



**5 June
2025**

Welcome to FREEROD, 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) 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. Now let's see what's happening.

Well project proceeding, repaving season begins

Through a bidding process, Freeport has selected three firms to complete the four projects that are part of the construction of the new Well #12 near the South entrance of Krape Park. These projects are related to the installation of a new 1,300-foot-deep production water well and treatment facility for the low zone of Freeport, which is the largest area of Freeport and serves 65% of the city. These well infrastructure projects were identified originally in the 2017 comprehensive infrastructure upgrade plans when PFAS, also known as forever chemicals, were originally detected by random testing. Freeport was one of the first 500 communities in the country to conduct this testing and many cities across the nation are dealing with the same issues of which Freeport has already improved and continues to address. The total cost of the Well and Well House #12 project is just under \$27 million.

The repaving season for the City has also begun, and this year's designated list of streets includes Blackhawk, Carroll, Dewey, Cleveland, Hance, Harvey, Stephenson, Greenfield, and Willow. Blackhawk Avenue from Empire to Dewey is slated to be one of the first projects. Please be considerate for workers handling these important projects and to stay on top of road work going on around the City visit www.cityoffreeport.org.

In other City news, the City Council has approved the expansion of the parking lot at Culver's. The lot will be expanded to the north, which Culver's states will improve the drive-thru process and overall space around the restaurant.

Stephenson County board news

The Stephenson County board approved the construction of a solar farm in Florence Township, located on 27 acres at Van Brocklin Road. There was some opposition on the board and the vote did pass but as a reminder, the county cannot turn down a solar farm if approved by the state. Vote was still taken and passed 11-4.

The board also is beginning to receive its first reports from Matrix, the new billing and collection company for Walnut Acres, where the current census is 49 residents. More on the reporting process is expected in the future.

FHN Food Fight Against Cancer

Join friends of The Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center at FHN Memorial Hospital for their annual Food Fight Against Cancer fundraising event next Friday, June 13th from 5:00 to 9:30 p.m. at the Wagner House in Freeport. This year's proceeds will support the FHN Foundation's campaign to purchase a new Linear Accelerator for Radiation Oncology.



Join friends of The Leonard C. Ferguson Cancer Center as we dish out some fun! Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and desserts from local caterers and restaurants, vote for your favorite, and then relax and enjoy FHN's "Unmask the Singer." Tickets on sale now! All funds raised will benefit the purchase of a new Linear Accelerator for radiology oncology.

Guests will dine on delicious hors d'oeuvres and desserts from a variety of local caterers and restaurants and be able to vote for a favorite vendor as they also enjoy a cash bar. For this year's entertainment, costumed FHN team members will be performing a variety of songs in an "Unmask the Singer" competition. Audience vote will determine which singers move forward in each round and ultimately decide who wins this inaugural contest.

Tickets are \$35 each or \$65 per couple and table pricing is also available. Contact the Foundation office at 815-599-6900 for tickets and more information. That's 815-599-6900.

Pretzel Pickers on the job

The Pretzel Pickers community clean-up crew is hard at work and inviting more volunteers to help them keep the community clean. The group was started by Kathleen Wilken and Sharon Koch in April 2021 with the simple mission to clear litter and waste in Freeport. It didn't take long for the group to get attention from the Greater Freeport Partnership, which began helping them with supplies and trash removal.

As the Pickers became more widely known through Facebook and other avenues, they began to recruit others to help the effort. As of today, more than 150 people are a part of the group online and many of these folks participate in the fieldwork as well.

According to Koch, they were surprised but very pleased at the reaction and they're hopeful that others will join the group to help keep Freeport looking its best. They are especially keen on interesting young people, including school groups. To stay up to date on when and where the Pretzel Pickers are out on cleanups, find them at their page on Facebook by searching on Freeport Illinois Pretzel Pickers. Thank you, Pretzel Pickers!

