



**30 January
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 objective, unbiased updates on what's happening in 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!

Knowlton Fire

As most of our audience has probably already learned, there was a large fire that essentially demolished Knowlton Motors on West Avenue last Friday evening. The fire started after business hours and no employees were injured. Knowlton Motors, owned by Jim Knowlton, has been in business for 13 years. A number of photos of the blaze can be found at the City's website or on the websites of Rockford television stations.

2024 Annual Report showcases City's efforts

Statistics from all City departments for the year of 2024 are included in the City's Annual Report. Highlights include a record-breaking year in paving roads, record attendance for the Library's Summer Reading Program, and details of achievements at Police and Fire Departments.

Other information, such as how many City employees work on a daily basis, the number of demolitions of blighted homes, and the number FOIA requests received, is also covered.

This information and much more can be found by searching on "2024 annual report" at the City's website, www.cityoffreeport.org or <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ugKfsN4KaLVAgXFe8KFGTdRmigqpEjMD/view>

City agreement with Northern Illinois Gas Company

In other City news, approximately every 50 years – yes, 50 years – Freeport has the opportunity to renew their enterprise agreement with the Northern Illinois Gas Company to construct, operate, and maintain a gas distributing system for the City. Among other details, a recent re-negotiation to update

the contract from 1974 resulted in \$20,000 in savings for the Freeport Public Library, which will now receive free therms from Nicor.

News from the County Board

A number of updates from the County Board were covered in their January meeting. These included a \$1 million grant to repair county road guardrails and approval of an Employment Agreement for Marcos Perez, who had been acting as an interim administrator for the Stephenson Nursing Center, as permanent Nursing Home Administrator.

As a result of a Request for Proposal to replace Transitional Care Management, the company previously engaged to provide billing, collection, accounting, and consulting services for the Nursing Center, two finalists were presented to the board for consideration. The first was Heyward Financial Group, a local firm with a sound track record but lack of experience specific to nursing homes. The second was Matrix Care, a large Minnesota-based firm with extensive nursing home experience nationwide. The board voted 12 to 3 to hire Matrix Care, resulting in a lower cost per month for the Nursing Center.

Former Illinois Senator hosts Galena tour for colleagues

Former Illinois State Senator Brian Stewart recent hosted a tour of a number of historic sites in Galena for a number of his colleagues, including the Consul for Foreign Policy and Diplomacy at the Consulate General of Canada. Locations they visited included the U.S. Grant Home, the Elihu Washburne Home, and the Market House. He was joined for the tour by Historic Site Superintendent Terry Miller and his associates Jamie Loso and Bill Lutes. A photo of the large group with all names and positions is included in the print version of this podcast.

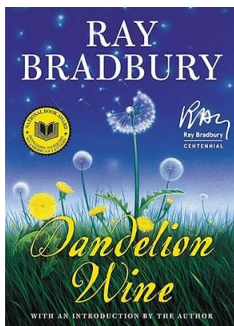
In his Facebook post, Brian urged residents in the area to also take advantage of wonderful historic sites such as these, which he characterized as “truly remarkable historic treasures in Northwest Illinois.” Thanks, Brian, for promoting Northwest Illinois to this large group!



Pictured from left: Al Marney; Connie Marney, District Director for Rep McCombie; Terry Miller, Site Superintendent; Ashley Rubino, Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs, IDNR; State Representative Bradley Fritts; Rep. Joe Sosnowski; Illinois House Minority Leader Tony McCombie; David Seagraves, sculptor of the nine busts pictured of the Generals from Galena in the Civil War; the Honorable Aaron Annable, Consul for Foreign Policy and Diplomacy at the Consulate General of Canada; State Senator Andrew Chesney; Representative and Assistant Minority Leader John M. Cabello; Shelly Grigoroff, Chief of Staff Representative John Cabello; Jeff Nevins, IDNR Historic Sites Manager; Kim Scace, District Director Senator Andrew Chesney; Stacey Flanagan, District Director Representative Brad Fritts; and Bill Lutes. Missing from the picture was Jamie Loso and taking the picture was photographer, Kelli LaShelle.

