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THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2026

Willowbrook dance team holds annual summer kids camp



Willowbrook High School's dance team held its annual summer kids camp last week. The five-session camp for children entering kindergarten through eighth grade concluded with performances for family members in the main gymnasium on July 24. Members of the team guided the campers through their routines. Willowbrook will hold three mini camps for kids (one-day camps in October, December and February) during the upcoming 2026-27 school year. (Photo by Chris Fox)

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Villa Park residents take part in Fun Ride



JT Helton and his father, Willowbrook Assistant Principal Joe Helton, are pictured riding on St. Charles Road during the Lombard Cycling Classic's Family Fun Ride. Joe and Lizzy Helton participated in the July 21 event with their two sons, JT and George. The Heltons live in Villa Park. The Lombard Cycling Classic featured a full day of races, with competitors riding laps on the downtown course. Each lap covered about two-thirds of a mile. The Family Fun Ride took place between the women's and men's professional races. (Photo by Chris Fox)

Area News

District 88 gives information regarding potential bond proposal before November

District 88 is evaluating a funding proposal that could appear on the Nov. 3, 2026, ballot to address facility improvements at Addison Trail and Willowbrook high schools, including safety and security upgrades, addressing aging infrastructure, ADA accessibility and improvements to Career and Technical Education (CTE) spaces.

According to District 88, the potential bond proposal would fund these updates at both facilities without a net tax rate increase.

"This is possible because District 88 has existing referendum debt that will be paid off after levy year 2026, and the district has limited the proposal to the absolute highest-priority needs," stated the district earlier this week.

The district is seeking community input and will continue to attend meetings and events this summer in Addison, Lombard, Oakbrook Terrace and Villa Park to share information and welcome feedback. View the calendar at <https://tinyurl.com/BondProposalCalendar2026> for a list of where District 88 representatives will be. Specifics about the potential bond proposal can be viewed at www.dupage88.net/Proposal.

Willowbrook High School set to host Aug. 14 Silver and Blue Community Night

Willowbrook High School invites all students, parents/guardians, alumni, staff, community members and friends to celebrate the start of the 2026-27 school year by attending the school's Silver and Blue Community Night on Friday, Aug. 14.

Silver and Blue Community Night, which will feature a showcase of the school's fall athletic teams and extracurricular activities, is an opportunity to welcome and thank all Willowbrook stakeholders for their support and partnership in building positive futures for students. This event is a time to come together to enjoy an evening of fun, fellowship and Warrior Pride.

Activities will begin in Willowbrook's stadium at 6 p.m. Gates will open at 5:30 p.m. Admission is free. Concessions will be available to buy.

For more information, contact District 88 Director of Community Relations Dani Brink at 630-530-3989 or dbrink@dupage88.net.

Christian Church of Villa Park accepting applications for Love Your Neighbor Day

The Christian Church of Villa Park is accepting applications for the 12th annual Love Your Neighbor Day, a community service event that brings together volunteers from local churches and the community to assist neighbors in need.

On Saturday, Sept. 19, volunteer teams will provide free help with yard work and small exterior home repair projects for approved homeowners. Materials are funded through grants and donations, and there is no cost to participate.

Following submission, applicants will be contacted to schedule a home visit to review the requested work. Project selection is based on the scope of work and volunteer availability.

Applications must be submitted by Aug. 16. To learn more and apply, visit <https://www.ccvonline.net/love-your-neighbor-day>.

York Township Community Mental Health Board accepting grant applications

The York Township Community Mental Health Board (708 Board) recently announced that as of July 1, it is accepting grant applications from qualified organizations providing mental health services, substance use disorder treatment and recovery services, and programs supporting individuals with developmental disabilities.

Eligible nonprofit organizations and service providers serving York Township residents are encouraged to apply for funding to support programs that improve access to care, promote early intervention, strengthen community resources, and enhance the overall well-being of individuals and families throughout the township.

This funding opportunity represents a historic milestone following the support of York Township voters, who approved the referendum establishing the 708 Community Mental Health Board by more than 65 percent in the November 2024 election.

Through this voter-approved investment, the Board is committed to creating a coordinated, community-driven system of care that addresses the evolving behavioral health needs of residents.

"Today marks the beginning of an exciting partnership with the organizations that serve our community every day," said Michael Ledonne, President of the York Township Community Mental Health Board.

"We encourage providers of all sizes to apply and help us build a stronger, more connected network of services that ensures every resident has access to the mental health, developmental disability, and substance use resources they need to thrive. Together, we have an incredible opportunity to make a lasting impact on the health and well-being of York Township."

