through her search for freely accessible edible plants, she peels back historical layers on African American and Indigenous food traditions and empowers those living in food deserts with greater self- sufficiency.

Nelson has also cooked up quite a few awards, receiving the James Beard Award for “Best Social Media” 2022, being chosen as a ‘TikTok Tastemaker’ for Forbes 30 Under 30 list, and honored as part of Fortune Magazine’s Creator 25 in 2021. With 5 million followers, Nelson will be joined in conversation by Natalie Evans, a wild edible foods instructor based in Chicago, and she invites all to come with her on her foraging journey via @alexisnikole on TikTok and @blackforager on Instagram.

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

As many folks are already no doubt aware, the Cub Foods Brat Stand has opened for the season on Fridays and Saturdays from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Community non-profit groups work the stand to raise money for their various causes and this week’s group is the Wahoo Aquatic Club. Last year the brat

stand helped raise almost \$96,000 which the groups used to better their communities through the sale of delicious brats, burgers, hot dogs and rib eye sandwiches.

Looking ahead to Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, you'll be able to find plenty of ideas and information to help complete 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. (poster below)



Also on Saturday as well as Sunday, you might enjoy stopping by the Garden of quilts Quilt Show at the Jane Addams Community Center in Cedarville where you can view over 150 quilts and learn more about quilting history, with many items also available for sale. Entry is just \$5 per person and the show opens at 10:00 a.m. both days.

And finally, time is running very short for getting your taxes done. Through next Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup> 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 in Stephenson and Jo Daviess counties as well as adults with disabilities.

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.

### **Subscribe to City of Freeport News**



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

In closing, if you haven't already be sure to listen to this week's in-depth interview that aired on Tuesday featuring FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors visiting 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 about the upcoming Pretzel Fest.

Next week, tune in as FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Becky Connors interviews Jaime Elliott of the Winneshiek Players about their plans for the next theatre season and several upcoming events. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>.

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 WNII 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).

And 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 as each new pod airs. You can also always click through to our pods through our Facebook page or the website of our partner, WNII National Public Radio in DeKalb, at [www.northernpublicradio.org](http://www.northernpublicradio.org). Thank you for listening to FREEPOD!

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