

THE GAZETTE-DEMOCRAT

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Thursday, August 13, 2026

Anna, Illinois

\$1.00

Volume 179, Number 33



Plaque presented
Anna Police Department Sgt. Caleb Clover was presented with a “Life Saving Award” plaque at the Tuesday evening, Aug. 4, regular meeting of the Anna Police Department.

‘Life Saving Award’ is presented to Anna Police Department’s Sgt. Clover

The life-saving actions of an Anna Police Department officer have been recognized at the local and national level.

Sgt. Caleb Clover has been honored by the Anna City Council. Clover also has been recognized by U.S. Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill.

Clover’s actions at the scene of a July 3 traffic accident in Union County are credited with saving the lives of two persons.

Bost’s recognition of Clover became part of the

Congressional Record. The Congressional Record is the official record of the proceedings and debates of the United States Congress. It is published daily when Congress is in session in Washington, D.C.

On July 27, the Southern Illinois Congressman recognized Clover “for his act of selfless heroism in the line of duty.” Bost’s statement, as posted in the Congressional Record, continued:

“On July 3, 2026, Sergeant

Clover was on his way to work at Anna Police Department when he came upon a head-on collision. As Sergeant Clover approached the wreck, he realized that one of the vehicles was rolled onto its driver’s side and was one fire with two passengers, a mother and daughter, still inside.

“Without a second thought, Sergeant Clover jumped into action, climbing onto the burning car to open the passenger door. The door, however, was stuck due to

the accident. With flames climbing the vehicle Sergeant Clover went for the sunroof, shattering it. He proceeded to climb into the vehicle to cut the seat belts of both passengers. After he removed the first passenger, he realized that the driver was stuck. With the help of a Good Samaritan, they were able to pull the driver from the vehicle as the fire consumed it.

“Thankfully, because
(see Award on page 8)

News Notes

Items of interest from throughout the Union County area, from social media and beyond...

Good luck to all Union County students, their families, school teachers, support staff and administrators as a new academic year begins.

Reminder: an American Red Cross blood drive is scheduled Thursday, Aug. 13, from 12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at Veterans of Foreign Wars Carroll P. Foster Post No. 3455 near Anna. The need for blood and platelet donors is urgent.

The City of Anna has approved an intergovernmental agreement with Union County for the providing of communication and dispatch services.

Resolutions for an intergovernmental agreement with the Southern Illinois Enforcement Group and a Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement also have been approved by the City of Anna.

Another round of hot and humid summer weather was in the forecast for early this week in the Union County area. Heat index readings in the range of 100 to 105 degrees were possible early this week.

An Aug. 6 update from the U.S. Drought Monitor showed that all of Union, Johnson, Alexander, Pulaski and Massac counties, as well as most of Jackson and Williamson counties, were experiencing no drought conditions. Conditions remained abnormally dry in a small part of northeastern
(see Notes on page 8)



Employees, local lawmakers rally in support of Choate

By Jackson Brandhorst and Saluki Local Reporting Lab

Union leaders, lawmakers and political candidates gathered alongside dozens of employees from the Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center on Tuesday, Aug. 4, to rally against the state’s plan to make dramatic cuts to staff and services at the downstate mental health facility.

One after another, they took the microphone on the back of a bright green pickup truck as signs and chants of “Save Choate” echoed through the streets of downtown Anna.

The Illinois Department of Human Services, IDHS, announced the changes in a July 23 letter to Choate staff. The three-year plan includes eliminating the state-run facility’s entire general residential program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, reducing the number of civil mental health beds, and laying off about 250 employees by March 2027.

“Shame on IDHS,” Ona “Tina” Rivero Winfield, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 141 told the crowd. “They sent us the memo – but where are they now?”

AFSCME, the union that represents the majority of Choate staff, organized the rally to condemn the decision



Protest in Anna
Dozens of Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center employees, union leaders and politicians were on the streets of Anna on Tuesday, Aug. 4, to protest the Illinois Department of Human Services’ plan to lay off 250 workers and significantly downsize the state-run mental health hospital. Photo by Jackson Brandhorst/Saluki Local Reporting Lab.

by IDHS, asking that it be reversed.

Choate currently serves 58 people across its general and forensic developmental disabilities programs and 75 mental health patients. The state-run mental health hospital employs roughly 524 people across its Anna campus and is one of the region’s largest employers.

“When We Fight, We Win” Winfield said this is just the beginning of many rallies, vowing that AFSCME will continue to host them until the decision is reversed.

Accompanying Winfield was Jason Woolard, president of the Southern Illinois Central Labor Council, who warned that the ramifications of this decision would reach far beyond the facility.

“We cannot allow for this to happen at this facility,” Woolard said. “The residual impacts are going to be dramatic.”

Many who gathered worried about what would become of their jobs.

Koda Leslie, a mental health technician who has worked at Choate for about a year and a half, said he expects to be among those

laid off because of his lack of seniority.

“I felt distraught,” Leslie said of hearing the news. “I’m not sure what I’m going to do. People like me that don’t have a lot of seniority, we’re pretty much not gonna have a job. I expect to get laid off for sure.”

Leslie said he hopes the weekly demonstrations

(see Choate on page 8)



Cobden Peach Festival opens for another year

The 2026 Cobden Peach Festival opened Friday evening, Aug. 7. The Peach Festival was held Friday and Saturday, Aug. 7-8. The community celebration, in its 89th year, once again was sponsored by the Cobden Lions Club. Most of the Peach Festival activities took place on the Cobden Lions Club grounds. Festival highlights included a queen pageant, a parade (which was held in the downtown Cobden area), live music, a 5K run/walk and 1-mile fun run, the popular Spin & Win game (with winners taking some peaches from Flamm Orchards), a carnival, a raffle, bingo, food, drinks — and lots of peaches and cream.



Group gathers at Davie Street Pavilion
Participants in the Delta Regional Authority’s 2026 Delta Leadership Institute had an opportunity to visit the Davie Street Pavilion during their recent visit to Anna. A “City of Anna” mural is one of the attractions at the pavilion.

COUNTY LINE NEWS BY SUZAN HARVEL

It’s been a busy week in the Mill Creek area. Brief rain didn’t hamper Mill Creek Baptist Church, which hosted its Vacation Bible School from Aug. 3 to 7. They had a total of 19 children register, five as first-time attendees, and 32 adults who helped over the course of that week, including one who had never attended a VBS, let alone worked one, and she jumped in with both feet and a willing heart. The Snowball Mountain Challenge theme was a winner and the children loved the Ollie the Arctic Seal puppet as a mascot. Plans are already in the works for next year’s event ... hint, hint ... it has another puppet mascot! Also, monies were

raised during the “Penny March” to be donated to the Baptist Children’s Home in Carmi. Mill Creek was also blessed to have Jenson Rider make an appearance into this world this week. Congratulations to Braden and Kristen Rutherford Rider; grandparents Dawn and Gary Rider; aunt Breen Rider; and uncle James Sullivan. We can’t wait to see him in person.

