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HAPPY Holidays

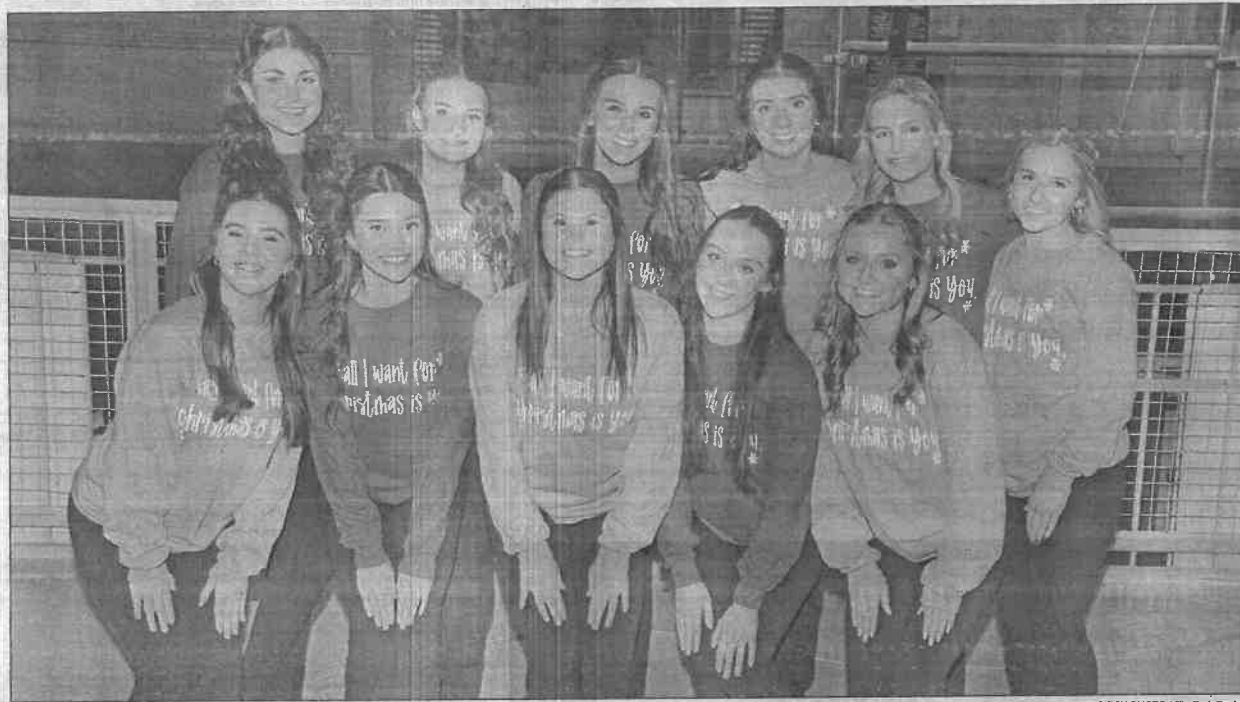
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THURSDAY, DEC. 26, 2024



CHRIS FOX PHOTO Villa Park Review

A holiday tradition

Willowbrook High School's dance team performed its Christmas kick routine during halftime of Friday's boys basketball game against Leyden. The Warriors' dance teams have performed this routine to Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas Is You" for more than 20 years. Members of the Willowbrook team, pictured left to right shortly after Friday's performance are: (front row) freshman Brianna Flemming, junior Cecilla Oddo, sophomore Amanzla Termini, sophomore Kyri Burritt and junior Gedvina Mickevicius; (back row) junior Maddy McEllin, soph-

omore Elizabeth Deany, junior Ava Jovanovich, freshman Soleil Martin, senior Gianna Giampaoli and senior Kelly Kramme. Nearly one year ago, Willowbrook's dance team qualified for the 2024 IHSA competitive dance state meet. The Warriors will try to qualify for the 2025 state meet at the upcoming Maine East Sectional on Jan. 25. The top six teams in each division at the state's sectional events will advance to the 2025 state meet, which will take place Jan. 31-Feb. 1 at Grossinger Motors Arena in Bloomington.

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Forest Preserve District Board approves \$126.7 million budget

Key projects earmarked for 2025

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County Board of Commissioners has unanimously approved a \$126.7 million budget, excluding transfers, for 2025. The budget, funded primarily by less than 2% of a DuPage County homeowner's property taxes, will support daily operations, capital improvements, and strategic initiatives to enhance the District's facilities and services.

A homeowner whose property has a fair market value of \$308,500 is estimated to pay approximately \$145 annually to the District, which maintains 26,000 acres of land, 60 forest preserves, 600 acres of lakes, and 175 miles of trails.

Earlier this month the board also approved the annual tax levy, which historically accounts for over two-thirds of the District's annual revenue. The total estimated levy to be extended, \$68.4 million, will cover a portion of the District's operational and capital expenses. Additionally, the Forest Preserve District restructured existing debt and approved the issuance of \$85 million in bonds to fund long-term capital expenditures.

"The 2025 budget focuses on supporting daily operations and investing in much-needed capital improvements," said District executive director Karie Friling. "Our team has once again crafted a fiscally responsible budget within the board of commissioners' guidelines, supporting key master plan initiatives while ensuring

the continued delivery of outstanding recreational and nature-education programs." Friling said.

The 2025 budget will support a variety of projects aimed at enhancing recreation, improving infrastructure, restoring habitats, and advancing sustainability efforts across DuPage County's forest preserves.

