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Belvidere's Community Concert Series Brought Culture to Belvidere

David Larson

Starting in 1927, Community Concerts Incorporated.

Belvidere created a Community Concert Series in 1947. Communities like Freeport and Lake County still do have a Community Concert Series today.

The idea for the series came from the Rockford Mendelssohn Club concerts, which were well attended by Belvidere residents. The local newspaper covered the Mendelssohn's concerts as news events, which reflected the interest in Belvidere in classical music, and newer, more sophisticated forms of jazz. Mendelssohn's concert attendance had outgrown its space, which provided further stimulus for Belvidere to strike out on its own.

The goal was to bring major talents like the violinists Yehudi Menuhin and Jascha Heifetz, and the baritone Nelson Eddy, which were but a few of the 150 artists represented by Community Concerts Incorporated to Belvidere.

On November 9, 1947, the first organizational meeting was held in the lower level of the First Presbyterian Church on North Main and Lincoln Avenue. It was followed up in the home of Mrs. Mary Louise Hunt, who was a driving force in the effort. The group's goal was to produce four concerts per season. Season tickets were sold rather than single tickets.

A member from each of the local clubs became board members, which brought in 15 individuals from those clubs. Supporters in Marengo wanted to become a part of the series, which added two additional members. Harvard was also a community that supported the series by subscription.

Team captains were chosen, who recruited additional individuals to canvas the communities in a membership drive. At the kickoff dinner, 200 workers joined in to make it happen. By 1948, they had achieved their goal and produced the first performance.

In 1955, local business donated the funds necessary for a Steinway Grand Piano for the Community Concert Series use at a cost of \$7,000. Today that 1955, \$7,000 would be \$84,000.

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(l to r standing) Mrs Hugh Funderburg, Mrs Florence Strandberg, Mrs Marion Kopp, Mrs Mary Louise Hunt, and Mrs Everett Bush (l to r seated) Mrs Robert Twynning and Mrs Frank Harms at the Community Concert office at 204 North State Street to kick off the 1965-66 membership drive.

Boone County Clerk and Recorder Pleads Guilty to Theft

*Press Release From the Office of Boone County
State's Attorney Tricia Smith*

On September 2, 2025, Boone County Clerk and Recorder Julie Bliss pleaded guilty to one count of Theft of Government Property and two counts of Official Misconduct. She was sentenced to four years of probation and 180 days in the Boone County Jail. The plea and sentence were negotiated by the Public Integrity Unit of the Illinois Attorney General's office. The Boone County State's Attorney's Office recused itself at the beginning of the case, and had no influence over the sentence imposed on Ms. Bliss.

Ms. Bliss was indicted by a grand jury in the summer of 2023 on multiple felony counts related to her employment with the County. These counts

related to using a county credit card for personal purchases at Walmart, Farm and Fleet, and Amazon; using county funds to pay a personal debt; and theft of cash.

Bliss has been on paid administrative leave for the past two years, as the State of Illinois has no mechanism to remove an elected official from office pre-conviction. A similar instance occurred in 2022 in Winnebago County where the elected coroner there remained in office for two years after he was charged with multiple counts involving theft of governmental funds. After the case in 2022, Boone County State's Attorney Tricia Smith joined with other local elected officials to propose legislation providing a mechanism to remove elected officials who have been charged with crimes relating to their office. That bill died in committee in the legislature. Until the Illinois legislature adopts such a bill, the taxpayers of Illinois will continue to be forced to pay the salaries of elected officials who refuse to leave office upon being charged with these crimes.

Concert

from page 1

In the 1960s, Belvidere used this same organizational networking strategy to raise money to build a new YMCA.

In 1960, the Community Concert Series produced five performances: The Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, (Harry) Belafonte Singers, the pianist David Bar, and two other performances. By 1977, the 30-year anniversary of concerts in Belvidere, 145 concerts had been performed since 1947. These included The Vienna Boys Choir, and the Boston Pops. And who could ever forget the original performance of the Lee Evans Trio, a jazz group composed of a piano, bass, and drums. The trio also played the White House.

