



**1 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. Thanks for your support! Now let's see what's going on.

Freeport breaks record for world's largest human pretzel image

A new record was set at the kickoff of Pretzel Fest last Saturday as more than 600 people gathered to create a "human pretzel." The previous Guinness Record Book record was established in 2019 with 424 people, which was then was broken in France in 2024 with a total of 529 people and now in Freeport with 603 people who gathered at the FAM Arts Plaza in downtown Freeport on Saturday morning. While it was cost prohibitive for Guinness World Records to be present for the occasion, Freeport's new record will be submitted to Guinness World Records for official certification.

The record secured a place in history for Freeport and the festival itself was a hit, including vendors and activities celebrating the food that gives Freeport its iconic nickname, as well as the inaugural celebratory Polka Fest to further honor Freeport's large initial Germanic heritage. As the birthplace of the Pretzel City mascot and nickname, FREEPOD is proud to report on the many wonderful things about our great City and region!

Highland Community College news

At the April 1st meeting of the Highland Community College board, outgoing Board Chair Jim Endress and Shaun Boldt were sworn in for their new member terms and incoming Student Trustee Rachel Salazar was also sworn in.

Endress then stepped down as Board chair and Doug Block, who has served previous as Board chair, was unanimously voted in as his successor. Shaun Boldt was unanimously elected as vice chair. Terri Grimes

was nominated and confirmed to continue as Board secretary, a role she has held for at least a quarter century.

Agriculture Instructor Justin Ebert and several Highland Community College agriculture students then reported on their recent attendance at two conventions of the Professional Agricultural Students Association. At the state convention in Normal, Illinois several Highland students won first, second and third place awards, and at the national convention in Bozeman, MT and Sheridan, WY, the Highland contingent again scored high in both individual and team events. Congratulations to Highland for this clear representation of the strength of their agricultural program.

Dan Dick also provided a report on Highland Community College Foundation activities. There were more than 1,100 applications for scholarships for this fall, which is a good indicator that enrollment will probably remain steady. Also, more than \$40,000 was raised in early April on the “Day of Giving”, which was down just a bit from last year.

U.S. 20 road work

Travelers on US 20 west of Freeport finally will see long-awaited road projects to improve that road all the way from just west of Freeport to past Stockton.

Done in phases, work will focus this year on the intersection of US 20 and Illinois Route 73 south of Lena. The intersection will be completely rebuilt to install turn lanes and a traffic light. Road closures and detours will wait until next year, but plenty of preparatory work will be happening yet in 2025. Other phases of the project will begin next year and in 2027.

Also this summer, pavement on US 20 will be ground and replaced near the former Skate Station back to Flansburg Road.

Community Clean-Up Day

Freeport’s annual Community Clean-Up Day is back! This year, the plan is to clean up Taylor Park and the area around it, and the City looks forward to welcoming families, individuals, and service group to this volunteer event. Next Friday, May 9th, volunteers should meet at the intersection of North Wilbur Avenue and East Orin Street and plan to participate in the clean-up from 8:00 .m. to noon.



Clean up materials such as garbage bags and gloves will be provided and volunteers are encouraged to bring bug spray, boots, and wipes. To sign up, please call Randi Kohlbauer at 815-396-3548. Sign-Up is not required but is appreciated. That sign-up number again is 815-396-3548.

REAL ID deadline is May 7

There's been a lot in the news about REAL ID identification in Illinois but the info can be confusing about how necessary it really is for some people, so here's the scoop.

The Illinois REAL ID is a driver's license or ID card that is also a federally accepted form of identification. REAL ID cards have a star in the upper-right hand corner-right corner, as shown in the visual below.



As far as who needs a REAL ID, beginning next Wednesday, May 7th, the federal government will require every person 18 years and older to present a REAL ID-compliant state-issued driver's license or ID card to board a flight within the U.S. or visit a military base or other secure federal buildings where ID is required for entry. For these purposes, you can also use another acceptable form of identification like a valid U.S. passport. You do NOT need a REAL ID to drive, vote, identify yourself for general identification purposes, enter a state building or federal building that does not require any ID to enter, or receive state or federal services

The cost of a REAL ID driver's license or ID card is the same as a traditional license or ID card and you can get either a REAL ID driver's license or an ID card, but not both. REAL IDs can be obtained at a Department of Motor Vehicles facility, also often referred to as a drivers' license location, or the new REAL ID Supercenter for the State of Illinois in downtown Chicago. A list of the documents you'll need to bring with you and more information is available online at <https://realid.ilsos.gov/>

Regional Juried Exhibition at Freeport Art Museum

The Freeport Art Museum's annual Regional Juried Exhibition, which offers both established and emerging artist the opportunity to debut their work created in the last two years, opens next Saturday, May 10th and runs through July 19th.

Each year, the Museum invites a new juror to select approximately 50 artworks for inclusion, and to choose awards for first, second, third place, and honorable mention. This year's juror is Rodrick Whetstone, an Assistant Professor of Graphic Design teaching in the Department of Art and Design at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Award winners are announced at the opening reception. This exhibit, which is a visitor's favorite, is open to artists living in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

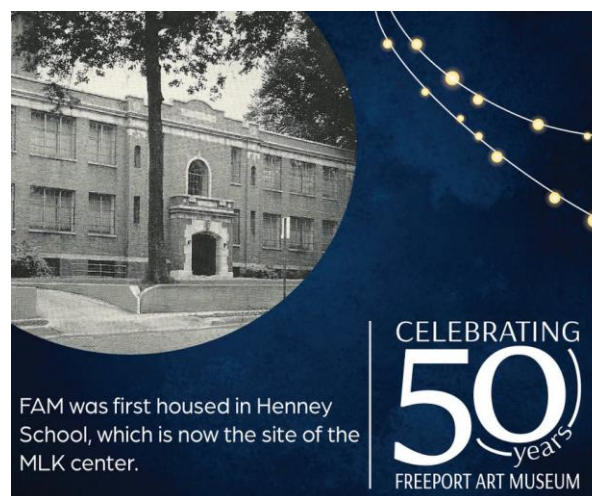
The museum is open 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, noon to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, and is closed Sunday and Monday.



