

THE GAZETTE-DEMOCRAT

The Talk And Cobden Review • Serving Union County Since 1849

Thursday, December 25, 2025

Anna, Illinois

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Volume 179, Number 3

News Notes

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



Anna-Jo Garden Club decorated a tree at the Anna City Park.

Merry Christmas to all of our readers.

It's Christmas break time for Union County schools.

Local banks, government offices and many business will be closed in observance of the Christmas holiday.

“A Night at The Oscars” has been announced as the theme for the annual Union County Chamber of Commerce gala, which is set for Feb. 7 at Havisham House in Alto Pass. The chamber is welcoming sponsors for the event.

Anna-Jonesboro Community High School is voicing its gratitude to the Derek Harvell Memorial Fund for a \$500 donation to help with overdue lunch accounts for students.

A-JCHS Beta Club students gave up a recent Friday night to help Delta Theta Tau wrap presents for a great cause.

A-JCHS is looking to hire a new head football coach.

The A-JCHS boys' basketball team is scheduled to play in the upcoming Eldorado Holiday Tournament. A-J is slated to tip off tournament play Friday night against Eldorado.

Anna School District 37 is thanking Anna-Jonesboro Elks Lodge No. 1641 for the lodge's generous donation to district's food pantry. District 37 also is thanking the Edward Jones office in downtown Anna (where Phillip McGrath is financial advisor and Keri Campbell is branch office administrator) for hosting a food drive and making two large food deliveries to the district in the last two months. Gratitude also was expressed to the community members and clients who shared their unsurpassed generosity.

The Anna School District 37 pre-kindergarten program hosted a family Christmas workshop. The workshop included decorating gingerbread houses, making a Christmas photo frame and creating a keepsake ornament.

Shawnee School District 84 is congratulating two students for being school winners in recent Veterans of Foreign Wars contests. The local contests were sponsored by the Anna VFW. Sereniti Mefford was honored in the Voice of Democracy oration contest. Murphy Wilson was honored in the Patriot's Pen essay contest.

(continued on page 2)



Anna police officer graduates

Anna Police Department Officer Tyler Smith graduated on Dec. 5 from the Southwestern Illinois College Police Academy in Belleville. He graduated after completing a 16-week training program. Smith was presented with his diploma by his father, Tim Smith, who is the retired assistant chief of the Anna Police Department. Photo provided.

Southern Seven names new executive director

Southern Seven Health Department and Head Start on Dec. 18 announced the appointment of Jennifer Parks as its new executive director.

Parks has been a dedicated leader within Southern Seven for many years, serving most recently as the early childhood administrator and interim co-executive director. Her leadership has guided the agency through critical transitions, strengthened community partnerships and supported the continued delivery of high-quality health and early childhood services across the seven southernmost counties of Illinois.

In her new role as executive director, Parks will oversee all public health, WIC, environmental health, health education and Head Start/Early Head Start operations. She will lead the agency's long-term strategic initiatives which are focused on expanding access to family services, enhancing early childhood outcomes and maintaining excellence in public health programming throughout the region.

"I am honored to serve the communities of Southern Illinois in this capacity," Parks said in a news release. "Southern Seven has a long history of supporting children, families and public



Jennifer Parks

health. I am committed to strengthening our programs, supporting our dedicated staff and ensuring our agency continues to be a trusted resource for the people we serve."

The Southern Seven Health Department Board expressed confidence in Parks' vision, professionalism and commitment to the agency's mission of promoting health, safety and school readiness for all families in the region.

Southern Seven Health Department is a public health department that serves communities of the seven southernmost counties in Illinois focusing on disease prevention, promoting healthy lifestyles and ensuring access to healthcare services and serves as the Head Start Grantee for the region.

White Christmas not common in region, unlikely this year



Snowy and cold in 2022

Snow covered the landscape around Christmas time when the photograph was taken in 2022 at the Anna City Park. Records kept by the National Weather Service office in Paducah showed that the ground was covered by several inches of snow. The high on Christmas Day in 2022 was in the low 20s. The low for the day was close to 0. With snow on the ground, the area experienced a white Christmas in 2022. File photo.

A white Christmas is not very common in the Southern Illinois, Southeast Missouri and Western Kentucky region.

And it does not look like there will be much of a chance for a white Christmas in the region this year. Temperatures are expected to be 10 to 15 degrees above normal through Christmas Day. The outlook from the National Weather Service office in Paducah, as of late last week, was calling for mostly cloudy and warm conditions on Christmas Eve, which is Wednesday, Dec. 24. A light shower is possible. Highs could range from 62 to 67 degrees on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Day, which is Thursday, Dec. 25, is again expected to be cloudy and warm, with another chance for a light shower. High temperatures could range from 65 to 70.

Weather History for the Holiday

In a look back at climate history for the holiday, the Weather Service office reported that measurable snowfall has occurred on Christmas Day on three occasions, with the most recent being in 1992.

There have been nine years, classified as a white Christmas, with a snow depth of

1 inch or greater. This last happened in 2022, when 2 inches of snow covered the ground on Christmas morning. The largest snow depth on Christmas morning was back in 2004, when 9 inches were on the ground.

The snowiest Christmas Days on record include 4.0 inches in 1969, 3.0 inches in 1992, 2.0 inches in 1975 and a trace in 2012 (which was a tie with a previous year).

The most snow depth on Christmas Day included 9.0 inches in 2004, 5.0 inches in 1963, 4.0 inches in 1969, 3.0 inches in 2010 and 2.0 inches in 2022 (which was a tie with a previous year).

Measurable precipitation has fallen 29 percent of the time. Over an inch fell on three different occasions, most recently in 1987, when precipitation totaled 3.78 inches. That was the wettest Christmas Day on record. Other wet days included 1.09 inches of precipitation in 1982, 1.01 inches in 1951, 0.95 of an inch in 2006 and 0.70 of an inch in 1944.

When it comes to temperatures, highs have been in the 30s and 40s for a good majority of Christmas Days, accounting for 63 percent of all years on record. The nor-

mal high for the day is 44. The normal low is 27.

The warmest highs included 74 in 2021, 71 in 2016, 70 in 2019, 69 in 1982, 66 in 1940 and 64 in 2023.

The coldest highs included 12 in 1983, 19 in 1985, 23 in 2022, 24 in 2000, 24 in 1980 and 25 in 2020.

On most Christmas mornings, low temperatures have been in the 20s and 30s, accounting for 62 percent of all years on record. Lows have bottomed out below 0 twice, most recently in 2004, when the temperature was 8 degrees below zero. There also have been three years when the low remained in the 50s, most recently in 2021.

The coldest low temperatures on Christmas Day included 8 degrees below zero in 2004, 5 degrees below zero in 1983, 3 in 2022, 7 in 2000 and 1980.

