

THE GAZETTE-DEMOCRAT

The Talk And Cobden Review • Serving Union County Since 1849

Thursday, February 19, 2026

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News Notes

Items of interest from throughout the Union County area.

From winter...to spring...and back to winter...looks like Southern Illinois weather will be on a bit of a roller coaster ride...

Union County Women in Business is planning to sponsor a women's conference on March 21 at Blue Sky Vineyard near Makanda.

Shawnee Hills Arts Council in Anna is planning to present a Freedom Sings USA songwriting retreat and concert April 16-18.

Congratulations to Cobden High School homecoming queen Amelia Long and king Jansen Nance.

The Union County Sheriff's Office posted a creative Valentine's Day message on social media.

Stinson Memorial Public Library in Anna has announced on social media that it is planning to host America's Field Trip "What does America Mean to you" workshops at 3:30 p.m. on Feb. 24 and March 3.

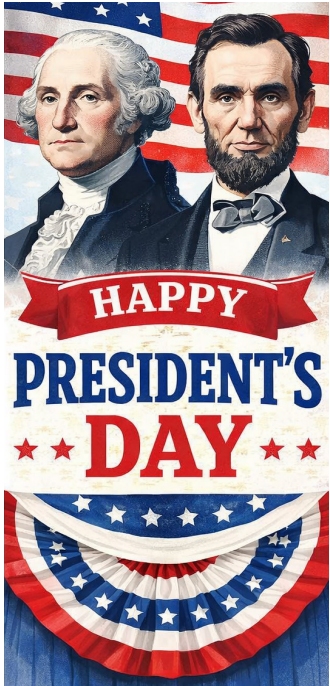
The season of Lent started with the observance of Ash Wednesday on Feb. 18. Easter Sunday is April 5.

Dental Safari visits are planned Feb. 23 at Davie School in Anna and Feb. 25 at Lincoln Elementary School in Anna.

Anna School District 37 posted a reminder on social media about "When Can My Student Return to School After an Illness?"

Shawnee Community College is planning to host a junior high band festival Thursday, today. Rehearsal is planned at noon. A concert is set for 7 p.m. at the college's main campus near Ullin.

Shawnee Community College is joining in February's observance of Career and Technical Education Month. The college is showcasing program that provide students with hands-on experience and strong career potential.



President's Day was observed on Feb. 16.

Local teachers honored by State Board of Education

Four teachers from Union County school districts have been honored by the Illinois State Board of Education.

Since 1970, the Illinois State Board of Education has sponsored the "Those Who Excel & Teacher of the Year" program to honor educators who have made significant contributions to Illinois public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools.

Classroom teacher Andrea Feloni and early career educator Kaylee Rose from Anna School District No. 37, and educational service personnel Brittany Chapman from Shawnee Unit School District No. 84 have been honored with an Award of Special Recognition from the program.

Classroom teacher Courtney Misener from Anna-Jonesboro Community High School was recognized with an Award of Meritorious Service.

"Congratulations to Mrs. Feloni and Mrs. Rose on receiving the award of special recognition from ISBE's 2026 Those Who Excel and Teacher of the Year," said Anna Superintendent Brent Boren. "This Honor is well deserved, and we are very proud of the

work you do."

The Shawnee school district recognized Brittany Chapman in a social media post: "Congratulations Mrs. Brittany! We are very proud of you and appreciate all you do for the Tribe!"

Before the official press release announcing the winners was issued, Shawnee held an impromptu assembly to surprise Mrs. Chapman.

A-JCHS touted Courtney Misner's accomplishment on social media, stating that the "prestigious honor recognizes educators who go above and beyond in service to their school communities. Mrs. Misener exemplifies what it means to be a dedicated educator – embracing leadership opportunities, uplifting the culture of learning in her classroom, and serving as an integral member of our school family.

"Her commitment, passion, and impact on students truly set her apart as an exceptional educator. We are so fortunate to have her inspiring the next generation of #WildcatNation!"

A full list of this year's winners can be found at <https://www.isbe.net/teacheroftheyear>.

Storms possible; dry conditions continue in region

Above normal temperatures were expected during this week in the Southern Illinois, Southeast Missouri and Western Kentucky region, followed by unsettled conditions and the potential for severe storms.

The National Weather Service office in Paducah reported Tuesday morning that confidence was growing that at least some of the area will see severe thunderstorms Thursday afternoon and evening. Tornadoes and damaging wind gusts will be the main threats. Areas to the east of Union County were seen as having the greatest risk for severe thunderstorms.

As of Tuesday morning, parts of Southern Illinois and Western Kentucky were facing a slight risk for severe weather on Thursday. A small part of Southern Illinois, along with areas in Southeast Missouri and Western Kentucky were facing a marginal risk.

High temperatures were expected to be 20 to 25 degrees above normal on Wednesday and continuing into Thursday. Highs were forecast to be 70s. The high on Wednesday in the Union County area was forecast to be near 71 degrees, followed by a high near 70 on Thursday.

A cool down is expected into the coming weekend, with a highs near 55 on Friday, near 47 on Saturday, near 42 on Sunday and near 39 on Monday.

Dense Fog Advisory

The region were under a dense fog advisory early Monday morning, Feb. 16. The advisory issued by the Weather Service office was in effect until 9 a.m. Monday and included the Union County area. Visibility was expected to be one quarter of a mile or less.

Drought Update

In an update posted on Feb. 12, the Weather Service office reported that a dry pattern was continuing in the region. The dry weather began late last summer and continued in the fall and winter. Moderate to severe conditions were reported across parts of Southern Illinois and Southeast Missouri. Some light rain fell over the last week or so.

Severe drought was reported in about 25 percent of the area covered by the Weather Service office in Paducah. Moderate drought and abnormally dry conditions covered the rest of the region.

Drought conditions had worsened in parts of Southern Illinois from Perry and Jackson counties northeast to Jefferson and Wayne counties, along with Perry County in Southeast Missouri.

A Feb. 12 update posted online by the U.S. Drought Monitor showed that dry conditions once again remained unchanged in the Union County area from the previous week. The update showed that most of the county was reported to be abnormally dry. Moderate drought conditions were reported in a very small northwest part of the county.

Severe drought conditions were reported in the northern half of Jackson County and a small part of northwest Williamson County. Moderate drought conditions were reported in the southern half of Jackson County and in most of Williamson County.

Abnormally dry conditions were reported in all of Johnson, Massac, Pulaski and Alexander counties, as well as in a small part of southeast Williamson County.

Arts council, PAST Civil War Weekend events scheduled



Civil War Weekend exhibits

Exhibits were on display during the 2025 Civil War Weekend hosted by the Shawnee Hills Arts Council in Anna. File photo.

The Shawnee Hills Arts Council is planning to host its 2026 Civil War Weekend on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 27-28. The arts council is located at 125 W. Davie St. in Anna. Activities planned for the weekend have been posted by the arts council on social media.

A Civil War Weekend event also is planned March 1 at the PAST organization of Union County's Heritage House in Jonesboro.

Blue and Gray Dinner

The Civil War Weekend is set to open with a Blue and Gray Dinner. The dinner will be served at 6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 27, at the arts council.

The guest speaker at the dinner is scheduled to be Betsy Brown, who is the president of the General John A. Logan Museum in Murphysboro. Brown plans to speak about the transformation of Logan's views about slavery. Logan served as a general in the Union Army during the Civil War.

Brown is a retired educator with 27 years of service in the classroom. For 20 years, she sponsored National History Day state winners. In 2006, she received the Illinois State Historical Society's teacher of the year award. She earned national recognition in 2010 as a history fair award winner. She received in the Governor's Award for Excellence in Teaching History in 2015. She serves as a commissioner on the Carbondale Historic Preservation Commission.

The Blue and Gray Dinner will be catered by the Kitchen on Lafayette in Anna. Doors open at 5 p.m. Dinner is \$25 per person. Proceeds support the arts council.

Dinner reservations are due no later than Feb. 24. To make a reservation, or for more information, contact Lee Hackney at 904-625-1109 or email vabchlee@gmail.com.

Saturday's Schedule

Civil War Weekend activities are scheduled to continue on Saturday, Feb. 28, with exhibits and guest speakers at the arts council. Admission is free and open to the public. The schedule of guest speakers, as shared by the arts council, follows:

9 a.m. "Sherman: Madman or Genius?" The presentation will focus on the military career of Gen. William T. Sherman, including his infamous "March to the Sea" and his continuing influence on modern wars. Presented by Robert Weeks, retired Southern Illinois University Carbondale professor and founding member of the Cape Girardeau Civil War Roundtable.

10:15 a.m. "Special Ops Forerunners: The Impact of the Jessie Scouts, the Blazer Scouts and the Mosby Rangers on the Development of Special Ops Units During World War II and Beyond." Presented by Doda Starkey, chapter regent for the Daniel Chapman Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution. Starkey has served as state historian for the Illinois State Organization, NSDAR.

11:30 a.m. "War in Copperhead Egypt, the War Within Southern Illinois, 1861-1865," presented by Ed Annable. The presentation will look at how neighbors were at odds with one another over slavery and whether Illinois should secede with the Confederacy. Martial law was declared in some



Betsy Brown, president of the board of the General John A. Logan Museum, will be the guest speaker for the Blue and Gray Dinner

areas and the destruction of people's houses and properties, as well as murder, were too common.

1 p.m. "Belle Boyd: Confederate Spy with an Insatiable Appetite for Life, Action and Excitement" by Norma Lee Hackney, PhD.

Lunch will be available starting at 11 a.m. The menu will include barbeque, chips and a drink for \$10 or a hog dog, chips and a drink for \$8.

Heritage House

PAST of Union County plans to host an open house on Sunday, March 1, at its Heritage House in Jonesboro. Heritage House is located at 102 S. Main St. Open house hours are planned from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Admission is free; donations are welcome.

At 2 p.m., local historian and author Darrel Dexter is scheduled to give a presentation titled "Use of the Illinois Central Railroad during the Civil War."

Healthcare career info night slated

Shawnee Community College is planning to host an upcoming event in Anna for those who might be interested in learning more about a hands-on career in healthcare.

The college invites the community to attend an informal, come-and-go Occupational Therapy Assistant, OTA, Information Night. The event is scheduled from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 24, at the Shawnee Community College Union County Extension Center, which is located at 1150 E. Vienna St. in Anna.