- Construction of a new Natural Resources and Grounds campus in West Chicago
- Land acquisition
- Completion of the new state-of-the-art, net-zero-designed DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center in Glen Ellyn
- Recreational accessibility improvements across the District
- Infrastructure upgrades, including trails, roads, and parking lots at Greene Valley Forest Preserve (Naperville), Blackwell Forest Preserve (Warrenville), Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve (Wayne), and Salt Creek Marsh Forest Preserve (Itasca)
- Interior restoration work at Mayslake Peabody Estate in Oak Brook
- Course updates and ecological restoration at Maple Meadows Golf Preserve in Wood Dale
- Habitat-restoration projects at Egermann Woods (Lisle), Fischer Woods (Bensenville), Herrick Lake (Wheaton), West DuPage Woods (West Chicago), and Hickory Grove (Lisle)
- Preserve master planning

• Expansion of green-energy and sustainability initiatives

"This budget represents an exciting opportunity to deliver on the promises we've made to our community," said Daniel Hebreard, the Forest Preserve District president. "Thanks to the taxpayers' overwhelming support of the referendum, we can advance key projects that enhance our preserves, improve recreational access, and protect vital natural areas for generations to come. I'm thrilled about the work ahead and grateful for the trust our residents have placed in us to make these investments a reality."

For more information about the Forest Preserve District's annual budgets and financial reports, visit dupageforest.org and click on "About Us" and "Transparency Portal."

IDOT, ISP: Don't let a DUI wreck your holidays

This holiday season, the Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois State Police and more than 200 police and sheriff's departments are joining forces for the national "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" campaign, reminding the public that law enforcement will focus not only on impaired drivers, but also seat belt violations, speeding, distracted driving and other traffic offenses.

"The holidays should be a time for celebration and creating memories—not for grief and loss caused by preventable crashes," said Stephanie B. Seck-Birhame, IDOT's bureau chief of Safety Programs and Engineering. "Whether you're using alcohol, cannabis or any other impairing substance, the message is the same: If you drive impaired, you risk lives, including your own."

As holiday festivities fill calendars, it's critical to plan for a sober ride home before celebrations begin. Law enforcement statewide reminds drivers to stay sober and buckle up to help ensure the holidays remain a time of joy rather than tragedy.

According to provisional IDOT data, in 2023 there were 1,241 traffic fatalities: Twelve lives were lost in nine fatal crashes during the holiday period from Dec. 22 to 25.

District 88 names December Business Partner

During its board meeting on Dec. 9, the District 88 Board of Education named Kate Drury, with The Schiller Team @ Properties, as a Business Partner.

That program acknowledges businesses, organizations and individuals for their support in building futures for District 88 students and helping to accomplish the district's mission and vision. Drury is a local realtor and a proud Willowbrook parent. Drury is always willing to lend a helping hand and promote student-athletes. District 88



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

is proud to honor Drury as a Business Partner in recognition of her efforts, which include: Supporting Willowbrook athletics as a corporate sponsor through the district's advertising opportunities with Power Ad Company; coordinating a digital billboard ad in Villa Park to promote the Willowbrook football team (for Round 1 of the IHSA 7A playoffs, which was a home game); volunteering during Willowbrook's Teacher Appreciation Luncheons; helping to organize the Willowbrook Athletic Booster Club's Silver and Blue Parents Night Out; constantly promoting Willowbrook on social media to watch the presentation, and to view a photo gallery from the event, go to <https://www.dupage88.net/site/page/16583>. To read more about this recognition, go to www.dupage88.net/DruryBusinessPartner2024.

Police reports

The Villa Park Police Department recently reported the following arrests and citations. Readers are reminded that an arrest does not constitute a conviction, and that suspects are considered innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law. Persons charged with domestic battery are not named in order to protect the privacy of victims. Juveniles age 17 or younger are not named.

Dec. 17

Mark F. Fisher, 70, of Villa Park, was charged with reckless conduct causing bodily harm or endangering safety in the I-100 block of N. Michigan at 5 p.m.

A 20-year-old Villa Park woman was charged with two counts of domestic battery in the 100 block of N. Cornell at 11:21 a.m.

Dec. 16

A complainant in the 300 block of W. North reported at 11:33 a.m. that a suspect battered them.

A complainant in the 300 block of E. Maple reported that a subject damaged a door.

Dec. 15

Matthew M. Kish, 38, of Addison, was charged with DUI and driving a motor vehicle on a sidewalk in the 100 block of W. St. Charles at 8:10 p.m.

A complainant in the 200 block of

E. Vermont reported that a subject damaged their vehicle.

Dec. 14

Nemias Jimenez Cruz, 21, of West Chicago, was charged with DUI, no valid license/permit never issued, driving too fast for conditions, failure to reduce speed to avoid an accident, not driving on the right side of a four-lane road and no insurance near W. North and N. Addison at 11:40 p.m.

Gerardo Yopez, 37, of Westchester, was charged with DUI, driving while license suspended, operating a vehicle with a canceled, suspended or revoked registration, failure to yield from a private road or drive and no insurance near N. Princeton and W. Wildfire at 8:19 a.m.

Dec. 12

A 41-year-old Villa Park man was charged with two counts of domestic battery in the 500 block of W. Terrace at 11:51 p.m.

A complainant at a hotel in the 300 block of E. Roosevelt reported at 11:57 p.m. that several items were moved within their room.

Identify theft, fraud

According to information provided by the Villa Park Police Department, police reported one incident of identity theft or fraud in the village between Dec. 4 and Dec. 17.

DuPage County Sheriff's Office warns of brushing scam

The DuPage County Sheriff's Office warns the community about a dangerous new scam that's taking place across the country that could leave your personal information exposed.

In a brushing scam, you may receive an unsolicited gift or package at your home—something you didn't order. It seems innocent enough, but here's where it gets tricky: the package includes a QR code that you're encouraged to scan.

Don't scan the code! By scanning this code, you could unknowingly provide scammers with access to your personal information, such

as banking, putting you at risk for identity theft or other malicious activities.