The warmest lows included 51 in 2015, 50 in 2021, 50 in 1982, 49 in 1971 and 46 in 2024 (which was a tie with a previous year).

Climate data has been recorded at Barkley Regional Airport in West Paducah since 1949. Prior to that, records were kept in downtown Paducah back to December of 1937.



Anna Junior High School softball team honored

The Anna City Council has honored the Anna Junior High School softball team. The Class M state championship team was recognized at the council's regular meeting held Tuesday evening, Dec. 16. The meeting was at Anna City Hall. The championship team's roster included players Addi Scott, Aliyah Potter-Casey, Brynlee Miller, Jenna Hoehner, Kaegan Craig, Kailyn Won, Katie Stegle, Kenley Boyd, Kenslie Ford, Lillie Beanland, Niah Chotner, Tori Cummins and Vayda Joles and coaches Erin Suggs and Brad Hoehner. Mayor Steve Hartline presented certificates of recognition to the team members. The team was congratulated by the mayor and city council members Michael Bigler, Kathy Bryan, Torie Carter and Martha Ann Webb. "We're very proud of you," the mayor told the team.



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News Notes

(continued from page 1)
Alyssa Fabian is the Cobden High School winner in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Voice of Democracy audio essay contest. She received a certificate and money.

The Cobden School District honored 2025 Hall of Fame inductees last week: Bailey Bunyan for cross country and the 2015 high school baseball team.

The Appleknocker Holiday Tournament is slated Dec. 26, 27 and 29 at Cobden High School. Teams in the basketball tournament include the host school, Egyptian, Johnston City, Elverado, Century, Zeigler-Royalton and Pope County.

The Lick Creek School PTO brought Santa for a visit to the school.

The Christmas Shop at the Union County Museum in downtown Cobden wrapped up a successful holiday season last Saturday.

A “Stuffy Sleepover” event for stuffed animals is planned Jan. 2-3 at Stinson Memorial Public Library in Anna.

Gasoline once again is available to purchase at Cobden One Stop.

Starting in 2026, Caleb Hale is planning to take the lead on a new local photography

Wreath Match campaign underway

The City of Anna is working to ensure that a wreath is placed on the grave of every veteran buried at the city’s cemetery in 2026.

The city is promoting a Wreath Match campaign as part of the national Wreaths Across America program. Information posted by the city on social media shared that during the campaign, Wreaths Across America will match all wreaths sponsored through a registered sponsorship group for placement on next year’s national Wreaths Across America Day.

The campaign started Dec. 13 and continues through Dec. 31. The information posted on social media shared that checks can be sent to the city or wreaths can be purchased directly from the city’s page at ILAILA - Anna City Cemetery) with Wreaths Across America at <https://www.wreathsacross-america.org/.../Sponsorships...>

A Wreaths Across America ceremony was held Dec. 13 at the Anna City Cemetery. Organizers reported that the most volunteers ever turned out to help place wreaths on the graves of veterans.

group called the Shawnee Hills Photography Collective. The group’s first meeting is set for 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 29, at the Shawnee Hills Arts Council in Anna.

Starting on Jan. 6, 2026, the Shawnee Hills Arts Council in Anna plans to offer a Zumba class led by Amy Sturgeon from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. A \$5 donation will be requested for each class.

Dr. Mandy Hannan, the dean of allied health and nursing at Shawnee Community College, received a doctor of nursing practice degree from Northern Kentucky University earlier in December.

Shawnee Community College campuses were scheduled to close Wednesday, Dec. 24, for the holidays. Campuses are slated to reopen Monday, Jan. 5. The college’s spring semester begins Jan. 12.

The visitors center at Giant City State Park near Makanda has announced holiday closings which include Thursday, Dec. 25, Saturday, Dec. 27, Sunday, Dec. 28, and Thursday, Jan. 1.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources invites residents to step into 2026 with a First Day Hike at an Illinois state park on New Year’s Day. The department is planning to host self-guided hikes at 17 state parks, throughout the state, including Giant City State Park near Makanda, on Jan. 1. The free, family-friendly hikes are available to the public. The First Day Hike program is an initiative in partnership with America’s State Parks Foundation. The organization began the event in 1992 in Massachusetts. The campaign encourages participants nationwide to hike, bike and engage in activities in state parks on the first day of the new year.



Traffic accident along old U.S. Route 51

Multiple emergency services personnel responded to the scene of a traffic accident which occurred last week along old U.S. Route 51 between Cobden and Anna. The accident happened around mid-morning on Wednesday, Dec. 17, near the intersection of old U.S. Route 51 and Hess Lane. The passenger car involved in the accident apparently ran off of old U.S. Route 51 and came to rest on railroad tracks near the highway. Reports at the scene indicated that the driver was picked up at the scene by a relative.

More seniors eligible for property tax relief under new Illinois law

The Illinois Department of Revenue, IDOR, is reminding senior homeowners about the Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral Program, which has been expanded thanks to legislation signed by Gov. JB Pritzker.

“Our seniors have spent their lives building our communities and strengthening our state and they deserve stability and peace of mind. This legislation helps ensure that more older Illinoisans can remain in their homes without the fear of losing them to rising property costs,” the governor said in a news release.

The new law amends the Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral Act, introducing income eligibility enhancements effective in tax year 2025 and beyond.

Starting in tax year 2025, the maximum household income for eligibility will increase from \$65,000 to \$75,000 in 2026, then to \$77,000 in 2027 and to \$79,000 beginning in 2028 and thereafter.

To qualify for the Senior Tax Deferral Program, homeowners must meet the following criteria:

Be 65 years of age or older

by June 1 of the filing year. Own and occupy the primary residence for a minimum of three years. Have no outstanding property taxes or special assessments on the property. Maintain adequate fire or casualty insurance.

Eligible seniors may defer up to \$7,500 per year, including interest and fees, or as much as 80 percent of the equity in their home, whichever is lower.

The deadline to apply for the 2025 Senior Tax Deferral Program is March 1, 2026.

“The new law allows more Illinois seniors to qualify for tax deferral and stay current on their property taxes without risking their homes,” IDOR director David Harris said in a news release. Harris encouraged those 65 or older who own and live in their home to see if they now qualify and apply with their county collector.

To apply, seniors must contact their local county collector's office to receive an application. For general questions concerning the program, taxpayers may visit IDOR's website at tax.illinois.gov or contact their local county collector's office.

Illinois extends open enrollment deadline for health care plans

By Peter Hancock
Capitol News Illinois
SPRINGFIELD – Illinois residents who buy health insurance on the state-run marketplace now have a little more time to sign up for coverage for the upcoming year.