Shirley Harvel had double blessings this week with the birth of another great-grandson, Lemuel Harvel. Congratulations are wished to Bethany and Sam Harvel, and all his siblings, as well as all his other relatives. Shirley was also gifted with

a visit from granddaughter Rachel Henry and great-grandchildren Liam and Stella, from Waterloo. Shirley and son, Richard Harvel, attended the Cobden Peach Festival on Saturday, and each won a basket of peaches. She came home exhausted, but pleased with winnings!

P.A.S.T. of Union County hosted its first August Sunday Talks series with Bart Hileman leading a group in a discussion of all the various railroad lines that came to change Union County over the years. Discussion was also held about different towns in Union County with depots or repair yards, various cargo, the steep Alto Pass

pass, as well as derailments, passenger trains and so much more. On Sunday, Aug. 16, Jane Mowery Patterson will come to discuss the wagon trails. Please join others at 2 p.m. each Sunday at the Heritage House Museum, 102 S. Main St. in Jonesboro, just off the square. Admission is free.

Those in need of prayer this week are Lula Belle Tripp, who had knee replacement surgery and had a bit of complications. She is still in ICU as of this writing, so please keep her and her family in your prayers. Also, Claude Sadler will be having surgery this week, so please keep him in your prayers as well.

JONESBORO FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NEWS

On Aug. 2, Pastor Perry Williams spoke in our morning service. His message addressed the urgency of deciding for God now while you have time. You don’t know when you will stand before God. He used the story of Israel (which stood for Jacob’s descendants) and Edom (Esau’s descendants) to show it is just as wrong to do nothing when someone is attacked as the attacker. All throughout the Bible, the message is “Repent, the

kingdom of God is at hand.” His text was found in the third chapter of Matthew, in the New Testament, and also, in the Old Testament book of Obadiah in the Bible.

Connor Benbrook led in worship, accompanied by Debbie York on the piano, and the Praise Team: Sharon Morgan, Rodger Goines, David Pedigo, Denna Williams and Debbie York. Connor Benbrook sang a special medley, “How Great Is Our God” and “How Great

Thou Art.”

Our service was sent via transmitter station 87.9 FM for those who want to listen via the radio. The service was also live streamed on Facebook, so if you missed it, you still have an opportunity to view it. Please check our Facebook page, Jonesboro FBC, for the latest videos and info on church events.

Our Children’s program, “Dig-In,” will resume on Aug. 26 from 6 to 8 p.m. Children ages third through sixth grade

are invited to attend.

Currently, our regular schedule for worship at Jonesboro First Baptist includes Sunday School classes on Sundays at 9 a.m.; Sunday morning worship at 10 a.m.; Sunday evening worship at 6 p.m. Youth for 6th-12th grades meet also on Sundays at 6 p.m. and Wednesdays from 6 to 8 p.m. Our Adult Prayer Meeting and Bible Study also meets on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. All are invited to attend.

ANNA CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE NEWS

Anna Church of the Nazarene news
The morning worship service was held at 10:35 a.m. Aug. 2, 2026. Announcements were

given by Jessica Elkins. The worship service was led by Pastor Wright and the worship team.

The message, “Compassionate Outreach

- Loving People the Way Jesus Loves” from Mark 16:15, was brought by Pastor Wright sharing that prayer changes our hearts. Compassion moves our

feet. “The Church does not exist merely to gather believers — it exists to join God in His mission of seeking and saving the lost.”

CAMP GROUND CHURCH NEWS

Bro. Easton’s sermon Aug. 2 was “Peace Through Submission” based upon 1 Peter 5:5-7.

Submission can be scary, but God is always with us. Three areas of submission were discussed in the selected scripture.

We are to respect and be submissive to our elders. Respect cannot be commanded but has to be earned by how elders have lived their lives.

We are to submit to others. We should have the mind-set of Christ in our relationship with others. We never get to the point that we are not to submit to someone as well as the laws of society.

Most importantly, we are to submit to God that He may lift us up. Why does it matter? In God’s time, all the arrogant will be humbled. God is patient, but His patience can be exhausted by those who ignore a relationship with Him. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Bro. Easton’s sermon Aug. 9 was “Discovering God’s Will for Your Life” with scripture selection Romans 12:1-2.

As Christians, we must seek God’s will for our lives.

Conversely, there are those who don’t want to seek God’s will because they know their will is contrary to His.

In the scripture selection, writes to the church at Rome, and applies to us today, that God wants us to be faithful and to walk in step with Him. We are not to conform to the way of the world, but grow as a child of God.

God gives us the choice to do good and right in His eyes or allow Satan to use us. God won’t force His will on us; the decision to follow or not is ours.

Vodra and Aldi Gerard took up the tithes and offerings. Our lead elder for August is Tony Gerard.

Birthday greetings this week go to Kim Emery the 2nd and Addi Bonner the 12th.

Congratulations to Justin

and Rachael Bonner whose wedding anniversary was Friday, the 7th, and to Tony and Berna Gerard Sunday, the 9th.

As a member of the Union County Alliance of Churches, our congregation encourages you to mark your calendar and plan to attend the annual Alliance sponsored Worship Service Aug. 23, the first Sunday of the Union County Fair. The service will be held in front of the grandstand beginning at 6:30 p.m.

We invite you to join us each and every Sunday as we gather to study and worship. At 9:15, we enjoy coffee and fellowship preceding Bible Study at 9:30 followed by worship at 10:30. We are located at the intersection of Camp Ground Road and Tunnel Lane east of Anna, north of Route 146.

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THE CAT'S MEOW

By Cobden Spay Neuter Coalition

Mid-year report: We fixed 178 cats January through June! Ninety of them were feral, the rest subsidized spays and neuters. Amazing work by our small but dedicated “cat team.” We’ll keep on as long as we have the support of our communities. We are endlessly grateful to our veterinary partners, Meller-James & Associates and Ulrich Veterinary Clinic, for their compassion, cooperation and willingness to work with us on the unpredictable.

We continue to receive a countless number of calls and contacts reporting new litters of helpless and innocent kittens whose odds are not good because they are outside facing the elements, predators, cruelty and indifference. We cannot manage it all. Please do your part by fixing cats in your care and your neighborhood. Gather up outdoor mamas and their kittens and bring them in to safety so you can help

ready them for a rescue facility. Please help us help them, and stop the cycle.

Please visit our website, cobdenspayneutercoalition.org, or our facebook page to see what we’re up to. You may drop off, call in or send donations to our account at Meller-James & Associates, send your gift online through givebutter.com, or mail them to CSNC, P.O. Box 542, Cobden, IL 62920. If more convenient, you may also drop off donations for us at Kiki’s in downtown Anna. CSNC is a 501c3 nonprofit organization, and donations are tax-deductible.

Spay/Neuter/Adopt companion animals. Meanwhile, if you see a companion animal in need, in trouble, or suffering, please, please call someone before it’s too late for them. Call your local animal control office, the police, or the Sheriff’s Dept. It IS your business if an innocent being who cannot speak for himself needs your help!