Mini-golf tournament at Krape Park

The first Wing It! mini-golf cup tournament is scheduled for Saturday, June 14th at the Wing It! mini-golf course at Krape Park. There will be two shot-gun tee-times at 9:00 and 10:00 a.m. and awards will be presented for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place at 11:00 a.m. Players must pre-register online at the Krape Park website or by calling 815-235-6614 and registration closes next Wednesday, June 11th. That number again is 815-235-6614.



Pretzel City 5K run

In other news from the Park District, it's time to register for the Pretzel City 5K scheduled for Saturday, June 28th. The race, hosted by Freeport Park District, begins at 8:00 a.m. and all levels of runners and walkers are welcome to participate. The course consists of flat roadways and paths that wind through Krape Park. The registration is \$30 for adults and \$15 for kids age 19 and under. Pre-registration must be completed by Friday, June 27th although a \$35 registration is also available on race day. This race is a Rockford Road Runners circuit race and signup can be done on their website at www.signup.com and searching for "Pretzel 5K."

Pretzel City 5k
 Saturday, June 28
 Krape Park • Race starts at 8am

On Your Mark...Get Set...Go!
 All levels of runners and walkers are welcome to participate. The course consists of flat roadways and paths that wind through picturesque Krape Park. This race is a Rockford Road Runners circuit race.

\$30 pre-registration fee by June 27
 \$15 registration fee for kids 19 and under
 \$35 race day registration fee

FREEPORT
 PARK DISTRICT

New Pre-Columbian gold objects at Freeport Art Museum

The Freeport Art Museum has been gifted four stunning Pre-Columbian gold objects from the Sinu, Veraguas, and Coclé cultures as additions to the museum’s permanent collection. A photo of one of the items is included in the print version of this episode and it is indeed beautiful. The intricately crafted “gold dancer” is from the Veraguas culture circa 1000 CE, also represented as 1000 AD, and features a ceremonial headdress and holds a rattle in each hand, evoking a ritual of ancient performance.



Originating from what is now coastal Panama, the Veraguas culture was renowned for its masterful goldwork, especially detailed cast figures and pendants used in spiritual and social ceremonies. These objects symbolized power, status, and a deep connection to the spiritual world. The pieces were donated by Ann and Robert Walzer from New York and are a wonderful new reason to visit the Museum at 121 North Harlem Avenue, which is open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and noon to 5:00 on Saturdays.

***Cinderella* at Summerset**

This summer, Highland Community College’s Summerset Theatre will celebrate its 50th anniversary season in a production of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Cinderella* with a fresh, empowering twist and a familiar face in the title role. Lena resident and Highland theatre veteran Erin Schrader will don the

famous glass slippers as Cinderella in a production that Director Dr. Randy Haldeman promises will blend the story's enduring charm with an important message.

"Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella is a timeless tale of dreams, kindness, and self-discovery," said Haldeman. Continuing, he said that Highland's production emphasizes that dreams don't come true through magic alone but require personal courage and action. Cinderella stands up for herself and others, using her voice to create a fairer kingdom.

This is Schrader's seventh production at Highland, and her fourth for Summerset. As a youth librarian's assistant at Freeport Public Library, Schrader is a familiar face on and off the stage, including her role as Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* in 2028. Schrader noted that as a biracial woman, she is honored to be carrying on the legacy of a Cinderella that has been inclusive for generations. Said Schrader, "This show is a great reminder that how we treat others is one of the most crucial aspects of being human. We do not always get it right, but we have the choice and opportunity every single day to fight for people not deemed worthy or good enough by society."

Cinderella takes center stage at Highland's Ferguson Fine Arts Center on June 20th, 21st, 26th, and 28th at 7:00 p.m. with matinee performances on June 22nd and 29th at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors, and \$10 for students and children. Online ticket sales are already live at www.Highland.edu or can be purchased in person at the theatres box office or by phone at 815-599-3718.