Officials at Get Covered Illinois, the new state-run marketplace for insurance sold under the Affordable Care Act, announced Tuesday, Dec. 16, they have extended the open enrollment deadline to Dec. 31 for coverage that begins Jan. 1, 2026.

Consumers also have until Jan. 15 to sign up for coverage that takes effect Feb. 1.

Officials said the extension is intended to give people more time to receive help choosing a plan for the upcoming year as changes in federal policy are about to take effect. Free enrollment support is available from the Get Covered Illinois customer assistance center or by calling 1-866-311-1119 (TTY 711).

Many consumers can expect to see significant increases in the cost of their plans as enhanced federal subsidies are set to expire at the end of the year. Those enhanced subsidies were enacted in 2021 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Congress so far has not been able to agree on a plan to extend them beyond the end of this year.

First year of state marketplace

This year marks the first open enrollment period in which Get Covered Illinois is operating as a state-based marketplace independent of the federally run HealthCare.gov.

“Shifting to a state-based marketplace has given Illinois the authority and flexibility to make decisions that put our residents first,” Get Covered Illinois director Morgan Winters said in a statement. “This enrollment deadline extension is exactly the kind of customer-focused action that we could not take as a federally facilitated marketplace.”

Costs will also increase next year for people insured by Medicare, the federal health care program for people over age 65. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced in November that Part B premiums will go up 9.7 percent next year, to \$202.90 per month, while the standard deductible for Part B coverage will go up 10.1 percent, to \$283.

Medicare Part B is optional coverage that pays for outpatient services such as office visits, x-rays and preventive treatment.

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.



Early December snow

An early December snow which fell on the windshield of the photographer's car combined with banners in the Village of Cobden to create a scene for the holiday season.

Shawnee College awarded \$542,000 in state grant funds

Shawnee Community College has been awarded a combined \$542,000 in state grant funding to expand hands-on training, workforce development and student support services across the district.

The college announced in a news release that it has received \$280,000 through a Taking Back the Trades Round 4 Grant and \$262,000 through an Innovative Bridges and Transitions Grant.

Together, the grants will fund the acquisition of a mobile innovation lab designed to enhance the college’s Career and Technical Education, CTE, and allied health and nursing programs, expand dual credit opportunities, support workforce and community education and strengthen wrap-around student support services.

The mobile innovation lab will bring hands-on simulation training directly to students and communities, traveling to district high schools, Shawnee Community College extension centers and community events. This approach removes barriers to access while providing real-world learning experiences aligned with high-demand career pathways, the college shared. “This investment allows us to meet students where they are,” said Kristy Stephenson, dean of career and technical education. “By taking training

on the road, we can expand access to high-quality, hands-on education and strengthen our partnerships with schools, employers, and communities throughout our district.”

The mobile lab will play a key role in connecting education to workforce needs, supporting both traditional students and adult learners seeking new skills, certifications or career transitions.

The college said the grants reflect an ongoing commitment to empowering learners, enriching communities and building a strong regional workforce.

Dry conditions return to area

A Thursday, Dec. 18, update from the U.S. Drought monitor showed that parts of the Southern Illinois area once again were experiencing drought conditions.

Abnormally dry conditions were reported in west-central-northwest Union County, all of Jackson County, extreme western Williamson County and southeast Massac County.

No drought conditions were reported in east-southeast Union County, most of eastern Williamson County, central and western Massac County and all of Johnson, Alexander and Pulaski counties.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR CORRUGATED METAL PIPES

Request for Proposal (RFP) packets are available in the Union County Engineer’s office and on our website at www.unioncountytill.gov. Questions regarding specifications may be directed to the County Engineer, Amy Ferris via email at aferris@unioncountytill.gov.

Sealed bids should be submitted to the Union County Engineer by 10 AM on Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at the Union County Engineer’s Office.

The County reserves the right to reject any and all bids received and to waive or not waive any informalities or irregularities in bids or bid procedures, and to accept or further negotiate costs, terms, or conditions of any bid determined by the County to be in the best interest of the County.

Union County Engineer
204 West Mississippi Street
Jonesboro, Illinois 62952

Rusty’s Home Center announces Christmas essay winners

Rusty’s Home Center’s holiday tradition continues this year with their annual “What Christmas Means to Me” essay contest. For years, Rusty’s has awarded the student with the best essay from each Union County school with a stocking full of toys.

The winning essays for the 2025 contest follow:

Cheyenne Flores
Shawnee

Christmas to me is about family. I start Christmas Eve off by waking my parents early. After I wake up my parents, I help my mom make breakfast. For breakfast we eat waffles and sausage. Next, we head to my uncle’s house. At my uncle’s house, I play with my cousins. We like to play a lot of games until it is time for dinner. For dinner we have pizza! After dinner is my favorite because we get to open presents! Christmas is my favorite because I get to spend time with my family I normally do not see.

Kyla Kueker
Anna

What is your favorite holiday? Mine is Christmas. I think Christmas is a time to spend with family. I think Christmas is fun to go look at lights on houses. Christmas is when we celebrate Jesus’s birthday.

I like to watch movies with my family, like A Christmas Story. We watch it every Christmas Eve. We look at houses in Marion. We celebrate Jesus’s birthday because it is Christmas and the day he was born. I like to bake cookies with my sister, my mom, and dad.

I love Christmas so much because I get to spend time with

my family, looking at Christmas lights on houses, and we Celebrate Jesus’s birthday. What is your favorite part of Christmas?

Miles Jiter
Jonesboro

Ho-Ho-Ho! Merry Christmas! Christmas is my favorite holiday!

Christmas to me means spending time with my family, traditions, and presents.

To start, Christmas means spending time with family. Every year we go to my Nana’s and we open large bags of toys. We also go to my Grandma’s and we open gifts. At my Nana’s we eat lunch and supper. At my Grandma’s we also all eat. At my Grandma’s I help give out the gifts. At my Nana’s she always gives me and my cousins ornaments.

Next, Christmas means tradition. Every year on Christmas Eve we watch a Christmas movie. We normally watch “The Santa Clause.”

Lastly, Christmas means presents. I normally open gifts first! When we open gifts, I have to wait until we finish to be able to play with the gifts I received.

In conclusion, Christmas is my favorite holiday because it is the most wonderful time of the year.

Blakeley Bryan
Lick Creek

Hello! I’m going to tell you the three main things I love about Christmas. I love God, family, and food. So please sit back and enjoy my essay (with hot chocolate of course).

God is our savior and it’s His birthday. Why not celebrate? God died for us to save us from our sins. He did! God loves us

all the same, and we should be happy He made us. Some people don’t believe in God, but I do.

Now, I will talk about food. On Christmas, my dad buys very delicious cupcakes. I know this year and every year my dad will try to make even better food. Especially when my dad makes jokes about the food! My favorite food is ham and mashed potatoes. For dessert my dad usually buys a delicious cake.