Those who attend the event will be able to learn more about the college's OTA program and how to apply. High school students, recent graduates, parents and adults considering a career change are welcome to attend.

The college shared that the event will offer the following opportunities: Learning what an Occupational Therapy Assistant

does. An opportunity to meet program instructors and the program's director. Learning how to understand admission requirements and timelines. Getting help with applications and advising. Asking questions about financial aid and cost. Hear from current students.

No registration required. Light refreshments provided. More information can be found online at shawneecc.edu.



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County board hears update about Anna VFW activities

VFW float in 2025 Veterans Day parade
An annual Veterans Day parade in Anna is one of the many community activities presented by Veterans of Foreign Wars Carroll P. Foster Post No. 3455. The Anna post’s float was one of the units in the 2025 parade in Anna. Veterans Day is commemorated each year on Nov. 11. The float is a familiar site in local parades.

An update on the activities of a local veterans organization was shared at last week’s regular meeting of the Union County Board of Commissioners. The meeting was Friday morning, Feb. 13, at the Union County Courthouse in Jonesboro.

Veterans of Foreign Wars Carroll P. Foster Post No. 3455 of Anna representative Clay Mitchell attended Friday’s meeting. Mitchell report on the post’s activities and upcoming events. He emphasized that the post continues to welcome the support of the community.

The Anna VFW post is participating in a program which offers local, state and national recognition to first responders, including emergency medical technicians, law enforcement personnel, 911 dispatchers and firefighters. The program recognizes service, excellence in the performance of duties and dedication to responsibilities.

Mitchell highlighted the post’s wide range of recent activities. Glow Bingo was held in December; from that event, the VFW donated \$500 to both the county Democrat and Republican committees. The post continues to serve fish fries. Ten percent of the gross receipts are donated to support local programs; in August, that amount was raised to 25 for school organizations.

A military ball open to all

veterans was held in November. The ball is planned again in 2026 on Nov. 14. The post’s presented its annual Veterans Day parade on Nov. 11, 2025; the parade was termed as a success.

The Pay It Forward program once again was held during the holiday season. While not an official program of the organization, the post’s auxiliary and members used the Anna VFW hall to wrap, organize and distribute gifts to 370 school age kids. A Buddy Poppy Christmas party with Santa, games and snacks was held during the holidays.

Upcoming events planned by the Anna post include Taco Tuesdays, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. each Tuesday, except for the first Tuesday of the month; a potato bar, offered from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month; and fish fries, served on the first Friday of each month.

An American Red Cross blood drive is scheduled from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on April 9. A fully cooked pork butt sale is planned May 9. A golf scramble is scheduled May 16; hole sponsors, donations, players and volunteer helpers are welcome.

The post plans to host an annual Memorial Day ceremony at 11 a.m. on May 25. Food will be served in the VFW hall following the ceremony.

“You can help us help the

Weather

High 69, low 24; 0.43 of an inch of rain

Temperatures for the period of Feb. 10-16 in the Union County area ranged from a high of 69 degrees to a low of 24. Precipitation totaled 0.43 of an inch of rain. Heavy fog was recorded on several mornings.

Following are highlights for the period as recorded by local weather observer Dana Cross near Jonesboro:

Tuesday, Feb.10: high 69, low 32. 0.02 of an inch of rain. Heavy morning fog.

Wednesday, Feb. 11: high 51, low 27.

Thursday, Feb. 12: high 54, low 24.

Friday, Feb. 13: high 59, low 26.

Saturday, Feb. 14: high 51, low 34. 0.33 of an inch of rain.

Sunday, Feb. 15: high 55, low 32. 0.08 of an inch of rain.

Monday, Feb. 16: high 62, low 28. Heavy morning fog.

County facing major loss of funds for support of local roads

Union County stands to lose major funding for support of local roads as the result of state legislative action taken to generate new revenue for public transportation, primarily in the Chicago area.

Gov. JB Pritzker in December signed a bill to provide significant new revenue for public transportation agencies while creating a new Chicago-area oversight agency. Funding for the transit agencies will be diverted from sales taxes on motor fuel purchases and interest in the Road Fund, Capitol News Illinois reported when the legislation was signed in mid-December of 2025.

Nearly all Republican lawmakers voted against the law over concerns that it hurts suburban representation on the transit agency boards and takes money away from downstate agencies.

The governor signed Senate Bill 2111, which raises \$1.5 billion to plug a fiscal cliff for the Chicago area’s transit agencies that was set to hit next year, Capitol News Illinois reported. The plan does not include any statewide tax increases, instead relying on an increased sales tax in the Chicago area and a diversion of funds from the state’s Road Fund.

Many downstate lawmakers, particularly Republicans, lamented that the measure is expected to bring in only \$129 million for transit agencies outside of Chicago and its suburbs. Those agencies had advocated for \$200 million.

The Regional Transportation Authority, Chicago Transit Agency, Metra commuter rail and Pace Suburban Bus collectively faced a \$230 million funding shortfall in 2026 as pandemic relief money ran out, Capitol News Illinois reported. The funding deficit was projected to grow to \$834 million in 2027 and \$937 million in 2028. Without action in Springfield to plug that gap, the transit agencies said they could have been forced to cut services by 40 percent.

Since the measure’s passage, the transit agencies approved 2026 budgets without fare hikes or service cuts.

The law also creates the Northern Illinois Transit Authority beginning September 2026, which is designed to be a stronger version of the RTA. The law gives NITA the ability to establish a universal fare system and co-ordinate schedules between the three service agencies, a power the RTA generally did not have.

Local Impact

The local impact of the legislation was addressed at last Friday morning’s regular meeting of the Union County

Union County road
A vehicle makes it way on Wing Hill Road east of Cobden that was partially covered in snow at the time the photograph was taken. File photo,

Board of Commissioners. The meeting was Friday morning, Feb. 13, at the Union County Courthouse in Jonesboro.

Union County Highway Department engineer Amy Ferris said the county stands to lose almost \$400,000, which would impact work on local roads.

Ferris shared information with the county commissioners which explained that the legislation directs 90 percent of the interested generated in the state’s Road Fund, estimated at around \$200 million annually, to the newly created Northern Illinois Transit Authority.

The state will divert an estimated \$860 million annually in sales tax revenue charged on motor fuel purchases from road construction projects and toward public transportation operations.

Of the sales tax revenue diverted to transit, 85 percent is dedicated to the Chicago region, while the remaining amount supports downstate transit systems.

The changes are scheduled to take effect on July 1 of this year.

The information shared with the county board noted that while the Road Fund traditionally is used for road construction, it can be utilized for transportation-related purposes under the Illinois Constitution.

The redirection of the funds marks a shift away from the 2019 Rebuild Illinois infrastructure plan that originally earmarked the funds for roads.

In terms of sustainability,

the Illinois state treasured is reported to have expressed doubt that the Road Fund will continue to generate \$200 million in interest annually due to potential changes in interest rates. Such changes could make the projected revenue outlook uncertain.

Ferris said the impact of the legislation is “really detrimental to Union County.” She encouraged action be taken to make legislators aware of the concerns which all Southern Illinois counties are facing.

Some Good News

The county engineer was able to share good news about funding with the county commissioners at Friday’s meeting. She has received word from the Illinois Department of Transportation that the county will be reimbursed for 80 percent of the costs incurred in the repair of a section of Lick Creek Road.

A 2.5-mile-long section of the road was used as a detour for traffic from Interstate 57 during construction work on the highway in the summer of 2025. The move led to damage that the county had to repair to the tune of about \$123,000 in labor and materials. The road’s shoulder was reported to have been destroyed. Ferris was successful in seeking the reimbursement for some of the costs from the state.

The county commissioners took action Friday to approve a North Lick Creek Road pavement rehabilitation agreement for reimbursement. Ferris was praised by commissioners for the work she did to secure the funds. It was noted that the reimbursement will not make up for the \$400,000 in funding which the county stands to be losing.

SIU plans service-learning days

Southern Illinois University Carbondale’s STEM Education Research Center planning to host two upcoming volunteer service-learning days in the Shawnee National Forest’s Panther Den Wilderness area in Union County.

The separate events, held in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, are scheduled from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 22, and on Sunday, March 22. Organizers said the service-learning days are open to the public, particularly SIU Carbondale students, faculty and staff.

Participants will spend the morning assisting with trail maintenance and the early

afternoon going on a guided hike, said Stephen Gariepy, outreach coordinator and experiential education specialist with SIU’s STEM Education Research Center. Volunteers are asked to bring lunch and a water bottle, to wear weather-appropriate clothing and to be ready to learn.

Participants will meet at the Panther Den Trailhead at 9 a.m. each day. Online registration for both days is required and is available online at forms.office.com.

Directions to the trailhead from the U.S. Forest Service Panther Den webpage follow:

From Carbondale: From Hwy 13 and Giant City Road

go south 7 miles to Grassy Road, turn left and go 2.5 miles to Rocky Comfort Road and turn right. Go south 4.5 miles to Panther Den Road, turn left go 1.5 miles to Panther Den Lane, turn left go north to trailhead.

From Interstate 57: take exit 40 (Goreville exit) west take Goreville Road 1 mile to North Lick Creek Road. Turn right, go a quarter mile to Mt. Hebron Road, turn left. Go 2 miles to Robinson Hill Road, turn right on Panther Den Lane and go north to trailhead

For more information, contact Gariepy at mammoth@siu.edu or 618-453-4216.

Check out

The Gazette-

Democrat

on line at

annanews.com

County Line News

(Mill Creek and Upper Elco)

By Suzan Harvel

The board of P.A.S.T. of Union County honored founding member Elaine Crain with a Pie Party Open House on Saturday, Feb. 14 at the Heritage House in Jonesboro. Tears, laughter, and many stories were shared, like the pie, during a slide show narrated by Barbara Bauer.

Four generations of family were in attendance; as well as over 60 friends, both old and new. Elaine and her late husband, Bob Crain, worked tirelessly for many years with other members, many who have now passed on, to restore and preserve St. Anne’s Historical Church on Main Street in Anna, then on the Heritage House when it was purchased. P.A.S.T.’s mission is to Promote Appreciation of Structural Treasures and we honor all those who continue to do just that. Thank you, Elaine!

