



**28 November
2024**

Welcome to FREEPD, 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.

City applies for Community Development Block Grant

Early in December, the City intends to apply to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity for a grant from the State's Community Development Block Grant program. This program is funded by Title 1 of the Federal Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, and program funds are to be used for a Freeport project that will address the sanitary sewer lining of a sewer main that is causing a threat to the health and safety of some of the City's residents.

The City is requesting a grant total of \$1 million. Of that total, \$542,000 will be used to support sewer main activities that benefit low-to-moderate income people. A plan to minimize disruptions has been prepared by the City in anticipation of receiving the grant.

Medicare Basics Class

The Senior Resource Center invites individuals aged 60 and older and their caregivers to a Medicare Basics Class on Tuesday, December 10 at the Center

This informative session will cover essential Medicare information and provide an opportunity for attendees to get their Medicare questions answered in a straightforward, supportive setting. The Medicare Basics Class is designed to help participants better understand Medicare coverage options, enrollment periods, and other key details, ensuring they are equipped to make informed healthcare decisions. Please note that this event occurs after the deadline for open enrollment, which is coming up on Saturday, December 7th, and will include information that will be important for 2025.

To secure a spot, please register by calling 815-235-9777. Walk-ins are welcome. The Senior Resource Center is located at 206 E. Stephenson Street in Freeport. That number again is 815-235-9777.

Final year for *Christmas Memories*

Plan now to attend the final annual performance of a beloved Freeport holiday tradition next weekend! For many years, adults and children alike have enjoyed delightful holiday stories and songs brought to life onstage in annual performances of *Christmas Memories*, and this year will be no exception. Attendees will be delighted with both new skits as well as *Christmas Memories* favorites. The cast includes LaFrancine Baker; Gary and Jody Brubaker; Becky and Tim Connors; Denise McIlwain; Pat Norman; Derek Simons; Laura Stocker; and Roman Viveros.

Christmas Memories will play on Thursday and Friday, December 5th and 6th at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, December 7th at 2:00 p.m. at the Jeannette Lloyd Theatre owned and operated by the Freeport School District at 701 W. Empire Street. Tickets are \$6 plus a food donation for the Freeport Area Church Cooperative and may be purchased online at fsd145.org/tickets or by calling 815-232-0428.

IPASS event

State Senator Andrew Chesney bringing a mobile team from the Illinois Tollway to Freeport on Monday, December 2nd from 3:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Center at Highland Community College.

“The Tollway is transitioning away from plastic transponders and are replacing them with new sticker technology,” said Chesney. “Rather than having my constituents complete this transaction at the DMV or elsewhere where there may be a fee, I am bringing a mobile team into the 45th District for quick, easy, and free service.”

During the event, Illinois Tollway officials will help people transfer over the new sticker technology and make sure people can switch without interruptions to their IPASS account. It is also important to note that those planning to attend should write down their license plate number for quick service.

Once the sticker tag is activated, it can be used on Illinois Tollway and on E-Z Pass roadways in other states within 24 hours. There is no deposit needed for the sticker and the \$10 transponder deposit that was paid when the transponder was purchased will be transferred to the new account when it is activated.

Local teacher recognized as Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher of the Year

Lisa Corp, second-grade teacher at The Open Bible Learning Center in Freeport, was recently named the 2025 Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher of the Year in a surprise assembly at the school.

One of Corp’s favorite lessons for her second-grade students last year incorporated the “Elf on the Shelf” concept by putting “Sprout” on a shelf in the classroom to share facts about agriculture. The 20 days of Sprout lessons were so popular that third graders in the hallway popped into her classroom to join in the fun. Corp will be bringing Sprout back again with new activities and ag facts.

Corp will be recognized at the Illinois Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Chicago and will receive a trip to the 2025 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference in Minneapolis. She is now also the Illinois nominee for the USDA National Excellence in Teaching Agriculture Award. Corp serves as a member of the Stephenson County Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom Advisory Committee to help shape resources and training for others across the county.

The runner-up for the Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher of the Year is Tammy Greene, a fourth-grade teacher at Kings School in Kings, a small community of 164 residents in Ogle county.



Caption: Lisa Corp, (center) a second-grade teacher at Open Bible Learning Center in Freeport was named the 2025 Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom (IATIC) Teacher of the Year. Among those in on the surprise were Stephenson County Ag Literacy Coordinator Debbie Steinbach (left), and Illinois Farm Bureau's Illinois Center for Agriculture Engagement Kevin Daughtery. (Photo Courtesy of IAITC)

Highland Community College holiday musical events

For those who like to look back into history at the holidays, the Highland Community College Madrigal Dinner will be held on Friday and Saturday, December 13th and 14th at the Freeport Club, 1614 Park Boulevard in Freeport. This magical Christmas feast will surround you with traditional music and costumes from throughout history, including favorite foods and tunes from the holiday season. Tickets are \$50 per person and are on sale through next Wednesday, December 4th. Seating begins at 6:30 p.m. with dinner starting at 7:00 p.m.

Highland is also hosting two other holiday musical events. The Highland Community College Concert band and orchestra present their holiday concert next Friday, December 6th at 7:00 PM in the Fine Arts Center Theatre, and then on Sunday, December 8th the College's Chorale and Children's Choir will present their holiday concert at 3:00 p.m., also in the Fine Arts Center. No tickets are needed for either of these family-friendly events.