I hope you enjoyed reading my essay about God, family, and food. That’s the end of my essay. I wish you a merry Christmas! See ya later alligator!

Cici Kinder
Dongola

On Christmas Eve we open gifts at my grandparent’s house. We have this tradition where we see who can make the most funniest cookie. Then we open gifts, but with a twist. We draw names and they open their gifts. Then on Christmas Day we open gifts at my house. Christmas is for family to be happy.

Roger Flores
Cobden

Christmas is the most wonderful day of the year. The first thing that makes Christmas so special is spending time with my whole family because it makes me happy.

The next reason I love Christmas is listening to Christmas music. This is important to me because me and my family sing the songs.

The final thing that makes Christmas special to me is watching Christmas movies. I love this because we love watching them.



Shawnee student Cheyenne Flores pictured here with her prize.



The essay winner from the Anna school district is Kyla Kueker



Essay winners
Each of the winners of Rusty’s Home Center’s received a stocking full of toys as part of the “What Christmas Means to Me” essay contest. Pictured with one of the prizes are, clockwise from the top, Cici Kinder from Dongola, Roger Flores of Cobden, Miles Jiter from Jonesboro and Blakeley Bryan of Lick Creek.

County Line News

(Mill Creek and Upper Elco)

Well, we sure aren’t going to have a white Christmas, are we? The shortest day and the start of winter came and went with a bit of a chill in the air. That chill won’t linger this week. The forecast as of Sunday, Dec. 21 is calling for 60 degrees weather this week, with a high in the 70s and low in the 60s on Dec. 25.

It would appear that an early spring is arriving instead. BUT, oh wait...by this coming Sunday, Dec. 28, our highs will be in the 40s and the lows in the 20s. Hmmm, still too warm for snow, but it’s at least closer to what we are accustomed to for late December.

Steve Hornbeak and Friends and Family performed at St. Anne’s Church in Anna, Sunday afternoon. They are always a joy to hear and we appreciate all they do

for the community.

Mill Creek Baptist Church held regular services Sunday morning with a message about the birth of Jesus. Scripture from Matthew 1: 18- 2: 23 and Luke 2 tell us that an angel gave not only Joseph and Mary, but the shepherds also, assurance and direction. The Wise Men were also given divine instruction that led to the prophesies of the Old Testament being fulfilled.

The baby Jesus came as a King. He was honored by the Wise Men as a king would be. Their gifts: Gold-a gift befitting a king; Frankincense- a gift for a priest; Myrrh- a gift predicting His sacrifice. He was the greatest gift ever given to us. We just have to accept it. Herod tried to stop his coming, many tried to stop his ministry, so many today continue to try to stop his

By Suzan Harvel

message. That’s never going to happen, as they’ll learn the hard way. God’s plan is still, and always will be, in action.

Candlelight services were held at Mill Creek Baptist Church Sunday evening at 6 p.m. led by Natalie Richardson. This was a beautiful song service, with scripture readings throughout that tell the Christmas Story, and all were enhanced by candlelight. Thanks to Natalie for putting a wonderful service together.

Those added to the prayer list are: the families of Betty Garrett, Katy Williams, Frank Millis, and James Wilkins. Please keep these folks and many others in your prayers. Losing a loved one is hard, but doing so around the holidays adds an extra layer of pain.

Merry Christmas to all...

Union County Fixin’s

Nellie’s Peanut Brittle
2 c. sugar
1/2 c. water
1/2 c. corn syrup

In clean, dry iron skillet, combine above and bring to a boil. Let boil on medium heat until it reaches soft ball stage. Stir edges toward the center, to keep it mixed and to keep it from sticking, but do not over stir!

When it reaches the soft ball, stage add:

2 c. raw peanuts
2 tbsp butter, softened

Press nuts down into syrup mixture and let come to boil again. Stir just enough to keep it from sticking while the butter melts. Let it boil until it reaches a light brown color and nuts “pop”.

Add:
1 tsp. vanilla and 1 tsp. baking soda, mixed with 1 tsp. water.

Stir well and then pour onto a large buttered cookie sheet with sides.

Spread it out, making sure nuts are evenly distributed. Let it cool completely. Break it up and store in air tight containers.



Meeting at Subway

The Little Egypt Red Hat Ladies met at Sub Way in Anna. Pictured are, front row, Barbara McKneely, Theresa Lister, Connie Harvel, birthday girl Anitha Perez. Back row, Brenda Lovelace who won the door prize, Carole Anderson, Sherri Annable, Queen Mom Kathy Milam, Lillian Milam, Kay Johnson hostesses.



(above) Dale Denny chairman of the deacons at Anna First Baptist Church presented Rev. Lupe Lopez with a Christmas gift from the church family.

(left) Special thanks was given to Menda Cash, librarian at Anna First Baptist Church, for making 83 angels with 116 names on them in memory of loved ones for their church Christmas tree. Photo by Martha Ann Webb

News from

Anna Nazarene Church

Sunday, Dec. 21
The morning worship service was held at 10:35 a.m. on December 21, 2025.

Announcements were given by Jessica Elkins. The worship service was led by Pastor Wright and the worship team. The message “The Fourth Sunday of Advent- Perfect Love” was brought by Pastor Wright from 1 John 4:7-12. 1 John 4:8, Romans 5:8, 1 Peter 1:18-19, 1 John 4:11-12, Matthew 22:37-39,

Galatians 5:13-14, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, John 3:16, Romans 8:38-39, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Matthew 5: 43-48, 1 John 3:18.

There was no evening service on December 21, 2025.

Celebrating a birthday this week is: 22nd Pastor Randy Wright.

Our prayers and sympathy are extended to the families of Raymond Theis, Frank Millis and Carol Dillinger in the loss of their loved ones.

Wednesday, Dec. 24
Christmas Eve Candlelight & Communion Service at 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 27
Breakfast - 9:00 a.m. Sunday School - 9:30 a.m. Morning Worship Service-10:35 a.m. No Evening Service.

You may contact the church by calling the church office at 618-833-6702 and leaving a message if necessary or by calling Pastor Wright at 618-534-7103

✝

"The Preaching Pen"

Facing the Trials of Life

Life is a mixture of experiences, both positive and negative. Often, human nature focuses too much on challenging times while not fully appreciating good times. During times of hardship, a Christian’s faith is truly tested. Our response communicates to God how committed we are to Him.

Many want to wait for trials to ease up before becoming faithful; postponing obedience is disobedience. God requires us to exhibit proper behavior in dealing with tough times. Faithfulness begins with acceptance of God’s will, not our own, Matthew 16:24. In the book of Jeremiah 29:11, Judah wanted immediate escape from captivity, but God called them to “settle in.” Why should we think any different?