Cinderella and the work behind the scenes that go into making it a wonderful performance is also the topic of FREEPOD's in-depth interview next Tuesday so be sure to tune in then to find out more!



Book discussion at Generations Brewing Company

The Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance is hosting a book discussion of *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* by Robin Wall Kimmerer next Wednesday, June 11th at 5:30 p.m. at Generations Brewing at 1400 South Adams Avenue in Freeport. This book offers ideas to orient our lives around gratitude, reciprocity, and community. Members of the committee will lead the discussion.

Attendees will be able to enjoy their own orders for a variety of alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages from Generations Brewing. The Alliance is also providing pizza at no cost to guests. Registration is

required by this Friday, June 6th by calling 201-233-0946 to nwilbirdnaturealliance@gmail.com. That number again is 201-233-0946.

The Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance is also asking for feedback about continuing the bird club they have hosted for youth ages 7 through 10 for the past two years for another year, as well as determining interest in a group for kids younger than age 7. They'd appreciate your thoughts in a quick survey at <https://forms.gle/uKxrJHEcAcmstC3w6>

The week ahead...

As always, there's more coming up in the Freeport area than we have time to report on in detail! Remember that tomorrow night, Friday June 6th, is the first Music on Chicago event of the season. *Fortunate Sons* will perform at the Art Plaza on the corner of Chicago Avenue and Douglas Street and for just \$5 you can enjoy all the music as well as local food vendors and volunteers serving alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages during the event.

Also on both Friday and Saturday, June 6th and 7th, the Curtain Call Academy Players of the Playhouse present *Sherlock Holmes: The Baker Street Irregulars* at 7:00 p.m. both evenings at the Winneshiek Playhouse. Tickets are available at the Playhouse website or at the door.

Then on Monday June 9th the Summer Reading program starts at the Freeport Public Library, with a Kick-Off Party from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Library. Children who sign up for the summer reading program at the party will receive a free book. There will also be crafts, tattoos, touch-a-truck, and games. In case of rain, the party will move inside the library.

If you're hungry tomorrow or Saturday, the Cub Foods Brat Stand this weekend will be run by Indian Trail Archery, who will be ready to serve brats, burgers, hot dogs, and ribeye sandwiches you can grab on the go from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. both days. Also on Saturday morning don't forget to see what's fresh and delicious at the two Farmers' Markets in Freeport as well as one in Lena.

And finally, if you're looking for a new pair of shoes, Shoe Sensation just opened at the Meadows Shopping Center!

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 also subscribe to the City of Freeport's monthly newsletter at their website, www.cityoffreeport.org. We have links to both in the print version of FREEPOD episodes.

In closing...

In closing, if you haven't already done so, be sure to listen to this week's in-depth interview where FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors interviews Kelsey Rosenstein about the Freeport Concert Band summer concert series at Krape Park. The interview is available online and can be listened to anytime.

As noted earlier, next Tuesday FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Becky Connors chats with Alex Jansen, tech director for theatre at Highland Community College, who gives us a backstage tour of sets, lighting, and sound and then previews Highland's upcoming production of *Cinderella*. Be sure to tune in for this interview, which will post at noon on Tuesday June 10th and be available to listen to then or at any time after that – just head to our website or your favorite podcast platform to select the programs of your choice.

As always, FREEPOD couldn't come to you without the Mass Communication Department at Highland Community College and our community liaisons and reporters. Thank you, Team FREEPOD! You can always find us on our Facebook page or the website of our National Public Radio partner, WNIJ in DeKalb, at www.northernpublicradio.org. For more info, including how to make a tax-deductible contribution to support our work, visit our website at www.freepod.org.

With that, time's up for this week. Tune in again next Thursday at noon – or any time after that on our website or your favorite podcast platform – for more about what's happening in Freeport, and thank you for listening!

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

LINKS TO OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS NEWSLETTERS

To find 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 with the QR code below.

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