

THE GAZETTE-DEMOCRAT

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Thursday, September 24, 2026

Anna, Illinois

\$1.00

Volume 179, Number 39

Anna mayor announces he will not seek another term

Anna Mayor Steve Hartline has announced that he will not seek another term in office. Hartline announced his decision at last week's regular meeting of the Anna City Council. The meeting was Tuesday evening, Sept. 15, at Anna City Hall.

The mayor's announcement early in the meeting, which had a busy agenda which included filling a vacancy on the city council and a request for approval of a resolution in support of the Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center in Anna.

Mayor Hartline has served the city for approximately 39 years. During those years, he has served as a police officer, chief of police, as a member of the city council and as a mayor. The city's next election is scheduled in April of 2027.

The mayor voiced his gratitude to all of those he has worked with over the years and for the job done by those who work for the city. "It's been an honor and pleasure to serve the city," the mayor said. "We've got a lot done."

Vacancy on Council Filled

A motion to fill a vacancy on the city council was approved at the meeting. The vacancy was created by the recent passing of longtime city council member Martha Ann Webb.

The council voted to appoint David Prather to fill the vacancy. Prather is a retired hospital chief financial officer. He will take the oath of office at the city council's next regular meeting in early October. The term runs through the 2027 election.

Choate Center Resolution

The future of the Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center in Anna again was addressed by city officials. The consent agenda for the meeting included a resolution urging the Illinois Department of Human Services, IDHS, to reverse a decision to downsize serves at the center.

A request for passage of the resolution was made at the council meeting by American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFSCME, Council 31 representative Ty Petersen. The Union County Board of Commissioners, along with several of the county's municipal governing bodies, have passed such a resolution.

IDHS in July announced plans to cut services and lay off staff at the center. Petersen said has been meeting with local governing bodies to seek

(see Council on page 8)

AFSCME files lawsuit to block state from gutting Choate Center

The labor union representing hundreds of employees at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center in Anna has filed a lawsuit challenging the state's planned downsizing of the facility, arguing Gov. JB Pritzker's administration failed to follow state laws governing reductions in healthcare services, the closure of state facilities and the preservation of psychiatric beds.

Capitol News Illinois' Molly Parker reported that the Illinois Department of Human Services, IDHS, announced to staff in late July that it planned to significantly reduce staffing and beds for patients with mental illness and developmental disabilities.

As of Aug. 1, Choate had 75 mental health beds and 150 beds for individuals with developmental disabilities. The state's plan calls for eliminating all psychiatric beds and all but 40 beds for individuals with developmental disabilities. Those 40 beds would be reserved for forensic patients who are typically admitted through the courts after being found unfit to stand trial in criminal proceedings.

The state's planned downsizing would eliminate about half of Choate's roughly 500 workers, with most represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

AFSCME Council 31 filed the lawsuit Tuesday, Sept. 15 in Union County Circuit Court in Jonesboro, joined as plaintiffs by Union County State's Attorney Tyler Tripp and AFSCME Local 141 president Tina Winfield. The lawsuit names the State of Illinois, Pritzker, IDHS and IDHS Secretary Dulce Quintero as defendants.

The lawsuit alleges violations of three state laws and asks a judge to block the state from moving forward with key portions of the downsizing.

First, AFSCME alleges IDHS violated the Health Facilities Planning Act by failing to obtain a permit or exemption before eliminating Choate's general developmental disability and mental health operations. The union argues the changes substantially alter the scope and operation of the facility and reduce its bed capacity enough to trigger the law's requirements.

The lawsuit also alleges violations of the Illinois State Facilities Closure Act. Although the Choate campus would not fully close, AFSCME argues the law's mandates are triggered by plans to shutter the psychiatric hospital and general residential program for people with developmental disabilities, and that the state has taken no steps to comply with the closure act.

Finally, AFSCME alleges the state's plan violates the Mental Health Inpatient Facility Access Act, passed in 2022 amid a shortage of



Supporting Choate Center workers
Signs on display at the four-way stop in the downtown Anna show their support for workers at the Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center.

publicly funded psychiatric services. The law prohibits further reductions in state-operated inpatient mental health bed capacity, with limited exceptions.

The Pritzker administration has said the need for mental health beds is greater in northern Illinois and plans to phase out Choate's 75 civil psychiatric beds by March while adding beds at Madden Mental Health Center near Chicago.