P.A.S.T. of Union County will hold its monthly meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 24 at 6 p.m. at the Heritage House in Jonesboro. Guests and new members are welcome!

Valentine’s Day was also celebrated at Mill Creek Baptist Church with its annual Valentine’s Day Sweetheart Dinner, which is cooked, served and clean up by the men of the church. They certainly showed their love of their church family with a delicious dinner. Thank you, gentleman! The ladies appreciated every bit of it.

Mill Creek Baptist Church held Sunday services with Brother Bobby Richardson leading the congregation with more lessons from Genesis. In chapters 42-45, the message taught that Joseph learned just how God had led him through the suffering of his being sold by his own brothers into slavery, being falsely accused by Pharoah’s wife, and being forgotten in prison by those he’d helped. Joseph endured a lot, but God not only saw him through those

trials, but put in a position of power to save not only Egypt, but the very brothers who sought to get rid of him. We need to remember we are never alone in our trials. God is with us and will certainly lead us through it. Remember Psalm 23: 4 tells us that even “through the valley of the shadow of death” He is with us. Blessings will come, be faithful and trust in Him. The Mill Creek church family also welcomed new members, Colleen Seabaugh and Jon and Jacqueline Meirndorf.

Those added to the prayer list for healing are: David Garrett, Dean and Gail Short, Jimmy Poole, Kristin Rutherford, Loretta Walls, Lula Belle Tripp, Natalie Brown, Huntly Hilliard, Pat Webb, and Randy Pierce. Also remember the families of Christian Vellella, Marshall Burns, Al Lingle, James Pickel, Pamela Casper, Catfish Wright, Mike Estel, Billy Joe Tucker, Shiela Swinburne, and Delores Dillman.

Union
County

Fixin’s

Steak and Bacon Cheddar Meatballs

- 1 8oz block of cream cheese, softened at room temperature
 - 1 cup milk
 - 1 3.4 oz package of instant Pistachio pudding mix
 - 1 8 oz can crushed pineapple, drained
 - 1 graham cracker crust (pre-made or homemade)
 - 2 cups frozen whipped topping, thawed
 - 1/4 cut toasted coconut
- In a small bowl beat the cream cheese, milk, and dry pudding mix until smooth. Fold in drained pineapple. Spoon into pie crust. Gently spread the whipped topping over pie filling; sprinkle with coconut. Cover and chill until ready to serve.

News from

Camp Ground Church,
Community

Continuing his sermon series from the New Testament book of Revelation, Bro. Bradley Easton’s sermon Sunday was “Hope for the Overcomer, pt. 2” based on Revelation 2:8-11.

This scripture is Jesus’ command to John to write all that he saw and heard to the church at Smyrna.

First, Jesus reminds the believers that He has been from the beginning and will be to the end. Jesus also emphasized that He once was dead but He overcame death.

Jesus told the Smyrna church to not fear the future and the troubles that would come. He told them to be faithful through it all, and they would not be affected by the “second death.” Instead, He would be with them and give them the “crown of life.”

This message applies to all Christians yet today: be faithful whatever comes our way because He will be with us and give us the “crown of life – eternal life” when we pass from this earthly life. The second death will only affect those who have refused to accept Christ as their Lord

and Savior.

The hope for the overcomer is that Jesus is coming back for us; in the meantime, as Christians, we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

In America, there are churches everywhere; but people are making the choice to not worship. For these, we need to be “the church” to them, to share of God’s love and saving grace available to them.

Karen Vaughn, our lead elder for February, took up the tithes and offerings.

Best wishes to Tymber Roach who celebrated a birthday Thursday, the 12th.

Congratulations to Foster Needling for being selected one of 43 statewide to receive a SIU Chancellor’s Scholarship. Foster is the grandson of Billy and Donna Williams of our congregation.

If you are looking for a church home, we invite you to join us each Sunday. We have coffee and fellowship at 9:15, Bible Study at 9:30 and Worship at 10:30. We are located at the intersection of Camp Ground Road and Tunnel Lane east of Anna, north of Route 146.

Penny shortage causes headaches
for retailers in the Land of Lincoln



Lincoln statue in Union County

A statue of Abraham Lincoln stands at the Lincoln Memorial Picnic Grounds in Jonesboro. Lincoln visited Union County in September 1858 when he debated Stephen Douglas in a U.S. Senate campaign. The debate took place at what is now the site of the picnic grounds. File photo.

By Erika Tulfo
and Medill Illinois
News Bureau

SPRINGFIELD – At the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, visitors can shop for sweatshirts, pillows, jewelry and chocolates using coins bearing the face of perhaps the most-famous Illinoisian, Abraham Lincoln.

But even here, pennies are growing scarce at the cash register.

The museum gift shop, like the rest of the country, is grappling with a penny shortage after the United States Mint halted production of the coin in November, citing the rising cost of producing them.

The lack of fixed guidance from the state and federal governments about how to cope with the shortage of new pennies has left some business owners scrambling to come up with ways to address it.

Many retailers are just rounding up or down to the nearest 0- or 5-cent mark in their prices to make change. They will accept the one-cent coins, but can’t always pay them out.

“The retailer faces frustration on behalf of the consumer,” said Rob Karr, president of the Illinois Retail Merchants Association. “Most retailers are rounding in the consumer’s favor, which doesn’t make the consumer mad, but it also takes profits out of the retailer and puts them at the narrowest end of the net profit margin. So every penny matters there. I think the absence of clear guidance at the moment is difficult.”

Some businesses, like the Lincoln Museum gift shop, display a guide on how its rounding system works. The museum, for example, rounds amounts ending in 1 or 2 cents down to 0. It rounds amounts ending in 3 or 4 cents up to 5 cents, and amounts ending in 6 or 7 cents down to 5 cents. However, other business owners say this kind of multi-tiered

rounding system can be inconvenient and confusing for customers.

For many Illinoisans, there is a sad, end-of-an-era feeling watching the slow disappearance of the one-cent coin, which was one of the first coins made by the U.S. Mint after its establishment in 1792. President Lincoln’s profile has been on the “heads” side since 1909, and that change made him the first president featured on U.S. coins in honor of his 100th birthday.

Mary Disseler has been working as a volunteer at the Lincoln Museum for over 20 years since its founding in 2005. As a die-hard fan of Lincoln, she sees the decision to stop penny production as a sad but sensible decision.

“It kind of breaks my heart. I think it’s a nice tribute to Mr. Lincoln, but I understand that it’s costing four cents to make a penny, so there’s a part of us that has to be practical, too,” she said.

Keith Wetherell, executive director of the Illinois Beverage Association, which represents a handful of small, cash-reliant or cash-exclusive businesses, has practical concerns, too. He worries that the inconvenience posed by complicated rules around rounding could affect customers’ sentiments.

“The one thing that we would really lobby against was any type of bouncing around from city to city where you have all these different rules and stuff; we want to just minimize the confusion,” he said. “We just like to make everything as good and as easy as possible for the customer. Small businesses are struggling as it is. We don’t want any operational challenges. When (customers) have challenges, they take it out on us by not buying them as much.”

Julie Johnson, who owns Daisy Jane’s, a boutique in downtown Springfield, said she rounded up cash change

to the benefit of the customer when necessary, but would rather use pennies to give them exact amounts.

“My jar is pretty low on coins. I’m gonna have to figure out what (the state) wants us to do with pennies,” she said. “There has to be a plan for that. When you calculate tax on something, it’s almost always going to have pennies as part of the equation.”

How Will Lawmakers Respond?

Illinois lawmakers say the penny shortage is not an issue at the top of the agenda because of factors like the popularity of cashless payment methods and the fact that there are still billions of pennies in circulation.

Sen. Dave Syverson, R-Cherry Valley, wrote a note on his website in November applauding the U.S. Treasury’s decision to halt production, saying it was “more of an inconvenience than a useful part of the economy.” He said no steps were currently being taken to address the shortage at the state level and that he would await guidance from the federal level.

“It’ll be something that they’ll obviously start working on addressing more and more as the pennies become less in circulation,” he told Capitol News Illinois. “It doesn’t look like people have to worry about it at all for 2026. I’m guessing that the soonest there’d be any guidance would be ’27, when they would maybe set some rules about requiring businesses to accept whatever rounding decision that gets made.”

But Karr, head of the retail merchants association, said he wasn’t satisfied with Springfield playing the waiting game and leaving the decision up to the U.S. Treasury.

“While the federal government makes currency decisions, the states make sales tax decisions. So it’s a shared responsibility,” he said. “While there’s clarity that the federal government needs to provide, there’s also clarity that the state needs to provide. That clarity, it helps in terms of lawsuits as well, because there are lawyers out there who can sue if they don’t think you’ve done something correctly. And without that guidance, it leaves the retailers certainly exposed.”

Gordon Davis, founder of the Springfield tea store Whimsy Tea, said he hasn’t had issues with the penny shortage yet, but that it was “looming.” He said that while 72 percent of his customers opted to pay with cards, more than one-quarter still chose to pay with cash.

Instead of rounding prices, Davis made prices tax-inclusive in his store’s point of sale system, which he says saves him the trouble of facing legal complications with rounding.

“Rounding, as I understand, can run you afoul of federal law because you have to treat all currencies, all payment methods the same. If you’re rounding for cash but not rounding for card, you’re breaking the law,” he said.

Still, experts say that beyond minor adjustment costs on the retailers’ end, the penny shortage won’t pose a major issue in terms of price increases simply because its value is low.

“Inflation-wise, it’s not creating a problem,” said Shihan Xie, an assistant professor of monetary economics at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. “The value of the penny has diminished. It’s at a point where the value is so small that it’s not going to affect daily life much, or that it becomes crazy.”

But for some citizens of the Land of Lincoln, the penny shortage is an issue that has more to do with sentiment. Lincoln Museum volunteer Disseler she understands the economics no longer support the beloved one-cent piece.

“We’ll still have the \$5 bill,” she said. “Even though they’re phasing (the penny) out, we’ll keep his memory alive forever.”

Erika Tulfo is a graduate student in journalism with Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, Media and Integrated Marketing Communications, and is a fellow in its Medill Illinois News Bureau working in partnership with Capitol News Illinois.

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.