Here's what to do if you receive an unexpected package:

- Do not scan any QR codes or open any suspicious links.
 - Contact the sender if they appear to be a legitimate company.
 - Report it to your local police department. If you're in unincorporated DuPage County, call the DuPage County Sheriff's Office at 630-407-2400.
- Remember: if something seems too good to be true, it probably is! Stay vigilant.

Man sentenced to 12 years for fatal DUI crash

Crashed into a disabled vehicle on the shoulder occupied by victim

DuPage County State's Attorney Robert Berlin announced that a former Homer Glen man charged with causing a crash that took the life of 51-year-old John Exner was sentenced to 12 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Robert Ebel, 55, appeared in Court in front of Judge Margaret O'Connell, who handed down the sentence. On April 30, 2024, Ebel entered a blind plea of guilty to one count of aggravated DUI—accident causing death (Class 2 felony).

On Aug. 22, 2020, at approximately 2 p.m., Ebel was driving a 2015 Tesla at a high rate of speed on I-55 south of Cass Avenue in Darien. As Ebel approached a semi-truck, he attempted to pass the truck on the right-hand shoulder of the road and crashed into a disabled Toyota on the shoulder occupied by Exner.

Upon their arrival at the crash, authorities immediately transported Exner to a local hospital where he was treated for life-threatening injuries including a collapsed lung, inter-

nal bleeding and injury to his spleen.

Exner died from his injuries approximately 13 hours later at the hospital. An investigation into the matter found that Ebel had amphetamine, cocaine metabolite, cocaine and THC in his system at the time of the crash.

Ebel will be required to serve 85 percent of his sentence before being eligible for parole. He will receive credit for 958 days he has already spent in custody.



CHRIS FOX FILE PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

The Broncos defeat Mother McAuley

Montini Catholic's girls basketball team beat Mother McAuley 59-42 in last week's Girls Catholic Athletic Conference (GCAC) Red Division contest in Lombard. The Broncos moved to 8-3 overall and 3-0 in division play with their Dec. 17 victory over the Mighty Macs. Montini led Mother McAuley 15-5 after one quarter and 30-11 at halftime. The Broncos owned a 46-25 lead at the end of the third quarter. Seniors Peyton Farrell and Nikki Kerstein scored 22 points each for Montini in the game. Kerstein made four shots from 3-point territory during the contest. She also sank four free throws. Farrell (No. 24) supplied 10 field goals and made two free throws in the Broncos' victory over Mother McAuley. Farrell scored five of her 10 baskets during the third quarter. Senior Audrey Kinney made one 3-point shot and contributed nine points for Montini. Seniors Natalie Gartlan, Lauren Mellish and Lily Spanos provided two points each. The Broncos are playing in their own 16-team tournament this week. Montini opened its event with a game against Nequua Valley on Monday, Dec. 23. The tournament ends this Saturday, Dec. 28.

• Rams (Continued from page 11)

game of a doubleheader; the second game featured a battle between the two schools' varsity boys teams. The Raiders expanded their lead to 25-13 by halftime. Glenbard South led the Rams 35-21 at the end of the third quarter. The Raiders improved their division record to 5-0 with Friday's win over Glenbard East. Nee connected on three shots from 3-point territory and scored a team-high 11 points in Friday's loss to the Raiders. Murphy provided six points, while Carver contrib-

Warriors win the team title at Addison Trail's invite

Capulong takes first in the all-around standings

The Willowbrook girls gymnastics team won the title at Saturday's Addison Trail Winter Tumbleland Invite. The Warriors posted a first-place team score of 130.15 in the five-team event. Leyden (128.1) finished second, while Addison Trail (127.8) placed third. York (119.5) and Morton (113.7) finished fourth and fifth, respectively.

Willowbrook sophomore Lilli Macias won the invite's title in the vault event with her score of 9.25. Addison Trail senior Olivia DeBeau claimed the championship on the uneven bars with her first-place score of 8.2. Junior Mia Trombatore of Addison Trail won the first-place medal on the balance beam with her score of 8.4.

Willowbrook junior Kaia Capulong won the invite's all-around title with her total score of 33.55. Capulong achieved her all-around score after placing second on the balance beam (8.3), third in floor exercises (8.7), tying for fourth on the vault (8.75) and finishing sixth on the uneven bars (7.8).

Trombatore (33.3) placed second in the all-around standings, while DeBeau (32.55) and Macias (32.25) landed in third and fourth, respectively.

Willowbrook freshman Ella Paulsen secured a second-place finish on the vault (8.95). Sophomore Mallory Yeazel of the Warriors finished third on the uneven bars (8.0). Senior Naomi Campbell of Willowbrook earned fourth-place finishes on the balance beam (8.15) and in floor exercises (8.5).

The Warriors competed in a dual meet at Leyden on Dec. 19. Leyden earned a narrow 129.85-128.3 victory in the meet's team standings. Capulong finished first on the balance beam (8.85) in that competition. Campbell delivered a first-place effort in floor exercises. Her routine earned a score of 8.65.

The Warriors' 2024-25 season continues with a home meet against Addison Trail on Jan. 8.

Broncos drop to 5-5 after losing to Brother Rice

Sansone connects on four 3-point shots and scores 16 points for Montini

The Montini Catholic boys basketball team's overall season record fell to 5-5 following Friday's 64-51 loss to Brother Rice in Lombard.

The visiting Crusaders jumped out to an 11-0 lead during the opening minutes of the game. Brother Rice led the Broncos 22-4 at the end of the first quarter. The Crusaders held a 37-19 lead at halftime. Their lead swelled to 58-33 by the end of the third quarter.

Brother Rice led Montini 64-44 with a little more than two minutes to play. The Broncos delivered a 7-0 run to end the game.

Junior Robert Sansone made four 3-point shots and scored a team-leading 16 points for the Broncos during Friday's loss. Senior Dillon Bagley

supplied 11 points for Montini, while senior Jack Barrett made two 3-point shots and scored 10 points. Senior Jake Maquet and junior Colt Ashton contributed four points each for the Broncos.