But AFSCME argues the state has begun moving patients out of Choate without first adding enough state-operated psychiatric beds elsewhere and that moving capacity north would severely reduce access to inpatient psychiatric care in Southern Illinois.

The lawsuit asks the court to prevent the state from eliminating Choate's psychiatric operation and to require IDHS to maintain 75 inpatient psychiatric beds there until it creates 75 additional beds at other state-operated mental health centers. It also seeks to block layoffs tied to the psychiatric closure until those replacement beds are created.

The union also accuses the administration of abruptly reversing course after years of assurances about Choate's future.

In 2023, when the state announced a three-year "transformation" of Choate, state officials told union representatives the plan did not include closing the facility or laying off workers, according to the complaint. In 2024, the state announced an expansion of mental health services at Choate, and as recently as the budgeting process for the current fiscal year, DHS officials assured state and union representatives that the budget did not "contemplate

any layoffs," the lawsuit alleges.

Then, on July 23, just weeks after the new fiscal year began, the state announced plans to end Choate's general developmental disability operation by Sept. 30 and phase out its mental health operation by March.

"DHS never explained what had changed and why it reversed course," the lawsuit alleges, accusing the state of beginning "an unseemly rush to transfer residents of the facilities to other placements."

"AFSCME members who work at Choate care about the individuals they support and are committed to the mental health and disability services they provide," AFSCME Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch said in a statement. "Southern Illinois needs these services, and state laws exist to protect them. That's why we're asking the court to step in."

Second Lawsuit Filed Challenging Closing

The AFSCME case is the second lawsuit filed since the state announced the downsizing in July, Capitol News Illinois reported.

Earlier in September, Tripp, the Union County state's attorney, filed a separate lawsuit in Union County Circuit Court along with Union County Sheriff David Wilkins and Justin Emrick, the legal guardian of a Choate resident.

The lawsuit alleges that criminal defendants in Southern Illinois have routinely remained in county jails for weeks while awaiting state psychiatric placements, and that reducing Choate's capacity would worsen an already strained system. It seeks a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction to prevent the elimination

of Choate's psychiatric beds and its remaining general developmental disability beds while the case proceeds.

Among the records attached to the lawsuit is a July letter from IDHS to a Union County judge demanding placement of a defendant who the state had determined needed psychiatric care at Choate. That letter asked for the judge's patience while the state awaited an opening. The letter said there were 217 people statewide waiting for admission to the state's forensic treatment programs, while another 109 were awaiting evaluations to determine whether inpatient admission was necessary.

An IDHS spokesperson said the agency does not comment on pending litigation.

Pritzker has defended the decision to reduce operations at Choate, pointing to longstanding problems at the facility. In a years-long investigation that began in 2022, Capitol News Illinois and ProPublica documented a culture of abuse and coverup at the facility that had persisted for years despite numerous calls for reforms. In response, Pritzker's administration announced a series of reform plans, though intended to keep the facility open.

Speaking to reporters in Southern Illinois in late August, Pritzker said he'd hoped to resolve the challenges there but made clear several years ago that if that didn't happen "the only option that we really would have is to stand down on that facility."

• *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.*

News Notes

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

Happy homecoming week to everyone at Anna-Jonesboro Community High School. A full week of activities are planned. A homecoming parade is set for 1 p.m. Friday, Sept. 25, in Anna. A-J hosts Pinckneyville in the Wildcats' 2026 homecoming football game; kickoff is set for 7 p.m. Friday.

The Village of Cobden is moving forward with plans for a new well. The village has received confirmation that financial assistance from USDA Rural Development has been approved. An emergency community water assistance grant in the amount of \$680,000 and a water and waste disposal loan in the amount of \$1.374 million have been approved.

A Sept. 17 update from the U.S. Drought Monitor showed that northeastern Union County, northern Johnson County and all of Jackson and Williamson counties were experiencing abnormally dry conditions.

Weather update: the forecast posted Friday, Sept. 18, on the website for the National Weather Service office in Paducah was calling for high temperatures in the 70s on Tuesday and Wednesday.

One more weather update: at 1:47 p.m. Friday, Sept. 18, the heat index at the Southern Illinois Airport near Murphysboro was 102 degrees. The air temperature was 97 degrees and the humidity was 39 percent.

