



**8 May
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. Now let's see what's happening.

PFAS in City water

Freeport recently sent out a letter stating that PFAS were previously detected in four of Freeport's production water wells during routine testing. PFAS, or P-F-A-S, is an acronym for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances that are a group of man-made chemicals known for their resistance to grease, oil, water, and heat. They are also sometimes referred to as "forever chemicals" and have been linked to various health concerns, including potential links to certain cancers, developmental issues, and hormone disruption.

In approximately 2017, two wells showed the highest levels and were immediately removed from service. Two additional wells contained only trace amounts and stayed in reserve until their capacity could safely be replaced. This was accomplished through several steps, including switching to two new PFAS-free deep-aquifer wells and a new well that was put into service in 2023 that also tests free of PFAS. An additional new well is under construction that will allow the City to permanently close both older shallow wells and the original water treatment plant.

According to Randi Kohlbauer, the City's Environmental & Regulatory Compliance Officer including the Water and Sewer Department, the City's water is safe to drink and all water currently delivered to homes and businesses comes from PFAs-free wells and meets all state and federal safety standards. Testing happens regularly and Freeport has never had a problem with meeting standards and does not foresee any issues in the future. Kohlbauer stated that the City goes further standards, including monitoring wastewater influent, effluent, and biosolids as well as having industrial users test and plan to move towards PFAs-free options.

For more information, visit the City website at www.cityoffreeport.org and click on the public works newsletter for winter 2025 link on the home page.

Other City news

In other City news, Pretzel City Transit has received three new vehicles from a grant that was applied for several years ago. The City has also issued its State of the City report that describes many of Freeport's accomplishments over the past five years, including achievements such as a 166% increase in minority police officers and a 26% increase in female officers since 2020, substantial street repairs and repaving, and a response time of under three minutes for emergency medical and fire calls. Much more can be found at the City website at www.cityoffreeport.org.

Small businesses recognized

The Business Academy for Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs, referred to by the acronym BASE, (BASE) Camp celebrated the efforts of participants and awarded cash prizes for small business presentations at the recent conclusion of the 12-week program.

The Camp, hosted by the Greater Freeport Partnership, recognized 11 small businesses and entrepreneurs. Seven of these participated in a pitch competition that included an executive summary, financial report and elevator pitch for a panel of judges. Three were then selected for the final round of competition, which was then won by Hope WINS, a non-profit designed to help teach and raise children who have been exposed to trauma as they work through hardship, doubt, and fear. Hope WINS Executive Director Linsey McDane stated that the BASE Camp experience provided practical steps needed to launch a successful nonprofit.

Kate Stone Cross and Jaime Elliott representing Winneshiek Playhouse received a second-place award and third-place was awarded to Amera Striegel and Kate Frautschy of the, Full Circle Café & Collective located within the Freeport Public Library.

BASE Camp presents local businesses with information on financing, legal structure, business planning, and marketing. The Camp is made possible in part by a grant from The Foundation for Northwest Illinois and will return in early 2026. Photos of this year's participants appear below.



BASE Camp Pitch Competition (from left): Bill Clow, Partnership business engagement director; Daniel Hershey, Amber Hershey, Kate Frautschy, Amera Striegel, Jaime Elliott, Kate Stone Cross, Hannah McWhirter, Linsey McDanel, and Kristopher Williams.



BASE class (from left): Hannah McWhirter, Kate Frautschy, Amera Striegel, Jaime Elliott, Linsey McDanel, Nancy Jean Jogerst, Kristopher Williams, Daniel Hershey, Amber Hershey, Ernesto Matamoros, Bill Clow, Partnership business engagement director. Not pictured: Kelly Diamond, Janelle Nelson, and Kimberly Knight.

Stephenson County Farmers Market opens

The Stephenson County Farmers Market in downtown Freeport opens for the season this Saturday, May 10th from 8:00 a.m. to noon with fresh produce, flowers, baked goods, holistic health products, plants, honey, preserves, soaps and candles, woodwork, and yard décor as well as much more.

FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Becky Connors caught up with Amera Striegel, the Market's leader, and found out about their plans for this year.

(audio clip)

Thanks Becky and Amera – we look forward to coming to the Market!



Fresh Produce
Bread
Baked Goods
Herbs
Crochet
Holistic Health
House plants
Art
Honey
Candles
Woodwork
Jellies
Pickles
Yard Decor
Soap
Specialty Produce
& more!

Starts Saturday, May 10th!

Every Saturday through Oct 25th *rain or shine*

8 A.M to 12 P.M

Downtown Freeport in Municipal Lot on
Exchange St & Chicago Ave

New this year:
Farmers Market Passport, Produce Preparation &
Recipe Book, Local Artists Tent, & more to come!

The Stephenson County Farmers Market's mission is to cultivate a locally sourced community culture; bringing together farmers, producers, and artists to sell their products directly, while also providing education, entertainment, and inspiration to the market-goers. We are dedicated to the security of our local economy, food sovereignty, and access for all to the best local products.

Annual World Migratory Day

The Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance in partnership with the Freeport Park District, and University of Illinois Extension will host the Fifth Annual World Migratory Bird Day event from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. this Saturday, May 10th at Oakdale Nature Preserve.