Freeport Art Museum 50th Anniversary social media celebration

In other news from the Freeport Art Museum, they are celebrating their 50th anniversary with a special series of social media posts called Freeport Art Museum Fridays!

Each Friday, the Museum will share a piece of the museum's rich history from its early days in the Henny School to the evolution of our permanent collection and the creation of community spaces like the Arts Plaza in downtown Freeport. Each story will help to honor the people, places, and moments that have shaped the Freeport Art Museum over the past five decades while celebrating the museum's role as a cultural cornerstone in the Freeport community. Follow the Museum on social media to enjoy this walk down memory lane as they also look forward to the next 50 years of creativity and connection.





Chainlink Cyclist rides begin again


Beginning this week, the Chainlink Cycle group is once again opening their rides to the biking public, including their Thursday night Cyclepath bike rides and Saturday morning Bike Shop Rides.

For the Thursday Night Cyclepath Ride, plan to meet at the Krape Park Marina just before 5:30 PM every Thursday evening. Riders cycle at about 10 to 12 miles per hour, which is conversation pace ride, on a 10-mile round trip, usually to Florence Station. For some variety, the group hosts ice cream rides, beer rides, pumpkin rides or even mosquito rides throughout the season.

The group then meets at 8:00 a.m. every Saturday morning at PHK Bicycles in downtown Freeport on Adams Street for the Bike Shop Ride. This ride is usually a 24-mile trek to Dakota and back at a pace of about 12 to 16 miles per hour and includes a few challenging hills. The official ride is on paved roads, but intrepid bikers can choose an alternate gravel route for the last few miles. There is also a shortcut for those only having time for a 16-mile route. All cyclists are welcome to join both free rides.

Car Show at Union Dairy this Saturday



Freeport, IL Lions
 **11TH Annual** 
Cruisin' For A Cause Car Show



Saturday, May 3, 2025
1pm to 5pm
Union Dairy
126 E. Douglas St., Freeport, IL

Announcements proudly brought to you by 3D Sound

\$10 vehicle registration fee	Hourly drawings
Registration closes at 3pm	Door Prizes
7 CATEGORIES PLUS TOP 10	50/50 drawing

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The Freeport Lions Club will host their 11th annual Cruisin' for a Cause Car Show from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. sponsored by and held at Union Dairy in Freeport. There's a \$10 fee for vehicles and awards will be presented in seven categories as well as recognition for the Top 10 cars. Registration closes at 3:00 p.m. Be sure to enjoy a tasty treat at Union Dairy as you enjoy all the great cars that will be on display!

The week ahead...

Next Wednesday will be the first Wednesday of the month and as always, that's the Wednesday movie-lovers look forward for the next offering in the Select Pix Classic Film Series at the Lindo Theatre. Hosted by Ed Finch and Alan Wenzel, this month's film is *Dial M for Murder*, an Alfred Hitchcock classic starring Grace Kelly, Ray Milland, and Robert Cummings. The film will be shown in remastered 3D so attendees will be donning those cool 3D glasses for the presentation. Show times on Wednesday are 1:00 and 7:00 p.m. and both will be followed by a discussion about the movie with Ed Finch and Alan Wenzel, who have hosted this popular film series for 15 years now at the Lindo.

This week's group working the Cub Food Brat Stand tomorrow and Saturday is VOICES of Stephenson County. You can help them in their efforts in supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence with a stop between 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. both days to enjoy delicious brats, burgers, hot dogs and rib eye sandwiches. We're also looking forward to Pretzel City Wine Fest coming up next Saturday, May 10th. We'll have more to share about that next week, and next Saturday is also opening day for the Stephenson County Farmers Market in downtown Freeport. We'll have more on their plans for the season ahead soon too.

Here are also reminders to get your tickets for two fundraisers coming up late next week. The annual YMCA annual fundraiser is next Thursday, May 8th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Big O's On The Hollow where for just \$15 you can enjoy delicious cupcakes paired with a variety of cocktails and support the YMCA's Annual Strong Kids Campaign. Tickets can be purchased at the YMCA or online at <https://freeportymca.org>. While you're online, also don't forget to grab your tickets for the HCC Foundation Celebration fundraiser next Saturday, May 10th. This year's celebration highlights the fine arts in honor of Summerset's 50th anniversary and you can get tickets at www.highland.edu.

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 use their QR code 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 host Alan Wenzel visited with Andrea Schultz-Winter and Nicole Haas of the Greater Freeport Partnership about business development and other community events in Freeport. The interview is available online and can be listened to anytime.

Next week, our in-depth interview features FREEPOD and TimBeck2 host Time Connors chatting with three winning Pretzel students – Paityn London, Mya Ortiz, and Tristan Peterson – about their successes both in the classroom and their extracurricular activities. Their conversation will post at noon on Tuesday, May 6th and be available for you to listen to then or at any time after that – just head to our website or your favorite podcast platform and search on FREEPOD to select the programs of your choice.

With that, time's up for this week. 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.

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, WNIJ 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!