God commanded Judah: 1) build homes and dwell in them, 2) plant gardens and harvest from them, 3) watch out for false teachers, 4) trust in God’s plan. This is sound advice for us today. Building homes means stabilizing one’s life, investing in one’s spiritual future. We can do that today through study of God’s word, prayer, and attending His church, Matthew 16:18. Planting gardens means to thrive in the conditions in which we live. For many, attitude of work is the key to having a successful life. Due to sin, a Christian should always be rebuilding their life. Idleness produces sin, 2 Thessalonians 3:11. Being on guard against false teachers is a constant vigil for a Christian. Christ relates that there will be false Christs and false prophets, Matthew 24:24, and Paul warns against Satan and his false apostles, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. Christians must not allow these imposters to jeopardize our souls, Ephesians 5:6.

God’s people must influence those contrary to God’s will; Christians are to shine within our “places,” Romans 13:1-2. For us to do so, we must trust in God’s timing; God’s love is shown within His plan for us, one of future and hope, Hebrews 13:14. We can be God’s child wherever we are, Philippians 4:7, and whatever circumstances we find surrounding us. Jesus offers a wonderful gift, peace, John 14:27; His peace keeps corrupting influences of world away from us and focuses us on God. Let us draw us near to Him and show others how they can as well.

✝

Ryan Thornsberry,
Anna Church of Christ

✝

Obituaries

Michael "Mike" Alva Duskey

Michael "Mike" Alva Duskey, born Feb. 13, 1945, to Alva and Ruby (Lacy) Duskey, left to go home with Jesus on Dec. 18, 2025 approx. 8 a.m.

He was preceded in death by his parents Alva and Ruby (Lacy) Duskey, his wife Janice Ann Duskey, his sister Marilyn (Duskey) Patterson, and his brother Ernest Forehand.



er, loved riding horses, and dancing on the week-ends.

He was a great man, loved by his family, friends, and community. He will be dearly missed.

"Blessed are those that mourn, For they shall be comforted." Matthew 5:4

Visitation was held on Monday, Dec. 22 at Crain Funeral Home in Anna. Military Honors were held by the area veterans of the Carroll P. Foster Post #3455 followed by the conclusion of services.

The family requests with gratitude that memorial contribution be made to the Anna VFW Honor Guards.

The cremation of Michael "Mike" Alva Duskey will be personally handled by the staff of Crain Funeral Home.

Crain Funeral Home in Anna, Illinois is in charge of arrangements.



Neal Deon Egner

Neal Deon Egner, age 84, of Carbondale, passed away on Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025 at Memorial Hospital in Carbondale.

He was born on April 13, 1941 to Cornelius Jasper and Iris Mae (Ritter) Egner in Cairo, Illinois.

On Nov. 26, 1963, he married Linda Jewell Manus at the First Baptist Church in Jonesboro, Ill.

Deon graduated from Southern Illinois University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture and then went to work for the Illinois Department of Agriculture as a Livestock Marketing Specialist.

As a child, he was baptized and joined Cache Chapel United Methodist Church, later transferred membership to Sherman United Methodist Church in Sherman, Ill., and finally transferred his membership to Grace United Methodist Church in Carbondale, Ill.

Deon was an avid fisherman and loved listening to or watching the St. Louis Cardinals.

Survivors include his wife of over 62 years, Linda; Children, Michele Egner (Giri) Giritharan of Carbondale, Ill., Brent Egner of Kansas City, Mo., and Nita Egner (Dean) Lewis of Almena, Kan.; seven grandchildren, Dr. Andrew Giritharan of Nashville, Tenn., Dr. Ashley Giritharan (Alejandro) Urunuela of Edmond, Okla., Zachary Lewis of Windsor, Colo., Evan Lewis of Evans, Colo., Drake Lewis of Timnath, Colo., Brock Lewis of West Des Moines, Iowa, and Grant Lewis



of Kansas City, Mo.; and one great-grandson, Mateo Urunuela.

Along with his parents, he is preceded in death by his sister, Elaine (Egner) Brown.

Visitation was held on Thursday, Dec. 18, at Crain Pleasant Grove - Murdale Funeral Home.

Funeral Services was held on Friday, Dec. 19, 2025 with Larry Gilbert officiating at Crain Pleasant Grove - Murdale Funeral Home.

Interment followed the service at Cache Chapel Cemetery in Ullin, Ill.

The family requests with gratitude that memorial contributions be made to Cache Chapel Cemetery and/or Grace United Methodist Church lawncare. Memorial envelopes will be available at the funeral home.

Crain Pleasant Grove-Murdale Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

To view the obituary and/or to leave an online condolence for the family, please visit www.crainonline.com.



Jack W. Womick

Jack W. Womick, 84, of Littleton CO, formerly of Carbondale, passed away on Sunday, Dec. 7, 2025, at his home.

He was born in Anna on Jan. 23, 1941, to William E. and Helen L. (Jones) Womick, who preceded him in death. Jack was a graduate of Anna-Jonesboro Community High School.

In his early years, he owned and operated a trucking company alongside his father and brothers.

He spent most of his career as a legal investigator for Womick Law Firm, working closely with his brothers John and Jim. He also possessed a

real estate broker's license.

He married AR Rice in 1960 and she survives. He is also survived by his daughter Jayne (Mark) Bales; sons Joel (Robin) and Luke ; brother John (Jane); sister Debra (Ruane) Tanner; four grandchildren, Jack and Sam Bales and Reece and Jackie Womick. Also, he was a special Uncle to Janet, Jim, Jerry and Joe and John W., Julie and Jill and their families. Can't forget to include, his little feline friends, Stella and Lucy.

Jack was preceded in death by his son Bill; daughter-in-law Melinda; grandson Casey and brother and sister-in-law Jim and Rosaria Womick.

Patsy Ruth Simmons

Patsy Ruth Simmons, 98 years of age, departed this life on Friday, Dec. 19, 2025 at Southgate Nursing and Rehab Center in Metropolis, Illinois.

She was born on July 22, 1927, the daughter of the late Robert and Thelma Lee Halteman of Bardwell, Kentucky.

She was a graduate of Bardwell High School and, like many young women of her generation, joined the workforce in support of the war effort at that time.

Patsy was a loving mother of her late son, Stanley Newell, and a loving wife of her late husband, Thomas (Tommy) Simmons, and a proud grandmother and great-grandmother.

A life-long resident of Cairo, Illinois, Patsy was the oldest member of Mighty Rivers Worship Center where she was a faithful member.

Patsy was a skilled seamstress by vocation and in her retirement years, she enjoyed hand-quilting as a pastime hobby, second only to patronizing her favorite baseball team, the St. Louis Cardinals.