Yearly the Belvidere Community Concert Series was something that everyone from all walks of life sought to attend. In an article written by Bill Hetland in 1967, he quoted board member Marion Kopp, “We don’t want to see Community Concerts become a thing of the past.”



Timothy Cole, 73, Poplar Grove, August 28
Kevin Cardinet, 67, Belvidere, August 30
Sharon Fowler, 79, Formerly Belvidere, August 29
Alice Nelson, 86, Belvidere, August 28
Ellen Rogers, 77, Belvidere, August 27

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David Grimm April 1938 - Dec. 2000
Richelle Kingsbury Aug. 1955 - June 2013

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Gun Rights Groups Ask U.S. Supreme Court to Overturn Cook County Assault Weapons Ban

Case seeks to overturn recent ruling by 7th Circuit Court of Appeals

Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

Two national gun rights organizations are asking the U.S. Supreme Court to strike down Cook County’s ban on assault-style weapons in hopes that such a decision would overturn similar bans nationally, including the statewide ban Illinois lawmakers enacted in 2023.

The Firearms Policy Coalition and the Second Amendment Foundation filed a petition with the court Wednesday, asking it to reverse the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals. In June, the 7th Circuit said plaintiffs in the case had shown no reason for the court to reverse its own precedents that have upheld assault weapons bans, including a 2019 decision upholding the Cook County law.

It also came as the 7th Circuit is still weighing arguments in a challenge to Illinois’ statewide assault weapons ban, known as the Protect Illinois Communities Act. Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul’s office filed its final brief in that appeal Aug. 14. The court has not yet set a date for oral arguments.

“The AR-15 is the most popular rifle in America, owned by millions of peaceable people for lawful purposes every day,” Coalition President Brandon Combs said in a statement. “The Bill of Rights is not a suggestion, and the Second Amendment is not a second-class right.”

Cook County first adopted a local assault weapons ban in 1993, and it has been updated at least twice since then. It is now officially known as the Blair Holt Assault Weapons Ban, named after a Chicago teen who was killed in a 2007 shooting while protecting a high school classmate.

The law prohibits the possession, acquisition and transfer of a variety of firearms, including semiautomatic rifles that can accept large-capacity magazines. It specifically names 125 prohibited rifles, including the AR-15.

In 2018, a federal judge in Chicago upheld the law, citing a 7th Circuit decision from three years earlier upholding a nearly identical city ordinance in Highland Park. The case was appealed and in 2019, and the 7th Circuit reaffirmed its position that “bans on assault weapons and large-capacity magazines do not contravene the Second Amend-

ment.” The U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of that decision.

The current challenge was filed in 2021, when the two gun rights organizations went back to court seeking to have both the Highland Park and Cook County decisions reversed. The plaintiffs include two Cook County residents, Cutberto Viramontes and Christopher Khaya.

While that case was proceeding through court, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a landmark gun rights decision in 2022, New York State Rifle and Pistol Assoc. v. Bruen. That ruling held that to pass constitutional muster, gun control laws must be “consistent with the Nation’s historical tradition of firearm regulation.”

Also while the case was pending, the Illinois General Assembly passed a statewide assault weapons ban, officially known as the Protect Illinois Communities Act.

In November 2023, the 7th Circuit issued a ruling in a consolidated appeal involving the statewide ban as well as local bans in Chicago, Naperville and Cook County. In that ruling, the court refused to issue preliminary injunctions to block enforcement of any of those laws, saying its original ruling upholding the Highland Park ordinance still stood.

As a result, in March 2024, U.S. District Judge Rebecca Pallmeyer granted Cook County’s motion to dismiss the lawsuit.

The plaintiffs appealed that ruling to the 7th Circuit, hoping for a reversal of the appellate court’s earlier decisions. But in a simple three-page opinion June 2, a three-judge panel said the plaintiffs had provided no compelling reason for the court to reconsider its earlier decisions.

Now, the plaintiffs are asking the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse the 7th Circuit. But in recent months, the nation’s high court has been reluctant to take up the question of assault weapon bans.

In July 2024, the court declined to hear an appeal of the 7th Circuit’s decision not to issue preliminary injunctions on the state and local assault weapons bans. And in June, the court also declined to hear appeals involving Maryland’s assault weapons ban as well as Rhode Island’s ban on large-capacity magazines.