Senior Drew Church, junior Keny Hines and junior Charlie Morton added two points each.

The Broncos are playing in the 12-team ICCP/Westmont 2024 Christmas Classic, which began earlier this week. Montini opened the event with a game against Taft High School on Dec. 23 in Westmont. The Broncos finished pool play in the tournament with a Dec. 26 game against Unity Christian in Westmont. The tournament continues through Monday, Dec. 30.

baskets. Witt and Hodges added six and five points, respectively. Carver scored four points, while junior Nora Opila contributed three points. Bridget Crocker provided three points with a 3-point basket in the fourth quarter. Greenfield added two points.

The Rams will play four games in this week's Sandburg Holiday Classic at Carl Sandburg High School in Orland Park. Glenbard East opened play in the 16-team event with a Dec. 26 matchup against Nazareth Academy.



CHRIS FOX PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Warriors lose to the Mustangs

Willowbrook's girls basketball team lost 61-25 to Downers Grove South in last week's West Suburban Gold Conference game in Villa Park. The visiting Mustangs led the Warriors 28-11 after one quarter and 36-18 at halftime. Downers Grove South held a 53-23 lead at the end of the third quarter. That lead of 30 points triggered a running clock for the entire fourth quarter of the Dec. 17 game. Sophomore Jada Langston scored a team-leading 10 points for the Warriors in the contest. Langston (No. 0) is pictured while launching and making a 3-point shot in the third quarter. Senior Ayaani Gusman and junior Joely Maciejewski added five and four points, respectively. The Warriors lost their next game, falling 51-44 at Leyden in Friday's conference battle. That loss dropped Willowbrook to 2-10 overall and 1-4 in conference action. Gusman scored a team-high 15 points in Friday's loss to the Eagles. Langston and senior Loralei McIntyre provided eight points each. The Warriors are playing in this week's 16-team Bill Nelbch Holiday Classic at Wheaton North High School. Willowbrook began the event with a Dec. 23 game against West Aurora. The tournament ends this Saturday, Dec. 28.



CHRIS FOX PHOTO Rock Valley Pub

Warriors fight back to win their conference opener

Willowbrook's boys basketball team opened its West Suburban Gold Conference season Friday's 41-38 victory over Linden in Villa Park. The Warriors who improved their overall record to 3-4 with the win, tied the visiting Eagles 11-9 after quarter. The two teams were at 22-22 at halftime. Willowbrook struggled in the third quarter and trailed Leyden 36-27 eight minutes to play. The Warriors outscored the Eagles in the fourth quarter to earn a hard-fought victory. Junior Powell (No. 2) scored a team-high 12 points for Willowbrook in the contest. Junior Ja Griffin provided nine points while seniors Filip Palutkie and Jaden Royal supplied six points each. Powell sank a 3-point shot with about one minute left in the game. A layup by Royal and two late free throws by Palutkiewicz helped the Warriors complete their comeback victory. The Eagles tried to miss a 3-point attempt at the end of the game, but Palutkiewicz made his two throw attempts. Leyden finished the game with only three points on the court. The Warriors are playing in this week's 2024 Westmont Christmas Classic. Willowbrook opened the 12-team event with a game against Independence St. Mel on Dec. 23. The tournament continues through Dec. 30.

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THURSDAY, DEC. 19, 2024



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS Villa Park Review

Showcasing Willowbrook students' artwork

The Funky Java Coffee House, located at 40 S. Villa Avenue in Villa Park, welcomed the artwork of Willowbrook High School students last week. Larry Poggi, the owner of the Funky Java House and a father of Willowbrook graduates, has hosted a December exhibition featuring the pieces of the school's art students for many years. This year's art show included more than 100 pieces of art in various media that were on display at Poggi's business through the end of the week. One photo from the opening reception on Dec. 11 shows Willowbrook junior Josie Parkinson, who is pictured (left) near her digital creation, titled "Shadows." Parkinson entered the piece in the Art-ConnectED Art Throwdown in October. Parkinson competed against 56 other artists in the Illustration category of the state-wide competition. More than 2,500 votes were cast to select the winning entries. Parkinson's piece earned second-place honors. Also pictured during last week's opening reception is Willowbrook junior Rebeca Timothee, who is shown (above) near her sculpture, titled "Reflection." The piece includes a photo the artist took of herself. "When you just get out of the shower, it's sort of that intimate moment where it's just you looking at yourself," said Timothee while describing her piece. "I wanted to sort of embrace that awkwardness of looking at yourself in the mirror." Parkinson and Timothee are Villa Park residents.

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Concert at Willowbrook

Willowbrook High School's music department held three concerts this month in the school's auditorium. The performers in the Dec. 3 concert included the rock band featuring (left to right) senior Ayden Oquendo, senior Yeshua Mata, junior Nate Drane, sophomore Shea Downer and junior Malachy Heneghan. Two other concerts took place at Willowbrook last week.

Appellate court affirms subject's conviction of sexual assault and 88-year sentence

Man convicted of assaulting female employee of an Oak Brook hotel in 2019

DuPage County State's Attorney Robert Berlin announced on Friday that the Third District Appellate Court of Illinois affirmed the conviction and 88-year sentence of Julius Ramsey for sexually assaulting, at gunpoint, a female employee of an Oak Brook hotel in 2019.

In his appeal of his conviction, Ramsey claimed that his attorney was ineffective for failing to explain to the jury why the defendant did not testify at trial after they had been told that he would.

On Sept. 9, 2019, at approximately 11:48 a.m., Oak Brook police were called to the Hyatt House for a sexual assault that had occurred in a vacant room. Through the course of their investigation, officers learned that at approximately 11:20 a.m., Ramsey forced the woman at gunpoint into a vacant room at the hotel, where he sexually assaulted her on several occasions, put a gun to her head and threatened to kill her. The victim was able to escape the room and report the assault.