She looked forward each week to Bible Study Class, as well as daily lunches with friends at the Happy Days Senior Center and her volunteer work at the Mission Store.

She will be remembered by her family and friends for her fierce independence, her pleasant personality, her quick wit, and for always putting her



“best self forward” with her sense of style and grace.

Patsy is survived by a grandson, Michael Newell and wife, Sabrina of O’Fallon, Missouri; four great-grandchildren, Jamie, Calleigh, Riley, and Jack; a daughter-in-law, Gretchen Newell; and numerous nieces and nephews.

In addition to her parents, her son, and her husband, she is preceded in death by three sisters, Rosemary Burnett, Dorothy Reasons, and Helen Riddle; along with two brothers, Joe Halteman and Keith Halteman.

Her family would like to extend their gratitude to her caregivers and the staff at Southgate Nursing and Rehab Center for their compassion and care.

Funeral services were held on Monday, Dec. 22 with Rev. Larry Potts officiating with services concluding at Crain Funeral Home in Cairo.

Interment was held at Rose Lawn Cemetery in Bardwell, Kentucky.

Crain Funeral Home in Cairo is in charge of arrangements.

Frank “Jum” Millis

Frank “Jum” Millis, age 91 of Anna, passed away Friday, Dec. 19, 2025 at his home surrounded by his family.

He was born on Dec. 17, 1934 in Union County, the son of Wade Frank and Clyde Elizabeth (Hartline) Millis. He married Margie Glasco on July 4, 1956.

Frank is survived by his wife, Margie Millis of Anna; sons, David Ray (Gina) Millis and Dale Eugene Millis, both of Cobden; grandchildren, Shelby, R.J., Ashley and Sara; 11 great grandchildren; nieces, nephews, other relatives and many friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents; infant sons, Randy Lee and Frankie Wayne Millis; granddaughter, Nicole and siblings, Betty Larrison, Juanita Schrieber, Kenneth Millis and Pat Haire

Frank was a member of the First Baptist Church in Cobden.

He loved spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren. He enjoyed being outdoors with them, often taking them fishing.

For many years, he worked as a heavy equipment operator. He greatly enjoyed time spent on a bulldozer or a tractor at his farm.

Funeral services for Frank “Jum” Millis will be held at 1



p.m. Saturday, Dec. 27, at the 23w2First Baptist Church in Cobden with Dr. Ed Falgout and Dewayne Taylor officiating.

Interment will follow in the Anna Cemetery. Rendleman and Hileman Funeral Home in Anna is in charge of arrangements. Visitation will take place from 11 a.m. until the service time at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 27, 2025 at the church.

Memorial contributions can be made to the First Baptist Church in Cobden. Envelopes will be available at the church.

To view the obituary and leave online condolences for the family, visit www.rendlemanhilemanfh.com.

Rendleman and Hileman Funeral Home in Anna is in charge of arrangements.

Dorothy Cirilla

Dorothy Cirilla, age 84, of Cobden, passed away Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2025.

She was born on Jan. 30, 1941, in Spokane, Washington.

To know Dorothy was to understand that family is not always defined by blood, but by love, loyalty, and shared life. Her chosen family was a circle of people gathered over the years, who became children, siblings and lifelong friends.

Throughout her life, Dorothy was a devoted follower of Christ, most recently as an active member of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Cobden.

She embraced her creative side becoming an artist in her retirement years. Lucky are those who have bought or received a Dorothy Cirilla original painting or greeting card.

Dorothy is survived by her husband of 30 years, Daniel Cirilla; her stepsons, Vito and Daniel Jr.; her stepdaughter, Angela (Jacob) Theesfeld. Most proudly, she received the title of Grandmother in 2010 with her grandson, Benjamin. No one was prouder of their grandson than she.

Dorothy's chosen fam-



ily, near and far, will carry forward her spirit of generosity and connection.

A celebration of life for Dorothy Cirilla was held on Monday, Dec. 22 at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Cobden with Father Uriel Salamanca officiating.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Cobden High School Art Department. Envelopes will be available at the church and at Rendleman and Hileman Funeral Home in Anna.

To view the obituary and leave online condolences for the family, visit www.rendlemanhilemanfh.com.

Terrell “T.J.” Johnson

When a star explodes, its residual light can last for a thousand years. While not a star, may his smaller light shine, as a dying star, just a little in the darkness providing some illumination to family, friends, and all whom his life has touched.

He has most certainly had the light of those who have gone before him illuminate his way. For that he was grateful and thankful. Thanks be unto God and the ETERNAL LIGHT!

He was born in San Pedro, California and lived in CA until age 5, then went to Illinois with parents Earl and Ellen Johnson to live on their farm near Alto Pass until age 13. The family returned to California for 18 months where he attended high school and worked at Knotts Berry Farm during two summers.

Terrell graduated from Alto Pass High school in Alto Pass, IL and served in the army from 1955-1958. He earned his bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University in 1964 and went on to teach school.

He then graduated from Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky in 1968 and subsequently worked as a student pastor and pastor for a short time. He then went back to work as an educator and earned his Master of Arts degree from the University of Illinois and became a school principal in 1975.

Terrell received his Ph.D. and became a District Superintendent of Schools and later became President of S.W. Division of School Administrators comprising 145 school districts in Illinois. He then retired from education after 36 years and became a teaching minister in the United Methodist Church in Illinois.

He also was employed six years with the USDA - United Department of Agriculture where he interviewed farmers



about statistics concerning crops, production, and finance and he enjoyed this job.

He finally retired permanently in 2012. He travelled all 50 states, seven continents and over 80 countries throughout his life.

Marriage and family included an early marriage to Mary Ruth Holderfield and they had three children: Terry, David (deceased), and Janyne and marriage to Gail W. Spahr for 42 years with two children: Brittany and Annakay who grew up to be two wonderful women.

His grandchildren were God's gift. His only sibling, Lynn Johnson, was not only his brother but a best friend and was an inspiration to him. In later life, his partner was Lucille Mandel of NYC whom he deeply loved and they were married by Jewish law not civil law and enjoyed traveling together and lived in Boca Raton, FL.

He is survived by children Terry Johnson, Janyne Johnson Stahl, Brittany Johnson, Annakay Silva, brother Lynn Johnson, and partner Lucille Mandel and many grandchildren. A private service will be held at a later date. Memorial donations can be made to First United Methodist Church of Boca Raton, FL.

Jim Wilkins

Jim Wilkins, age 94 of Anna, died peacefully Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2025, at the Illinois Veterans' Home in Anna.

He was born on May 13, 1931, in South Bend, IN, to James Richard and Lorell Wilkins. They immediately moved to Detroit, MI.

At high school age, after moving to live with his grandparents, Charley and Mary Knight, he graduated from Ullin High School in May, 1949.