The theme for this year's event is "Shared Spaces, Creating Bird-Friendly Cities and Communities" and focuses on the many ways to help birds where we live. More than half of the world's population currently lives in cities and that number is projected to double in the next 25 years. As communities expand, migratory birds face growing challenges such as shrinking native habitats, noise and light pollution, and domestic pets that disturb and prey on a variety of species.

Northern Illinois Raptor Rehab and Education will bring live birds of prey for two hours for a meet and greet and there will be hourly hikes as well as an obstacle course and stations with educational games and crafts, including a scavenger hunt and a demonstration on creating watercolor bird paintings.

This Rain-or-Shine event highlights ways people can protect migratory birds, whether they are nesting, overwintering, or stopping to rest and refuel along their incredible journeys and is free and open to the public.



WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY
Shared Spaces
Creating Bird-friendly Cities and Communities
5th Annual World Migratory Bird Day Event
Saturday, May 10, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm
Oakdale Nature Preserve, 4433 S. Cranes Grove Rd, Freeport, IL
Fun & educational open-house style event for all ages!

Hourly bird outings on the trails Meet & Greet with LIVE BIRDS OF PREY with Northern Illinois Raptor Rehab & Education Arts/Crafts with Jaime Elliott
Free giveaways & prizes Migration Obstacle Course Educational games

Free and open to the public. Rain or shine event.

Co-hosted by the Northwest Illinois Bird & Nature Alliance, Freeport Park District, & the University of Illinois Extension

World Migratory Bird Day is a global event coordinated by the International Council for the Americas.

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS BIRD AND NATURE ALLIANCE
A Division of the National Audubon Society

FREEPORT PARK DISTRICT

Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

STATE OF ILLINOIS RAPTOR REHAB & EDUCATION

Musical comedy at Freeport High School

The Freeport High School theatre team presents *The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940* this weekend at the Jeanette Lloyd Theatre at the Freeport Middle School. The play follows the comedic adventures of a New York theatre company following a Broadway flop in which three chorus girls were murdered. As the company tries to produce another play, mayhem ensues when the actors and director prepare for a performance that is interrupted by a masked figure, more murders, a suspicious German maid, sliding panels, and a bumbling police inspector on snowshoes.

Tim Connors directs this farce, his seventieth show at Freeport High School. Performances begin tonight and continue tomorrow and Saturday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased on the School District's website at www.fsd145.org or at the door.



League of Women Voters presentation

At 6:00 p.m. next Tuesday, May 13th, the League of Women Voters of Freeport will host a presentation by Dr. Anna Alvarado, Superintendent of Schools for the Freeport School District 145, at the Freeport Public Library. The presentation is entitled "The Pre-School Expansion Project" and will be followed by conversation and desserts from Vicki's Baked Goods. The event is free and open to the public.

Winefest 2025

Winefest 2025 is also this Saturday, May 10th from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in downtown Freeport. This wine-tasting event features wines from Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa wines at locations in more than a dozen downtown boutiques and shops.



Check-in is at Re-Spun Records at 119 East Stephenson Street and the event's \$35 admission includes a souvenir wine glass and gift. Sounds like it could be a fun way to celebrate Mother's Day!

The week ahead...

As we look at the week ahead, we're reminding folks that Stephenson County Board Members Lynnette Williams and Adam Moderow host a conversation the second Friday of every month at 2:00 p.m. at the

Lincoln Mall in Freeport. For May, that Friday is tomorrow May 9th. The public is invited and Williams and Moderow will address questions on any topics from Stephenson County residents.

Don't forget that the City's Community Clean-Up Day for the Taylor Park area is tomorrow, Friday May 9th. Bring your boots and bug spray and meet at the intersection of North Wilbur Avenue and East Orin Street to get things looking great for the summer from 8:00 a.m. to noon.

Also and just in time for Mother's Day, the annual Plant and Garden sale at Friends Forever Humane Society is this Saturday, May 10th from 9:00 a.m. to noon. And speaking of our furry friends, there'll be dogs wanting stories to be read to them at the Freeport Public Library in the Paws for Reading program also on Saturday at 11:00 .m.

And since we're all pretty busy this time of year, remember Cub Food Brat Stand is ready with brats, burgers, hot dogs, and ribeye sandwiches you can grab on the go. The group working the Cub Food Brat Stand tomorrow and Saturday is the Ambassadors for the Greater Freeport Partnership and you can get your taste treats from them from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. both days.

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 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 below.

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 visited with three winning Pretzel students – Paityn London, Mya Ortiz, and Tristan Peterson – about their successes both in the classroom and their extracurricular activities. The interview is available online and can be listened to anytime.

In next week's in-depth interview FREEPOD host Alan Wenzel will talk with Freeport Mayor Jodi Miller, City Manager Rob Boyer, and Chief of Police Chris Shenberger about their recent State of the City report that outlines progress on the City's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan for 2020 through 2024. This interview will post at noon on Tuesday, May 13th 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. 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 for more about what's happening in Freeport, thank you for listening, and Happy Mother's Day weekend!

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.



What's Going on in Stephenson County?

Subscribe to our weekly event guide!



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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