In denying to hear the Maryland and Rhode Island appeals, however, Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote in a statement that he felt the issue of assault weapons was not yet ripe for review, but that the court probably would address it “in the next Term or two.” He also specifically cited the Cook County case as one of several that the court might decide to review.

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Foster Science Diplomacy Legislation Passes House

Press Release

As part of the PARTNER Act, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Strengthening Science Through Diplomacy Act, originally introduced by Reps. Bill Foster, Joaquin Castro (D-TX), and Dusty Johnson (R-SD). This legislation would extend appropriate privileges and immunities to CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, making it easier for CERN scientists to come to the U.S. to collaborate on scientific projects, such as Fermilab's Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment (DUNE).

"The exchange of knowledge and ideas across borders not only promotes peace but also serves as a powerful instrument to address urgent global challenges," said Congressman Foster. "As a physicist, I spent more than two decades working with colleagues from around the globe at Fermilab in Illinois, where scientific collaboration transcended national boundaries and helped us better understand the world around us. I'm proud that my colleagues came together to pass this bipartisan legislation, which is an important step in solidifying our long-term partnership with CERN and maintaining our nation's role as a leader in scientific research."

The International Organization Immunities Act, enacted in 1945, governs how the United States extends the rights and treaties to international organizations like CERN. The U.S. typically extends automatic privileges and immunities to international organizations to which it belongs (e.g., the UN, NATO), but a special act of Congress is needed to extend recognition to international organizations where the United States participates as an observer, rather than a full member. This legislation would amend the International Organization Immunities Act to extend necessary privileges and immunities to CERN.

CERN currently partners in scientific experiments with six U.S. National Laboratories, including Argonne National Laboratory and Fermilab in Illinois, Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York, SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California, and Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. The partnership, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, the National Science Foundation, and CERN, enables researchers employed by American universities and national laboratories to work on the international high energy physics experiments hosted at CERN. These experiments contribute to innovations in computing, medicine, radiation sensing, cryogenic cooling, superconducting materials, and other fields that are critical to U.S. security, technological capability, and economic development.

The PARTNER Act now heads to the Senate for consideration.

Raoul Sues Trump Administration for Access to Crime Victim Funding

DOJ blocking distribution of funds to 'sanctuary' jurisdictions

Peter Hancock

Capitol News Illinois

Attorney General Kwame Raoul announced Monday that he has joined a multistate lawsuit seeking to block the Trump administration from withholding federal funding to support crime victims in Illinois due to the state's policy on immigration.

The lawsuit is one of 35 such suits challenging Trump administration policies that Raoul has joined as part of a coalition of Democratic state attorneys general. That's an average of more than one suit per week since Trump resumed office on Jan. 20.

The latest suit, filed in U.S. District Court in Rhode Island, argues that the U.S. Department of Justice has imposed unlawful conditions on the distribution of funds under the federal Victims of Crime Act, a 1984 law that provides funding to help crime victims deal with costs resulting from crimes, including medical bills, counseling services and lost wages.

The money is distributed to states through a series of grant programs. States then distribute their share of the money to programs and agencies that provide services or aid to crime victims. For the current federal fiscal year, which runs through Sept. 30, more than \$1.3 billion is supposed to be available nationwide, including about \$54 million for Illinois.

Raoul's office said the funding supports such programs as victim and witness advocacy services, emergency shelters, medical, funeral and burial expenses, crime scene cleanup, and sexual assault forensic exams.

According to the lawsuit, however, the Trump administration has attached new and unlawful conditions to the distribution of those funds.

Those conditions were spelled out in a July 21 Notice of Funding Opportunity, which provides that funding may not be used for any "program or activity that, directly or indirectly, violates (or promotes or facilitates the violation of) federal immigration law ... or impedes or hinders the enforcement of federal immigration law."

According to the no-

tice, that includes complying with a federal statute that prohibits state and local governments from restricting communication with immigration officials.

