



**12 December
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.

You can find us on Facebook as well as our website (www.freepod.org) and the website of our NPR partner WNJI Northern Public Radio (www.northernpublicradio.org), so please visit us there and continue to share about us on your own social media. Thanks for your support, and now here's local news you've been missing.

New County Board members sworn in

Newly-elected Stephenson County Board members were sworn-in on Dec. 2 at a re-organizational meeting. At that meeting, Scott Helms was elected board chairman and Tim Whalen was elected as vice-chairman.



Pictured are newly-elected board members (from left to right) Lynette Williams, Todd McKenna, Dale Diddens, and Larry Jogerst. Not pictured is Scott Helms.

Hy-Vee project discontinued

More than three years after announcing plans to build a grocery store in Freeport, Hy-Vee is dropping the project. They have confirmed that they are discontinuing the Freeport project and have notified the City of these plans. Details are not confirmed and FREEPOD will report further about this story as the situation evolves.

New parking schedule for City snow removal

Before the snow starts to accumulate, the City is reminding residents of their new odd/event parking system to make snow removal as safely, efficiently, and quickly as possible during the winter months. The system is in place through March 31st and only applies when there is more than a half-inch of snow. The system requires residents to park on the even-numbered side of the street when snow will be removed on even-numbered dates of the month and the odd-numbered side of the street when snow removal will occur on odd-numbered dates.

For example, if two inches of snow fell this Friday, December 13th, vehicles should park on the side of the street with EVEN-numbered addresses by 8:00 a.m. Saturday December 14th since the snow will be removed on the 14th. In an odd-numbered example, suppose that the weather forecast shows that a heavy snowfall will hit Freeport around 2:00 p.m. on December 17th. All street-parked vehicles should park on the side of the street with ODD-numbered addresses before the snow arrives on the 17th, and then would also be required to park on the EVEN side of the street the next day, March 6th, due to the expectation that the snowfall will be heavy enough to require more time to remove.

Many streets in Freeport are narrow and can create road blocks for large plows. Correctly following this new system can prevent accidents and reduce time to clear the streets. In addition, this regular parking schedule eliminates confusion or the need to contact the City about parking requirements in snowy conditions. Vehicles not adhering to these guidelines are subject to towing at the owner's cost.

Donation drive for North Carolina

Last Saturday, Farm Bureau Young Leaders from the Counties of Northwestern Illinois Counties – including Stephenson, Carroll, Ogle, Jo Daviess, Winnebago, and Boone – hosted a hay donation drive for farmers in North Carolina region that were affected by recent hurricanes.

The event coordinated drop points at the Ogle County Fairgrounds and the Stephenson County Fairgrounds for producers to drop off their hay to be loaded onto semis to be sent to North Carolina. Volunteers filled six semis with hay that included 145 round bales, 27 large square bales and 280 small square bales.

This project would not have been possible without the outpouring of support from our local farming communities as well as services and in-kind donations from a number of other local businesses. These included trucks and drivers provided by Frankfother Trucking, fuel from Carroll Service Company and Stephenson Service Company, operators and machines to load and unload the semis from Helm Group, and financial support from Polo Co-op.

FREEPOD is proud to thank all these great community members for helping another agricultural region far from Freeport at their time of need!

Orange bracelets for recent maternity patients

A program that uses orange bracelets to quickly help identify new mothers who have given birth in the past 12 weeks has been implemented at FHN Memorial Hospital. This new program helps staff quickly recognize mothers who may be suffering from postpartum emergencies, and FHN is one of the first hospitals in the nation to put it into action.

According to FHN Memorial Hospital Perinatal Quality Nurse Danielle Wittig, the CDC reported that over 800 women died of maternal causes in the United States in 2022. Wittig says that 33 percent of those deaths were substantially preventable, and another 36 percent were moderately preventable.

FHN Director of Women's Health Services Linn Carter says that the program is saving lives already, noting a situation where FHN staff was able to get medication and treatment to a patient within 22 minutes of arriving at the hospital's emergency room.

FHN first rolled out the program in July and is now showing other hospitals across the nation how to implement this life-saving program.

Lady Pretz Swimmers are 1st Team All Conference

Congratulations to the Freeport High School Lady Pretz Swimmers for being named 1st Team All Conference!

