



**27 March
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) 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! Now let's see what's going on.

Highland Community College terminates head basketball coach Luke Norman

In a 4 to 2 board vote at a recent meeting, Highland Community College terminated Head Basketball Coach Luke Norman. Following a reminder that personnel matters are not a regular subject for public comment, the meeting attracted about 200 people online and over 40 people in person. In public comment 23 people spoke, all in favor of Norman being retained. The meeting was covered by Rockford television where you can search for more details.

The cause for the special meeting originated in a post-game brawl on February 20th between players and fans of both Highland and Kennedy-King College after a hard-fought, emotional 80 to 79 Highland win in overtime. National Junior College Athletic Association Region IV officials had penalized both schools to forfeit two games as punishment and soon after added a third-game suspension.

In a post-meeting interview, Highland President Chris Kuberski said the administration will now shift its attention to a search for a new basketball coach. The situation is likely headed for legal action.

Info on local ICE activities

As reported earlier, the Freeport Police Department has acknowledged community concerns regarding immigration and enforcement by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, known by the acronym ICE, in local schools.

Illinois is governed by the 2017 TRUST Act, making any immigration enforcement the responsibility of federal law enforcement agencies not associated with local authorities, and local authorities cannot comply with federal immigration warrants or detainers unless signed by a judge.

According to Freeport Police Chief Chris Shenberger, local authorities cannot search a person based on their immigration status or hold a person based solely on an ICE request. Shenberger further stated that the School Resource Officer assigned to the Freeport School District will be working with staff and students regarding any concerns they may have.

United Way fundraising dinner coming up

The United Way of NW Illinois is making plans for their Celebrity Dinner on April 19th at the Freeport Club. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will start at 6:00 p.m., dinner is at 7:00 and a short presentation will begin at 7:30. Reserve your tickets for \$40 each at 815-232-5184. All proceeds will benefit the United Way of NW Illinois Community Impact Initiatives. Enjoy a fun evening and great food while supporting our community!

Grasshopper's now open

The name may be changed to Grasshopper's Bar & Grill, but the same friendly service, good food and fun atmosphere remains at the former Pub 219 bar on Stephenson Street in downtown Freeport. New owners Jeff Schultz and Michelle Davies have put their own touch on the place, but a full bar of drink choices and the staples of appetizers, burgers, and sandwiches still are featured on a varied menu, including brunch on Sundays from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. We'll have more on this new establishment next week!

Coffee and Crumbs Bakery now open

Another new business is opening in Freeport too, with plenty of sweet treats and hot coffee for customers at our newest stop for baked goods. Coffee and Crumbs bakery is located in the business area next to the driver's license office north of town at 1022 Riverside Drive and offers cookies, cinnamon rolls, and mini-cheesecakes and coffee drinks to wash them down. Hours are Monday through Friday 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Check out their Facebook page for more information, and be sure to give this new Freeport business a try!

Concert at the Masonic Temple

Get ready for a night of electrifying blues and rock-n-roll with *Jimmy Nick* and *Don't Tell Mama* at the Freeport Masonic Temple on Saturday, April 5th. Jimmy Nick is an old-fashioned, guitar-slinging blues prodigy who cut his teeth in the legendary Chicago blues clubs of Kingston Mines, Rosa's Lounge, and headlining Buddy Guy's Legends, and B.L.U.E.S. on Halsted. Schooled by the blues greats, Jimmy has quickly made a name for himself as one of the most dynamic performers in the scene.

Tickets are just \$20 each, or you can elevate your experience by sponsoring a table for 8 at \$200, ensuring reserved seating for you and your friends. Doors swing open at 6:00 p.m. and the show kicks off at 7:00 p.m. Food and a cash bar will be available.

The show is hosted by the Greater Freeport Partnership so for more information and to register, visit their website at www.greaterfreeport.com and search on “Jimmy Nick.”



Stephenson County Home Show

Are you thinking about a home remodeling or landscaping project this season? Come meet with many contractors and suppliers all in one space. The Stephenson County Home Show returns to the Stephenson County Fairgrounds, Saturday April 12th from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Visit with professionals in service industries to tackle your next home project and know you're in good hands. Admission is free.



Freeport Park District facility and shelter rate update

As a reminder, beginning next Tuesday, April 1st, rental rates for facilities and shelters maintained by the Freeport Park District will be increasing to help to maintain and improve parks and amenities. If you have an event in mind, book your reservation before April 1st to take advantage of the current rates.

Second Chances reentry simulation

On Tuesday, April 15th from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois, VOICES of Stephenson County, and the United Way of Northwest Illinois will host a simulation of what the challenges encountered by thousands of Illinois workers who seek to re-enter the workforce after being incarcerated.

Attendees will learn how to tap into a workforce that is ready and committed to working and learn about financial incentives to hiring justice-involved individuals. Workforce development and training resources will be presented and lunch will be served. If you're interested in helping to provide much-needed second chances for folks in our community, please plan to attend.

Register through the QR or go online at the link provided in the print version of this podcast, or contact Goodwill, VOICES, or the United Way in Freeport for more information.



<https://forms.gle/Z2k7wmU8JpBxUa27A>



Next offering in Classic Film Series

The 1984 film *Sixteen Candles* directed by John Hughes is the next film in the Lindo Theatre's Select Pix Classic Film Series scheduled for next Wednesday, April 2nd. Director Hughes wrote the lead part of Samantha especially for actor Molly Ringwald and helped redefine the teen comedy genre with this popular movie.

Show times on Wednesday are 1:00 and 7:00 p.m. at regular movie prices. Both showings will be followed by a discussion about the movie with Ed Finch and Alan Wenzel, hosts of this popular film series which is now in its 15th year at the Lindo.