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Obituaries

Pamela Sue Casper

Pamela Sue Casper, age 71 of Carterville, formerly of Anna, died Monday, Feb. 9, 2026.

She was born on June 25, 1954 in Anna, the daughter of Waconda “Walkie” and Mary (McCommons) Casper.

Pam is survived by her sons, Ricky Shepard, Jr., Jason (Erin) Shepard and Jesse (Amy) Shepard; grandchildren, Nicholas, Connor and Clarity Shepard, Chase Strole and Bryce and Breonna Brown; sisters, Sandra Williams and Lisa (Rick) Hicks, nephews, Jeremiah and Jimmy Kessner and Rik Hicks; niece, Cortni (Grant) Saylor; other relatives and friends. She was preceded in death by her parents.

Pam was a loving and supportive mother. She greatly enjoyed spending time with her children and grandchildren. Holidays were always a favorite time, surrounded by those she loved. She will certainly be missed.

Memorial services for Pamela Casper was held on Friday, Feb. 13 at Rendleman and Hileman Funeral Home in Jonesboro with Pastor Randy Morgan officiating.

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

Rendleman and Hileman Funeral Home in Jonesboro in charge of arrangements.



Patricia Ann Butts

Patricia Ann Butts, age 84, of Cairo, passed away on Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2026 at Integrity Healthcare in Anna, Ill.

She was born on Jan. 11, 1942 to Dan and Hazel Linder in Poplar Bluff, Mo.

Patricia was a graduate of Granite City High School and worked for several years at the Social Security office in Cairo, Ill. She was an avid St. Louis Cardinal Baseball fan. Patricia was of Baptist faith.

Survivors include her daughter, Audrey Butts; siblings, Bryan Davis, Ralph Clutts, and one other sister; nephew, Michael Clay; sister-in-law, Julie Davis; nieces, Stephanie Cotton and Christina Winkley; nephew, Keith Davis; niece-in-law, Kayla Valentine; one grandnephew and several grandnieces.

Along with her parents, she is preceded in death by her daughter, Nancy Oakes.



A Visitation was held on Monday, Feb. 16 at Crain Funeral Home in Cairo.

Inurnment will be held on Thursday Feb. 19 at 2:30 p.m. at Mt. Pisgah Cemetery in Wetaug, Ill. Friends are asked to gather at cemetery.

The cremation of Patricia Ann Butts will be personally handled by the staff of Crain Funeral Home.

Crain Funeral Home in Cairo is in charge of arrangements.

Catherine (Kay) Joan Profilet Wild

Catherine (Kay) Joan Profilet Wild, age 81, of Gainesville, Florida passed away on Friday, Jan. 30 at North Florida Hospital.

She was born on July 25, 1944 to Curtis and Marguerite Profilet in Cairo, Ill.

Kay grew up in a large and loving family with ten sisters and three brothers she loved deeply, along with their spouses, Mary Ann and Bill Eblen, Barbara Newberry, Pat and John Sullivan, Marge and Bill Harper, Jan and Dave Burkstaller, Robert "Bob" Profilet and Karen, Martha Ellen and Charles Lankheit, Sara and Pat Lancaster, Donna Profilet, John Profilet, Jim and Debbie Profilet, Ginny and Todd Ponting and Emilie and Kris Martin and a host of beloved nieces and nephews.

Survivors include her children, Rene Wild Laws and Eric Wild, son in law William (Bill) Laws, daughter in law Kara Godwin Wild, grandchildren Katie Laws Geomans (spouse Tom Geomans), Ricky Laws (spouse Bridget Bailey), Derek Laws, Tori Laws, Karen Laws, Bill Laws, Eloisa Wild, and Niyah Godwin and her beloved canine companion, Kiko.

Along with her parents, she is preceded in death by her husband, Theodore (Ted) Wild.



A Funeral Mass was held on Saturday, Feb. 14, with Celebrant Father Patrick Nwokoye at St. Patrick’s Church in Cairo, Ill.

Interment followed the mass at Calvary Cemetery in Villa Ridge, Ill. In lieu of flowers please honor Kay through a donation:

Catholic Charities- Kay and Ted adopted René and Eric through Catholic Charities in Mobile, Ala. <https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/ways-to-give/honor-and-memorial-gifts>.

The Humane Society - Animals held a special place in Kay’s heart, especially her fluffy pup companion of 16 years, Kiko, lovingly adopted by her son Eric and his family. <https://www.americanhumane.org/support-our-work>.

Crain Funeral Home in Cairo is in charge of arrangements.

Herbert Marshall Burns

Herbert Marshall Burns entered heaven the morning of Feb. 7, 2026.

The ones waiting for him were his wife, Jackie; his parents, Houston and Wanda Burns; brothers, Houston Everett, William (Bill), Buster, Samuel, Roy, and Jimmie; sisters, Fannie Campbell, Virginia McIntyre, and Doris Bullock; and a grandson; Caleb; along with many others.

He is survived by his daughter, Sheila; son, Wade (Beth) and his grandchildren, Colby, Trey, Dalton, Baya, Aubrey, and Elly; along with sisters, Jerre Dover (Harry) and Carita Miller. And his best friend since grade school Carlyn Light. And many nieces and nephews.

Marshall was born on Jan. 9, 1942. He was the 10th of 12 children born at the family home on Fayville Road. His childhood years were spent around Miller City and Thebes working on the farm and picking cotton.

First and foremost, Marshall was a Christian who served as a Deacon and Trustee at Anna First Baptist church. He took on many jobs and was always willing to help at the church on different committees.

Marshall was a brick mason by trade, he graduated from Dongola High School and went to Chicago to work with his brothers to learn how to lay brick and block in the early to mid-60s. He was also serving in the Marine Reserves from 1963-1969.

He settled in Union County where he owned Burns Masonry for over 50 years. His handiwork is seen all over Southern



Illinois, he was working in the early 70s building houses on the Lake of Egypt as the lake was growing. He worked all over Southern Illinois from Cairo to Mt. Vernon. He also worked in Florida and South Carolina with his brothers. His work ethic was second to none and anyone that knew him would say that he was the best in the business. He was a Life Member of the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers.

His wishes were to be cremated and will be laid to rest at McGinnis Cemetery.

Funeral Services were held on Saturday, Feb. 14 with Les Sinks officiating at Crain Funeral Home in Anna.

Inurnment was held at McGinnis Cemetery.

In Lieu of flowers, donations can be made to McGinnis Cemetery or SSM Hospice Care.

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



Sheila J. Swinburne

Sheila J. Swinburne was born on Feb. 25, 1934, to Juanita and Murray Hunter in Mill Creek, Ill. She passed away peacefully on Feb. 12, 2026, in Marion, Ill.

Sheila is survived by her daughter, Jane Malick, and her sons, Erik and Andre of Louisiana. She is also survived by her sister, Shirley Cauble, and her best friend, Donna Dameron, both from Marion and many nieces and nephews that loved her dearly.

Sheila was preceded in death by her parents, lifetime step-father Marvin Kerr, sister Shellby Sims, and her faithful companion Bill Lager.

A family service was held on Tuesday, Feb. 17 at 10 a.m. with Rev. LaRue Parr officiating at Crain Funeral Home in Anna, Ill.

A private burial will be held at St. John’s Cemetery in Dongola, Ill.

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



Michael Lee Estel

Michael Lee Estel, a devoted family man, passionate sportsman, and dedicated community servant, passed away on Feb. 7, 2026, in Carbondale, Ill. He was 81 years old.

Mike was born on Oct. 16, 1944, in National City, Calif., to Clarence and Kathlyn (Rosenberger) Estel during World War II.

A lifelong resident of southern Illinois, he grew up as the second son of five Estel boys, along with their older sister, Joy.

Mike held deep appreciation for hard work, faith, and service—values that would guide him throughout his life.

He graduated from Murphysboro High School, afterwards joining the United States Navy during the Vietnam War era and serving 4 years. This period of his life would forever stay with him, his service to country, the family and friends lost to the war, and the funeral of his father that he was forced to miss.

Mike returned from the Navy to Murphysboro to live with his mother who was still adjusting to the loss of her husband. His brothers would forever call him "Sheik" in memory of their father and tease him about being the "favorite."

He was never known to be a handy-man, but more than made up for those shortcomings by his smile, hugs and interest in all people.

He went on to earn a degree from Southern Illinois University in History, another life-long passion.

While a student, he worked at the SIU Health Services as an ambulance driver and later wrote a book from the perspective of a veteran experiencing first-hand the SIU riots and protests against the Vietnam war.

It was also during this time he met Becky Lipe and her 3 young children, Bridgett, Jeff and David. He was always known to have Wrigley’s Juicy Fruit gum for kids, and he filled their lives with outdoor sports and adventures such as camping, hiking, caving, and hunting for arrowheads, medicinal roots, and antique bottles.

They married in 1970 and then moving to Anna becoming a fixture of the community. Mike and Becky would have a total of 5 children, adding to their family Gretchen and later Charles, and whether they were biological or adopted he loved them equally and wholly.

Mike’s professional life was marked by an enduring love for storytelling and sports. He began his career as a printer, then soon became a sportswriter for The Southern Illinoisan. His insightful coverage and engaging writing earned him the respect of readers across the region.

He continued his journalism career at the Gazette-Democrat in Anna, where he covered sports and the outdoors for over 34 years. His words brought local games to life and celebrated the athletes who played them. He was well known by all the coaches throughout Southern Illinois.

In addition to his work in journalism, Mike served as a technician at Choate Developmental Center for many years until his retirement. Despite it being a tough job, he again showed his love of all people by thriving in working with the developmentally delayed. Even after he was no longer employed there, he would return on holidays with small gifts and treats and many called him “Daddy Mike.”

He also shared his knowledge of history as an instructor at Shawnee Community College for over 20 years.

A man who truly always stayed busy, Mike found joy in leading and participating in the intramural sports of his community — refereeing basketball games and umpiring softball and baseball.

Mike’s passion for youth sports left a lasting legacy. Noticing in 1972 that there were no intramural sports in Union County for girls, he started a girls softball travel team that quickly grew to two teams —for junior high and high school ages— and he coached both for many years. The fact that over 40 years later those “girls” still host annual reunions attests to how impactful Mike was to their lives.