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OBITUARIES



Harold Stephen (Steve) Smith

Harold Stephen (Steve) Smith was born March 7, 1945, in Anna. He was the son of Harold and Helen Smith. He died on July 25, 2026, as a result of cancer.

His childhood was spent in Anna, where his life centered around family, church, school and sports. While growing up, he developed lifelong friendships. He was an outstanding athlete at AJCHS graduating in 1963. He graduated from Southeast Missouri State University in 1967 with a degree in business administration. Later that year, he started work for

Standard Oil of Indiana which ultimately became Amoco Oil. Steve spent his entire career there — working in marketing, sales and ultimately real estate acquisition.

Steve was active at Desert Skies United Methodist Church in Tucson, Ariz. He was an avid golfer and a great fan of Mizzou football as well as St. Louis Cardinals baseball.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his sister and brother-in-law, Ruth and Charles Pisoni. Steve is survived by his wife, Pam Smith of Vail, Ariz. He is also survived by sisters Jean (Joe) Wilkins of Pleasant Plains, Ill., and Susan (Ralph) Schild of Vail, Ariz. Additional survivors include nieces, nephews, cousins and a host of friends.

A memorial service will be held on Sept. 5, 2026, at 10 a.m. at Desert Skies United Methodist Church in Tucson, Ariz.

In memory of Steve, please consider a gift to the Anna United Methodist Church (111 W. Monroe St.) or to the charity of your choice.

Announcement courtesy of Crain Funeral Home in Anna-Jonesboro.

Grants support local food systems

The Illinois Department of Agriculture, IDOA, recently announced award recipients for the Local Food Infrastructure Grant Program. The department announced the distribution of nearly \$4 million in fiscal year 2026 funding to support the continued expansion of Illinois’ local food system. Some of the grant recipients are in Union County.

The Local Food Infrastructure Grant Program, LFIG, was created to strengthen the capacity of Illinois producers and food businesses to store, process, package, aggregate and distribute locally grown products. Funding supports essential investments that help move Illinois-grown food from farm to consumer while building long term resilience within the state’s food supply chain.

The state’s Fiscal Year 2026 budget allocated funds for both collaborative and individual projects. Selected grant recipients represent a diverse group of farms, cooperatives, nonprofits, food hubs, local governments and food businesses, with awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$250,000 for collaborative projects and \$1,000 to \$75,000 for individual applicants.

LFIG funds of \$2 million were appropriated in the FY2027 budget passed recently by the Illinois General Assembly. The

grant dollars currently being distributed reflect two years’ worth of funding, combining appropriations of \$2 million each from Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026.

IDOA shared in a news release that funding recipients in Union County included Alto Vineyards, \$75,000; Flamm Orchards Inc., \$44,355.59; Lucy Jill Rendleman dba as All Seasons Farm, \$64,757.25; Rendleman Orchards Inc., \$60,286.02.

“Illinois continues to make critical investments that support the local farmers and food businesses that feed our state,” Gov. JB Pritzker said in the news release. “Illinoisans deserve fresh, nourishing food that was grown close to home, and these grants will help producers statewide expand access to locally grown products in their own communities.”

“The Local Food Infrastructure Grant Program reflects our commitment to supporting Illinois agriculture,” said Illinois Department of Agriculture Director Jerry Costello II. “These awards will help farmers, food businesses and community partners expand their capacity and reach new markets. When we invest in local food infrastructure, we are creating economic opportunity for businesses while ensuring Illinois residents have greater access to fresh, locally grown foods.”

Lingle awarded scholarship

The SIU Alumni Association is awarding \$66,443 to 53 new and continuing students at SIU Carbondale for the 2026-2027 academic year. The association says the support is a testament to the generosity and pride of Saluki alumni across the world.

Funded by SIU Carbondale alumni groups and donors, the scholarships include financial support from 18 regional and legacy scholarships and 26 textbook awards, which help offset the rental fee for

course materials from the SIU Bookstore.

One of the scholarship recipients is Amelia Lingle of Jonesboro. Lingle received a \$750 scholarship from the association’s Union County chapter.

Over the last couple of years, the association has experienced several significant advancements in its scholarship fundraising efforts.

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Members of the 2027 Union County CEO class are, in the first row, from left, Natalie Storm, Kinley Leek, Natilyn Corbit, Ella Helton, Mackenzie Barnhart and Leslie Rafael. In the second row are Holly Yana, Alivia Kilpatrick, Sereniti Mefford, Shelby Pender and Addilyn Clark. In the third row are Grayson Garner, Tilman Dallas, Hunter Craft and Maxwel Ruddick. Union County CEO photo.

Union County CEO welcomes 15 students in Class of 2027

Students in the 2027 Union County CEO (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) class have officially begun their journey.

Union County CEO held its Class of 2027 student orientation in July at The Space on Main, a new addition to the Anna community. The Space on Main is located on South Main Street in downtown Anna and is owned by Bryan and Mary Kay Miller.

Union County CEO board members and program facilitator Melanie Smith welcomed 15 young professionals and their parents at the student orientation.

Recruitment for the Class of 2027 began in February. Twenty-four seniors from Union County’s high schools submitted applications. All personal and school information was then redacted before the applications were reviewed by a selection committee of board members. The blind review process is designed to ensure participants are chosen fairly and based solely on merit.

“Fifteen students were selected, and the UCCEO family is thrilled to welcome them aboard,” Smith shared.

Students in the 2027 class include, by school:

From Anna-Jonesboro Community High School: Ella Helton, Grayson Garner, Holly Yana, Hunter Craft, Kinley Leek, Mackenzie Barnhart, Maxwel Ruddick, Natilyn Corbit, Tilman Dallas.

From Cobden High School: Alivia Kilpatrick, Leslie Rafael, Natalie Storm.

From Shawnee High School, Wolf Lake: Addilyn Clark, Sereniti Mefford, Shelby Pender.

Orientation included a presentation for students and parents which outlined the opportunities, expectations, and policies of the CEO

program. Parents participated in a Q&A session with board members while students had a chance to connect informally with Union County CEO alumni. This is the second year that CEO qualifies as a dual credit class through Shawnee Community College.

Several alumni returned to encourage the Class of 2027 and share their experiences, including Drake Campbell (’23), Kaylee Hall (’23) and from the Class of 2026, Grant Miller, Zoe Chen, Foster Needling, Alyssa Fabian, Jaylen Althoff, Adam Clark and Aleah Box.

“UCCEO is grateful for the involvement of so many of its alumni,” Smith stated.

Union County CEO is a program of the Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship that gives high school students real-world experience in entrepreneurship through daily meetings hosted at local businesses. Throughout the school year, students will work directly with area business owners, mentors and investors to develop their own ventures and gain hands-on business skills.

“UCCEO extends its gratitude to our investors, community and business leaders, board members, mentors and volunteers who make this program possible

and looks forward to a year of growth, learning and entrepreneurship for the Class of 2027,” Smith said.