Stephenson County Historical Society annual dinner

The Stephenson County Historical Society will hold their annual meeting and dinner fundraiser on Thursday, April 10th beginning at 5:00 p.m. at the Eagles Club in Freeport.

The program will highlight the Oscar Taylor home that is the home of the museum. The home has been rumored to have been part of the Underground Railroad. While this is something that may never be proven, there are many reasons to believe it could have been. The program will explore the Taylor family's interest in the abolitionist movement, and especially a group of abolitionist singers called the Hutchinson Family who performed at the Taylor's open house party in 1857.

Tickets are \$50 per person and support the programming and other activities of the Museum. For additional information, contact Sharon Welton, SCHS Executive Director at 815-232-8419. That's 815-232-8419.

Bruce Johnson Memorial Run

The Young Leader Committee of the Stephenson County Farm Bureau is once again hosting the Annual Bruce Johnson Memorial Farm to Farm 5K/10K Run next Saturday, April 5th. Day-of-race registration begins at 7:30 a.m. on the 5th with the 10K run beginning at 8:50 a.m., the 5K run beginning at 9:00, and the 5K Fun Run/Walk beginning at 9:05. Johnson was a previous president of the Bureau.

Funds raised by this event will be donated to the Agriculture in the Classroom program. Registration and additional information can be found by visiting www.runsignup.com and searching Bruce Johnson Memorial Farm to Farm, stopping by the Farm Bureau office at 210 W Spring Street in Freeport, or calling 815-232-3186 and asking to speak with Victoria.

New fitness class at Senior Resource Center

The Senior Resource Center is introducing a new fitness class, Better Balance & Strength for Older Adults, in partnership with Pathway Physical Therapy. This six-week program is designed to help older adults improve strength, flexibility, and balance in a safe and supportive environment.

Led by experienced physical therapists, participants will engage in gentle exercises aimed at enhancing mobility, preventing falls, and promoting overall well-being. The six-week class begins April 8th and continues through May 13th and will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesdays at the Senior Resource Center at 206 East Stephenson Street. Cost is \$42 and spaces are limited so early registration is encouraged. For more information, contact the Senior Resource Center at 815-235-9777. That's 815-235-9777.

Audubon Society banquet

The Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, is hosting a fundraising banquet on Wednesday, April 9th beginning at 5:30 p.m. Tickets are \$32 per person and children age 12 and under are welcome at no charge, and all bird and nature lovers are welcome. Registration deadline is due this Saturday, March 29th.

The program features David and Adrienne Olson, photographers and naturalists, who will share their insights and images of the greater Yellowstone National Park ecosystem. Olson Photography of Rockford now conducts tours to the park, and as part of David's lifelong dedication, he also visits the park to produce new photographs whenever he can. David and Adrienne will share an amazing photo show, fascinating tales and interesting facts that make Yellowstone National Park still one of the most incredible destinations in the world. A silent auction will also be offered.

For more information, call Tim Smith at 815-835-5109. That's 815-235-5109 or visit <https://nwilbirdnaturealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-Banquet-Mailer.pdf>

Musical performance at Library this evening

Songs of the Illinois Freedom Road is a powerful musical performance by nationally recognized singer-songwriter Chris Vallillo featuring the songs, stories, and struggles of the Illinois Underground Railroad that's on the calendar for this evening, Thursday, March 27th at the Freeport Public Library from 6:30 to 7:45 p.m.

The show features rare first-person accounts of freedom seekers who passed through Illinois. Highlighted stories include John and Mary Little, who traveled on foot 140 miles to Chicago, and George Burroughs, a black Canadian who worked on the Illinois Central Railroad where he helped smuggle escapees to freedom.

Vallillo extensively researched the subject using primary source documents such as the 1857 Slave Narratives of Canada and the WPA Slave Narratives, and combines these stories with eleven historic songs that were sung by the enslaved to inspire and share knowledge among themselves.

The Freeport Public Library, Lincoln Douglas Society, and Greater Freeport Partnership collaborated to bring this experience to Freeport. For more information on the exhibit, the programming in Freeport, and the stories of the Illinois Underground Railroad, visit www.IllinoisUGRR.org

The week ahead...



In addition to the presentation at the Library tonight, as we look to the week ahead, we're anticipating a yummy visit soon to the Full Circle Cafe & Collective that is now open inside the Freeport Public Library.

Partners Kate Frautschy (left) and Amera Striegel are introducing locally sourced and organic foods to their patrons along with educational classes focused on building a sense of community.

Don't forget that 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 residing in Stephenson and Jo Daviess counties as well as adults with disabilities through April 15th.

You can still also vote early for next Tuesday's April elections for all city and village races in the lower level of the Stewart Centre, 50 West Douglas Street in Freeport from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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 and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors chatting with Elisha Walker, Executive Director of Northwestern Illinois Community Action Agency. They talk about the agency's role in helping families find and access federal support in a wide variety of areas from energy assistance to Golden Meals.

Next week, tune in as FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Becky Connors visits with Sarah Long, Artistic Director of Studio 121 dance in Freeport, which offers classes in ballet, modern, and pointe technique. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, April 1st.

We'd like to once again thank the Broadcast Journalism classes at Freeport High School taught by educator Jena Kleindl for last week's podcast – they did a great job and we look forward to welcoming their participation again in the future!

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 on your as each new pod airs. You can also always click through to our pods through our Facebook page or the website of our National Public Radio partner, WNIJ in DeKalb, at www.northernpublicradio.org.

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 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.

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