One Book One Freeport Readers' Theater event

This Saturday, February 1st, the Freeport Public Library and Winneshiek Playhouse will host a free readers' theater performance of *Dandelion Wine*, the book selected for this year's One Book One Freeport community reading program. The book, by famed author Ray Bradbury, recounts the story of his boyhood in Green Town -- which is actually Waukegan, Illinois -- in which he learns about love, life, mysteries, and death.



The entire public is invited to this all-volunteer event, which One Book One Freeport participants will enjoy even if they haven't started reading the book yet. The event runs from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Winneshiek Playhouse at 228 West Clark Street in Freeport.

Sorensen statement on Clean Fuels Production Credit

Congressman Eric Sorensen worked with 52 other lawmakers in Washington D.C. on a bipartisan basis to encourage the Department of Treasury to quickly to expand the definition of farming practices eligible for a tax credit along with guidance associated with accessing the credit. The credit will help lower transportation costs as well as providing for investment in sustainable fuel sources.

The Clean Fuels Production Credit which was released last week incentivizes the production of low-emission transportation fuels, including sustainable aviation fuel and other biofuels. It directly benefits Illinois farmers by expanding markets for corn and soybeans used to make biofuels.

American History Lecture at Library

The public is invited to *Jane Addams as Reformer: Striving For the Lincoln Ideal in a Rapidly Changing America*, a free American History Lecture at the Freeport Public Library next Thursday, February 6th, at 6:00 p.m.

The program will be presented by Andy Dvorak, who will review how had Abraham Lincoln lived another 15 or 20 years beyond his death in 1865, he would have witnessed enormous challenges to his vision of a partnership of business and labor against the evils of slavery and xenophobia. By the 1880s, business and labor were increasingly in opposition to each other, and Jim Crow racism and anti-immigrant bigotry was on the rise as the United States rapidly industrialized and urbanized.

Dvorak will discuss how Jane Addams, who was born in Cedarville, grew up idolizing President Lincoln, but discovered she needed to adapt her ideals and strategies to meet the reform needs of a new and complex society far removed from the stark but simpler issues of a much more rural pre-Civil War America.



Jane Addams

FHN Awards Four Healthcare Career Scholarships

FHN has awarded \$1,000 scholarships to four area students to help cover the cost of their healthcare education. Each student wrote an essay about their career path to support the healthcare needs of FHN's service area and the top candidates were selected for interviews.

The 2024 Healthcare Career Scholarship winners are Emily Allison from Ridott, who is pursuing a Physical Therapist Assistant degree at Highland Community College; Abbey Hammer from Shannon, who is pursuing a Nursing degree also at Highland; Hayley Smith from Warren, who is pursuing a Doctorate of Pharmacy degree at UW-Madison in Madison; and Bintou Timbiné of Rockford, who is pursuing a Doctorate of Pharmacy degree at the University of Illinois-Chicago, Rockford Campus.

All of FHN's scholarships are funded through donations to the FHN Foundation.

Wine & Spirits Tasting at Freeport Art Museum

Next Friday, February 7th, at 7:00 p.m. the Freeport Art Museum hosts a Wine and Spirits Tasting fundraiser at the Museum to support community arts. Cheeses from Baumgartner's Cheese Shop, along with other sweet and savory treats, will accompany tastings of wines, whiskey, and other spirits presented by distributors from Cork & Keg Liquors.

General admission is \$40 per person and VIP tickets and other types of admission are offered, and all Art Museum members receive a \$5 discount on their tickets. For more information and to purchase tickets online head to the Museum's website at www.freeportartmuseum.com and click on "events."

Winter Sports Fun

Although it has recently sometimes felt otherwise, wintry weather will still be with us for many weeks and hearty souls can enjoy the opportunity to grab their sleds, skates, snowshoes, skis, and snowmobiles for cold-weather recreation!

