



**13 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!

New credit union to open in Freeport

The newest branch office of First Community Credit Union will be opening in Freeport yet this month on West Galena Avenue near Sullivan's Foods. This is the financial organization's ninth location in the Stateline area and will provide banking services like personal and business accounts, auto loans, recreational vehicle loans, credit cards, and a variety of home loan options as well as electronic services including Online Banking and their own mobile app. They will also have a 24-hour ATM, a night drop, and four drive-thru lanes.

School registration open

Registration for the 2025-2026 school year in Freeport School District 145 is now open for new students. New students include those not currently enrolled, including incoming kindergarten students. Current district preschool students who will be kindergartners in the fall do not need to register at this time.

If you have questions about enrollment please contact the school's enrollment department at 815-232-0580, Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or visit the New Student Enrollment Link in English at <https://secure.infosnap.com/family/Login> or the New Student Enrollment Link in Espanol at <https://secure.infosnap.com/family/Login>

Measles update

Although there have been no cases reported in Illinois yet in 2025, there have been enough stories in the national news that FREEPOD wanted to provide an update.

In 2000, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, known by the acronym CDC, declared that measles was eliminated in the United States after a successful vaccination campaign in the 1960s.

However, rates for 39 states for the 2023-2024 school year were below the target rate of 95% for measles, mumps, and rubella vaccinations, also known as MMR vaccinations. This means that approximately 280,000 school children nationwide were unvaccinated and unprotected against measles, and research shows the more unvaccinated children in a school, the larger risk of an outbreak.

Measles is one of the world's most contagious diseases. The measure of contagiousness for measles ranges from 12 to 18. In other words, if one person is infected, they will infect as many as 18 others on average. That's much higher than with other infectious diseases such as COVID, which has a contagious index of only around three.

The measles virus spreads easily through airborne contact with respiratory droplets. It can remain airborne for up to two hours after an infectious person leaves an area and up to 90% of susceptible people who have contact with someone with measles will develop measles.

Since the end of December, there have been 222 cases of measles reported in the U.S., mostly among children who had not received the MMR vaccine. One hundred and ninety eight of the 222 cases have occurred in Texas, and two deaths have been reported, one in Texas and one in New Mexico. More cases are expected as this outbreak continues to expand rapidly, and since measles are also occurring globally, unvaccinated travelers returning to the U.S. are at an increased risk.

Symptoms of measles infection include diarrhea and vomiting, ear infection, bronchitis, laryngitis, pneumonia and rarely encephalitis.

If you were vaccinated between 1968 and 1989, you likely received just one dose of the measles vaccine instead of the two doses that are standard today, and it is recommended that you contact your healthcare provider about getting a booster shot.

Senior Resource Center visits Stockton and Galena

The Senior Resource Center is hosting free events in Stockton and Galena to provide personalized assistance to seniors and their families in navigating aging and disability resources. The Stockton event will be held next Thursday, March 20th at the Stockton Township Library and the Galena event will be held the following week, Thursday, March 27th at the West Galena Township Building. Both will begin at 10:00 a.m. and end at 2:00 p.m.

Services offered include:

- Aging and disability benefits information,
- Medicaid questions,
- Part D prescription coverage questions,

- Benefit access applications, including license plate discounts, and
- General aging questions

Appointments are required to ensure personalized assistance. Call 815-235-9777 to secure your spot; that's 815-235-9777.

Senior Center Update on possible budget cuts

In other Senior Center News, with uncertainty about possible federal budget cuts to Social Security and Medicaid, staff at the Senior Resource Center based in Freeport is assuring local senior citizens the Center is open for business and will continue to be that way unless things change.

Assistant Director Christine Gentry said the staff takes their guidance from the Illinois Department on Aging and NICAA and those agencies have not changed anything. Accordingly, Center staff will still provide services such as tax preparation for senior citizens, Medicare advice, and license sticker renewal discounts. If anything changes, the Senior Resource Center staff will inform its clients.