The University of Memphis Center for Earthquake Research and Information

(see Notes on page 8)



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Proverbs 3
Exhortations to Obedience

3.1 My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, 2 for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. 3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.[1]

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. 8 This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. 9 Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; 10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. 11 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, 12 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.[2]

13 Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, 14 for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. 15 She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. 16 Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. 17 Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. 18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed. 19 By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; 20 by his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.

21 My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion; 22 they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. 23 Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble. 24 When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. 25 Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, 26 for the Lord will be at your side and will keep your foot from being snared.

27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. 28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you"- when you already have it with you. 29 Do not plot harm against your neighbor, who lives trustfully near you. 30 Do not accuse anyone for no reason- when they have done you no harm. 31 Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways. 32 For the Lord detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence. 33 The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. 34 He mocks proud mockers but shows favor to the humble and oppressed. 35 The wise inherit honor, but fools get only shame.

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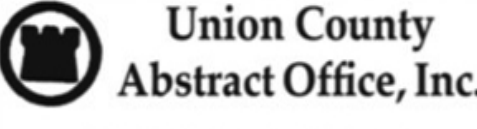
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NEWS FROM VIENNA, ILLINOIS



Vienna football field scoreboard restored through community partnership

Vienna High School’s football field scoreboard has been refreshed through a collaborative project that highlights hands-on student learning and strong partnerships between schools and community organizations.

The sign was removed from the football field and transported to the Joppa High School Auto Body class, a program attended by Vienna students as part of the career and technical education pathway. T Ham Sign Inc. out of Marion, assisted with taking down the sign, while Robin Mizell, Maintenance

team member, along with other maintenance staff, constructed a custom frame to safely transport it. Korte Farms out of Metropolis, also generously provided a trailer to assist with hauling the scoreboard. Vienna students in the Auto Body class dismantled and repainted the sign this past spring as part of their coursework.

Robin Mizell emphasized the value of collaboration in the project: “It is so nice to be able to have a partnership with Joppa High School where our students are helping their own peers while also utilizing our own resources. This project

shows what can happen when schools and communities work together to create real learning opportunities.”

“This project represents exactly what we want for our students. They are gaining real and meaningful experiences while contributing to something that matters to our school and community. We are so thankful for the teamwork and partnerships that made this possible and to Joppa auto body instructor Jeff Goddard. We are also excited to see the scoreboard be used this fall for the football season,” said Superintendent Dr. Joshua Stafford.

The public phone at the Old Johnson County Courthouse



By Ed Annable

The residents of Johnson County and the surrounding area will most likely remember a phone booth that stood on the east side of the court square. The photo shows the location of the concrete pad where the booth stood. Included in the image is an exact replica of that old public phone booth.

There was a time before cell phones — a time when being out of immediate touch with others was not unusual or even feared. Today’s young people cannot imagine a time when instant communication with others was not available. They cannot imagine a time when not every household had a telephone, one of those old models that when used, everyone in the room could hear at least one side of a

conversation.

Yes, there was such a time — a time when the old phone booth on the courthouse square became a lifeline for those who found it necessary to call home or to make an emergency call to conduct their personal business. It was a time when young people frequented the square on a Friday night and found a reason to communicate with parents or friends — a time when it was inconceivable that a person might reach in his or her pocket and dial up a friend or a parent.

I remember well when there was a terrible school bus accident one September day in 1965. All the students who were not injured or severely injured were transported to Vienna and seen by the only physician that had an office on the court square. I remember

the old phone booth and being able to make the phone call to my mother and telling her that my sister and I were OK.

The old phone booth on the courthouse square witnessed many such calls, if it was possible for an inanimate object to witness something. The history of Johnson County should have a special chapter concerning the conversations that occurred in that glass cubicle.

No one seems to remember the day the old phone booth disappeared. No one remembers because no one seemed to care. When cell phones came to town, the old phone booth lost its relevance. The concrete pad where it sat is the only remnant of a period of time that our young people will never witness.

the party on a single ticket.) Only 110 tickets will be sold for the Draw Down. As in the past you do not need to be present to participate in the winnings.

If you would like to purchase a ticket, call or contact Madonna Slife, PO Box 163, Vienna IL 62995.

NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE *By Dixie Terry*

Look for the full moon on the evening of Sept. 26.