The Freeport Park District crew has been busy preparing their winter venues, and invites you to enjoy seasonal sports at several locations. Here are some of the options.

- Hit the trails at Oakdale Nature Reserve and Krape Park for hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and fat tire bicycling. The trails at Oakdale are groomed after snowfall.
- Skate or participate in a high-energy hockey game at the Read Park ice rink, which is open and lighted for evening use. Hockey players should use the west side of the rink if non-players are skating.
- The ever-popular Krape Park Sledding Hill offers fun for everyone – plus an aerobic hike back up the hill after a fun descent! Guidelines are posted and sledders are reminded to avoid the hill when it is closed due to lack of snow.
- Sports equipment like cross country skis, poles and boots, snowshoes, and ice skates are available to rent at affordable prices from the Park District Administration Center at 1122 S. Burchard Ave. For example, snowshoes are just \$5 during the week and \$12 for a weekend; skis, poles, and boots are \$10 for a day, or \$20 for the weekend.
- For snowmobile enthusiasts, the Jane Addams Trail provides the opportunity to explore Stephenson County's winter wonderland. Go to janeaddamstrail.com and snowtracks.com for more information and trail conditions.

Bundle up and enjoy these fun winter activities while you can – it's only 49 days until spring!

Free tax help

Starting next Wednesday, February 5th, the Senior Resource Center will provide 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. This service is offered by trained and IRS-certified volunteers is provided through the AARP Tax-Aide program and will run through April 15, 2025.

Appointments are required and can be scheduled to be held at the Center at 206 East Stephenson Street in Freeport beginning January 22 by calling 815-235-9777. That's 815-235-9777 and those interested are encouraged to call soon as spots are limited and fill quickly.

Trash and bulk item collection

Residents who live within the city limits of Freeport are reminded that they can now bring trash and bulk items for disposal to the Freeport Transfer Station located at 2133 S. Walnut Road from 8:00 – 11:00 a.m. the first Saturday of every month. This month, that will be this Saturday, February 1st.

ID's are required for verification of residency. Tires, hazardous waste such as paint and oils, TVs, computers, or other electronics **are not accepted**. Events for the collection of items not accepted

on these Saturdays will be organized later in the year. The City thanks Gill's Freeport Disposal for partnering in this landmark initiative.

The week ahead...

As we look at the week ahead, there's still time tomorrow, Friday February 1st, to bring items to the Salvation Army Clothing and Coat Giveaway from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at 106 W Exchange Street.

Then, as we mentioned last week, there's an open house at Tri-County Christian School next Tuesday, February 4th from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Tri-County offers full-day pre-school as well as instruction for students through eighth grade, and new families will receive a 10% tuition discount for the school year beginning this Fall.

Next Wednesday, February 5th, the Lindo Theatre will host the February film in the long-running Lindo Theatre's Select Pix Classic film series. The film is Beverly Hills Cop from 1984 starring Eddie Murphy as a freewheeling Detroit cop pursuing a murder investigation in the very different culture of Beverly Hills. Show times are 1:00 and 7:00 p.m. at regular ticket prices. 2025 is the 15th year for this popular film series hosted by Alan Wenzel and Ed Finch.

As a reminder, registration is open for Dads or another significant adult and daughters 10 years or younger for the Park District's Candyland Ball on Valentine's Day at the Masonic Event Center. For more info and to register, which must be completed by next Friday, February 7th, Google "Candyland Ball in Freeport Illinois" or call 815-235-6114. That's 815-235-6114.

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, 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, or by using their QR code that appears below.

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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 host Alan Wenzel interviewing Community College President Chris Kuberski about plans for the college in 2025. Next week, tune in to hear FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors visit with Rachel Gastel about Finding Clarity when dealing with an alcohol problem. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, February 4th.

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, WNIJ National Public Radio in DeKalb, at www.northernpublicradio.org.

As always, 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.

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