On May 20, 2021, following a three-day-long trial presided over by Judge Jeffrey MacKay, a jury found Ramsey guilty of three counts of aggravated criminal sexual assault with a firearm (a Class X felony), one count of aggravated kidnapping with a firearm (a Class X felony) and one count of aggravated criminal sexual abuse (a Class 2 felony).

In its decision, the Appellate Court rejected Ramsey's claims and found that at trial, "counsel put forth a rigorous defense and appropriately addressed the absence of defendant's testimony during his closing argument." The Appellate Court further stated that "Counsel highlighted defendant's constitutional right not to testify and emphasized the burden was on the State to prove the charged offenses" and noted "We fail to identify what more counsel could have said to remedy defendant's own last-minute decision not to testify."

"I thank the Appellate Court for their thorough analysis of this case and their finding that Mr. Ramsey received a fair trial," Berlin said. "The Appellate Court's decision ensures that Mr. Ramsey will not receive a new trial and his conviction and 88-year sentence will stand."

Justice Lance Peterson delivered the judgment of the court, with Justice William Holdridge and Justice Linda Davenport concurring. Ramsey's appeal was defended by Steven Biagi of the DuPage County State's Attorney's Criminal Appeals Division.

Police Reports

The Villa Park Police Department recently reported the following arrests and citations. Readers are reminded that an arrest does not constitute a conviction, and that suspects are considered innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law. Persons charged with domestic battery are not named in order to protect the privacy of victims. Juveniles age 17 or younger are not named.

Dec. 3
Police said Miriam E. Sanchez Figueroa, 24, of Villa Park, was served with an in-jurisdiction warrant in the 300 block of N. Cornell at 10:34 a.m.

A complainant in the 300 block of N. Cornell advised at 10:34 a.m. that a suspect harassed and threatened them.

A complainant in the 400 block of N. Gerard reported suspicious activity that they suspected may have occurred at the residence.

Dec. 2
Martin A. Crossley, 49, of Wheaton, was charged with retail theft/possessing displayed merchandise not exceeding \$300 at a store in the 1-100 block of E. North at 5:10 p.m.
A complainant in the 100 block of W. Plymouth reported a suspect battered them.

Nov. 30
Police said Thomas Nesbit, 45, of

Downers Grove, was served with an in-jurisdiction warrant at a hotel in the 1-100 block of W. Roosevelt at 6:21 p.m.

Sergey Rom, 54, of Arlington Heights, was charged with failure to reduce speed to avoid an accident, improper use of registration/title, driving too fast for conditions and driving with a suspended license near Route 83 and Riverside at 7:20 p.m.

A complainant in the 700 block of N. Yale reported an unknown suspect entered their unsecured vehicle and rummaged through it. Nothing was reported missing from the vehicle.

Nov. 28
Martell A. Williams, 42, of Willowbrook, was charged with DUI near S. Route 83 and Riverside at 9:53 p.m.

A 28-year-old woman and a 24-year-old woman, both of Villa Park, were each charged with domestic battery in the 500 block of N. Princeton at 4:28 a.m.

Nov. 27
A complainant in the 100 block of W. Kenilworth reported at 9:21 a.m. that a suspect battered them.

Identity theft, fraud
According to information provided by the Villa Park Police Department, police reported one incident of identity theft or fraud in the village between Nov. 27 and Dec 3.

DuPage County office eliminates fees for veterans requesting discharge records

DuPage County's newly sworn-in Recorder of Deeds, Elizabeth Chaplin, has announced that the office would eliminate fees for veterans who obtain copies of their military discharge records from the Recorder's office.

"Our veterans have given so much, and this small gesture is one way we can express our gratitude and ensure they have convenient access to the documentation they need without asking for a fee," said Chaplin.

Effectively immediately, DuPage County Recorder's Office will no longer charge veterans for copies of their DD214 military discharge records. This change reflects a commitment to honoring the service and sacrifice of our veterans.

Chaplin made the change after reviewing state statutes and implementing a new change that allows

the fees to be waived. The DD214 form is an essential document for veterans, often required to access benefits, services and other resources.

Veterans and their families can bring a copy to the Recorder's Office to ensure a backup copy always is available. By eliminating copy and retrieval fees, the Recorder's Office strives to make the process easier and more accessible for all veterans.

The Recorder's Office encourages all veterans and their families to take advantage of this new policy, and to sign up for "Honor Rewards" a special retail discount card offered by the Recorder's Office.

For assistance or additional information, contact the office at (630) 407-5400 or visit www.Dupage-county.gov/Recorder.

•Burglary (Continued from page 3)

In a separate incident on Dec. 13, it is alleged that at approximately 7:04 p.m., Williams entered the Nordstrom Rack with an empty child car seat. It is alleged that Williams placed \$716.87 worth of merchandise, including clothing and cosmetics, into the car seat, draped a blanket over the car seat and exited the store.

Williams was confronted by a loss-prevention officer outside the

store and taken into custody a short time later.

The next court appearance for Johnson, Thrasher and Booker is scheduled for Jan. 6. The next court appearance for Williams is scheduled for Jan. 10, for arraignment in front of Judge Ann Celine O'Hallaren Walsh. As a condition of their release, the defendants are prohibited from entering the Oak Brook Nordstrom Rack store.

Two Cook County women and two juveniles charged with retail theft/burglary from Oak Brook Sephora

One minor defendant allegedly threatened police officer and his family

DuPage County State's Attorney Robert Berlin and Oak Brook Chief of Police Brian Strockis announced last week that two Cook County women and two male juveniles have been accused of stealing merchandise from the Oak Brook Sephora store located at 104 Oakbrook Center.