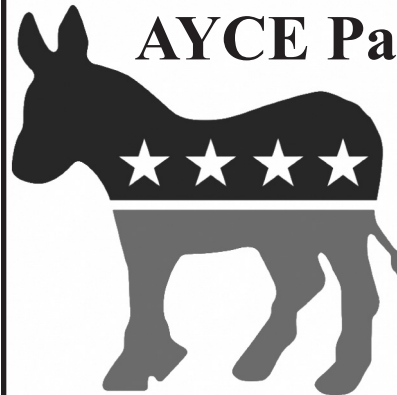
The lawsuit alleges that the requirement is more than a limit on the allowable use of funds but actually serves as an eligibility requirement, meaning any state or local jurisdiction with laws or policies in place that limit their law enforcement agencies from fully cooperating with federal immigration authorities will be deemed ineligible.

At issue in Illinois, according to the lawsuit, is the state's 2017 TRUST Act, which, among other things, prohibits state and local law enforcement officials from assisting federal immigration agents in enforcement operations, giving immigration agents access to detained individuals or giving agents nonpublic information about the release dates of detained individuals.

"Conditioning that vital funding on cooperation with immigration enforcement is not just unlawful, it is immoral," Raoul said during a news conference Monday. "VOCA (Victims of Crime Act) funds have no relationship to civil immigration policy. In fact, grants are distributed based on a statutory formula that has nothing to do with immigration."

The lawsuit argues those conditions violate the federal Administrative Procedures Act, that they exceed the Justice Department's legal authority and that they violate U.S. Constitution's spending clause and separation of powers doctrine. It also asks the court to permanently enjoin enforcement of the conditions.

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10 Years After State Budget Impasse, Human Services in Illinois Again Brace For ‘Tsunami’

Nonprofits hurt by impasse boosted budgets with federal funding — now endangered by Trump

By Casey Toner, Hannah Meisel & Molly Parker

This story is a collaboration between the Illinois Answers Project and Capitol News Illinois.

It was a bitterly cold evening on Jan. 19, 1997, when Judy Stegle and her husband, Mike, received the call that would upend their lives forever.

Their 17-year-old daughter, Cortnie Stewart, a softball and basketball standout at Anna-Jonesboro Community High School, a gifted painter with a spunky attitude, had taken the car without permission to drive to Harrisburg. She hit black ice and the car landed on her after she was thrown from the vehicle. When the ambulance arrived, she was unconscious.

Cortnie woke up 13 days later in a hospital in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

Cortnie had suffered extensive brain damage. She’d never speak again, or feed herself, or go to the bathroom without help. She would live, but she would need round-the-clock care for the rest of her life.

A few years later, the Stegles reached out to the Delta Center, which provided respite care services. That meant even just a few hours a week where someone from the Cairo-based nonprofit organization could step in for the Stegles. Enough time for Judy Stegle to run to the doctor, get her hair done, maybe grab a meal with her husband at the local Dairy Queen.

Then, in 2015, the Delta Center closed, becoming one of the earliest casualties of Illinois’ two-year budget impasse, which began a decade ago this summer — a product of the political struggle between Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner and Democrats who controlled the General Assembly.

Just over a month into the impasse, the nonprofit’s respite care program that helped the Stegles and more than 50 other families in Southern Illinois ended and never returned.

The Stegles were far from alone in their experience; organizations that provided child welfare, housing, mental health care, alcohol and drug addiction services, food for poor people, senior services, childhood education, and care for domestic violence victims cut off services to nearly 1 million Illinoisans. Hundreds of human service agencies were forced to lay off employees and slash their budgets with disastrous outcomes.

In some cases, these services still haven’t recovered.

The stories of upended lives were legion: A sexual assault crisis center in Urbana put rape victims on a three-month waiting list for counseling appointments; a social service agency in Chicago denied drug addiction treatment, domestic violence counseling and HIV prevention to hundreds of people; a senior service agency in Alton took on \$3.5 million in debt, reduced Meals on Wheels services and warned that seniors are “starving and being left out in the cold.”

Then-candidate JB Pritzker seized on the resulting discontent and sailed to an easy victory over Rauner in 2018, with the Democrat promising to undo the damage. But in the decade since the state’s two-year budget stalemate began, recovery for social services has been uneven.

As governor, Pritzker has touted significant growth in spending under his administration; annual General Funds state spending on human services jumped by 60% from 2014 to 2024 — from \$12.3 billion to \$19.7 billion.