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Submit events to The Vienna Times office in writing, by mail, email or by dropping off at The Vienna Times office. Deadline for submission is **Monday at 3 P.M.** for Thursday paper.

A maximum of two weeks per event will be permitted. Be certain to include the location and time of the event. No rummage, garage or yard sales. **ALL activities must be open to the general public.** If not, you are welcome to place an advertisement.

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Hebrews 13
Service Well-pleasing to God

13.1 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. 2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. 3 Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. 4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." [1] 6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" [2] 7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. 9 Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so. 10 We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. 11 The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. 12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. 13 Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. 14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. 15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. 16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. 17 Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

18 Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. 19 I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.

Benediction and Final Greetings

20 Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 22 Brothers and sisters, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you quite briefly. 23 I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you. 24 Greet all your leaders and all the Lord's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings. 25 Grace be with you all.

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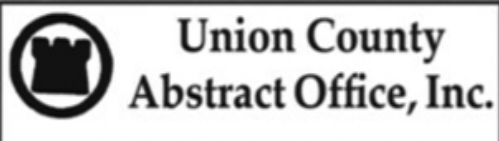
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NEWS FROM VIENNA, ILLINOIS

NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE *By Dixie Terry*

Whether we enjoy hot and humid weather, it's here for several more weeks. This period of sweltering weather coincides with the year's rising of Sirius, the Dog Star, a part of the constellation Canis Majoris, the Greater Dog. Except for the sun, Sirius is the brightest star in the sky. And now, you know!

And, with Aug. 9 being Book Lover's Day, I can celebrate that, easy enough, since my daughters keep me supplied with a stack from Marion Carnegie Library. I am now into "The Four Feathers," written in 1903 by A.E.W. Mason, and taking place in the 1800s. A good read!

For Marshall Tucker Band fans, his music will be performed on Aug. 29 at the Carson Center for Performing Arts in Paducah.

The Johnson County Home and Community Education (HCE) Board of the University of Illinois Extension met for their monthly business meeting on Aug. 6 at 9 a.m. at the Extension Office in Vienna. Board members are Natalie Dougherty, Linda Kuykendall, Kim Collins, Rosemary Rouse, Betty Yandell, Arlene Dueker, Bonnie Hogue, Dixie Terry, Phyllis Webb, Lisa King and Faye Mize.

The HCE board welcomes the public to enjoy a coach trip on Nov. 9 to 12 to the Christmas-decorated Biltmore Mansion in Asheville, N.C.

Contact Faye Mize at 618-771-0066 or famize@hotmail.com for information or reservations for this fun-filled excursion.

Did you know? One in six American school kids think of the weekend not as a time to have fun, but as two days of hunger. For some food-insecure children, school meals are their only access to affordable nutrition. "Blessings in a Backpack" a Kentucky-based group, has helped to feed students in more than a thousand schools across our country.

This includes all the schools in Johnson County, in a program begun several years ago, when two mothers of the Community of Christ Church organized it in the Goreville Grade School. The program has now been extended across the county to provide nutritional food and snacks for the weekend, that are discreetly slipped into the backpacks of needy children on the last day of each school week. Donations can be mailed to the coordinator, Barb Watkins, at 1680 Dutchman Lake Road, Tunnel Hill, IL 62972.

Looking Back: On Oct. 6, 1768, the swollen Susquenanna and Delaware rivers, in Pennsylvania, were filled with pumpkins that had been washed away from nearby fields. It was thereafter known as "The Pumpkin Flood."

The Southern Trust Bank of Goreville recently celebrated the 21 years of employee Paula Reineking, who has served as executive vice-president, chief financial officer and chief operating officer since 2005. We wish her a successful and enjoyable retirement.

The Heather Harper Treat Memorial Duck Race will be held on Sept.13. Stay tuned for details.

The annual Webb family reunion will be held on Sunday, Sept.6 at the Community of Christ Church on Tunnel Hill Road. A service and business meeting will be held at 11 a.m., with a potluck feast at noon and a talent presentation at 1 p.m.

Volunteers at the Goreville Ministerial Alliance Thrift Shop on Aug. 11, 13 and 15 are members of the Lick Creek Pentecostal Church. The shop is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon. Drop in for bargains galore!

Two of our southern Illinois lawmakers are criticizing the Illinois Department of Human Services, which is attempting to reduce operations at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center in Anna. State Representative Scott Doody, R-Anna, and State Senator Paul Jacobs, R-Pomona, have issued statements calling the decision "devastating" and

"disappointing."

Ten members of our clan motored to Current River in Missouri last weekend and enjoyed the airbnb as well as rafting down the river. No, I didn't go along!

My two daughters, Pam and Nancy, spent an enjoyable afternoon cooling off in the swimming pool at Dixon Springs State Park. They also made a stop at The Chocolate Factory for ice cream and brought me a dark chocolate bar, made from their irresistible silky smooth velvet creme chocolate.

August is National Family Fun Month and mine seem to be celebrating it.

Blowing out candles this week and turning another year older are these folks: Aug. 9 — Abigail Payne, Dorothy Pfeffer, Caleb Montgomery, our grandson! Aug. 10 — Emilee Webb, Misty Rowe! Aug. 11 — Tyde Reszczensky, Nancy Farris, Jennifer and

Laura, the Billingsley twins! Aug. 12 — Elizabeth Potocki, Melissa Darnell, Dixie Hughes! Aug. 13 — Robert Poole, Owen Hancock, Joyce Frederick, Logan Lambert! Aug. 14 — Caleb Murley, Carl Kelley, Rosemary O'Keefe, Derek Herron, Krista Miles, Baylee Webb! May you all have many more!

Congratulations to these couples who will be celebrating wedding anniversaries! Jamie and Shannon Kerley on Aug. 9! Julie and Jason Hammond on Aug. 11! Max and Emma Hook on Aug. 15!

Jody Johnson celebrated his July 30 birthday, along with his three sons, playing pitch and catch at "Field of Dreams" in Iowa.

Along with my friend, Joyce Frederick of Goreville, we enjoyed a delicious lunch at Club Sixty, the senior center in Marion on Friday. The Swiss steak and cherry cheese cake were great!

At Shawnee Community College on Aug. 12 at 5:30pm will be "Building Healthier Communities for Men" sponsored by the University of Illinois Extension.

Camp Jericho, located at Pulleys Mill, has closed for the season, after welcoming youngsters from the area with fun and learning sessions for several weeks.

Looking Back: From the Aug. 25, 1993, edition of the Goreville Gazette comes this: "The Lake of Egypt was stocked this summer by the Southern Illinois Power Co-Op with several thousand hybrid striped fingerlings, which should be mature enough to catch in 4 or 5 years, making this lake one of the best for fishing."

Have news? Send it along to dixieterry85@yahoo.com or 618-422-2086.

Have a great remainder of the week and enjoy all that August has to offer!