Saturday, Sept. 26 is celebrated as Johnny Appleseed Day, the birthday of John Chapman who spent years planting apple seeds across the western frontier of our great country.

The Johnson County Genealogical and Historical Society met on Sunday, Sept. 20 in the community room of the Vienna Library. The program on Trigg-Ozark Tours of 1931-1949 was presented.

The Johnson County Women’s Club will hold their first meeting of the club year on Friday, Oct. 2 at 1:30 p.m. in the U. of I. Extension Building in Vienna. New members are welcomed to join this community group.

The “Rekindling the Spirit Youth Rally” will be held on Oct. 21 at Eagle House Ministries, with food served at 6:30 p.m., followed by the worship service at 7 p.m. This is free and open to all area youth.

“Sweet Harvest Day” will be held on Oct. 3, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Goreville Village Park. There will be a horse-drawn sorghum press, fresh apple cider, honey, Autumn produce, pony rides and much more.

Southern Seven Health Services will be providing flu shots in a drive-thru on Oct. 1, 10am-2pm at the Goreville Village Park. Bring insurance cards.

Happy 100th Birthday to Betty Noble of Autumn Ridge Supportive Living in Vienna. Donate children’s books

in her name for the “Little Leaves Learning Center” of Arrowleaf by Sept. 28.

The annual “Run For Hope Race” on the Tunnel Hill State Trail, adjacent to the Vienna City Park, will take place on Sept. 25, with registration at 4:30 p.m.

The “Heather /treat Memorial Duck Race was held for the 20th year on Sunday, Sept. 13 at the Clod and Corton Vineyard on Parker City Road.

The list of winning ducks has not been received.

The Community of Christ Church members and guests enjoyed services on Sept. 20 at Ferne Clyffe State Park, followed by a picnic lunch.

The Vienna Fall Festival will be an all-day event on Oct. 3, at the Vienna City Park, with events, food, games and prizes.

The Cypress School PTO will provide a dance for local students in grades 5-8 on Oct. 16, 6-9pm.

The cost is \$5, payable at the door.

On Oct. 2-3 will be the Goreville Community Yard Sales. Call 995-2157 to have your sale on the map, which will be available at the village hall.

See the Beatle Exhibit at the SIU-C Morris Library, the collection of Ann Chamberlain, through

December.

Constitution Week was celebrated on Sept. 14-19 by the Daniel Chapman Chapter NSDAR, with a bell-ringing ceremony and a program by Brian Bailey of Vienna.

The Vienna High School Class of 1986 will hold a reunion on Oct. 17 at the Evergreen Coffee Shop in Paducah, 6 to 9 p.m. owned by classmate, Jean Bowman Alford.

Volunteers at the Goreville Ministerial Alliance Thrift Shop on Sept. 22-24-26 will be members of the Goreville United Methodist Church and the Busby Chapel Freewill Baptist Church. Drop in for bargains galore on Tuesday and Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to noon.

Give a gift of family history, a membership to the Johnson County Genealogical and Historical Society, a perfect birthday or anniversary gift. Send a check for \$20 to JCGHS, P.O. Box 1207, Vienna, 62995.

We welcome news from your church, school, club or neighborhood, for this column from Johnson County. Call 618-422-2086 or email to dixieterry85@yahoo.com.

Enjoy the remainder of the week and all that September has to offer.

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Mountain lion sightings reported

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, IDNR, reports that it has confirmed a mountain lion with multiple sightings believed to be the same animal in Union and Jackson counties in Southern Illinois. IDNR noted that mountain lions are rare visitors to the state. This is the 12th confirmed mountain lion in Illinois since 2002. Previous animals have been 2- to 3-year-old males, and DNA analysis suggests they dispersed from a western population, likely in Nebraska and the Dakotas. If this is the case with the current mountain lion, it traveled a great distance without incident to reach Southern Illinois. IDNR advises anyone who encounters the animal to leave it alone and report the sighting to wildlife biologists online at <https://wildlifeillinois.org/.../report-large-carnivore.../>.



Campaign promotes Baby Safe Haven Law

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, DCFS, and the Save Abandoned Babies Foundation have announced the launch of a new campaign designed to immediately connect the public to lifesaving information about the Illinois Newborn Infant Protection Act, commonly referred to as the Baby Safe Haven Law.