New management for Hampton Inn

Dreamscape Hospitality has assumed management of the Hampton Inn in downtown Freeport. The hotel offers 73 guestrooms, a heated indoor pool, fitness center, complimentary hot breakfast and complimentary WiFi and is close to many downtown attractions and businesses.

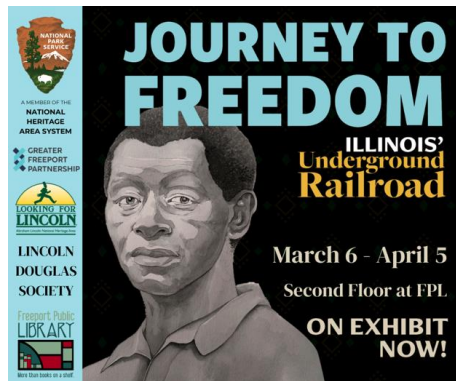
Underground Railroad Exhibit continues at Library, including special presentations

Following opening remarks last week, the Freeport Public Library hosts the *Journey to Freedom: Illinois' Underground Railroad* exhibit for free public viewing through Saturday, April 5th on the library's second floor. The free exhibit highlights the courageous stories of freedom seekers and the multi-racial conductors who assisted them on the Underground Railroad in Illinois using photos, videos, maps, personal stories, and illustrations created specifically for the exhibit.

Highlighted stories include freedom seekers John and Eliza Little, who traveled barefoot through Illinois to Canada to gain their freedom, conductors like Henry who worked for Abraham Lincoln, and Mary Ann King Brown who helped the enslaved reach freedom in the Springfield, Quincy, and Galena areas.

Additional free programming has been added to the schedule for further education and information around the topic, beginning at 5:30 p.m. next Thursday, March 20th when Dr. Pat Norman and Dr. Ed Finch will present the video *Race to Freedom* followed by discussion. On Monday, March 24th at 6:00 p.m. Dr. Samuel Wheeler, former Illinois state historian, will present *The Presumption of Freedom: The Illinois Supreme Court and the Fate of Slavery in the Prairie State*, and on Thursday, March 27th at 6:30 p.m. nationally recognized singer-songwriter Chris Vallillo will present *Songs of the Illinois Freedom Road*.

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



Stephenson County Farm Bureau sales

The popular Freezer Meal fundraiser that was discontinued at the Stephenson County Farm Bureau is back! Orders are due by 4:30 p.m. tomorrow, Friday, March 20th and delivery will be Wednesday, April 9th at the Bureau. The fundraiser benefits the Stephenson County Ag in the Classroom program.

You can order sets for either two or five people, and each set has five entrées including BBQ pulled pork, honey mustard chicken, ranch chicken tacos, shepherd's pie, and chicken and biscuits. Two-person meal sets cost \$60 and five-person sets cost \$125. Order forms can be printed from the Bureau's website at www.stephensoncfb.org under the "news" tab or by calling 815-232-3186. For more info, call the same number: 815-232-3186.

The Bureau is also once again offering one-pound bags of pollinator seed. Orders for these popular bags are available only through the end of the day today, Thursday, March 20th. The cost is \$25 per bag for Farm Bureau members and \$30 per bag for non-members. Contact the Stephenson County Farm Bureau at 815-232-3186 to place your order today.

Upper Mississippi Watershed movie to air at Library

Next Tuesday, March 18th, the Northwest IL Bird and Nature Alliance invites the public to the film *Moved by Waters* at the Freeport Public Library at 6:15 p.m. The documentary focuses on diverse groups and individuals working together for the health of the Upper Mississippi Watershed.

The award-winning documentary depicting collaborative projects involving organizations and diverse groups of students, teachers, artists, farmers and volunteers of all ages was created by filmmakers Kelly

and Tammy Rundle of Fourth Wall Films. One of their other films, *Places to Be Wild*, will also be screened.

Summerset Theatre auditions

Summerset Theatre is celebrating its 50th season at Highland Community College with a magical production of *Cinderella* by Rodgers and Hammerstein directed by Randy Haldeman. Auditions for all roles will be held this Saturday, March 15th at the Ferguson Fine Arts Center at Highland and whether you're a seasoned performer or new to the stage, everyone is encouraged to come and showcase their talent.