University of Illinois-Chicago professor David Merriman, who has long researched state finances, said Illinois’ economic picture has drastically improved more than he thought possible a decade ago.

But that progress very well may be upended by large cuts to Medicaid benefits and cuts to housing and food assistance contained in congressional Republicans’ recently passed federal budget signed into law July 4 by President Donald Trump.

Illinois Collaboration on Youth Chief Executive Officer Andrea Durbin warned the state’s network of human services organizations is not equipped to handle an increase in need created by federal spending cuts, especially as social services agencies continue to struggle holding onto qualified employees.

Illinois Deputy Governor for Health and Human Services Grace Hou, who ran the Department of Human Services during Pritzker’s first term, said she’d learned early on that “trust ... can be easy to lose, but it’s really hard to rebuild.”

She fears the coming federal cuts will undo years of progress.

“It’s an earthquake, it’s a tidal wave, it’s a tsunami,” Hou said.

The impasse years

Rauner, who ran for governor in 2014 as a socially moderate Republican during the tail end of the GOP’s era of libertarian dominance, had a simple message for voters: Illinoisans’ tax dollars were being wasted by the “corrupt bargain” between Democrats who ran the state and public employee unions which he alleged inflate the cost of government services.

Two years before his victory against unpopular Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn, Rauner said he wanted “to drive a wedge issue in the Democratic Party” on the role of government in social services and bring in voters who’d rather “help the disadvantaged, the handicapped, the elderly, the children in poverty” than unionized government workers.

Before Rauner was even sworn in, he faced an immediate \$6 billion structural deficit when a temporary hike to the state’s income tax rates expired on Jan. 1, 2015. The deficit would have to be made up by either other sources of revenue or cuts to state spending — or a combination of both.

Instead, after a spring of ever-worsening relations between the governor and Democrats who controlled the legislature, Illinois entered the new fiscal year on July 1, 2015, with no spending plan after Rauner vetoed most of the budget passed by the majority party.

During the two-year stalemate, Illinois saw neither cuts to state spending nor new revenue sources. In fact, the state kept on spending due to a combination of constitutional mandates and a series of court rulings forcing the state to maintain certain services for vulnerable populations like the developmentally disabled.

Rauner himself took steps that ensured the impasse did not affect most voters, such as approving K-12 public schools spending and going to court to keep paying state workers.

The impasse lacked hallmarks that make federal government shutdowns a spectacle like airport security agents walking off the job or mass furloughs. The budget stalemate affected less than 10% of the state’s population, people who already live on the margins of society, including the poor, homeless people, children in foster care, people with disabilities, those struggling with addiction, and people suffering from domestic violence or gun violence.

Social services agencies that served those Illinoisans often weren’t covered by the patchwork of legal shields but were still obligated to fulfill their state contracts — many of which were even renewed during the two-year impasse — without any state funding.

The cuts to the state’s social safety net came fast and furiously. Some were temporary, others permanent.

‘It is so sad’

By the time the budget impasse began, the Stegles had settled into a life that was upended by tragedy. And they had done so with help from the state of Illinois.

The state had long funded the Delta Center, which hired the respite care worker they came to rely on, Becky Neathery. She knew how to bathe Cortnie, feed her, keep her calm. She was someone they felt safe leaving Cortnie with — and for the first time in many years, Judy and Mike could breathe on occasion.

Then, one day, Judy received an unexpected call from Becky. She told her, “‘Judy, I gotta get a job, and there’s no more Delta Center.’ And it’s like, ‘Oh no.’ I mean, and it was just — it was gone!”

In addition to respite care, the Delta Center provided housing for homeless people and sex offenders, offered jobs to disabled adults, and after-school programming for at-risk teenagers in the small, impoverished city of Cairo, which has lost more than half its population in the last few decades. A total of 1,523 people lived there in 2024, according to census estimates.

Today, the once sprawling Delta Center campus is
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Human Services

from page 4

mostly deserted. Big white block letters spelling out the Delta Center's name on a nearby brick sign are swallowed in a tangle of vines.