Courthouse Memories: *Remembering the Johnson County Courthouse Square in 1954*

By Ed Annable

The accompanying photo shows the courthouse square in 1954, less than 10 years after the close of World War II. The photo most likely was taken on a Saturday afternoon when, as it appears, not more than one narrow parking space remained. As can be seen, traffic around the Old Courthouse went in two directions, and parking likewise followed this pattern.

Saturday was the busiest day of the week for the Vienna merchants. Most people shopped locally; afterall, there was hardly anything that a person might need or desire that was not carried in the numerous busy stores.

Saturday was not only the busiest day of the week, but it was the longest day, with most stores remaining open until 9:00 pm, well past



the normal weekday closing time. Saturdays being so busy, the merchants needed some extra time off. The solution was the closing of all stores on Thursday afternoons to give the merchants and their employees a welcomed break.

Not only were the stores closed on Thursday afternoons, there are reports that the Old Courthouse was also closed for business at this same time. The

courthouse square was a lonely place on these afternoons. The only thing open was the doors to the public restrooms on the south side of the Old Courthouse.

When this practice of Thursday afternoon closings was initiated, or when it ended has not been definitely determined, but it is known that the practice dominated the stores around the Old Courthouse sometime during the 1950s and 1960s.

Extension launches Health, Community Wellness program

University of Illinois Extension is launching its new Health and Community Wellness, HCW, program area to better meet the needs of Illinois residents as communities and families face challenges related to health, food and nutrition, family relationships and financial well-being.

Housed within the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, Illinois Extension connects the research and expertise of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with communities in all 102 Illinois counties.

HCW combines and expands the work of Extension's former Family and Consumer Sciences and Integrated Health Disparities teams into a single program area built for greater impact.

"We carefully assessed our strengths within Illinois Extension and identified where communities need us most, now and in the future," said Jennifer McCaffrey, assistant dean for Health and Community Wellness, in a news release. "This strategic alignment allows us to focus our efforts on key issues in Illinois, where we can make the biggest difference for families across the state."

Under this umbrella, the HCW team will:

Deliver research-based programming aligned with local needs and community health priorities, building upon Extension's strengths and partnerships in nutrition and food security, food systems, chronic disease prevention, aging and financial wellness.

Improve outcomes and efficiency through a streamlined staffing model, increased digital educational opportunities and expanded use of proven outreach methods, such as train-the-trainer education and community capacity-building initiatives.

Integrate research and teaching initiatives across Extension, the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign by working with faculty, expanding student learning opportunities, and continuing to build workforce development initiatives.

One of the first initiatives for the HCW team is the new Center for Food Systems, Nutrition Security and Health Integration, which opened in July. The center is a statewide strategic hub for

Illinois Extension, focusing on research, innovation and leadership across food systems, nutrition security and community health.

The center's mission is to connect farmers, partners and communities with research, training and practical solutions that strengthen Illinois food systems, improve nutrition security, protect the environment and enhance the health and well-being of people and ecosystems across Illinois and beyond. In the coming year, the center is excited to launch projects focused on farm-to-school, food navigation, and training for rural healthcare workers.

Matthew Vann, director of Illinois Extension, said the center builds on Extension's longstanding role as a trusted partner in communities across Illinois. "We're excited about the next phase of Extension programming in health and wellness," he said. "This is a great opportunity for impactful programming through deeper partnerships across Extension and the state of Illinois. It exemplifies how Illinois Extension can serve the citizens of every community. We look forward to seeing growth in our Health and Community Wellness program."

The Vienna Times

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State sales tax reduced for back-to-school items

The State of Illinois is offering a sales tax reduction on school supplies through Aug. 16. Starting on Aug. 7, the state sales tax was reduced from 6.25 percent to 1.25 percent. During this time local sales taxes still apply. School supplies, as well as clothing and shoes under \$125, are eligible for the lower tax rate.

Ben Szalinski with Capitol News Illinois reported in an Aug. 3 story that items with a lower sales tax include traditional supplies such as markers and pencils, notebooks and folders and other classroom items, as well as many clothing purchases. “Parents will keep more of their hard-earned dollars while students will get what they need to start the school year off right,” Gov. JB Pritzker said at an event in Palatine to highlight the initiative.

Clothing items, including shoes, that cost less than \$125 will qualify for a lower sales tax rate, while there will be no

price limit on school supplies. All purchases will still be subject to local sales taxes, however.

The program costs the state \$10 million, a minimal amount of the \$55.9 billion budget.

Pritzker blamed President Donald Trump for rising inflation, saying his policies have increased costs and made life harder for Illinois families.

“We can’t control broader inflation in the economy, but there are some things we can do to make life easier,” Pritzker said.

Launching into campaign mode with Election Day three months away, Pritzker said the sales tax holiday is the latest example of how his administration has tried to lower costs for Illinoisans. He pointed to initiatives to raise the minimum wage, provide food benefits for people who lost eligibility for federal support and forgive medical debt. He also touted

and legislation reforming insurance and banning hidden fees as other ways he’s saved Illinoisans money.

The sales tax holiday on school supplies is one of two tax relief initiatives in the fiscal year 2027 budget. Lawmakers also suspended the annual increase to the motor fuel tax until Jan. 1, which saves drivers about 1 cent per gallon.

The budget also included hundreds of millions of dollars in new taxes, mostly on businesses, as lawmakers increased spending by less than 1 percent.

The last time the state approved such a program was in 2022, the last time Pritzker ran for reelection.

• *Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service that distributes state government coverage to hundreds of news outlets statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.*

New laws address cash payments, pay for jury duty

By Ben Szalinski
Capitol News Illinois

Most Illinois retailers will be required to accept cash payments beginning in 2028 under a bill Gov. JB Pritzker signed on Friday, July 31.

House Bill 4592 requires retailers that employ someone to process in-person consumer transactions must accept cash payments on purchases under \$500, though the businesses do not have to accept bills larger than \$20.

The requirement does not apply to self-checkout machines, overnight sales, if a business runs out of cash, membership-only businesses, or phone or internet purchases. Businesses that do not follow the law will have to pay fines.

“For many Illinois residents, cash remains a dependable and necessary way to pay for everyday purchases,” Sen. Christopher Belt, D-Swansea, said in a statement. “People deserve the freedom to choose how they pay.”

The measures was one of 87 bills Pritzker signed on July 31.

Jury pay
Employers will now have to pay their employees their full rate of pay while they are serving on jury duty under House Bill 4844. Businesses with 25 or fewer employees are exempt from the requirement, which begins immediately.

CPR practice
House Bill 4788 requires schools, beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, to provide breasted and non-breasted manikins for CPR

practice in middle school and high school. The goal is to give students more practice with female victims, who studies show are less likely to receive help from bystanders when suffering cardiac arrest. “When someone’s life is on the line, every second counts,” Sen. Laura Ellman, D-Naperville, said in a statement. “More inclusive, realistic CPR training helps people act quickly and save lives.”

Workload report
Senate Bill 3314 requires higher education institutions to provide more transparency about how many credits their faculty members are teaching. The law requires the state’s colleges and universities to, beginning in Sept. 2028, report annually the number of credit hours being taught by full- and part-time faculty members. The reports would be organized by tenure status and discipline.