The York Township Community Mental Health Board was established under Illinois' Community Mental Health Act and is funded through a voter-approved property tax dedicated to supporting mental health, developmental disability, and substance use services for township residents.

Rather than providing direct services, the Board identifies community needs, develops strategic funding priorities, and partners with qualified local agencies to expand access to high-quality care.

The Board encourages eligible service providers interested in applying for funding to review the application requirements and submission guidelines.

- All grant application agencies must be in business/in operation at least three years at the time of application.

- All funds requested must be used to directly benefit York Township residents

- Grants for expansion of services will be given higher consideration than those of startup or new services

- Grants will be given up to a maximum of \$50,000 per organization in 2026-2027. However, the York Township Community Mental Health Board has the discretion to award multiple grants to an organization based on funding availability and community needs.

Grant applications and additional information are available at <https://york-twp.com/supervisor-home/708-mental-health-board/>.

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.

July 21

Michael J. Vega, 50, of Villa Park, was charged with filing a false 911 report, three counts of resisting an officer, firefighter or correctional employee, and two counts of disorderly conduct—breach of peace in the 600 block of W. Ridge at 10:25 p.m.

July 20

A complainant near Riverside and S. Route 83 reported a subject's vehicle did not stop at the intersection, struck the complainant's vehicle and left the area.

A complainant in the 1300 block of S. Villa reported that a subject punched their door, causing damage to it.

A complainant in the 1300 block of S. Villa reported at 8:17 p.m. that a subject was taunting them and attempting to start an altercation. The complainant did not wish to sign complaints.

July 19

Deonta L. Robinson Henderson, 31, of Chicago, was charged with DUI, driving without a valid license, improper lane usage and disobeying a traffic control signal near E. Roosevelt and S. Westmore-Meyers at 2:28 a.m.

Lukasz M. Weglarz, 41, of Villa Park, was charged with criminal damage to property in the 500 block of N. Yale at 10:24 p.m.

A complainant in the 400 block of W. Plymouth reported that a subject is harassing them via telephone.

July 17

Alejandro J. Ospino Perozo, 35, of Riverdale, Georgia, was issued citations for failure to give information to an officer after striking an unattended vehicle or property and improper backing of a vehicle on a roadway in the 1-100 block of N. Harvard.

July 16

Matthew J. Rischer, 47, of Villa Park, was charged with possession of a firearm—no valid FOLD card on person in the 400 block of S. Cornell at 6:49 a.m.

A 21-year-old Villa Park man was charged with two counts of domestic battery in the 100 block of W. Terrace at 11:30 p.m. He was transported to the DuPage County Jail.

A complainant at a store in the 200 block of W. North reported that a subject was following them around the store and making comments that made the complainant uncomfortable. The subject left prior to an officer's arrival.

A complainant in the 300 block of S. Illinois reported that an unknown subject entered their vehicle and removed several items.

July 15

A 19-year-old North Aurora man was charged with domestic battery and interfering with the reporting of domestic violence near N. Villa and E. North at 7:37 p.m. He was transported to the DuPage County Jail.

A complainant in the 400 block of E. Highland reported that a subject battered them.

A complainant near E. Highland and S. Ardmore reported an unknown subject entered their vehicle.

A complainant near St. Charles and Ardmore reported that a subject battered them.

A complainant in the 300 block of S. Monterey reported the lock on their fence was damaged.

Willowbrook student Downer set to perform at Villa Park's inaugural Villa Fest on Aug. 22

Shea Downer, who is about to begin her senior year at Willowbrook High School, will perform during next month's Villa Fest.



Shea Downer

a new community celebration that will feature entertainment, live music, food and more. The event will take place Saturday, Aug. 22, at Ardmore Avenue and Park Boulevard in Villa Park.

The theme of this year's event is "All Roads Lead to Villa Park." For more information, visit <https://www.invillapark.com/777/Villa-Fest>.

Downer will serve as the lead vocalist for her father's band, the Rhythm Rockets. The band will perform from 3:05 to 4:20 p.m.

Downer has been involved with music and theatrical productions since she was in grade school and has been part of Willowbrook's vocal jazz group (CenterStage), theater program and orchestra. Downer, who plays the cello in Willowbrook's orchestra, had the opportunity to perform with Willowbrook alumnus Tom Higginson and his multi-platinum, Grammy-nominated band, Plain White T's, during a concert this February at the school, where Downer and three other students played "Hey There Delilah."