"The services that ended in Cairo have never come back to Cairo," said Sandy McGregor, a former Delta Center accountant who lived in Cairo as a young adult but now lives across the border in Kentucky. "It is so sad."

The impasse was especially hard on small towns in Southern Illinois, which lacked the economic power to weather the storm. If a housing nonprofit shuts down in a more populated area like Chicago or Bloomington-Normal, others are available to step up.

That's not the case in places like Rosiclare, a city of 980 people along the Ohio River about 80 miles northeast of Cairo. In February 2016, the Mahoney Transitional Living facility, a homeless shelter for young adults in the Southeastern Illinois city, also closed its doors about a year after FCCI opened the residence.

Crabb was introduced to FCCI as an elementary schooler when she and her sister were briefly placed in foster care, and said it was "traumatizing" to inform the five or six youths and young adults there that they needed to leave the closing shelter.

"It was another traumatic experience for them of picking up and having to go somewhere else, thinking that they had found a safe and secure place and had the support that they needed," she said.

The shelter had been funded through a state grant, but payments were halted when the impasse began. Crabb said the impasse taught her to view grants funded exclusively by the state as "risky," and said the stalemate years forced her organization and many others like it to diversify their funding sources — especially to federal money, which up until recently was viewed as more stable."

The damage spreads

As the impasse dragged on, Illinoisans' access to social services shrank rapidly, as tracked by regular surveys conducted by the United Way of Illinois. Within weeks of the new fiscal year's start, more than a third of the roughly 400 respondents to the United Way's survey reported they had already made cuts.

Six months into the stalemate, nearly half of the

444 human services providers that responded to the survey reported limiting the number of clients they could serve, shuttering entire programs or both. Layoffs were becoming more common, too.

Illinoisans who received mental health and addiction treatment services made up the largest share of the million Illinoisans who'd had services shut off to them by June 2016, although the impasse affected portions of nearly every other vulnerable population throughout the state.

Rape Advocacy, Counseling, & Education Services in Urbana laid off its staff of eight workers and created an interim position to triage calls from sexual assault victims and people seeking protection orders.

"We were in a position of having to say, 'I'm sorry we can't help you and ... no survivor deserves that,'" said Jaya Kolisetty, who became RACES' interim leader during the impasse and is now executive director. "It can make it so people feel like there's ... no clear purpose in reaching out for help, and that can be a really helpless position to be in."

The Alton-based Senior Services Plus Inc. laid off 17 employees and scaled back its popular Meals on Wheels program, which served up to 700 people in St. Clair and Madison counties, according to Chief Executive Officer Theresa Collins. They went from doing wellness checks and delivering hot food to each senior five times a week to doing wellness checks and delivering five frozen meals to each senior once a week.

By the time the impasse ended, more than 100 seniors were on the Meals on Wheels waiting list.

"When we started calling them when funding got flowing ... several had been institutionalized or had died," Collins said, adding that Meals on Wheels kept the once-a-week food delivery program as the number of their senior clients had ballooned to 1,100.

Though smaller nonprofits were uniquely vulnerable to the impasse, larger organizations suffered, too. Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, the single biggest human service provider in the state, sent shockwaves when it announced mass program closures and layoffs in mid-January 2016.

LSSI shuttered 33 programs that served 4,700 Illinoisans throughout the state, though the organization's president and chief executive officer, Mark Stutrud, emphasized that efforts were made so that clients could be matched with other service providers. More than 750 staffers — roughly 43% of LSSI's workforce — also were laid off.

The nonprofit scaled back youth services, including closing a youth shelter near Dixon, scaled back substance abuse treatment, shuttered nine mental health counseling centers and an adult day care, scrapped respite care for military families as well as reentry programs designed for inmates and their families in Alton, East Saint Louis and Chicago.

By the time of LSSI's restructuring, the state owed the Des Plaines-based nonprofit more than \$6 million and the organization had maxed out the bank line of credit it had been relying on for seven months and was "burning cash," Stutrud said.

For Kristen Ward, the budget impasse was one more sign that she'd gotten treatment for her heroin addiction at the right time.

In 2013, after two decades of abusing painkillers spiraled into heroin use, the 41-year-old nurse

and mother of two young boys finally reached rock bottom. Ward had started stealing to support her addiction. After multiple arrests and a conviction, she spent five months in the Will County Jail.