The law provides parents in crisis with a safe, anonymous and legal alternative to infant abandonment. Under the law, a parent may hand an unharmed newborn, up to 30 days old, to staff at a designated safe haven and walk away, with no questions asked and without fear of prosecution.

In Illinois, safe havens are hospitals, emergency medical care facilities, police stations, firehouses, college and university police stations and Illinois State Police district headquarters.

The relinquishing parent is offered information about their rights, the Illinois Adoption Registry and postpartum health resources.

However, a parent in distress may decline or misplace the packet during an overwhelming and emotional time.

To bridge the gap, Illinois DCFS is mailing weatherproof stickers to every safe haven in the state with instructions to place them onto their building's safe haven sign. The stickers feature a universal QR code that provides quick, discreet access to information and confidential support for expectant or new parents in crisis through the Save Abandoned Babies Foundation's website (saveabandonedbabies.org).

DCFS reports that since

its enactment in 2001, 151 infants have been safely relinquished under the Baby Safe Haven Law and are now living in loving adoptive families.

To view, print and share brochures, posters and other materials visit dcfs.illinois.gov and click "Baby Safe Haven Law Information" under the Protecting Kids heading.

For more information about the Baby Safe Haven Law or to learn how to take a more active role in preventing infant abandonment, contact the Save Abandoned Babies Foundation by email at info@saveabandonedbabies.org or call 312-440-0229.

Region experiences another heat wave

The forecast was calling for high temperatures only in the 80s on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week in region. The somewhat milder conditions followed another prolonged heat wave which the region experienced during the last full week of summer. Fall started Tuesday, Sept. 22.

The National Weather Service office in Paducah advised that dangerous fall heat and humidity impacted the Southern Illinois, Southeast Missouri and Western Kentucky region last week. The Weather Service said the region faced a "rare level of heat for this late

in the season" starting Tuesday, Sept. 15, and continuing through Sunday, Sept. 20. Record to near record hot temperatures and high humidity were expected. Temperatures during the heat wave were 15 to 20 degrees above normal.

The late season heat wave impacted the region through all of last week. High temperatures in the mid to upper 90s were possible each day through Sunday. A few locations could have hit 100 degrees. Daily peak heat index readings of 100 to 110 degrees were in the forecast. Last week may have been the latest in the season

when 105-degree heat index values were recorded.

At 12:52 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17, the heat index at the Southern Illinois Airport near Murphysboro was 102 degrees. The air temperature at the time was 97. Humidity was at 39 percent.

As a result of the high temperatures and humidity, the Weather Service office issued another heat advisory for the region. The advisory initially was for Tuesday, Sept. 15, and Wednesday, Sept. 16, but was extended through the remainder of the week and then until 7 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 20.

Notice of Public Hearing
Hazardous Waste Permit Renewal

Permittee Dyno Nobel, Inc. 6640 South Millrock Drive Suite 150 Salt Lake City, Utah 84121	Comment Period Begin Date September 24, 2026	Available Documents https://epa.illinois.gov/public-notices/bol-permit-public-notice.html
	Comment Period End Date December 10, 2026	
	Hearing Date and Time November 10, 2026 at 5:00 PM	For More Information Sarah Brubaker (217) 786-0790 TDD phone number (866) 273-5488 sarah.brubaker@illinois.gov
Facility Information Dyno Nobel, Inc. PO Box 134 5570 State Route 3 North Wolf Lake, Illinois 62998	Hearing Location Shawnee Junior-Senior High School 3365 IL-3 Wolf Lake, IL 62998	

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) gives notice of its intent to approve a renewed Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Hazardous Waste Management Permit (draft permit) for Dyno Nobel, Inc., an explosive products manufacturing plant located at 5570 State Route 3 North in Wolf Lake. The permit would require Dyno Nobel, Inc. to complete closure of two former miscellaneous open-burning units, continue corrective action at three solid waste management units (SWMUs) to address past releases, and continue post-closure care, including groundwater monitoring, for two former non-hazardous surface impoundments that were closed as landfills.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND PUBLIC HEARING

On July 9, 2026, the Illinois EPA issued a public notice with a 45-day written public comment period that ended August 24, 2026.