These awards were determined at the end of the girls' swim season by area coaches. Led by a team of five seniors, this very close-knit team went 9-2 in conference meets, were 2nd in a very close contest at Varsity Conference and took 3rd – again by a slim margin – at the Sectional Meet. Senior Jada Veer advanced to the State meet in two events.

Along with the Pretzel football team, the Lady Pretz Swimmers had the most all-conference nominations of all the Pretzel Fall Sports teams. Way to go, Freeport Pretzels!



Freeport High School Speech Team posts a great finish

There are more winners at Freeport High too! Congratulations also to the Freeport high School Speech Team on their outstanding finish at last weekend's DeKalb Corn Classic speech competition.

In the Varsity category, Mya Ortiz won 2nd Place in Poetry and also received 5th place for Special Occasion Speaking and 6th Place for Dramatic Interpretation.

In other categories, winners include Lucas Viveros with 6th Place for Informative Speaking, Gretchen Rudolph for 3rd Place in Original Comedy, Gretchen Rudolph and Corrine Winter with 3rd Place for Dramatic Duet Acting, Corrine Winter with 5th Place for Prose Speaking, Morgan Bunker with 5th Place for Informative Speaking, Maddie Seal with 6th Place in Oratorical Declamation, Johanna Everding with 6th Place for Original Oratory, and June Elliott with 6th Place for Dramatic Interpretation.

The team is coached by FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors, who is also Head Speech Coach at Freeport High School.

Environmental Sustainability survey for Freeport residents

As we mentioned last week, the City of Freeport is looking for unique ways to create a more sustainable environment for the entire community. From maintaining a healthy Pecatonica River to creating new initiatives to support our ecosystem, your thoughts are needed about how the City can collaborate with other organizations in the community to improve the environment.

The survey is brief and won't take long to complete, and can be found through the City Website (click on the December newsletter link to find it) or directly by copying this link: bit.ly/EnvironmentCOF.

Help support the Freeport Student Garden, and pumpkin composting still available

If you're still looking for a good way to dispose of your fall pumpkins that doesn't involve a landfill, take them to the bays right next to the chicken coop at the Freeport Student Garden where they'll become compost for next year's gardens. The Garden is located just to the east of the Freeport Middle School at 701 West Empire Street and the bays are pictured in a photo on the Facebook page for the Student Garden for easy identification, so please don't leave pumpkins in the parking lot.

The Student Garden is also conducting a fundraising drive through December 20th by selling shirts and hats, including t-shirts, long-sleeved t-shirts, sweatshirts, and hoodies, including embroidered crewnecks and hats. Don't need a shirt or hat? It's easy to make a monetary donation instead. Find all the details on their Facebook page, and we'll look forward to lots of wonderful summer produce as a result of the Garden's composting efforts this Fall!

Jane Addams Trail undergoing repairs

The Jane Addams Trail Commission has been repairing segments of the Jane Addams Trail this fall with completion of the project planned for Spring 2025.

The initial repair work between Richland Road and McConnell Road/Buena Vista has now been completed, and that portion of the Trail is now open. The next area of repair from Buena Vista to Brush Creek Road is in process and that portion of the Trail is now closed.

Information on the repair process is at the Trail and on social media as well as the Trail's website at www.janeaddamstrail.com. The work is being funded with a Recreational Trails grant.

PAWS for Reading

This Saturday, just like the second Saturday of every month, therapy dogs will be at the Freeport Public Library – and they are just waiting for stories to be read to them! PAWS FOR READING is the Library's therapy dog program where certified therapy dogs listen to any and all kinds of books that young readers might like to share with them.

The dogs will be there from 11:00 a.m. to noon on Saturday, and we hope there will be plenty of readers to entertain the furry listeners who will be waiting for them and looking forward to perhaps hearing a Christmas story or two!