Marisol Ocampo, 35, of Chicago, appeared in court on Dec. 23, and was charged with one count of contributing to the delinquency of a minor (Class 1 felony), two counts of burglary (Class 2 felony) and one count of retail theft (Class 3 felony).

Ocampo's co-defendant, Deyisi Villalobos, 32, of Melrose Park, also appeared in court on Dec. 23, and was charged with one count of contributing to the delinquency of a minor, three counts of burglary and three counts of retail theft.

Two male juveniles who were with the women, one 17-year-old and one 15-year-old, both appeared at a detention hearing; and each was charged with one count of burglary (Class 2 felony), one count of aggravated battery (Class 3 felony) and one count of retail theft (Class 3 felony).

In addition, the 17-year-old juvenile was charged with one count of threatening a public official (Class 3 felony). Both juveniles were released

and placed on GPS monitoring.

It is alleged that on Dec. 22 at approximately 5 p.m., the defendants entered the Sephora store and selected numerous items of merchandise valued at more than \$300 and left the store without paying for the merchandise.

It is also alleged that both Ocampo and Villalobos directed one of the juveniles to steal merchandise from the Sephora. It is further alleged that the juveniles struck a store employee during the commission of the retail theft and that one of the juveniles also threatened an Oak Brook police officer, stating "I am going to get your a** killed, boy ... I know your family. I know your brother. You better watch out."

It is further alleged that on Dec. 20 at approximately 5:59 p.m., Ocampo and Villalobos entered the same Sephora store and selected numerous items of merchandise valued at more than \$300 and left the store without paying for the merchandise.

The next court appearance for Ocampo and Villalobos is scheduled for Jan. 21, for arraignment in front of Judge Brian Telander. The next court appearance for the juveniles is scheduled for Jan. 10.

Police recover handgun from subject after responding to disturbance

Male subject charged with two misdemeanors

While responding to the 500 block of North Princeton Avenue for a disturbance call shortly after 7 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 28, Villa Park Police Department officers stopped a subject leaving the area.

While engaging the subject, officers recovered a 32-caliber handgun from his person. The suspect was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct (related to the disturbance call) and unlawful use of a weapon for being in possession of a weapon without a valid concealed carry permit, both misdemeanor charges.

The handgun was not loaded with ammunition.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Villa Park VFW's Queen of Hearts jackpot is rising

The winner's share of Villa Park Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 2801's current Queen of Hearts contest is about \$26,000. The contest's weekly ticket drawing takes place at 8 p.m. each Friday at the post, which is located at 39 E. St. Charles Road. Pictured left to right after the recent contest drawing of Dec. 20 are two members of the post's contest team—Michael Huston and Mary Agrusa. A five-pack of contest tickets costs \$5. The ticket that is selected during each Friday's drawing includes a number on the contest board that has not been revealed. If the Queen of Hearts is behind that number, the ticket holder claims the winner's share of the jackpot. There will be 30 covered spaces on the contest board for the drawing of this Friday, Jan. 3. The Queen of Hearts is behind one of those spaces. There are also three \$100 bonus cards (one Joker and Queens of two other suits) hiding on the contest board. Tickets are on sale at the post during the week and up until a few minutes before each Friday's drawing. Contestants do not have to be present at the drawing.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Willowbrook presents Outstanding Students honors for the second quarter

Willowbrook High School recently recognized 12 students as Outstanding Students for the second quarter of the 2024-25 school year. To be chosen for the honor, students must demonstrate extraordinary achievement and an outstanding effort, along with a commendable attitude. Additionally, students who receive the award must demonstrate motivation and the ability to overcome obstacles. Willowbrook Principal Dan Krause and Willowbrook Assistant Principal Jamie Gourley welcomed the recipients and their families to the Dec. 12 breakfast that celebrated the honor. Staff members who nominated the students for the award in various departments also attended the breakfast at the school. The Brook Catering Co., which is comprised of Willowbrook culinary students, provided the breakfast. The honored students (pictured left to right) included: (front row) sophomores Makenzie Jacobson (English), freshman Charlotte Baker (Social Studies), freshman Taylor Koziol (Physical Education), senior Madison Vega (Career and Technical Education), junior Kiki Smelling (World Languages) and junior Josie Parkinson (Art); (back row) senior Jacey Frank (Mathematics), sophomore Carlos Marquez Chaustre (Literacy), senior Christopher Vargas (Learning Services), freshman Charley Pickerill (Warrior Resource Center), junior Ayden Ketelsen (Science) and senior Ayden Oquendo (Music).

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Administration:
Chris Fox
News Coordinator

Debra Hamilton
Advertising Director

Pete Cruger
Publisher

Advertising:
Brenda Garcia
Kate McCarty

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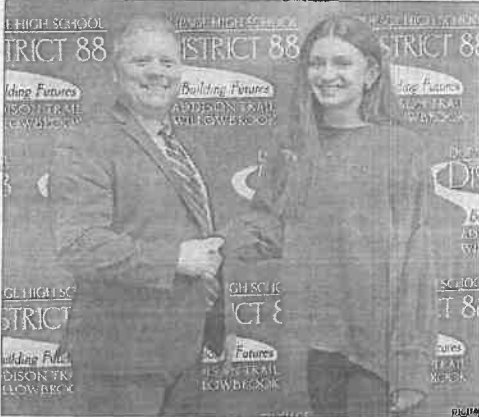


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Kenny named 88's Best for December