As requested during the initial public comment period, the Illinois EPA is holding an additional public comment period and public hearing to offer an opportunity to the public to provide written and/or oral comments on this proposed action prior to making a final decision. After consideration of any comments received, the Illinois EPA will make a final decision on this proposed action. Please visit the Illinois EPA website to learn more about how to submit an effective comment: <https://epa.illinois.gov/topics/community-relations/public-notices/public-comment.html>.

All public comments received during the public comment period will become part of the Administrative Record (AR) and will be evaluated by the Illinois EPA in making the final decision on the draft permit. The Illinois Pollution Control Board rules that govern the issuance of the permit are found at 35 Ill. Adm. Code 705. The Illinois EPA will respond to public comments and indicate whether additional documents have been included in the AR. Commenters will be notified of the final permit decision and the permit decision appeal process.

Written Public Comment Period

The Illinois EPA invites written public comments on the draft permit during the comment period. All written public comments must be received no later than **11:59 PM on Thursday, December 10, 2026**. Please reference "Dyno Nobel" in all written correspondence. Please submit written comments by email to EPA.PublicHearingCom@Illinois.gov or by mail to:

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Community Relations, MC #5
Attn: Jeff Guy, Hearing Officer
2520 West Iles Avenue PO Box 19276
Springfield, IL 62794-9276

Public Hearing

In addition to accepting written public comments, the Illinois EPA Office of Community Relations, in coordination with the Bureau of Land, will host a public hearing beginning at **5:00 PM on Thursday, November 10, 2026** at the Shawnee Junior-Senior High School, 3365 IL-3, in Wolf Lake. The purpose of this hearing is to receive public comments regarding the Illinois EPA draft permit.

If you wish to provide oral comments at the public hearing, please register in advance using the online form at <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/g/3m678A6KCZ> or scan the QR code. If you are unable to use the online form, you may register by contacting the Hearing Officer by email at EPA.PublicHearingCom@Illinois.gov or by phone at (217) 785-8724. Individuals may also register in person at the hearing.



Requests for Special Accommodations

Requests for special accommodations must be submitted by **5:00 PM on Wednesday, October 21, 2026**. Requests must be made by email to EPA.PublicHearingCom@illinois.gov, by phone at (217) 785-8724, or via TDD at (866) 273-5488.

DOCUMENT REPOSITORY

The interested public is invited to review copies of the permit application, draft permit, and facility fact sheet at the Stinson Memorial Library, 409 S. Main Street, Anna, Illinois 62906.

The AR, including the permit application, draft permit, related information, and all data submitted by the applicant, is available for public inspection at the Illinois EPA office at 2520 West Iles Avenue in Springfield. To view the documents, please make an appointment by calling (217) 786-0790, by emailing sarah.brubaker@illinois.gov, or using TDD at (866) 273-5488. Copies of the draft permit and fact sheet are also available at <https://epa.illinois.gov/public-notices/bol-permit-public-notice.html>. For further RCRA information, please visit <https://www.epa.gov/rcra>.

To request a translation of this letter, please email epa.contactus@illinois.gov

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Laura Sadler
Secretary,
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Please read this...

One more Critter to worry about...

Based on the forecast that was posted at the end of last week by the National Weather Service office in Paducah, our wonderful late September heat wave might actually have come to end by the time you are reading this. High temperatures in the 70s were expected Tuesday and Wednesday. Time to break out the winter coats...

Meanwhile...
As if we did not already have enough to concern ourselves with when it comes to Critters... Wild and crazed squirrels. Vultures circling overhead...looking for a snack. Blood-sucking ticks and mosquitoes. Foxes showing up on the front porch. Armadillos showing up in the front yard. White-tailed deer munching on The Other Half's flowers. Groundhogs munching on pretty much anything The Other Half is growing in her garden. Bears...out there somewhere...maybe. And now...a mountain lion.

Maybe you saw the news last week. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources shared on social media that it had confirmed multiple sightings of a mountain lion in Jackson... and Union counties. Union County just happens to be where we call home.

IDNR reported that mountain lions are rare visitors to the Land of Lincoln. "This is the 12th confirmed mountain lion in Illinois since 2002," the department said. Previous visitors have been young bucks out doing what young bucks do. No surprise there. They might have made their way to our little corner of the world from Nebraska or the Dakotas. I have never been to those places. I do not know why a mountain lion would want to leave.