YMCA Cookies with Santa

Area families are invited to the annual Cookies with Santa event at the YMCA of Northwest Illinois on Saturday, December 7th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Y. Attendees will meet and take photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus and receive take-home crafts and holiday cookies ready for decorating at home. The gathering is free and open to the public.

The Y is seeking community contributions to help make the event memorable for all, including canned frosting and sprinkles for the take-home cookies as well as wrapping paper for crafts and gifts. Please drop off any items at the YMCA front desk by end of next Monday, December 2nd.

Community Festival of Trees

FHN's Festival of Trees activities continue with the Community Festival of Trees at the Freeport Public Library, hosted jointly by FHN and the Library. View beautiful holiday trees throughout the Library that are decorated by local service organizations, clubs, and church groups competing for prizes and vote for your favorite holiday tree by Saturday, December 14th.

This coming Monday, December 2nd, enjoy an evening of holiday family fun as FHN and the Library host Frosty Family Fun, again at the Freeport Public Library. Make "Holiday Slime," play Holiday Bingo, enjoy a holiday treat, and grownups bringing kids to the event can enter to win a \$100 gift card. Frosty Family Fun begins at 5:30 p.m. and will end at 7:00 p.m. There is no charge for either of these community events.

Santa has once again asked FHN to help get letters to him and 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. Letters must be received by December 16 to allow time for Santa to respond.

City renews application to remain a Bird City

The City of Freeport recently renewed its application to remain a Bird City Illinois, a recognition originally awarded in 2021. Bird City Illinois recognizes communities that implement sound bird-conservation practices, enhancing the environment for birds, and educating the public about the relationship between birds and people as well as how that contributes to a healthy community. Freeport is one of only 10 municipalities in Illinois to have this designation.

To be a Bird City, a municipality must complete a minimum of nine actions from four different categories that include Habitat, Threats to Birds, Education and Engagement, and Sustainability. An annual proclamation must also be read at City Council recognizing World Migratory Bird Day and holding a public event. The date for this event will occur in May 2025. In addition, the municipality must also have a Resolution read and voted on by council members every three years to support the Bird City Initiative.

The Northwest Illinois Audubon Society, a non-profit organization, fulfilled many of the criteria as well as paying for the cost of the application and renewal fees. The group also documents the work done by other groups and organizations that fulfill additional criteria. These organizations include the Freeport Park District, Freeport Public Library, University of Illinois Extension, Jane Addams Land Park Foundation, Freeport Student Garden, Environmental Study Group, the Bluebird monitors at Park Hills Golf Course, and the Pretzel Pickers. In 2021, Freeport completed 18 criteria, but over the past three years, these

organizations helped Freeport complete 29 actions. All of these actions are described for the public to read on the Bird City Illinois website. To learn more, visit birdcity.org and search for Illinois.

The week ahead

Once again, there are plenty of things to do in the Freeport area in the coming week. To start, this Saturday, November 30th, is Small Business Saturday! Freeport is home to dozens of small businesses that are important to our community's overall economic health, and we hope that many of our listeners will take this opportunity to support them

Then next Wednesday, December 4th, head downtown for the last 2024 movie in the Lindo Theatre's Select Pix Classic film series. Continuing a tradition of showing a "non-Christmas—Christmas film," the December 4th film *Lethal Weapon*, a 1987 buddy cop action-comedy. Per the Series' holiday tradition, the film is not a Christmas film but has at least one scene set at Christmas time. The film stars Danny Glover and Mel Gibson and shows at 1:00 and 7:00 p.m. at regular ticket prices. 2024 is the 14th year for this popular film series hosted by Ed Finch and Alan Wenzel at the Lindo Theatre in Freeport, and they'll be continuing the series again in 2025.

As we mentioned last week, there are also literally dozens of holiday events 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. We'll have more next week on what looks like a great event from the Greater Freeport Partnership in mid-December for Trans-Siberian Orchestra fans.

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.

Once again, we want to remind everyone that in this season of lots of friends and family gatherings, stay healthy and take good care of yourself and others. Free COVID tests are available at covidtests.gov and also in the interests of community safety, we urge drivers to be extra careful driving in the early evening when pedestrians may not be as clearly visible. Early darkness continues through December, when we'll gradually begin to see more hours of daylight until Spring.

In closing...

In closing, we'd like to remind you that through year-end we're 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, was FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors visiting with Steven Winter about the creation of local brewery Generations about how they got started and their future plans. Next Tuesday's offering is a double feature! First up, FREEPOD and TimBeck2 hosts Tim Connors and Becky Connors will give us a preview of Christmas Memories, the local theatre production we mentioned earlier that will be happening next weekend. Then Tim will visit with the folks at Twice as Nice, who just celebrated the 25th anniversary of their stories in Freeport. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, December 3rd.

We also wanted to note that that sometimes when we're checking for news to include in FREEPOD, for you, we find something funny. This week we found a laugh on the X, formerly Twitter, account for Illinois 17th Congressional District representative Eric Sorensen, who represents Freeport in Washington D.C. He posted this joke: Why was the turkey invited to join the band? Because he came with two drumsticks.

With that turkey of a holiday menu joke, 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 WNIJ 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!