Willowbrook High School senior Hannah Kenny was recently honored as her school's recipient of the 88's Best award for the month of December. Kenny was recognized during the District 88 Board of Education's Dec. 9 meeting. She is pictured (right) at that meeting with Willowbrook Principal Dan Krause (left). Krause noted during the meeting that Kenny was days away from graduating from Willowbrook. After graduating from high school in December 2024, Kenny is heading to the University of Louisville in January 2025 to continue her academic and athletic careers. During the Dec. 9 board meeting, Krause read comments from some Willowbrook staff members as he described Kenny's successes at the school. Those staff members praised Kenny as a hard worker who is dedicated, self-motivated, kind, collaborative and conscientious. Kenny excelled academically at Willowbrook. She is an Advanced Placement (AP) Scholar with

Distinction and an Illinois State Scholar. She was named to Willowbrook's Distinction Honor Roll during each semester of her time in high school. Kenny is a member of the National Honor Society, the National English Honor Society, the National Math Honor Society and Willowbrook's social studies honor society—Civitas. In addition to excelling academically, Kenny enjoyed a spectacular athletic career as a Warrior. She was a four-year starter on Willowbrook's girls volleyball team. In her junior season, she helped the team win conference, regional, sectional and super-sectional titles on its way to earning the program's first ever berth in the IHSA state semifinals. The Warriors' 2023 girls volleyball team won the third-place trophy in that year's IHSA Class 4A state tournament. Kenny (No. 6) is pictured (above) while celebrating with some of her teammates after Willowbrook defeated Barrington in the Class 4A state tournament's third-place match in Normal on Nov. 11, 2023. Kenny demonstrated her all-around athletic talent as a freshman at Willowbrook, when she earned All-Conference recognition in basketball and softball. She concentrated on volleyball during her final three years of high school, setting numerous records and earning All-Conference, All-State and All-American recognition. Kenny will be a member of the University of Louisville's standout women's volleyball program, which recently finished second in the 2024 NCAA Division I Tournament. Penn State University defeated the Cardinals in the national-championship match on Dec. 22. Kenny plans to study business or finance.



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Saturday, January 25, Game Night at 4 pm

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Warriors win their last two games at Wheaton North's holiday tournament

After opening the event with two losses, Willowbrook defeats Elgin and Schaumburg

The Willowbrook girls basketball team won two of four games at the 16-team Bill Neibch Holiday Classic, which took place last week at Wheaton North High School. The Warriors' overall season record stood at 4-12 at the end of the holiday tournament.

Willowbrook began the event with a 62-40 loss to West Aurora on Dec. 23. The Warriors then lost 44-40 in overtime to De La Salle Institute on Dec. 26. Willowbrook closed the tournament with a 58-56 win over Elgin

on Dec. 27, followed by a 55-44 victory over Schaumburg on Saturday, Dec. 28.

Willowbrook led West Aurora 17-10 after one quarter of last week's tournament game. The Warriors led the Blackhawks 26-24 at halftime. West Aurora delivered a 22-9 run in the third quarter to take a 46-35 lead with eight minutes to play.

Senior Kristin Woods scored 13 points for the Warriors in their loss to West Aurora. Senior Kendall Medinger

made three shots from 3-point range and added 10 points. Senior Ayaani Gusman provided nine points, while senior Lorlai McIntyre contributed six points.

The Warriors trailed De La Salle 22-18 at halftime and 30-24 after three quarters of the Dec. 26 contest. The two teams were tied at 35-35 at the end of the fourth quarter. Willowbrook led De La Salle 35-32 late in the fourth quarter. The Meteors sank a 3-point shot to even the score at 35-35

with about 30 seconds left in regulation.

The Meteors outscored the Warriors 9-5 during the four-minute overtime period to earn their 44-40 win.

Gusman scored 19 points in Willowbrook's loss to De La Salle. Woods added nine points.

Willowbrook held a 30-29 halftime lead over Elgin in the Dec. 27 matchup at Wheaton North. The Maroons owned a 48-40 lead by the end of the third quarter.

McIntyre sank a 3-point shot to tie the game at 50-50 with 5:24 to play in the fourth quarter. Gusman added a basket that completed a 10-0 run and gave Willowbrook a 52-50 lead with about five minutes remaining. Elgin then scored four straight points to take a 54-52 lead.

Gusman made two free throws to even the score at 54-54 with 1:16 on the clock. The Maroons delivered a steal and basket with less than 25 seconds to play to take a 56-54 lead. Gusman then drained a 3-point shot with

14 seconds left in the game to tie the Warriors a 57-56 lead. Medinger added a free throw with 3.7 seconds to play.

Gusman poured in 23 points in Willowbrook's win over Elgin. Woods scored 13 of those points during the fourth quarter. Woods surpassed 14 points in the victory. McIntyre who made a pair of 3-point shots during the game, provided 11 points. Medinger scored six points, while sophomore Jada Langston contributed four points.

Willowbrook owned a sizable 14 halftime lead over Schaumburg. The Saxons cut the Warriors' lead 44-30 by the end of the third quarter.

Gusman scored 17 points for Willowbrook in Saturday's win over Schaumburg.

Medinger made five 3-point shots to supply 15 points. Langston added 11 points. Junior Joely Maciejewski scored five points. Woods and McIntyre tallied four and three points, respectively.

Warriors battle in nearby holiday tournament

Willowbrook's boys basketball team won its first two games at the 12-team IC Catholic Prep/Westmont Christmas Classic, which began last week and continued through Dec. 30. The Warriors opened the event with a 52-50 victory over Providence St. Mel in Westmont on Dec. 23.



Three days later, the Warriors defeated College Preparatory School of America (CPSA) 70-50 at IC Catholic Prep in Elmhurst. The Warriors completed pool play in the tournament with Friday's victory over CPSA of Lombard. Willowbrook advanced to the semifinal round of the tournament with its 2-0 record in pool play. The Warriors faced IC Catholic Prep in Saturday's semifinal contest in Elmhurst. The Knights beat Willowbrook 68-48. The Warriors' overall season record dropped to 5-5 after Saturday's loss to IC Catholic Prep.