FHN Festival of Trees events continue

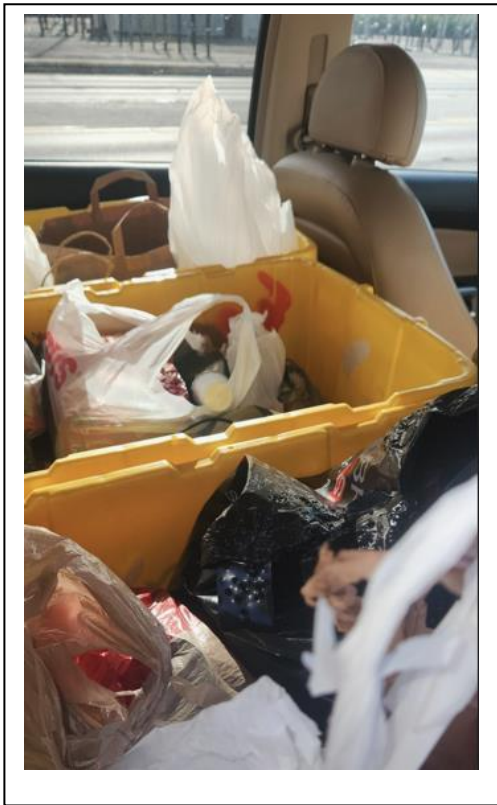
FHN's annual Festival of Trees activities for the whole family continue with another Holiday Storytelling by Santa and Mrs. Claus in their visiting area at the Freeport Public Library this Saturday, December 14th at 2:00 p.m.

Santa is also still partnering with FHN to collect letters from children in the Freeport area, which he needs to receive by next Monday, December 16th in order to have time to respond. Santa Letter forms can be downloaded from the FHN website at www.fhn.org. Letters can be returned to Santa mailboxes at the Freeport Public Library children's desk or the lobbies at FHN Family Healthcare Center - Burchard Hills, FHN Family Healthcare Center - Highland View Drive, or FHN Memorial Hospital. Letters can also be mailed to The North Pole, 524 W. Stephenson Street, Suite 100, Freeport IL 61032.

The week ahead

As we've mentioned often, there are literally dozens of holiday events continuing throughout the community, many of which you can find on the website of the Greater Freeport Partnership and others by checking with churches, schools, and businesses with which you are familiar.

This Saturday, December 14th is also a Saturday for the Stephenson County Winter Farmers Market at the Farm Bureau Building at 210 West Spring Street. From 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. you can browse taste treats like home-baked bread and desserts, homemade jams and jellies, and crafts, which could make wonderful holiday gifts.



A quick note of thanks and recognition this week goes to the team that produced and performed in last week's final performances of CHRISTMAS MEMORIES for collecting about 1,000 pounds of food as admission to the event! Drama students delivered their contributions to FACC this week as you can see in these photos.



As a reminder, if you are looking for something to do this week or any week, visit the Greater Freeport Partnership website at 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.

In closing...

In closing, please remember that through year-end FREEPOD is having a fundraising drive to help offset some of FREEPOD's expenses. We've been bringing you newscasts and interviews for almost a whole year and most of the generous start-up funding support we received has been spent to get us up and running. While our staff is all volunteer, we do have other ongoing business expenses including insurance and marketing to help more people learn about us, and it's time to reinvigorate our bank account. Please visit us at our website for more details, and thank you in advance for considering a donation for our holiday stocking.

We also want to remind you that last week's in-depth interview, which is available on our website, through our Facebook page, and at WNIJ Northern Public Radio's website, featured FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel, speaking with Freeport City Manager Rob Boyer about what's ahead for the City in 2025. Next Tuesday we'll hear from FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors as he visits with the creators of some spectacular outdoor holiday decorations. Their conversation posts at noon on Tuesday, December 17th.

With that, time's up for this week. Tune in again next week for more about Freeport businesses, City plans and progress, area rewards and recognition, local impacts of state and national news, and more.

As we say each week, FREEPOD couldn't come to you without the help of many others. We're especially appreciative for the assistance of the Mass Communication Department at Highland Community College for producing this podcast. We're also grateful to WNII and Northern Public Radio in DeKalb, a member station of NPR National Public Radio, for partnering with us in reaching even more listeners with news of events and activities in northwest Illinois. And of course, here's a big shout-out to our many liaisons and reporters for the time they volunteer to bring the news to you. Thank you, Team FREEPOD!

If you have story suggestions or would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to support FREEPOD, visit our website at www.freepod.org or contact us through our Facebook page.

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