"You better take this seriously ... because this isn't going to be available for everyone in the future," Ward recalled being told during her 13-month stay at LSSI's addiction treatment center in Chicago's Edgewater neighborhood in 2013 and 2014.

A little over a year after she completed inpatient treatment, LSSI announced its mass layoffs and program closures. By that time, she was working as a nurse at LSSI's newly opened detox center.

Ward's job was safe but she worried for residents who "weren't ready to go," along with the detox patients she was helping through withdrawal — a brutal process she'd once gone through alone in a jail cell.

"It's a vulnerable stage right after detox," Ward said. "And if someone tells you they don't have a bed ... and you're kind of left to your own devices, then you could convince yourself you could do it on your own, and then you're back out there, and then the cycle starts again before you know it."

In the years after the impasse, LSSI opened new residential treatment programs to replace ones shuttered in 2016, including in Edgewater. But that wasn't the case for the organization's in-home care program for seniors, most of which was taken on by two for-profit businesses as part of LSSI's restructuring. The program had been the largest segment of LSSI's operations, serving roughly 2,500 seniors in more than two dozen Illinois counties at its peak.

Jane Massey, of Rock Island, worked as an office manager and helped with client intake of LSSI's in-home care program in Moline. It served 130 seniors in Rock Island, Henry and Mercer counties.

LSSI sold the business to Help at Home, but the company laid off all 78 of its local employees, who were then told to reapply. Massey said the quality of care suffered when Help at Home moved its central office to Rockford.

"I can tell you that our staff members that were going out and taking care of these people they were getting — they were having such a hard time with communicating with that office," Massey said. "They didn't return calls."

Help at Home closed its Moline location in 2022 and fired Massey and the eight remaining workers.

In a statement, a Help at Home spokesperson called the budget impasse "a difficult period," but said the organization maintained "uninterrupted home care" and preserved jobs after it took over LSSI's portfolio.

Money flows again

After two years of compounding miseries, the Republican front folded in July 2017 when enough legislators joined the Democratic majority to override Rauner's veto power, approving both a budget and an income tax rate hike to fund it.

State payments flowed once again, made easier after Comptroller Susana Mendoza borrowed \$6.5 billion in a low-interest bond deal to pay off nearly half of Illinois' staggering bill backlog.

After several years, the comptroller's office was able to pay bills within 30 days — a figure that has since shrunk to an average of two weeks, and occa-

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Published in The Boone County Journal Aug 26, Sept 2, 9, 2025

The auction will be listed and advertised on www.storagetreasures.com. See website for terms and conditions. Units will be available for viewing prior to the sale on www.storagetreasures.com. A buyers premium, up to 15%, and a cleaning deposit will be charged per unit. Purchases must be made with cash only and paid at Boxed Up Operations Center located at 1511 E. Riverside Blvd. Loves Park, IL 61111 in order to complete the transaction. Boxed Up Self Storage may refuse any bid and may rescind any purchase until the winning bidder takes possession of the personal property. All sales are final.

Published in The Boone county Journal Sept 2, 9, 2025

IN RE THE ESTATE OF: LINCOLN J. WOLCOTT, Deceased.
CASE NO.: 2025 PR 41

NOTICE is given of the death of LINCOLN J. WOLCOTT. Letters of Office were issued on July 21, 2025, to THOMAS H. WOLCOTT and KAITLIN M. WOLCOTT, who are the legal representatives of the estate. Claims against the estate may be filed on or before 2/26/26, that date being at least six (6) months from the date of first publication, or within three (3) months from the date of mailing or delivery of Notice to creditors, if mailing or delivery is required by 755 ILCS 5/18-3 of the Illinois Probate Act, 1975 as amended, whichever date is later. Any claim not filed by the requisite date as stated above shall be barred.