Mike also started a youth football league in Anna when there was none; which grew and grew, eventually being a major factor in strengthening wins of the Anna-Jonesboro High School football team.

Through these efforts, he created opportunities for countless young athletes to grow both on and off the field. There was no doubt he liked to win, but he was also kind and supportive in working with student athletes.

As a young man, Mike often wrote in spiral notebooks saying he was “working on his book” and in his later years his lifelong love of writing evolved into writing over 17 novellas of historical fiction. He was always excited to talk about his next book idea!

A lifelong member of the Missouri-Synod Lutheran Church, Mike was deeply rooted in his faith. For over 30 years, he served as an elder at Trinity Lutheran Church in Anna, where he helped guide others with wisdom and compassion.

He is lovingly remembered by his wife Becky; daughters Bridgett and Gretchen; sons David, Jeff, and Charles; sons-in-law Gary and Andy; daughters-in-law April and Monica; brothers Terry, Steve, and Jimmy; and many grandchildren: Will, Jacob, Cara, Natalie, Noah, Isaiah, Lauren, Grace, Jessilyn, and Drew, and four great grandchildren KK, Poppy, Wyatt, and Sadie.

Mike was preceded in death by his parents Kathlyn and Clarence Estel; sister Joy; and brothers Jack Howard and Paul.

Above all else, Mike cherished time spent with family. He loved fishing, hunting, eating and joking around with his brothers and sister, and later their children and grandchildren. He took immense pride in watching all of his and Becky’s children and grandchildren grow. The love he had for Becky beamed for 55 years of marriage. He complimented her every morning on her appearance, thanked her with a kiss every night after dinner, and never went to bed without a goodnight kiss.

Mike Estel leaves behind a legacy of service—to family, faith, country, community—and will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Visitation was Friday, Feb. 13 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Anna. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to: St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital or Trinity Lutheran Church.

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

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



View Obituaries
Online at
annanews.com



News from

Anna Nazarene Church

Sunday, Feb. 15
The morning worship service was held at 10:35 a.m. on Feb. 15. Announcements were given by Jessica Elkins. The worship service was led by Trey Morrison and the Worship Team. The message “Learning To Live In The Moment” was brought by guest speaker, Rev. Jim Book from Romans 6:11-18.
Celebrating a birthday this week is: 16th Jennifer Fuller, 21st Bryce Wright.
Sunday, Feb. 22
Breakfast - 9:00 a.m. Sunday School - 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship Service, 10:35 a.m. Alabaster Sunday Alabaster funds are to be used for new churches to purchase a property or church building, purchase or build a church parsonage, build a church building, conversion of a property into a church gathering space, meet initial costs for renting a church meeting space for a limited period.
Alabaster funds may also be used to purchase or build missionary homes, purchase or build regional or field

missions facilities, build or repurpose buildings on Bible college campuses
Missionary Service – 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Feb. 25
Wednesday Night Service will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. Youth Group in the Fellowship Hall at 6:30 p.m.
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

News from

Anna First Baptist Church

Anna First Baptist Church met for worship on Feb. 9, after Sunday School. Our Call to Worship was done by Vickie Wagner and was on “The Church.”
“In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” Our Call to Worship was taken from Ephesians 2.
Our Worship Team led us in three songs, “Raise a Hallelujah,” “Graves Into Gardens,” “Amazing Grace.”
Pastor Lupe’s sermon title was “Smyrna” in keeping with our study in Revelation.
Highlights included, the seven letters in Revelation, found in chapters 2 and 3, were written by the Apostle John to the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.
Each letter contains Christ’s commendation, correction, and a call to overcome, reflecting the spiritual state of each church. These letters serve as both historical messages to first-century congregations and prophetic warnings applicable to churches today. They emphasize faithfulness, repentance, and perseverance in the face of trials

and spiritual complacency.
After our Worship service, we met together for our monthly After Church Potluck. Everyone enjoyed food and fellowship together.
Our Sunday School meets at 9 a.m. on Sunday. This is for all ages. Our Worship service begins at 10:15 a.m.
Our Prayer Time is at 6 p.m. on Wednesday evening, as well as our Youth Program. Our bus runs for all of these services and programs.
Our church is located at 409 Morgan Street in Anna, Illinois. Our phone number is 618-833-5416.
Our Facebook.com/Anna-FirstBaptistChurch Our email is fbcanna409@gmail.com

The sponsors on this page urge you to attend the church of your choice.



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Daily Bible Reading

John 8:21-47	John 8:48-59	John 10:1-21	John 10:22-42	1 John 1:1-10	1 John 2:1-17	1 John 2:18-29
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Scriptures Selected by the American Bible Society X Daily Devotional at DailyBible.AmericanBible.org

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NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 1ST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT UNION COUNTY, ILLINOIS IN RE THE MARRIAGE OF: ANDREW R BOYCE Petitioner, and CHRISTINE BOYCE Respondent Case Number: 2024-DN-39 NOTICE OF PUBLICATION The requisite affidavit for publication having been filed, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN YOU, CHRISTINE BOYCE, respondent, that this case has been commenced in this court by the Petitioner against you for Dissolution of Marriage and other relief. UNLESS YOU file your answer or otherwise file your appearance in this case in the Office of the Circuit Clerk of this Court in UNION County Courthouse, JONESBORO, Illinois, on or before MARCH 16, 2026. Not less than 30 days from the first date of publication. Must be published three (3) times. (2-207 Code of Civil Procedure) A JUDGMENT OR DECREE BY DEFAULT MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU FOR THE RELIEF ASKED IN THE COMPLAINT. Dated: February 3, 2026 Keri E. Clark Clerk of the Circuit Court 8221-961902

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT UNION COUNTY, ILLINOIS ESTATE OF PHILIP ROSSON, DECEASED.

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The publication of obituaries, birth announcements, weddings and other significant events in our lives remind us of poet John Donne's words, "no man is an island."
Community newspapers alert members of the community to problems needing attention.
The community newspaper facilitates the exchange of ideas and opinions through its editorial page and letters to the editor.
There are so many things of value community newspapers provide: the recording of local history and helping to maintain a healthy local economy through effective advertising for local businesses are just a few areas of value.
The community newspaper's value to its community is unquestioned.
— from Publishers Auxiliary, a publication of the National Newspaper Association

ICE agents detain five men on way to work at Du Quoin sawmill

By Jackson Brandhorst, Lylee Gibbs and one other

DU QUOIN – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrested five men on their way to work in late January in Du Quoin, marking one of the first reported mass ICE enforcement actions this far south in Illinois under President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown.

ICE agents in an unmarked vehicle were conducting surveillance in Perry County on the morning of Thursday, Jan. 29, when they pulled over their truck and detained them, according to the owner of Alstat Wood Products, a sawmill in Du Quoin where the men had been working.

Those arrested were 53-year-old Carlos Sanchez-Luna of Mexico; 37-year-old Guadalupe Hernandez Lopez of Mexico; 27-year-old Ramiro Lopez Alvarez of Mexico; 28-year-old David Ernesto Rodriguez-Mejia of El Salvador, and 42-year-old Gilberto Gomez Perez of Mexico. They were booked that same day and sent to the Ste. Genevieve County Detention Center in Ste. Genevieve, Mo., officials at the jail confirmed.

Rodriguez-Mejia was transferred and was being held in the Greene County Jail in Springfield, Mo. Gomez Perez was transferred to Greene County on Feb. 3 and was later extradited from the facility by ICE on Feb. 6, according to staff at Greene County Jail. ICE did not return multiple calls and emails seeking information on his whereabouts.

The Perry County Weekly-Press, which first reported on Feb. 11 the names of those detained, cited an ICE spokesperson as saying that a sixth man, 38-year-old Yecfren Alexander Alvarez, of Honduras, had also been arrested. However, reporters from the Daily Egyptian at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and Capitol News Illinois could not independently verify his detention, location or status.

ICE did not respond to multiple requests for confirmation or to comment on the arrests.

Daniel Alstat, owner of Alstat Wood Products, said the detainment of the workers took him by surprise.

“I did not dream of this, really, to be honest with you – until I got the phone call saying that they’d been picked up,” he said.

Alstat Wood Products is a family-owned sawmill and logging company located just off of Illinois Route 127 in rural Perry County. The company has been in operation since 1988 and is one of the few

remaining sawmills in Southern Illinois.

Alstat said he has struggled at times to fill certain labor-intensive positions with local workers, particularly during parts of the year when demand is highest. Depending on the season, the company employs about 25 to 30 people, many of them family members.

The visa and immigration status of the five individuals detained in Du Quoin is unclear. Alstat said he was told that the five employees he subcontracted had six-month work visas.

Looking for additional laborers to begin work in 2026, other sawmill owners pointed Alstat to a contracting company called Midwest Lumber Solutions Inc.

Through this company, Alstat said he hired five men on six-month contracts at the beginning of the new year in what he called an “experimental” approach to finding employees.

“When I signed the contract for the five employees, basically it states that they’ll (Midwest Lumber) be responsible for them,” Alstat said. “When I ran it through my people and got it approved, it was all good. So, we just kind of went from there.”

Diego Rest, of Kissimmee, Fla., the owner of Midwest Lumber Solutions Inc., which operates out of Missouri and Florida, confirmed that the employees had been hired by his firm and contracted to work at Alstat. He said he’d been aware they were detained by ICE but declined further comment.

Rest is also the owner of Midwest Outsourcing Inc., located in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

According to Alstat, Rest’s contracting company was responsible for providing housing and transportation for the men. They had been living in a trailer on North Howard Street in Du Quoin since November, according to neighbors, who were familiar with them and knew that they worked at Alstat.

Quiet Neighbors

Multiple neighbors said they recalled more than one instance of police activity at the trailer during the months the men lived there. Several described what they believed was an incident weeks earlier in which individuals were placed in handcuffs and taken into custody. However, reporters were unable to determine which agency was involved, what prompted the response or independently verify the account.

Perry County State’s Attorney Matt Foster said his office had no reports involving the men or the address in question. A review of Judici, the online court records system used by most Southern Illinois

counties, did not show any pending charges for the men in Perry, Jackson or Union counties.

One neighbor, Tristan Gossman, said he didn’t hear much from the men, though had been familiar with where they lived.