Downer's father, Dave, who graduated from Willowbrook in 1980, formed the Rhythm Rockets in 1996. The band's repertoire consists of postwar jazz and rhythm and blues from the 1940s and 1950s. It con-



The Rhythm Rockets, featuring (front row, left to right) Shea Downer and her father, Dave, will perform at Villa Park's inaugural Villa Fest on Aug. 22. Dave Downer formed the Rhythm Rockets in 1996. (Submitted photo)

sists of three saxophones, drums, acoustic bass, guitar and Downer as the lead vocalist. The band has self-produced five albums, performed more than 2,500 shows through-

out the country, and had four original songs on the FOX sitcom "The Tick."

For more details, visit www.therhythmrockets.com.

Obituaries

EARL CLIFFORD JOHNSON, 94

Earl Clifford Johnson, 94, of Villa Park, IL, passed away peacefully at home on July 18, 2026.

Born on June 4, 1932, in Zion, IL, he was the son of Clifford and Olive (Wright) Johnson. Earl honorably served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War as an aviation electronics technician aboard submarine hunter-killer aircraft. Following his service, he founded a landscaping company which he proudly operated for the rest of his life.

An adventurous spirit, Earl loved exploring the country in his motorhome with his dogs

to visit family and friends.

He was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed skiing, hiking, scuba diving, running, and kayaking. Earl was also a deeply dedicated member of the Rotary Club of Villa Park, where he was immensely proud of his 48 years of perfect attendance, spanning 2,496 consecutive weekly meetings.

Earl was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 54 years, Anne; his son, Steve; his parents, Clifford and Olive; his siblings, Vince,



Marge, Carol Ann, Paul, Rosemary, Spenser and Kenny.

He is survived by his children, Patty (Paul) and Dave; his grandchildren, Jeff (Kat), Luke, and Elizabeth; his great-grandchildren, Alysha, Jessica, Kyle, Delilah, Cadence, Hannah and Coralyn; his brothers, Roger and Allen; and many loving nieces and nephews.

Interment, September 14, 2026, at 11 a.m. at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, 20953 W. Hoff Road, Elwood, IL 60421. Celebration of Life, September 15, 2026, from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Villa Park VFW, 39 E. Saint Charles Rd, Villa Park, IL 60181.

Villa Park Police assist in apprehending man charged with hijacking vehicle

DuPage County State's Attorney Robert Berlin and Wheaton Chief of Police P.J. Youker announced earlier this week that Judge



Louis Aranda granted the state's motion to deny pre-trial release for a Chicago man accused of carjacking a man at gunpoint and then leading police on a high-speed chase.

Andrew Strong, 25, appeared in court on Sunday, July 26, and was charged with one count of aggravated vehicular hijacking (Class X felony), one count of unlawful possession of a weapon by a felon (Class 3 felony) and one count of aggravated fleeing and eluding (Class 4 felony).

On Friday, July 24, at approximately 12:53 a.m., Wheaton police officers responded to a call of an aggravated vehicle hijacking in the 1000 block of E. Willow Avenue.

Following an investigation into the matter, it is alleged that at approximately 12:45 a.m., the victim pulled into his driveway, heard a knock on his car window and observed an individual, wearing a black ski mask and a black zip-up hoodie, holding a black handgun.

It is alleged that the individual told the victim to "get out of the car, get out of the car" and after the victim complied, the individual told the victim to "get on the ground and don't do anything stupid."

It is alleged that a second individual, also wearing a ski mask and dark clothing, entered the victim's vehicle, a black 2020 Acura MDX, and pulled it out of the driveway. It is further alleged that the individual then entered a gray Nissan Sentra that both individuals arrived in.

A short time later, an officer with the Glen Ellyn Police Department allegedly observed the Acura and Nissan traveling eastbound on Roosevelt Road from Sunset Avenue, at which time he activated his emergency lights

and attempted to stop the vehicles. It is alleged that both vehicles accelerated away from the officer and reached speeds of approximately 100 mph on Roosevelt Road, where the posted speed limit is 35 mph.

The pursuit ended when the Nissan crashed on a curb after being spike-stripped, at which time two occupants fled the vehicle on foot. With the assistance of an Illinois State Police plane, both suspects were observed running along the tracks east of 2000 Beach Street in Broadview, and into a nearby residential neighborhood, where DuPage County sheriff's deputies apprehended the driver of the Nissan, later identified as Strong.

Inside the Nissan, authorities reportedly found a black Springfield handgun on the passenger seat.

The Villa Park Police Department joined several other law enforcement agencies to provide assistance in apprehending Strong, whose next court appearance is scheduled for Aug. 24, in front of Judge Daniel Guerin.