The department offered some advice that seemed to be pretty much in the category of common sense to me. If you happen to meet up with mountain lion: leave



Zombie squirrel? Nah. Actually, it's an AI generated squirrel with an AI generated nut hanging out in an AI generated tree in the photographer's AI generated hometown.



Counting Crows make stop in Anna. Well. Sort of. Actual crows. Five of 'em. Not the band. The crows were doing whatever crows do on a weekday morning when they were seen one day last week at the Anna City Park. Couldn't have been the band anyway. There are seven Counting Crows in Counting Crows.

it alone. However, given the ways of the world nowadays, I'm guessing there would be folks out there who would do something really silly if they came face to face with such a Critter. They would probably want to figure out how to shoot a video, get the video on TikTok and watch it go viral, which seems to be something everybody wants to do. Never mind that such a choice of an activity just might be the last thing they ever do.

With all of that being said, once I saw the news about a mountain lion wandering around in our neighborhood, I determined that it was time to go out and have a look see. I do the same sort of thing when we hear warnings for severe weather. I go out on the front porch and wait for the storms to arrive.

The Other Half thinks she saw a mountain lion back in the day when she motoring through Southern Illinois. Given the way things go,

By Geof Skinner

if there is a mountain lion wandering around in Union County, it's going to end up in her garden.

Anyway...last Thursday evening, I decided to go out for a drive. Maybe I would spot a mountain lion. Actually, I went out take some photographs of a colorful September sunset. The view from our hometown was really nice. The scene which was unfolding in the late summer sky suggested that the view might be even better outside of town. So I headed west on a frequently driven rural road.

Turned out the view of the sunset was indeed nice outside of town. I found a spot to stop and take some more photos. The stop turned into one of those chance encounters that sometimes happens on The Journey Through Life. A fellow traveler stopped behind my car. Once the traveler saw what I was doing, an invitation was extended to check out a location which would offer another nice vantage point for a picture or two. I extended my thanks... and was grateful for the kind words which were shared.

I never did see a mountain lion. I did, however, spot three white-tailed deer in a field not far from the road. If I were those Critters, which could make a tasty treat for a mountain lion, I would be keeping my eyes open.

In the meantime...I guess I will keep my own eyes wide open the next time I go wandering through a creek bed at the Trail of Tears State Forest...

Meanwhile...
Speaking of Critters...a chipmunk was spotted in our backyard last Friday morning. The little Critter was moving pretty fast. I'm guessing it was keeping its eyes wide open for a mountain lion. Or a bear.

And then there was Rocky. As in Raccoon...

Bob and I were sitting out on the porch swing last Thursday night. The mosquitoes weren't too bad, which, given recent experiences, was a good thing.

When we went out on the porch, young Rocky apparently felt like being neighborly and just kind of strolled up on the east end of the porch. After exchanging pleasantries, we sent Rocky on his way.

Rocky, however, was persistent. And Rocky thought he was sneaky, too. A few minutes later, he came strolling back up on the porch. This time from the west end. He walked confidently in the direction of the porch swing and its two occupants. Bob, being the cat he is, ignored Rocky. I guess if Rocky had been another cat, Bob might have feigned a little bit of interest.

Rocky got closer. Paused. Looked at me. Moved closer. Paused. Looked at me again. Didn't seem to care at all about my presence. I finally started banging on the porch floor with my Big Red Make a Raccoon Go Away Stick. Rocky paused again. Uttered something not very nice in Raccoon and left in the direction from whence he came. (I always like to be able to use the word "whence" in a sentence. Makes me feel like William Shakespeare.)

Rocky disappeared into the dark. Bob resumed an evening nap on the porch swing. I resumed looking for a mountain lion...taking comfort in the words of a song by The Woodbox Gang which declares: "We ain't got no panthers around here..." (even though a mountain lion and a panther ain't the same thing...)

Council From page 1

their passage of a resolution which would address concerns about the impact of 250 or more layoffs at the Choate Center.

"We can't handle this kind of loss," Petersen said. "We're fighting it every day."