“Good neighbors are quiet neighbors,” Gossman said “They must have come and gone at different hours. I didn’t know there was more than a couple people living there. I had not a single problem with them.”

Other neighbors said they occasionally heard loud music at night, and said it appeared multiple people were living in the home.

Du Quoin is home to about 5,600 residents – 2.44 percent of whom are Hispanic, according to Data USA, and is best known for the Du Quoin State Fair and Street Machine Nationals, which bring thousands of visitors to town during the summer.

Under the TRUST Act, Illinois state law prohibits local and state police officers and other officials from cooperating with ICE, with some limited exceptions.

Du Quoin Mayor Josh Downs said he did not learn about the ICE activity until after the men had been detained.

“Du Quoin police were not notified beforehand or asked to participate in any way with any ICE activities in Du Quoin,” Downs said. “They were notified afterward by a resident who noticed unmarked vehicles in town.”

The report from the Weekly-Press cites ICE Public Affairs Officer Nina Pruenda saying that ICE, along with federal partners, conducted a vehicle stop during a targeted enforcement operation and encountered six men – all which Pruenda told the Weekly-Press have warrants out for their arrest.

Alstat said it was his understanding that the men were pulled over by ICE as part of a broader surveillance effort by the agency in the region, and that the workers were not necessarily the target of it.

“From the details I’m gathering, they were pulled over on an actual highway,” Alstat said. “They got in their vehicle and started coming to work and drove through an area where they (ICE) were looking for people in another spot and when they happened to drive by with some Hispanic looking people they (ICE) went, ‘Oh look at that, let’s question these people.’”

Temporary Labor

Intensified ICE action over the past year in places like Chicago, Minneapolis, Los Angeles and others, has produced a plethora of legal battles concerning the conduct and procedures involving arrests and detentions made by ICE agents, such as *Perdomo vs. Noem*.

Perdomo, represented by the ACLU, alleges that recent ICE activity violates the Fourth Amendment because ICE agents are racially profiling and conducting stops on individuals without reasonable suspicion. The ongoing case has made its way to the Supreme Court, where it saw a contentious concurring opinion from Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

“He (Kavanaugh) suggested that if ICE knows people are working in jobs typically held by immigrants, or at workplaces where immigrants often work, if they’re speaking Spanish or doing other things typically associated with undocumented individuals, that might give law enforcement reasonable suspicion to stop and question them,” said Cindy Buys, a professor in the Southern Illinois University Simmons Law School, who specializes in immigration law.

Buys said that H-2A visas are used for agricultural workers, and that many southern Illinois farmers use them to add employees for seasonal labor.

“It sounds like they had some kind of temporary visa, meaning they were lawfully present and had employment authorization,” Buys said. “However, depending on the nature of their criminal records, that could invalidate

their ability to remain and work lawfully. For those without criminal records, if they were here on valid temporary visas, there shouldn’t be a reason to arrest and detain them.”

A wide range of criminal behavior puts an individual at risk of losing immigration status including most misdemeanors.

Buys said that obtaining immigration visas can be time-consuming, and that some companies specialize in handling that process.

“Companies with expertise in the visa process may act as the employer of record and subcontract workers to local businesses,” Buys said. “There’s nothing inherently improper about that arrangement.”

Alstat said he entered into the contract for workers in good faith, and that the situation has been unsettling to him.

“If I’d have known this was going to go down this way, I maybe would have chosen a different path to approach this,” Alstat said. “But still, I needed the labor. It was a chance I was willing to take. At the same time, I don’t know that there’s really been anything that’s gone wrong with anybody, because I still haven’t understood why they were taken if they had that paperwork. So I don’t know yet.”

This story was produced for Capitol News Illinois through the Saluki Local Reporting Lab, supported by grant funding from the SIU Foundation and the Illinois Press Foundation. Jackson Brandhorst and Lylee Gibbs are students at Southern Illinois University, and senior members of the Daily Egyptian, SIU’s student newspaper. Brandhorst can be reached at jbrandhorst@dailyegyptian.com and Gibbs at lgibbs@dailyegyptian.com.

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News from

First Baptist Church, Jonesboro

This past Sunday, Feb. 15, Pastor Perry Williams, spoke in the morning service. His message proclaimed God loves sinners. He explained that all need to be born again. All have sinned and fallen short. But because of God’s great love, He sent His Son to pay the price for our sin and everyone who believes in Him can have everlasting life. His text was found in the 3rd chapter of the book of John in the New Testament

Music Director, Dee Rose, led in worship accompanied by the Praise Team: Rodger Goines, Connor Benbrook and Sharon Morgan. Debbie York accompanied them on the piano. Jayson Rose sang the song,

“Unashamed,” as a special.

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

This week’s activities include the Men’s Bible Study at 6 p.m., Monday, Feb. 16, at the church; and the Ladies’ Bible Study at the home of Sheila Aldridge, also on Feb. 16, 6 p.m. The Newsletter Folding Team will meet on Thursday.

Recent birthdays:

Cindy Pender, Cole Whitaker and Liz Wilkins, all born on Feb. 15; Marilyn Hale, Feb. 16; and Kenmore Rowe, Feb. 20. Happy birthday to all!

Currently, our regular schedule for worship at Jonesboro First Baptist includes Sunday School classes on Sundays at 9 a.m.; Sunday morning worship at 10 a.m.; both Youth for 6th-12th grades and Sunday evening worship at 6 p.m. Our Children’s Dig-In Program meets on Wednesdays, from 6 to 8 p.m. Youth 7th to 12th grades meet 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesdays. Our Adult Prayer Meeting and Bible Study also meets on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. All are invited to attend.



Upcoming events set at arts council

The Shawnee Hills Arts Council in Anna has announced a series of upcoming events and programs for late February and early March, offering opportunities for community members to engage in art, history and wellness activities.

An Art Social is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 19, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the arts council at 125 W. Davie St. The free event invites participants to work on individual or collaborative art projects, with supplies

provided.

The Conservation Corner Speaker Series will continue on Monday, Feb. 23, at 6 p.m., featuring Chris Evans of the University of Illinois Extension at Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. Evans will speak on invasive species and their impact. The program is hosted by the Anna-Jo Garden Club and is open to the public at no cost.

Additional ongoing programs include an exhibit of handcrafted artificial bonsai trees by Mahadji Gillespie,

available for viewing Thursdays and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 1 to 3 p.m.

Fitness classes are also offered at the arts council. Tai Chi Gung classes are held Mondays from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m., and Zumba classes take place Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5 to 6 p.m. Fees vary by class.

For more information about events and participation, community members are encouraged to visit the Shawnee Hills Arts Council in Anna.



New Officers

The Anna American Legion Post 0344 met Feb. 10 at the VFW. New officers were installed. Picture are, from left, Kathy Arendt District Chaplan 25, Martha Ann Webb, Macky Cohen, Natlie Clutts, Shelby Pickle, Janet Hawk, Betty Caraker, Venus Buck, District 25 President Diane Steele

The Gazette-Democrat

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Television Listings

THURSDAY

	ABC	CBS	FOX	NBC	ESPN	TBS	USA	DISN	HBO	MAX	PARSHO
6 PM :30	Local Programs	Local Programs	(5:00) Local Programs	Local Programs	Wom. College Basketball (Live) (HD)	Bang (HD)	(5:30) Olympics (HD)	Worlds Collide	"Marie Antoinette"	(:02) "Oracle" ('23) Ryan Destiny.	"Southpaw" ('15) (R)
7 PM :30	9-1-1 (HD)	Survivor "Hide 'N Seek" (HD)	Next Level Chef (HD)	Milan Cortina Olympics from Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy (T)		Bang (HD)	Milan Cortina Olympics (HD)	(:15) Descendants/ZOMBIES	Murder in Glitterball City	(:28) ★★★ "The Flash" ('23, Action) Sasha Calle. (HD)	"Barron's Cove" ('25) Garrett Hedlund. (HD)
8 PM :30	9-1-1: Nashville	Hollywood	TMZ Investigates	Wom. College Basketball LSU vs Ole Miss	Bang (HD)	Olympics (HD)	"Zombies 4: Dawn" ('25)	(:21) Murder in Gli..	Industry "Dear Henry"		
9 PM :30	Grey's Anatomy (HD)		Elsbeth "Basket Case"		Local Programs Local info.			Jokers		Jokers	
10 PM :30	Local	Local	(:35) Late Show (HD)	Local	SportsCenter (HD)	Jokers	Milan Cortina Olympics (HD)	Miraculous	(:45) Murder in Glitterball City	(:53) ★★★ "We Live in Time" ('24)	"Wrong Turn" ('21)
11 PM :30	Jimmy Kimmel Live	(:37) Local		Local Programs	Milan Cortina Olympics (T) (HD)	SportsCenter (HD)	★★★ "The Tomorrow War" ('21)	Bluey			
	Nightline									"Friends"	

FEBRUARY 19, 2026

FRIDAY

	ABC	CBS	FOX	NBC	ESPN	TBS	USA	DISN	HBO	MAX	PARSHO
6 PM :30	Local Programs	Local Programs	(4:00) Local Programs	Local Programs	Tip-Off	Bang (HD)	(5:00) Olympics (HD)	(5:45) Worlds Collide	(:05) "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You" ('25, Drama) Rose Byrne. (R)	"Aftermath" ('21) Ashley Greene.	(5:45) "Queen & Slim" ('19) Daniel Kaluuya.
7 PM :30	Celebrity Wheel of	Survivor "Icarus Time" (HD)	College Basketball Indiana vs Purdue (Live)	Milan Cortina Olympics (T) (HD)	(:42) NBA Basketball Dallas vs Minnesota (Live) (HD)	★★★ "The Tomorrow War" ('21, Action) Chris Pratt. (PG-13)	Milan Cortina Olympics 2026 "Curling - Women's Semi-final" (HD)	★★★ "The Lion King" ('19) Donald Glover. (PG)	Miraculous	(:31) "Murder on the Orient Express" ('17)	Dreaming "Django Unchained" ('12, Western) Jamie Foxx. (R) (HD)
8 PM :30	20/20 Investigative news. (HD)	Hollywood	Local Programs	Stumble	NBA Basketball Los Angeles vs Los Angeles (Live) (HD)	★★ "Sky-scraper" ('18) Dwayne Johnson. (HD)	Milan Cortina Olympics (HD)	Miraculous		(:05) Real Time with Bill Maher	
9 PM :30		Boston Blue									
10 PM :30	Local	Local	Local Programs	Local				Miraculous			
11 PM :30	Jimmy Kimmel Live	(:35) Late Show (HD)	Local Programs	Milan Cortina Olympics (T) (HD)				Miraculous	(:38) Real Time with Bill Maher	"Leave No Trace"	Dreaming Coldwater
	Nightline	(:37) Local			Inside NBA			Big City			