Lawmakers supporting the bill said the goal is to provide more transparency for students and educators about the higher education system and ensure faculty members are receiving necessary support. “This legislation helps shine a light on who is doing the teaching in our colleges and universities by making clear how many credit hours are taught by full-time versus part-time faculty,” Illinois Education Association President Karl Goeke said in a statement. “Our students and their families deserve to know who is leading the bulk of the

classes at their colleges and universities.”

Human trafficking
Drivers on Illinois interstates will soon notice more information about human trafficking at rest stops.

House Bill 4654 requires the Illinois Department of Transportation to install signs with resources for human trafficking victims in bathrooms at all rest areas, beginning immediately.

Airport noise
Senate Bill 4041 requires O’Hare and Midway airports in Chicago to conduct noise studies at least every five years beginning by the end of 2030. The study must map out how sound is distributed around the airport and forecast how noise will be distributed going forward.

Mental Health Treatment
House Bill 5193 allows more patients to be transported by ambulance to a mental health institution rather than a hospital emergency room beginning immediately. The law now allows people under the influence of drugs or alcohol to be transported to approved mental health facilities if EMTs determine that’s a more appropriate location and it is approved by their supervisors.

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Adults encouraged to stay up to date on immunizations

August is National Immunization Awareness Month. At a time of the year when many families have been scheduling their child’s vaccinations appointment for school, Rural Health Inc. encourages adults to schedule their own vaccination appointment to ensure they too are up-to-date on their own vaccines.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, recommends that adults not only be vaccinated against seasonal illness, but depending on a person’s age, travel, life events such as pregnancy and employment, they should also be vaccinated against what are often considered childhood vaccines. These can include Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough), chickenpox (Varicella), Hepatitis B, meningococcal and MMR (measles, mumps and rubella).

“Outside of annual vaccines such as flu, COVID-19 and RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus), adults generally consider other vaccinations to be a ‘kid’ thing, not realizing that they are also susceptible to infection as easily as children,” Rural Health Inc. director of public relations

Shawna Rhine said in a news release. “The difference is that because of underlying health conditions, age and other risk factors, adults are more likely to suffer a serious illness without vaccination.”

While vaccination is not an option for some people in preventing illness, Rural Health Inc. encourages everyone to talk with their healthcare provider about vaccination protection.

“It’s easy to get caught up in all the information we read and hear about vaccines,” Rhine said. “Your provider is a trusted source and will help you decide if vaccination is right for you based on your individual health needs. Never hesitate to have this conversation.”

The CDC offers the following facts and information about vaccines:

Vaccines have reduced diseases and saved lives for over 100 years, but serious disease is still a threat. People all over the world, including in the United States, still become seriously ill or even die from diseases that vaccines can help prevent.

Vaccines protect individuals and also avoid spreading

preventable diseases to other people in the community who are not vaccinated.

Some vaccine-preventable diseases can have serious complications. For them, vaccination provides protection not only against the disease itself but also against the dangerous complications or consequences that it can bring such as hospitalization, long-term illness such as cancer and death.

Vaccine safety is a high priority. The CDC and other experts carefully review safety data before recommending any vaccine, then continually monitor vaccine safety after approval.

Most people experience only mild side effects after a vaccination. These reactions usually go away on their own within a few days. Serious or long-lasting side effects are extremely rare.

Information about vaccine safety and scheduling a vaccination appointment are available by calling Rural Health Inc. at 618-833-4471 or by visiting one of its health centers in the area. Rural Health Inc. has locations in Union, Johnson and Massac counties.

New Illinois program provides food benefits

By Ben Szalinski
Capitol News Illinois

A new state program took effect Saturday, Aug. 1, to provide food benefits to people who have recently become ineligible because of federal changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

The Families Receiving Emergency Support for Hunger, or FRESH, program kicked off Aug. 1 after state lawmakers appropriated \$70 million in the fiscal year 2027 budget to establish a state food assistance program. The initiative allows households that lost their SNAP benefits earlier this year to receive a \$400 one-time payment.

“At a time when the cost of groceries, gas, and utilities are all rising, Donald Trump and Republicans decided to strip food assistance from nearly 100,000 people,” Gov. JB Pritzker said in a statement. “In Illinois, we passed the FRESH program to help provide some relief for families kicked off food assistance, but no state can backfill the cruel and imminent cuts set in motion by Trump’s budget bill.”

About 150,000 Illinoisans

were expected to lose food assistance benefits beginning May 1 after new work requirements established by Congress went into effect. About 1.5 million Illinoisans received SNAP benefits in June, according to the Illinois Department of Human Services. That includes 830,342 households. The number of beneficiaries in June was down 134,734 people compared to April.

Eligible households are those that lost benefits because of the federal changes and are automatically enrolled in the FRESH program. Recipients will receive the one-time payment to their Illinois Link card to use on food.

People who lose SNAP coverage in the coming months will also receive payments until funding for the program runs out.

Other Financial Impacts
The budget also included \$55 million to hire 450 Department of Human Services employees, including staff to update state systems to comply with federal changes to SNAP and Medicaid eligibility.

Illinois, and most other

states, are set to be on the hook for higher costs in the coming years because of the changes Congress made.

Beginning in in October 2027, states will cover half of administrative costs for the program and many states will begin covering a portion of SNAP benefits. States with an error rate greater than 10 percent will have to cover 15 percent of the cost of benefits starting in fiscal year 2029.

Illinois’ error rate was 14.7 percent in federal fiscal year 2025, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That was up from 11.6 percent the year before.

Illinois will have another year to produce a lower error rate, giving the state more time to rectify problems. As of now, the state could be on the hook for \$700 million in new SNAP costs by the end of 2028 if nothing changes.

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Hunting permits available

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, IDNR, has announced the availability of turkey and deer hunting permits. Details about all of the permits can be found online at HuntIllinois.org.

The sale of fall turkey archery over-the-counter permits by licensed vendors

only started Aug. 1 and continues through Jan. 18. Permits are available on a first-come, first-served basis until quotas have been met.

Starting Aug. 3, Illinois resident and non-resident hunters could purchase fall turkey archery permits on a first-come, first-served basis

until quotas have been met for a particular county or until the close of the season on Jan. 17.

Starting Aug. 4 and continuing through Oct. 12, youth deer resident and non-resident firearm over-the-counter permits are being sold by licensed vendors.



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Please read this...

Pondering a requiem for newspapers...

By Geof Skinner

A note to readers... this week’s column is not completely “original,” but none of it has been generated by AI...as far as I know. Part of the column has to be credited to folks who write about news at Southern Illinois University Carbondale...which, by the way, is the alma mater for both The Other Half and yours truly...

Meanwhile... When I grow up, if that ever actually happens, my new dream is to become an “influencer.” I will create really exciting videos. I’m thinking the videos would feature squirrels. “Real” squirrels. Not some Critters generated by AI. I will post my squirrel videos on Tik Tac Toe, which I am sure would generate 85 gazbillion followers.