The resolution in support of the Choate Center declares that:

"...Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center serves a vital function in the Illinois Department of Human Services' system of care for individuals with severe developmental disabilities and mental illness, including those who have been found not guilty by reason of insanity or unfit to stand trial in criminal cases, and

"...for many of these individuals, Choate is the only suitable place in Southern Illinois that can care for them and meet their needs; and

"...Choate is an important source of good jobs and meaningful work in Southern Illinois, employing over 450 people at the facility; and

"...Choate employees have long advocated for improved funding, staffing and training opportunities to better meet the needs of residents, while the Illinois Department of Human Services instead has transferred a number of residents to other

Notes From page 1

recorded a magnitude 2.4 earthquake on Monday, Sept. 14, in Southern Illinois. The earthquake was center just northeast of Valier.

The Union County Sheriff's Office is congratulating Deputy Dustin Brimm on his graduation from the police academy in early September. The department shared that Deputy Brimm has successfully completed the demanding training required to serve as a sworn deputy sheriff.

Jamison K. Gent recently joined the Union County state's attorney's office as an assistant state's attorney. He joined Thomas E. Bucher as an assistant state's attorney in the office.

Looks like lots of activities are being planned for October's ColorFest celebrations in Anna and Jonesboro.

Looking ahead, just a bit: Trick-or-treating is planned from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 24, in the downtown Anna and Jonesboro Square areas.

A free program titled "I am Harriet" is planned from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Sept. 25 at Stinson Memorial Public Library in Anna. The program, presented by Dr. Clover Johnson, will highlight the important role of Harriet Tubman in the nation's history.

Shawnee Hills Arts Council in Anna is planning to host an artists talk and closing reception for a gallery exhibit by the Artist Collective on Race, Equity and Unity from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 26. The arts council is located at 125 W. Davie St. The exhibit has been on display during September.

Cobden High School's annual Purple Out Taylor Tomazzoli Memorial Scholarship Volleyball Game is set for Oct. 2.

Third-grade students at Anna Junior High School learned a lot about agriculture last week. Apples were the topic of an Ag in the Classroom activity. The students also learned about a calf they have "adopted" through a St. Louis Dairy Council program.

developmental centers elsewhere in the state where they have struggled to adjust to these new settings; and

"...in July 2026, DHS announced plans to further slash services at Choate and lay off some 250 staff at the facility; and

"...DHS has announced that the treatment program provided on the 'stepdown' unit that serves individuals with mental illness who are ending their term of confinement mandated by the courts will be moved to Madden Mental Health Center in the Chicago metro area, which is not equipped to serve such a population; and

"...such a drastic cut to mental health services available in Southern Illinois would profoundly affect the availability and quality of care for vulnerable Union County residents; and

"...Union County residents in need of such care for severe mental illness and developmental disabilities would be forced to seek care further away from family, friends, and support systems."

The city is joining an effort which seeks for IDHS to reverse its decision to drastically downsize Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center and urging the State of Illinois to reverse the trend of divestment in mental health services available to Southern Illinois residents.

The Anna Junior High School softball and baseball teams each posted 3-0 records in tournament play on their way to winning Southern Illini Conference championships. The softball team won its fourth conference title in a row by defeating Egyptian, Vienna and Century. The baseball team posted wins over Jonesboro, Cobden and Vienna.

Anna Junior High School's girls' cross country team won first place at last week's Fort Massac Invitational in Metropolis.

The Anna Junior High School marching band was among the bands which participated in the recent Murphysboro Apple Festival grand parade.

Shawnee School District 84 has announced this year's FFA officers: Madalyn Schuster is president, Shelby Pender is vice president, Adalyn Follis is secretary, Kash Mikel is treasurer and Carlie Chapman is reporter.

Farmers Daughter Jewelry, Boutique and Mercantile in downtown shared on social media that it was moving to a new location in downtown Anna. Saturday, Sept. 19, was the business's last day at 316 S. Main St.; its new address, coming soon, will be at 308 S. Main St.

The Friends of Stinson Memorial Library are planning to have a ColorFest book sale Oct. 9-11. The sale will be at the library on South Main Street in Anna.

September is National Library Card Sign-Up Month. Local libraries note that having a library card offers access to a wide range of resources...and not just books.

A Constitution Day trivia competition was held Sept. 17 at Shawnee Community College. The competition featured questions about U.S. history and government.

Shawnee Community College celebrated the birthday of the college's mascot, Bernie, on Sept. 18.

More than 70 people are in the cast for the upcoming production of "Frozen the Musical" at Shawnee Community College.

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