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

SATURDAY

	ABC	CBS	FOX	NBC	ESPN	TBS	USA	DISN	HBO	MAX	PARSHO
6 PM :30	Local	Local Programs	Hoops Tip-off (Live)	Local Programs	College Basketball "Teams TBA"	★★½ "Wedding" ('98)	(4:00) Olympics (HD)	★★½ "Frozen 2" ('19) Idina Menzel.	Murder in Knight	(5:13) "Queer" ('24) Daniel Craig.	(5:05) "Top Gun" ('86)
7 PM :30	Tip-Off	Elsbeth (HD)	College Basketball Illinois vs UCLA (Live) (HD)	Milan Cortina Olympics from Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy (T)	College Basketball Kentucky vs Auburn (Live)	"Central Intelligence" ('16) Kevin Hart. (HD)	Olympics	(:45) Descendants/ZOMBIES	"Dead of Winter" ('25) Emma Thompson.	"Tuesday" ('24, Fantasy) Arinze Kene. (HD)	"Top Gun: Maverick" ('22) Tom Cruise. (HD)
8 PM :30	NBA Basketball Houston vs New York (Live) (HD)	48 Hours (HD)	Local Programs	Local	College Basketball Iowa State vs BYU (Live)	"The Wedding Singer" ('98) Adam Sandler.	Olympics	ZOMBIES	(:13) ★★★½ "Life of Pi" ('12, Adventure) Suraj Sharma. (HD)	"Knox Goes Away" Al Pacino. (R)	(:15) ★★½ "Marshall" ('17) Chadwick Boseman.
9 PM :30		48 Hours (HD)									
10 PM :30	Inside NBA	Local Programs Local info.	99 to Beat	Milan Cortina Olympics (T) (HD)		★★½ "Big Daddy" ('99)	Milan Cortina Olympics (HD)	Miraculous	Miraculous	"Janet Planet" ('24)	"Jackass: Movie" (R)
11 PM :30	Local		Local Programs					Big City			
	Local Programs				Sports			Big City	Knight		

FEBRUARY 21, 2026

SUNDAY

	ABC	CBS	FOX	NBC	ESPN	TBS	USA	DISN	HBO	MAX	PARSHO
6 PM :30	Home Videos (HD)	60 Minutes (HD)	Next Level Chef (HD)	NBA Basketball Boston vs Los Angeles (Live)	30 for 30 "Long Gone Summer" (HD)	"Intelligence" ('16)	Law & Order: SVU	"Horton Hears a Who!" ('08) (HD)	Industry (:50) Industry "Dear Henry" (HD)	(5:16) "It" ('17) Bill Skarsgård. (HD)	(5:25) "Old Guy" ('25)
7 PM :30	(:01) Home Videos	Hollywood Squares	Family Guy Universal			Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	(:35) Kiff		(:31) ★★★ "We Live in Time" ('24)	Dexter: Resurrection
8 PM :30	(:02) American Idol "904 (Auditions)" (HD)	Tracker (HD)	Dad (HD) Family Guy	Milan Cortina Olympics (T) (HD)	ESPN Films (HD)	Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Kiff	Industry "Points of"	(:19) "Papillon" ('18, Drama) Charlie Hunnam. (R)	Dexter: Resurrection
9 PM :30		Watson "The Doctor"	Local Programs Local info.			Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Wizards Vampiina	Knight		Dreaming
10 PM :30	Local Programs Local info.	Local Programs		Local Milan Cortina Olympics (R) (HD)	SportsCenter (HD)	"Captain Marvel" ('19) Brie Larson. (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Miraculous Miraculous	(:10) Last Week (HD)		"Guns Up" ('25) Kevin James. (R)
11 PM :30		Local Programs	Local Programs		SportsCenter (HD)		Law & Order: SVU	Bluey	Industry "Points of"	"Southpaw" ('15) (R)	
								Bluey		"Splinter"	

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

MONDAY

	ABC	CBS	FOX	NBC	ESPN	TBS	USA	DISN	HBO	MAX	PARSHO
6 PM :30	Local Programs	Local Programs	(5:00) Local Programs	Local Programs	College Basketball (Live) (HD)	Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	(5:45) Descendants/ZOMBIES	Last Week Knight	“A Cure for Wellness” (‘17) (HD)	(4:15) “Silence” (‘17)
7 PM :30	American Idol ‘905 (Hollywood Week In” (HD)	Neighbor. DMV	Extracted (HD)	The Fall	College Basketball Kansas vs Houston (Live) (HD)	Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Wizards of Vampiina	Industry “Points of”	★★½ “Murder on Orient Express”	“Barron’s Cove” (‘25) Garrett Hedlund. (HD)
8 PM :30		FBI “Confetti” (HD)	Memory of a Killer	The Voice “The Blind Auditions” (HD)		Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU		Sally Hawkins.		
9 PM :30	The Rookie (HD)	CIA “Directed Energy”	Local Programs Local info.			Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Kiff	(:20) “Trap” (‘24, Thriller) Josh Hartnett. (HD)	School Spirits (HD)	
10 PM :30	Local	Local	Local Programs	Local	SC (HD)	Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Miraculous	Industry “Points of”	“Vicious” (‘25) Dakota Fanning.	
11 PM :30	Jimmy Kimmel Live	(:35) Late Show (HD)		(:35) Tonight (HD)		SportsCenter (HD)	Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Miraculous		
	Nightline	(:37) Local		Late Night		Family	Law & Order: SVU	Bluey	(:18) Knight Kingdoms	(:06) “Unlocked” (‘17)	“Would”

FEBRUARY 23, 2026

TUESDAY

	ABC	CBS	FOX	NBC	ESPN	TBS	USA	DISN	HBO	MAX	PARSHO
6 PM :30	Local Programs	Local Programs	(5:00) Local Programs	Local Programs	College Basketball "Teams TBA" (HD)	Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Big City	"Notebook"	"Aftermath" ('21) Ashley Greene.	(5:00) "The Godfather" ('72) Marlon Brando.
7 PM :30	Will Trent (HD)	NCIS (HD)	Best Medicine (HD)	Medical		Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Big City	(:27) Real Time with	"Shot Caller" ('17) Nikolaj Coster-Waldau. (R)	
8 PM :30	The State of the Union	CBS News: State of the Union Address (HD)	FOX News Special: State (HD)	Medical		Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Lady Dragon	Knight		
9 PM :30						Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Wizards of Vampirina	Industry "Points of"	(:06) "Atomic Blonde" ('17) Charlize Theron.	★★★★ "The Godfather: Part II" ('74, Drama) Al Pacino. (R) (HD)
10 PM :30	Local	Local	Local Programs Local info.	Local	SportsCenter (HD)	Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Kiff			
11 PM :30	Jimmy Kimmel Live	(:35) Late Show (HD)		(:35) Tonight (HD)	SportsCenter (HD)	Bang (HD)	Law & Order: SVU	Miraculous			
	Nightline	(:37) Local	Local Programs	Late Night		Family	Law & Order: SVU	Miraculous	(:03) "Exorcist" ('23)	(:05) "Bronson" ('09)	"Godfather"

FEBRUARY 24, 2026

WEDNESDAY

	ABC	CBS	FOX	NBC	ESPN	TBS	USA	DISN	HBO	MAX	PARSHO
6 PM :30	Local Programs	Local Programs	(5:00) Local Programs	Local Programs	NBA (HD)	Bang (HD)	9-1-1 "Neighborhood"	Big City	Knight	"Love & Mercy" John Cusack.	"Bridget Jones" ('01)
7 PM :30	Scrubs	Survivor "Epic Party" (HD)	The Masked Singer	The Voice Hopefuls coached. (HD)	(:42) NBA Basketball Golden State vs Memphis (Live) (HD)	Bang (HD)	League One Volleyball "Salt Lake at Austin" (Live)	Big City	Industry "Points of"	"The Mummy" ('17) Tom Cruise.	"No Strings Attached" ('11) (HD)
8 PM :30	(:02) The Average		(:02) Fear Factor: (HD)			AEW: Dynamite "Dynamite 2/25/2026" (Live)	Tales Shadybug	Wizards	(:42) "Dead of Winter" ('25) Emma Thompson.		
9 PM :30	Scrubs		Local Programs Local info.	Chicago P.D. (HD)	NBA Basketball Boston Celtics at Denver Nuggets (Live)	Jokers	9-1-1 "Breaking Point"	Vampirina	Kiff	"The Belko Experiment" ('17) (R)	★½ "She's Out of My League" Jay Baruchel.
10 PM :30	Local	Local		Local		Jokers	9-1-1 "Blindsided"	Miraculous	Kiff	"Get Out" ('17) Daniel Kaluuya.	"The 33" ('15) Antonio Banderas.
11 PM :30	Jimmy Kimmel Live	(:35) Late Show (HD)	Local Programs	(:35) Tonight (HD)		Family	9-1-1 "Parent-hood"	Miraculous	Bluey	Knight	
11 PM :30	Nightline	(:37) Local		Late Night	SC (HD)	Family		Bluey	Bluey	Industry	

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

THURSDAY

7:00pm

FOX Next Level Chef Gordan Ramsay is joined by Nyesha Arrington and Richard Blais in the quest to find the world's next elite chef, looking for cooks who thrive under pressure. (HD)

7:28pm

MAX The Flash ★★★ (2023, Action) Sasha Calle, Ben Affleck. A superhero discovers a way to go back in time, where he encounters a dangerous foe set on world annihilation. PG-13 (HD)

FRIDAY

7:31pm

MAX Murder on the Orient Express ★★½ (2017, Mystery) Kenneth Branagh, Penélope Cruz. Thirteen strangers become stranded on a luxury train, each of them considered a suspect following a murder, as a famed detective races to find the killer. PG-13 (HD)