And to think...this whole “influencer” thing wasn’t even a thing all that long ago when I was growing up for the first time and wanted to be a paleontologist...and then a veterinarian...and then, finally, a journalist.

Meanwhile... In another matter related to 21st century technology that I don’t want anything to do with: I received an opportunity via email to have “exclusive access to AI features.” Those features include being able to create “stunning slides that can include images and infographics.” No. Thank. You. At least I’m not getting any emails, yet, about opportunities to buy hearing aids.

Meanwhile... As I was scrolling through some of the disheartening news posted online one morning last week, I came across a headline on the Southern Illinois University Carbondale news website, news.siu.edu.

The headline accompanied a story which was about an upcoming exhibit scheduled at the Sharp Museum on the university campus. The exhibit is titled “Requiem for Newspapers.”

Until that moment, I do not recall ever having given a lot of thought about the

word “requiem.” Yes, I was familiar with the word...in a “it has something to do with music” way. Which is true. The definition of “requiem” which I found in the used-to-be-an-editor’s official blue dictionary read: “1 a. A Mass for a deceased person. b. A musical composition for such a Mass. 2. A hymn, composition, or service for the dead.” The dictionary, by the way, is old school: it’s printed on paper. Don’t know if anybody else still uses such things.

A n y w a y . . . i t w a s discouraging to see the words “requiem” and “newspapers” connected...and to see that newspapers have reached that point in their existence when they are a subject of a service for the dead.

Just in case you might be interested, here’s a look at the news release about the exhibit which was posted online at news.siu.edu:

Reading the newspaper, printed on real paper and delivered to the front door, was once part of the daily (and, in the case of the paper you are reading, weekly) routine for many Americans. That was before the digital revolution. An exhibition at Southern Illinois University Carbondale’s Sharp Museum commemorates and laments the heyday of print journalism.

“ R e q u i e m f o r Newspapers,” a collection of more than 15 paintings and works by veteran journalist and SIU Carbondale alumnus Tim Atseff, opens Aug. 18 in the museum’s Mitchell Gallery.

The exhibition is also coordinated with programming from SIU’s Charlotte Thompson Suhler School of Journalism and Advertising. The exhibition will be in University Museum through Dec. 11. An artists’ reception will be held later this fall.

Atseff is a 1970 graduate from the university’s School of Art with a major in painting. The exhibition includes work from Atseff’s 46 years in newspapers in his hometown of Syracuse, New York, where

he was an editorial cartoonist, a managing editor and a magazine editor. As editorial cartoonist for the Herald-Journal, Atseff’s work of more than 1,500 cartoons with local, national and international themes appeared in several publications, including The New York Times, Washington Post and Boston Globe. He has also designed and edited six tabletop books.

“I felt the need to give a tip of the hat to what was once a giant of an industry – one that connected communities and held those in power accountable – every day,” he said. “A friend on your doorstep to share stories of celebration, tragedy, victories, losses, that recipe that became a family favorite or the puzzle or comic that made your day. A requiem.”

T. Lance, the museum’s curator of exhibits, said the exhibition is not only of Atseff’s “wistfulness, but also as a signal of democracy” noting that Atseff banners one of his paintings with the phrase “Democracy lives in the light.”

“Through this exhibition, Atseff examines the disappearing tradition of print newspapers, arguing that their decline signals a more serious threat to democracy,” Lance said.

That the newspaper industry is in peril is past a matter of speculation. According to a 2025 report by Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, the country has lost nearly 3,500 newspapers in the last 20 years. The loss is creating “news deserts,” – areas where people have limited or no access to reliable local news sources.

“At first glance, ‘Requiem for Newspapers’ may seem like a nostalgic tribute, but its core message is grief, warning of an industry in peril,” Lance said. “The paintings create an immersive installation that underscores how the decline of newspapers reflects a broader societal loss. Atseff’s vision is cautionary. As newspapers close and print culture is replaced by

digital news, Atseff highlights what is endangered: the very democratic process that newspapers once ensured.”

The power of art is in the response it generates, Atseff said. He noted there were a variety of responses to the exhibition at the Everson Museum of Art in his hometown of Syracuse, New York.

“It was like going to the calling hour of a friend; some cried, some laughed, all bound up with losing something and the uncertainty that brings,” he said.

This is Atseff’s second exhibition at Sharp Museum. His four-month, 26-piece “Art of Darkness” exhibition that featured his paintings and editorial cartoons, began in November 2020.

“It’s an honor to come back with a significant show that is evocative and provocative,” he said.

Jan Thompson, director of the Charlotte Thompson Suhler School of Journalism and Advertising, said the school plans to have programming with Atseff when he is on campus later this fall. Thompson said she has been a fan of Atseff’s work beginning with his 2020 exhibition.

“I believe the exhibit, ‘Requiem for Newspapers,’ will allow the audience to reflect and to understand the value of information that newspapers provide to a community,” she said.

For more information on the exhibition, contact Lance at 618-453-5388 or t.lance@siu.edu or visit museum.siu.edu.

Sharp Museum hours are noon to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1-4 p.m. Saturday. The museum is closed Sunday and Monday, and during all SIU breaks and holidays.

(The photo which accompanies this column also is, as noted, posted online.)

I plan to pay a visit to the SIU museum to see the exhibit...even if it means going to a requiem for newspapers...



Alto Pass graduate celebrates 103rd birthday

Gladys (nee Hickam) Cavaness Smithey of Du Quoin, formerly of Alto Pass, Sparta and Anna, celebrated her 103rd birthday on July 29. She is pictured here with a portion of her family which numbers 100 (plus 25 in-laws). Two great-great grandchildren are expected this year. She is the oldest living graduate of the former Alto Pass High School. Photo provided

Notes

From page 1

Jackson County and in part of northern Williamson County.

Veterans of Foreign Wars Carroll P. Foster Post No. 3455 of Anna hosted a back-to-school supply giveaway Sunday afternoon, Aug. 9.

The Anna City Pool has wrapped up its 2026 season. The pool’s final event of the summer was a Doggie Swim Day, which was scheduled Sunday, Aug. 9.

WSIL and KFVS have announced that they are joining forces under the Heartland News brand.

Award

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he saved the lives of both passengers. He was sent to the hospital after his act of heroism, suffering from cuts and burns sustained from pulling the victims to safety. “The City of Anna will recognize Sergeant Clover for his selfless courage by putting himself in harm’s way to save others.

“Mr. Speaker, please join me in recognizing Sergeant Caleb Clover for his act of heroism and courage in the face of danger to save lives.” Clover was honored at last week’s regular meeting of the Anna City Council. The meeting was Tuesday evening, Aug. 4, at Anna City Hall.

Mayor Steve Hartline said

With the news comes the announcement that the two stations will have a single app, Heartland News, and a new online presence at HeartlandNews.com. KFVS and WSIL will continue to have separate First Alert Weather apps.