Willowbrook played its fourth and final game of the holiday tournament when it battled in the event's third-place game earlier this week. Junior Jaylen Griffin scored a team-leading 22 points for Willowbrook in last week's win over Providence St. Mel. Senior Mark Murrell provided 11 points for the Warriors, while senior Jaden Royal contributed seven points. Senior Jesus Gomez added three points for Willowbrook. Sophomore Michael Garner supplied two points and nine rebounds. Providence St. Mel scored a basket with about 10 seconds to play to cut the Warriors' lead to 51-50. Murrell made one of two free throws with 1.5 seconds on the clock. Providence St. Mel then missed a desperation shot from well behind the half-court line at the buzzer. Junior Otis Powell scored a team-high 21 points for the Warriors in Friday's victory over CPSA. Griffin (No. 1 - top left) delivered 11 points and seven assists. Junior Antwain Walker scored nine points, while Garner contributed eight points and seven rebounds. Junior Matthew Clesinski added five points and eight rebounds for the Warriors. Gomez and senior Felm Alka scored four points each. CPSA senior Hamzah Shouman (No. 5 - top right) led all scorers in the game with 31 points. Powell scored 27 points in Saturday's loss to IC Catholic Prep. Murrell (No. 3 - left) and Griffin scored nine and five points, respectively.



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS Rock Valley Publishing

•Rams (Continued from page 11)

with a 38-34 loss to Downers Grove South on Saturday, Dec. 28.

Murphy made a pair of shots from 3-point range and scored 10 points for Glenbard East in its win over Richards. Nee contributed nine points in the victory, while Witt delivered eight points. Brown scored four points. Carver added three points. Greenfield, sophomore Sarah Crocker and sophomore Ally Amrhein scored two points each. Junior Kathleen Nevels and sophomore Bridget Crocker tallied one point each for the Rams, who led Richards 12-7 after one quarter, 22-12 at halftime and

36-16 after three quarters.

Murphy connected on three 3-point shots and scored 13 points for Rams in their loss to Downers Grove South on Saturday. Nee drained 11 3-point shots in the second half, including two in the fourth quarter score nine points. Brown provided points. Carver and Witt added four two points, respectively.

Downers Grove South led the Rams 11-4 after one quarter and 19-10 at halftime. The Mustangs led Glen East 29-22 at the end of the third quarter.

•Broncos (Continued from page 11)

extended their lead to 40-31 by the end of the third quarter.

Bagley made two 3-point shots and scored a team-high 14 points for the Broncos in their win over the Phoenix of Unity Christian Academy. He sank both of his 3-point baskets in the third quarter. Bagley made five free throws during the fourth quarter.

Junior Robert Sansone connected on three 3-point shots and provided 11 points in Montini's Dec. 26 victory. Bell contributed nine points. Juniors Colt Ashton and Angelo DeSensi tallied six points each. Barrett and Church added five and three points, respectively.

Montini held a 13-8 lead after one

quarter of Saturday's game against Westmont. The Broncos' lead grew to 29-12 by halftime. Montini led Sentinels 48-17 at the end of the quarter.

Sansone duplicated his scoring output from Montini's previous game in Saturday's contest. For the second straight game, Sansone made 11 3-point shots and scored 11 points netted eight of his 11 points against Westmont during the third quarter when he drained two 3-point shots one 2-point attempt. Church made 3-point baskets and scored 11 points in the Broncos' win over Westmont. Maquet provided nine points. Senior Maquet contributed six points.

Coming events

Lombard blood drive Jan. 14
The Village of Lombard will hold a Versiti blood Drive Tuesday, Jan. 14, from 1:30-7 p.m. at First Church of Lombard - Fellowship Hall, 220 S. Main St., Lombard. Radon test kits will be handed out free while supplies last to all donors during the First Church blood drive. The drive will also be held in the Versiti mobile coach at the lower level Von Maur - Mall Entrance Circle, 203 Yorktown Shopping Center, Lombard, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Appointments appreciated; walk-ins welcome. To schedule, go to www.versiti.org/IL, load the Versiti Donor app, call 800-770-GIVE.

Chamber board installation luncheon Jan. 16
Join the Lombard Chamber Jan. 16 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. for the 2025 January Board Installation Luncheon, as we celebrate and support our newly installed and returning board members for 2025, at the Westin Chicago Lombard, 70 Yorktown Shopping Center, Lombard. Visit lombardchamber.com for details.

GPS program Jan. 9
The GPS Parent Series: Navigating Healthy Families will present "Bright Kids Who Couldn't Care Less: Tools for Tackling Motivation" with psy-

chologist and learning expert Ellen Braaten at noon and 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 9, via Zoom. Braaten is executive director of the Learning and Emotional Assessment Program at Massachusetts General Hospital, associate professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School and a visiting professor at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. Go to the GPS Parent Series website for information and the links to these webinars. To be placed on a reminder list for GPS events or submit a question in advance, contact Gilda Ross, Glenbard District 87 student and community projects coordinator, at gilda_ross@glenbard.org or 630-942-7668.

Answers

PUZZLE 1

9	1	8	5	3	4	6	2	7
3	6	4	2	1	7	5	9	8
5	7	2	8	6	9	1	4	3
8	5	1	7	4	6	2	3	9
7	2	3	9	5	8	4	1	6
6	4	9	1	2	3	7	8	5
2	3	6	4	8	5	9	7	1
4	9	5	3	7	1	8	6	2
1	8	7	6	9	2	3	5	4

PUZZLE 2

6	9	5	8	1	7	4	3
8	2	7	3	4	9	5	1
3	4	1	6	5	2	8	7
7	6	3	9	8	5	2	4
1	5	2	4	7	3	9	6
9	8	4	2	6	1	7	5
4	1	9	5	3	8	6	2
2	7	6	1	9	4	3	8
5	3	8	7	2	6	1	9