9:30pm

NBC Stumble After being fired from her champion cheerleading team, a coach starts over in a small Southern town where she's putting together a brand-new squad. TV14 (HD)

SATURDAY

7:00pm

PARSHO Top Gun: Maverick ★★½ (2022, Action) Tom Cruise, Jennifer Connelly. Pete Mitchell has been one of the Navy's top aviators for over 30 years, but he must confront the ghosts of his past when he receives a special assignment. PG-13 (HD)

9:13pm

HBO Life of Pi ★★½ (2012, Adventure) Suraj Sharma, Irrfan Khan. A zookeeper's son is surrounded by a loose hyena, zebra, orangutan and a Bengal tiger after a shipwreck forces them to wander the Pacific Ocean. PG (HD)

SUNDAY

7:01pm

ABC America's Funniest Home Videos "Animals Being Jerks, Name That Sound, and What Are the Odds?" Siblings engage in silly squabbles; mischievous animals create chaos; friends and family find themselves in goofy shenanigans. TVPG (HD)

7:31pm

FOX Universal Basic Guys "Shorty Hoagies" Mark and Tammy get adventurous on a date night at the Philadelphia Flower Show. Darren and JD prank David. TV14 (HD)

MONDAY

7:00pm

ABC American Idol "905 (Hollywood Week In Music City - Part 1)" Idol is bringing Hollywood Week to Music City as hopefuls take the stage for a make-or-break performance and face the biggest Hollywood Week cut ever. TVPG (HD)

NBC The Fall and Rise of Reggie Dinkins "Pilot" Former running back Reggie Dinkins attempts to mend his image with the help of a filmmaker twenty years after the scandal that ruined his career. TV14

TUESDAY

7:30pm

NBC St. Denis Medical "Nod and Agree" Ron tries to wrap up a perfect visit from his son, Michael; Alex questions Val's return from jury duty; Bruce feels iced out of a juicy business opportunity. TV14 (HD)

8:00pm

PARSHO The Godfather: Part II ★★½ (1974, Drama) Al Pacino, Robert Duvall. Michael Corleone takes over the family business and makes plans to expand into Cuba, but he is suspicious of his brother's loyalty and his wife's intentions. R (HD)

WEDNESDAY

7:00pm

FOX The Masked Singer "Spice Girls Night" The Spice Girl Night episode of The Masked Singer featuring fan-favorite songs from the iconic girl group and guest panelist, Taraji P. Henson! TV14 (HD)

8:02pm

FOX Fear Factor: House of Fear "Pain Auction" Nine remain for 24 hours of non-stop fear. They bid on how much punishment they can take in Knoxville's twisted "Pain Auction." TV14 (HD)

Opinion and Commentary

February National Children's Dental Health Month

Rural Health Inc. is joining in the observance of National Children’s Dental Health Month in February. The observance is promoted by the American Dental Association, ADA, and dental care professionals nationwide to raise awareness about the importance of oral hygiene in children.

Rural Health, Inc. encourages families to establish healthy dental habits early with children, such as brushing twice daily with fluoride toothpaste, flossing and scheduling regular dental visits to prevent infections, reduce dental anxiety and build life-long healthy habits.

According to the ADA, early, consistent care for children's teeth is crucial for preventing decay, aiding speech development, assisting with chewing and maintaining space for permanent teeth. Children should have their first dental visit by age one or within six months of their first tooth appearing.

It is estimated that up to 60 percent of children are affected by tooth decay by age 5. The ADA stresses that while tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in children it is highly preventable. Fluoride varnish can prevent about one-third (33 percent) of decay in baby teeth.

In addition to regular dental visits, brushing and flossing, there are other steps families can take to keep their child’s teeth healthy, such as discouraging frequent snacking on sugary or starchy foods, encouraging drinking more water instead of juice, applying dental varnish to baby teeth and considering dental sealants to protect permanent teeth.

Rural Health Inc., which serves Union, Johnson and Massac counties, offers dental services at its Anna and Goreville family medical clinics, with a primary focus on prevention through a variety of services, including general dentistry and dental education and hygiene services. To schedule a dental appointment at Rural Health Inc., call 618-833-4475 or visit www.ruralhealthinc.org.

Anna-Jo Garden Club News

Extension speaker gives composting tips

A recent meeting of the Anna-Jo Garden Club featured guest speaker Anne Townsend of the University of Illinois Extension, who gave a presentation on improving soil for gardening through composting techniques.

Townsend, a Master Naturalist program coordinator, shared strategies for creating effective compost and emphasized the importance of recycling food waste. She outlined key composting principles, including maintaining a balance between “brown” materials such as dry leaves, paper and onion skins, and “green” materials such as grass clippings, food waste and manure.

She also discussed composting best practices, including avoiding animal products other than eggshells and excluding diseased plant material. Townsend noted the importance of aeration and moisture to support the breakdown of organic matter by bacteria and other organisms.

In addition, Townsend introduced vermiculture, or composting with worms, as another method for producing nutrient-rich soil. She said the goal is to create usable organic material that can be layered into garden beds.

Resources on composting and gardening are available through the University of Illinois Extension at extension.illinois.edu.

The meeting also included a garden study tip from Linda K., who discussed cowbirds and their impact on migrating songbirds. Cowbirds, a protected native species, are known to lay their eggs in other birds’ nests, which can be harmful to songbird populations. She noted that many native songbirds depend on deep forest habitats, while cowbirds tend to thrive in open and agricultural areas.

Zack Rowatt also shared information on regional geology and water concerns during a recent Conservation Corner program. The next session is scheduled for Monday, Feb. 23, at 6 p.m. at the Shawnee Hills Arts Council, featuring Christopher Evans speaking on invasive species management.

The meeting was hosted by Debby F and Marge (in absentia) and Sue Mc with Valentine's Day themed deserts and table decorations.

Regular meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month from February through December and include field trips and other activities. New members are welcome.

Please read this...

In the year 2525...and some other stuff...

This would have been a really good week to hand the “chore” of generating a column over to Artificial Intelligence or some other creative enterprise, like Bob. From what we are seeing, it won’t be long before people of the human being variety aren’t even necessary to have around anymore. Makes me think of that song from back in the day...something about life in the year 2525... And now you will not be able to get that song out of your head for days. You are welcome.

I have tried to interest Bob in crafting a column a few times over the years. Mostly, he just gives me that “you’ve got to be kidding” look that cats are so good at. Then, he goes back to sleep...or goes and finds something to eat.

Since Bob didn’t seem interested in offering a paw, I decided to look to Mark Twain for some inspiration. He was a pretty good writer.

Thankfully, I think, this he’s-never-going-to-be-Mark Twain writer has some help that Mr. Twain did not have available: the internet and aforementioned Artificial Intelligence. In the 21st century, we have both of those resources. And aren’t we lucky?

So, I went to the internet and typed in a question: What did Mark Twain do about writer’s block? Moments later, my good friend Search Assist revealed that Mr. Twain believed that even the best writers have to cope with writer’s block. It’s just part of writing. His advice: trust what we’ll call the process of writing...step away from the work for a little while...and then let your cat finish the job. Just make sure you have plenty of treats on hand for kitty.

This week’s case of writer’s block might have something to do with the fact that it’s February. As you may recall from columns past, yours truly is not particularly enamored with the second month of the year. February, it seems to me, is one of those months that would be best if we just skipped it. So, with that in mind, we’ll just make today January 50th, 2026. With February out of the way, we can go straight to March. I feel better already.

Meanwhile...

From what I have been hearing, the Winter Olympics are happening someplace east of Buncombe. We have not been paying much attention to the Olympics in our household. That’s because they are happening in February. Besides that, I don’t think we wanted another reminder that it’s still winter. Snow. Ice. Sleet. The Polar Vortex. Enough said.

To be honest, I find it hard to get excited about an event which features competitions like skeleton, monobob and curling. If you are a big fan of those sports, please accept my apologies. Actually, I would kind of like to see skeletons competing in curling. Or maybe ice hockey.

I think it would be more fun if the Cold Weather Games had some “real” winter events...like team and individual snowman building...team and individual snow shoveling...freestyle walking on a sheet of ice, with scoring done based on creative ways each competitor tries to keep from falling...and maybe competitive getting into your car which has been parked outside when a layer of freezing rain was followed by two inches of sleet and 14 inches of heavy wet snow. I’m pretty sure lots of us have earned gold medals in one of those events.

Meanwhile...

With the appearance of some much warmer temperatures and a fair amount of sunshine, I have been on the lookout for crocuses in bloom. The Other Half uncovered a small patch of crocuses in a needs-to-be-rescued flower bed in the front yard last weekend. Temperatures were supposed to have been in the 70s by the middle of this week, so blooms may have made an appearance. That would be a good sign that warm weather is on the way.

Meanwhile...

Mea culpa. A couple of weeks ago, as a contributor to the local newspaper, yours truly submitted a short story to the local newspaper about an upcoming event which was planned



No Swimming. No Problem. At least there weren’t any mosquitoes buzzing around when the photograph was taken one morning last week.



All turned around...a hawk spotted at the Lincoln Memorial Picnic Grounds in Jonesboro appeared to be doing its best impression of an owl.

at Stinson Memorial Public Library in Anna. Somehow, I managed to have the date of the event correct...but not the day of the week. Not even close. My bad. I hope the folks who saw the miscue were of the forgiving sort.

Meanwhile...

Critter Sightings are starting to pick up. Sort of. When I paid a visit to the Lincoln Memorial Picnic Grounds in Jonesboro, last week, there were not a lot of Critters to be seen. I did spot a hawk. I also noticed that the little pond at the picnic grounds was covered with a layer of ice. Kind of made the No Swimming sign unnecessary. Then again, some folks find a dip in the icy water invigorating.

While on recent daily walks, I have spotted bluebirds several times. That is a good thing. We even managed to clean out the bluebird house in our backyard. We’re hoping a pair of bluebirds will move in soon and set up house.



New display

The window at the Union County Museum Shop in downtown Cobden has a new display. The Union County Historical and Genealogical Society, which operates the shop, is recognizing the 100th anniversary of the construction of the current St. Joseph Catholic Church in Cobden.

The society is also working on new exhibits for the museum and merchandise for the Shop for the Benefit of the Museum. The society's goal is to reopen after being closed for the winter at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 7. More information is forthcoming, the society said.