He enlisted in the Army in January, 1951. He served in the 5th Army, 61st Engineer Construction Battalion and attained the rank of SFC. He was a member of the Army Honor Guard.

He spent one year assigned to the Air Force for the construction of an air strip at Pusan, Korea. He was discharged from the Army January, 1954, at Fort Hood, TX.

Jim married Sue Wilkins of Ullin in July of 1953. They were blessed with two sons, Dirk of Lawrence, KS and Scott of Anna; six grandchildren: Christopher (Vedrano) Wilkins, Todd (Marianna) Wilkins, Natalie (Garrett) Attig, all of Kansas; Olivia and Tess Wilkins of Anna and Kyle Schuster of Anna; nine great grandchildren; sister, Carole Wilkins-Dunkerson of Detroit, MI; other extended family and many friends.

He is preceded in death by his parents and one sister.

He attended Louisiana Baptist College, Pineville, LA, and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, MO. He pastored churches in LA and MI for 14 years -- then 21 years in MO.

After volunteering for one year in Northern Ghana at a Southern Baptist hospital as their maintenance engineer in 1975-76, Jim and Sue were appointed in 1980 as Southern Baptist International missionaries to serve in West Africa - living in Liberia, Ghana, Mali, Togo,



Burkina Faso and Nigeria over the next 16 years. Jim's assignment was Builder/Evangelist.

He led in the various types of construction, but his primary focus was construction of missionary homes. Other construction included a dental clinic, publication house, warehouses, guest houses, a residential compound of houses for missionaries. Aluminum houses for missionaries were built in four of those countries.

In every country where they lived, Jim pastored an English-speaking congregation. Jim and Sue retired in Aug., 1996, and moved to Jonesboro, IL.

Jim kept busy supply preaching in churches across SO IL. Jim was a member of the First Baptist Church. He did not hunt, nor fish, nor play golf. His fun, passion and fulfillment could only be done from the seat of a bulldozer, tractor or lawn mower.

Jim and Sue moved to Anna in 2005 and to the Illinois Veterans' Home in 2022. Their lives were filled with adventure and blessings.

Funeral service were on Tuesday, Dec. 23 at Mound City National Cemetery in Mound City. Graveside military honors were conducted by the National Guard Funeral Honor Team and area Veterans. Interment will follow.





5 New Year's resolutions to benefit the brain

Resolutions made at the start of a new year often focus on personal improvement. Giving up poor habits like smoking or drinking too much alcohol and losing weight through diet and exercise are some popular resolutions.

Health and wellness certainly dominates the resolution landscape. Improvement-minded individuals interested in gaining long-term benefits from their resolutions this year may want to consider ways to improve brain health and function. Here are five ideas to consider.

1. Get moving: Exercise does the body good and even positively affects the brain. The American Academy of Neurology has found aerobic exercise may play a significant role in reversing and preventing cognitive decline. Researchers have found that even a little exercise each day can result in improved brain function in less than six

months. Andrew E. Budson, M.D., a professor of neurology at Boston University, also says aerobic exercise releases growth factors in the brain, which can help grow new brain cells.

2. Start a new hobby. When doing the same activities over and over, you eventually learn how to do those activities better. But doctors can't confirm this is actually helping the brain in a meaningful way. Rather, there is evidence that doing new things can be beneficial to the brain. So learning a new hobby, taking a class, or even learning to play a musical instrument can push the brain to improve from a cognitive standpoint, indicates The Healthy, a Reader's Digest brand.

3. Make more time for fun. Repeated stress can have detrimental effects on the body and mind. Harvard Health says stress has been linked to cognitive problems and a higher risk for Alzheimer's

disease and other dementias. Taking time to relax and enjoy oneself can tame stress, and in turn, alleviate issues affecting memory and cognition.

4. Practice mindfulness more often. Mindfulness is an exercise in paying attention to one's surroundings, senses and more. Too often people are multi-tasking and never fully devoting their attention to one thing. Mindfulness gives the brain a break and brings a person into the present.

5. Eat a better diet. The

benefit of eating healthy foods extends beyond the waistline. Many of the foods that are good for the heart are important for preventing cognitive decline and dementias. A 2015 systemic review found strong evidence for a protective effect of the Mediterranean diet, according to researchers at Deakin University School of Medicine in Australia.

By making brain health a priority when coming up with New Year's resolutions this year, individuals can benefit for years to come.

Happy New Year!

from all the staff and students of Anna District 37 Schools!

Have a safe and happy holiday!

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Thank you for your loyal support. Have a safe and wonderful holiday!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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The location you are calling from. Time, location, direction of travel and a description of the suspected drunk driver. The make, color, and license plate number of the car.



**With Warm Regards
At Christmas**

*It may be cold outside,
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the warmest time of year,
especially when one is
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ahead. And may peace
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people, everywhere.

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For A Happy New Year!

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for a wonderful year!*

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& Staff

With old-fashioned warmth
and lots of good cheer, we wish
you a Merry Christmas, and
thank you for your continued
friendship and patronage.

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**With Gratitude And
Warm Wishes
At The New Year**

**PLEASE
CELEBRATE
SAFELY**

**The Village
of Dongola**

**HAPPY
NEW YEAR**

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AT THE NEW YEAR

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HAPPY NEW YEAR

*Best wishes for a
happy and healthy
New Year to all
our good friends..*

**City of
Jonesboro**

best wishes

**HAPPY
NEW
YEAR**

When the sun
rises on the
new year,
may it bring
peace and
harmony for
all with it.

**Jonesboro
Grade School**

**RING
in the
NEW
YEAR!**

*Thank you for your
loyal support this
past year and we
look forward to
seeing you again
in the new year.*

Grill & Chill

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Happy Holidays from

**Shawnee
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Whether you're starting fresh, continuing your journey,
or exploring a new career path, Shawnee Community College
is here to help you unwrap new opportunities.

**Call 618-634-3200 or
visit shawneecc.edu to get started**

*We're putting on the
dog to say, hope
your New Year
is the cat's meow!*

mj
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**CELEBRATE...
A NEW YEAR**

*A new year. A new beginning.
A new chance to let you know how
much we value your friendship and
support. Happy New Year and many
thanks for giving us so much cause
for celebration this past year.*

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our best wishes for
a very happy and
prosperous new year!*

Happy New Year

*Dongola
Unit School
District #66*

*Wishing you joy ...
Wishing you wealth ...
Wishing you love ...
And also good health.*

*You've given us so much to celebrate,
That we wish you every
happiness in 2026!*

**The City of Anna
Mayor, Commissioners
and City Employees**

Happy Holidays from

**Shawnee
Community College**

**This season,
invest in your future.**

Whether you're starting fresh, continuing your journey,
or exploring a new career path, Shawnee Community College
is here to help you unwrap new opportunities.