Much more information as well as registration for auditions can be found at www.hIGHLAND.EDU/summerset/.

Freeport Park District facility and shelter rate update

Beginning 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.

Congratulations, Pecatonica basketball teams

Last Saturday the Pecatonica girls' basketball team, which had been ranked Number 3 in the state, won the Illinois Class 1A state championship, defeating Carrollton 63 to 45, and marking a first in Pecatonica High School history. Their victory came just one day after the Pecatonica boys' team, which was ranked Number 1 in the state, suffered a heartbreaking 36 to 31 overtime loss to Eastland in the sectional finals.

The two teams elevated Pecatonica together. Both the boys and girls' teams have tied or broken the school record for wins four years in a row. Last year the boys team won the school's first sectional title in any sport in 90 years. Congratulations to both teams – we look forward to your next season!

Where was all the snow?

According to the National Weather Service, northwest Illinois has had over 15 inches fewer inches so far this winter than its annual average at this point in the season as recorded in Rockford. Even with less snowfall, the very cold temperatures we've had has led meteorologists to believe this is due to the fact that the storm track for the winter was south of our region and essentially just went around the Freeport area. This could indicate that it is not a harbinger of permanent climate change. Similar patterns have been seen in other areas of Illinois.

Rockford's lowest annual snowfall was just 2.8 inches in the winter of 1906 and 1907.

The week ahead...

As always, there's plenty going on between now and next Thursday. For a couple of reminders, this year's One Book One Freeport community reading project wraps up tonight with a free program at 6:30 p.m. at the Freeport Public Library. Ty Rohrer, the Manager of Cultural Arts at Waukegan Park District, will present *Ray Bradbury: Waukegan's Influence on a Visionary*, which tells the story of the life of the author from the time he was growing up in Waukegan, Illinois to details about his prolific career.

Tomorrow night, we're looking forward to a performance of the award-winning Taiwanese ensemble *A Moving Sound* at The Wagner House. Featuring the Taiwanese fiddle and lute along with vocals, the event begins at 7:00 p.m. with tickets at \$10 for the general public and \$8 for museum members. Tickets can be purchased online at www.freeportartmuseum.com by clicking on "events."

Just in time for St. Patrick's Day, the new Grasshoppers Bar & Grill opens this Saturday, March 15th at 11:00am! Located in the location of the former Pub 219 Stephenson Street Station on East Stephenson Street across from the Senior Resource Center, the new owners invite you to stop in for a beer and a bite and to say hi to familiar faces behind the bar.

Since they sell out fast, act quickly if you'd like a Community Supported Agriculture share from the Freeport High School Student Gardens. For \$250 you get a whole season's worth of garden produce in seven half-bushel boxes of produce. Click here to find out more and reserve your share today: <https://fsg2024csa.cheddarup.com>.

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.

Subscribe to City of Freeport News



Join our list of subscribers and get City of Freeport's monthly e-newsletters and other important and timely updates sent directly to your e-mail using this QR code.

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 chatting with Tricia Mickley, CEO of the Frontier - Mt. Carroll Mutual Insurance Company about the cost of insurance premiums

Next week, tune in as FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors visits with native Freeporter Landon Koester about his job in the Equipment Department of the Green Bay Packers. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, March 18th.

We're also very excited to let our listeners know that the English and Broadcast Journalism classes at Freeport High School taught by educator Jena Kleindl will be narrating and writing all of next week's news podcast. Last year's classes did an episode of FREEPOD in April and we're delighted to welcome them for another episode this year. You may recall that we reported in February that Ms. Kleindl was named Illinois' Outstanding Early Career Educator by the Illinois State Board of Education as part of their annual Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year Awards. It will be great to hear her students' reporting!

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, WNII 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 WNII 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.

And 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, WNII National Public Radio in DeKalb, at www.northernpublicradio.org. Thank you for listening to FREEPOD!

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