Fall semester classes are scheduled to start Monday, Aug. 17, at Shawnee Community College.

Shawnee Community College is offering a new competency-based business management program this fall. The college shared on social media that the program is designed for busy adults and working professionals.

the opportunity to recognize Clover was “very special.” “I couldn’t be prouder of him,” the mayor said.

Anna Police Department Chief JD Barter presented Clover with a “Life Saving Award” plaque. The wording on the plaque declared: “Your fast thinking and swift, professional action on July 3, 2026, saved two citizen’s lives. Thank you for going above and beyond serving the citizens of Anna, Illinois.”

Barter echoed the sentiment that Clover’s actions on July 3 went above and beyond the call of duty. The police chief also made note of Rep. Bost’s recognition of the Anna Police Department officer. Clover said his actions reflected the success of his training

Award

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continue to garner attention until the state changes course.

“Man, I just hope to see everybody coming out and supporting us next Tuesday, and every Tuesday after that,” Leslie said. “I’m hoping to see things change and that all of us get to keep our jobs.”

Sylvester “King Mo” Morse, a participant at Tuesday’s rally, is not a Choate employee, but lives in Anna and has multiple personal ties to the facility.

“My sister worked there, and my aunt worked there for 19 years,” Morse said, but that’s not his only connection to Choate.

“When I was a kid, they said I was a problem, so they sent me to Choate to a school that used to help problem kids,” Morse said. “It helped me a lot. It made me become better and helped me get along with people. I believe that they’re just way more than Choate Mental Health.”

Eddie Caumiant, AFSCME Council 31’s Southern Illinois regional director, told demonstrators to make their opposition impossible for state leaders to miss.

“If the governor flies over in his helicopter, we want him to see us fighting him,” Caumiant said. “When we fight, we win.”

Gov. JB Pritzker recently defended the IDHS decision during a July 28 news conference and bill signing, saying the staffing cuts follow the relocation

of residents from Choate’s general developmental disabilities program. The downsizing of Choate’s developmental disabilities population followed reporting by Capitol News Illinois and ProPublica outlining the severe mistreatment of patients by staff and a culture of coverup that had persisted for years, despite state and federal regulators repeatedly citing problems and calling for improvements.

“Remember, the reason there are staff reductions is because we have literally moved the developmentally disabled residents there to better facilities,” Pritzker said. “At some point, you don’t need staff when there is nobody at that facility.”

However, Choate employees and local officials argued Aug. 4 that the state should expand, not reduce, mental health services in Southern Illinois, where they said jails, courts and treatment providers are already struggling to find beds for people in crisis.

IDHS plans to “phase down” all 75 civil mental health beds at Choate while adding beds at Madden Mental Health Center in Chicago. The agency said the shift, which is scheduled to be completed by March 2027, reflects that the “need for mental health beds is greater in northern Illinois.”

Jackson County Assistant State’s Attorney Travis Fleming, who handles mental health cases, told Capitol News Illinois that people are

already waiting in the county jail for placement in the state’s forensic mental health system.

“We do have individuals waiting for transport for fitness sitting in our jail currently,” Fleming said.

Fitness restoration is a process for defendants who, because of mental illness, do not understand the legal proceedings against them or cannot work with their attorneys. Treatment is intended to help them understand the judicial process so they can participate in their own defense.

Homer “Chip” Markel, the Democratic candidate for Illinois House District 118, aimed his remarks directly toward Pritzker.

“Governor...you should stand up and reverse the decision of IDHS,” Markel said.

State Sen. Paul Jacobs, a Republican from Pomona who represents Illinois’ 59th District, said that the demand for mental health treatment is not limited to Chicago or Northern Illinois.

“We are in mental health crises across the state,” Jacobs said. “We need Choate.”

Union County State’s Attorney Tyler Tripp said that his office repeatedly encounters the lack of available treatment space.

“Illinois is in a mental health crisis, and what I always hear in my office is that we have no more room here,” Tripp said.

Tripp said that hundreds of forensic patients across

Illinois are waiting in jails for appropriate treatment in a state mental health facility.

“There are hundreds of people sitting in jail with their mental health declining,” Tripp said. “State operations like Choate should not just remain open – they should be expanded.

“Any loss of a member of staff or any patient is unacceptable,” he added.

Tripp rejected the IDHS explanation that demand is greater in the northern part of the state.

“The need for mental health beds is greater than we can currently handle across the entire state – not just Northern Illinois,” he said.

Republican state Rep. Scott Doody, an Anna resident who represents Illinois’ 118th District, has repeatedly condemned the reductions at Choate, and did so again while addressing the crowd.

“I’m here today to support you all,” Doody said. “Employees and patients aren’t just numbers published on a spreadsheet.”

IDHS said in its original letter that the changes at Choate are a result of the “success” of the state’s three-year plan, which aimed to repurpose the facility in partnership with the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine.

As part of that partnership, SIU evaluated how Choate’s campus, workforce and programs could be repurposed. Its initial recommendations included preserving and retraining

existing employees, retaining and potentially expanding civil mental health services, adding forensic psychiatric care and converting unused space for step-down treatment, crisis services, housing and other community programs.

The first phase of SIU’s Choate Transformation Report, published July 14, 2023, said that two additional phases were planned. Phase 2, which was due Dec. 31, 2023, was expected to make recommendations concerning the safety of both people receiving care and Choate employees. Phase 3 was expected to make recommendations concerning Illinois’ statewide systems of care for people with developmental disabilities and serious mental illness over the following two to three years.

Neither Phase 2 nor Phase 3 appear to have been made public.

SIU School of Medicine’s 2020-25 Strategic Plan Progress Report, published July 3, 2025, said the university supported the “Choate Project” and worked with IDHS’ Division of Developmental Disabilities to advance workforce and care improvements.

An October 2024 IDHS announcement said the decision to add as many as 25 mental health beds at Choate was “informed by recommendations” from SIU. The agency said SIU continued to shape the transformation through campus repurposing recommendations, staff

training initiatives and assessments of safety, patient care and workforce needs, but it did not attach the underlying reports, assessments or recommendations.

IDHS’ 2026-2030 Strategic Planning Roadmap, released in May, also describes the Choate initiative as a three-year partnership with SIU. It lists four objectives: reducing the developmental disabilities population by 123, increasing mental health bed capacity, implementing safety enhancements and expanding support for community living.

Jacobs defended SIU’s role in the process and said the school’s work did not call for the cuts IDHS announced.

“SIU is not at fault for this,” Jacobs said. “In fact, their report was very thorough and clear.”

Winfield told the dozens of people lining the streets of downtown Anna on Aug. 4 that workers agreed to participate in SIU’s evaluation because they believed it could strengthen Choate.

“There is power in numbers,” Winfield said. “Three years ago they had us at the bargaining table telling us that they were going to repurpose Choate. We agreed to let SIU come in and evaluate the facility – and they actually made some great recommendations. They said that we should be expanding mental health services. They said that there is a need for us – and I’m here to tell you all that there absolutely is.”