**Call 618-634-3200 or
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Opinion and Commentary



The light from a candle was shining on a December afternoon during the recent Carols at Candlelight Christmas season event at historic St. Anne's Church in Anna.

‘Good news of great joy’

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear.

The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

— from the Gospel of Luke

Merry Christmas

O Christmas Tree...

Christmas trees can be seen on display during the holiday season in communities throughout Union County.



The Jonesboro Square once again is the home of a Christmas tree.

Please read this...

Bob wishes everyone a very Merry Christmas...

Hope you caught a glimpse of the sunset on Thursday evening, December 18. After rain had fallen for much of the day, clouds began to break up as the sun was going down. Colorful images in the sky seemed to change from moment to moment.

The rising sun created another colorful display last Sunday morning, which also happened to be the shortest day of the year.

Meanwhile...

Thank goodness. Winter “officially” arrived on December 21, which, as just noted, was the shortest day of the year. We can take heart, though. According to timeanddate.com, at the time this gem was being crafted, it was only 88 days, 19 hours, 20 minutes and 30...29...28...27... seconds until spring, which starts at 9:46 a.m. Friday, March 20, 2026.

In anticipation of next year’s growing season, The Other Half continues to work on setting up her new raised bed gardens. She also is growing greens in her greenhouse. Cold weather crops seem to be doing well in the greenhouse...and fresh greens sure do taste good in December. A couple of to-mato plants which sprung up in the greenhouse did not do so well as the result of our recent arctic cold. She mentioned again over the weekend that it’s time to get onions started for 2026.

The day’s activities and the decreasing number of hours of daylight meant that yours truly had to get in a daily walk as darkness was falling last Thursday. However, the circumstances did give me an opportunity to watch an ever-changing and very colorful sunset.

Meanwhile...

The forecast has been suggesting that the weather on Christmas Day in our little corner of the world could be almost “tropical.” High temperatures might even reach 70 degrees. Near record warmth is a possibility. Will there be folks out mowing their lawns after they open presents?

Temperatures near 70 degrees certainly are much, much better than the icy cold...and snow...we experienced back in 2022, which seems like a long, long time ago. And 70 degrees is also better than the 9 inches of snow we had on the ground back in 2004.

Warm weather on Christmas Eve hopefully will make it much more comfortable to continue a couple of our holiday season traditions. One involves a visit to the woods and the other involves firing up the grill. Memories of those traditions include grilling in a downpour of sleet one year, in falling snow and already fallen snow a few times and trying to set our front porch on fire. On that occasion, the grill had been moved onto the front porch and close to a door so that the chef wannabe did not have to stand out in very cold temperatures that were made even colder by snow which had fallen just in time for the holidays. I think the meat which had been thawed for cooking refroze while it was on the grill.

Speaking of mowing lawns...I think I heard the sound of a mower last Saturday afternoon. No surprise, I guess, since the temperature was in the mid-50s with lots of sunshine.

Meanwhile...

So...I’ve been checking my list...and checking it twice...and, as of late last week, it appeared that when it came to checking off things on the To Do List for Christmas I was, well, behind...

I did manage to get Christmas gifts for folks who live far away packaged and sent on their way. I can tell you that after that little adventure, I do not want anything to do with packaging tape for at least another year...if ever. As I was attempting to tape packages shut for shipping, it occurred to me several times that having three hands would have been a good thing. I am also hoping that I got the right labels on the various gifts and then got the right gifts in the right box.

Meanwhile...

Recent Critter Sightings included three or four, and maybe more, squirrels out and about and just having some good old fun dashing through fallen leaves on a sunny December morning at the Lincoln Memorial Picnic Grounds in Jonesboro.

A half dozen, maybe more, cardinals were enjoying a visit to the again thawed Gulf of Cobden last Saturday afternoon.

Last Friday afternoon, The Other Half and yours truly was motoring home after a visit to metropolitan Anna when we saw a bald eagle soaring through a nearly blue sky.

Technically it was not a Critter...but it was home for a bunch of Critters... That would be the big ol’ hornets nest The Other Half and yours truly saw in a tree along Kaolin Road



A Christmas tree is on display at the new Davie Street Plaza in Anna.



A holiday season display featuring a news stand just seemed appropriate to an old school journalist. The display was seen last Saturday at the Union County Museum’s Christmas Shop in Cobden.



Folks who like to watch the sky received an early Christmas present Thursday evening, December 18, with the appearance of a colorful sunset over Union County.

last Friday afternoon.

Meanwhile...

With apologies to John Lennon, we’ll close with a few words he penned back in the day...

“So this is Christmas...And what have you done...Another year over...And a new one just begun...And so this is Christmas...I hope you have fun...The near and the dear one...The old and the young...A very merry Christmas...And a happy New Year...Let’s hope it’s a good one...Without any fear...”

By the way...did you know that John Lennon had pet cats? Neither did I. However, thanks, once again, to the wonders of 21st century technology, I learned that he had several pet cats throughout his life, starting with one named Elvis. Imagine that. From what I read, one of his cats was named Tim. Did not see anything about a cat named Bob.

Another musician in the United Kingdom did have a cat named Bob. Bob was a street cat who suddenly showed up in the musician’s life, which was a good thing. There’s a good movie about the Street Cat Named Bob. Check it out.

Our Bob and one of the people he tolerates have not been able spend much time out on the porch swing recently. Temperatures in the 20s don’t make it very comfortable for such leisure. Even for a Critter with a fur coat.

With all of this being said, I hope you get to continue your favorite Christmas traditions again this year...and that you are able be with those who mean the most to you. Savor the traditions...and the time together.

So...from our cat Bob and yours truly, a very merry Christmas to you...

The Cat's Meow

by Cobden Spay and Neuter Coalition

We hope you enjoyed a loving and peaceful holiday. We are thankful for all the wonderful support we have received throughout this year and look forward to this next year of even greater good for our community.

We are busily planning for our Chili Cook-off on Jan. 24 at Fuzzy’s in Cobden from 4 to 7 p.m. A fun new development—we will have a silent auction during the cook-off, hosted by the Green Mug, right next door to Fuzzy’s. We are now accepting your donations of items, big or small for this event. You may drop items off for the silent auction at the Cobden Village Hall or at KiKi’s Coffeehouse in Anna. We plan to put together a number of great gift baskets for the silent auction.

We are putting together a summary of our spay/neuter activities for the year to share with you soon, so that you can see the tremendous difference you have helped us make in our community. We absolutely cannot do it without you!

Do have a joyful and safe New Year.

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, or mail them to CSNC, P.O. Box 542, Cobden, IL 62920. CSNC is a 501c3 nonprofit organization, and donations are tax-deductible.

Please 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!