Published in *The Boone County Journal* August 26, Sept 2 & 9, 2025

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF
THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS
U.S. BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, Plaintiff,
-v.- 2024 FC 23
ANGYALKAK SPAK, JONATHAN N. SPAK, CANDLEWICK
LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC., FIRST MID BANCSHARES, INC.
SUCCESSOR BY MERGER TO BLACKHAWK BANK, ILLINOIS
HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, Defendant
NOTICE OF SALE

Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser will receive a Certificate of Sale that will entitle the purchaser to a deed to the real estate

Case # 2024 FC 23 6088-957516
Published in The Boone County Journal 9/2, 9, 16/2025

Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) have partnered with Union Pacific Railroad and Metra to reintroduce intercity passenger rail service from Chicago to Rockford, with intermediate stops planned in Elgin, Huntley and Belvidere. This service will provide efficient, safe and reliable transportation operations, with passenger trains traveling at maximum speeds of up to 79 mph, connecting Illinois communities in Cook, Kane, McHenry, Boone and Winnebago. Design, survey, environmental review and stakeholder coordination are underway to support rail improvements.

To learn more about the program and subscribe to receive updates, visit chicagotorockfordrail.org.

Tuesday, September 16, 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
The Centre of Elgin (100 Symphony Way, Elgin, IL 60120)

Thursday, September 18, 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Rockford Public Library Nordlof Center (118 N. Main Street,
Rockford, IL 61101)

Monday, September 29, 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Rivers Edge Recreation Center (1151 W. Locust Street, Belvidere,
IL 61008)

Thursday, October 2, 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Huntley Park District (12015 Mill Street, Huntley, IL 60142)

The meeting locations are accessible for people using mobility devices. Anyone needing specific assistance should contact Mary McIlvain at (312) 262-2999 or mmcilvain@morrealecomm.com.
Published in The Boone County Journal Sept 9 and 23, 2025

The requisite Affidavit having been duly filed herein, NOTICE IS HEREIN GIVEN YOU, REBECAH M. ALLEN, BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND AS TRUSTEE UNDER A TRUST AGREEMENT DATED FEBRUARY 6, 2003 AND KNOWN AS THE REBECAH M. ALLEN TRUST NO. 1, COUNTRYSIDE CONDOMINIUMS, UNKNOWN OWNERS and NON-RECORD LIEN CLAIMANTS, Defendants in the above-entitled action, that an action is now pending in this Court

NOW, THEREFORE, you are further notified to file your appearance in the Office of the Clerk of the Court above stated on or before October 23, 2025, and if you fail to do so or do not otherwise make your appearance on or before said date, this cause may be heard and judgment entered as prayed for in said Complaint without further notice.

Published in *The Boone County Journal* Sept 9, 16, 23, 2025

IN RE THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF: Celina Cabral, Deceased.
CASE NO: 2025PR44

NOTICE is given of the death of Celina Cabral on December 25, 2020. Letters of Office were issued on August 20, 2025 to: Jose R Cabral who is the legal representative of the estate. The attorney is Christian Solares, 4855 E State St Ste 24, Rockford, IL 61108.

Published in The Boone County Journal Sept 9, 16. 23, 2025

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF
DARRELL GLENN ARMSTRONG DECEASED.
Case No. 2025-PR-51

Notice is given of the death of DARRELL GLENN ARMSTRONG of 311 W. Marshall Street, Belvidere, Illinois 61008. Letters of Office were issued on August 29, 2025, to Jenna Stern of 3259 Gunflint Trail, Rockford, Illinois 61109, whose attorney is Robert C. Becker, Jr., 213 West Main Street, Genoa, Illinois 60135.

Published in The Boone County Journal Sept 9, 16. 23, 2025

STATE OF ILLINOIS
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF
THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

In The Interest of **RAINE G. RUFFIN, minor** No. 24JA14
NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

**James Ruffin, Briana Martin, All Whom it May Concern
ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

Take notice that on September 15th, 2023, a Transfer petition was filed under the JUVENILE COURT ACT by Attorney Tricia Smith, Boone County State's Attorney, 601 North Main Street, Belvidere, Illinois 61008, in the Circuit Court of Boone County entitled "In the Interest of Raine G. Ruffin, a Minor". At the Boone County Courthouse, located at 601 N. Main St., Belvidere, Illinois, on 10/16/2025 & 11/20/2025 at 1:30 / 3:00 P.M. CDT, or as soon thereafter as this cause may be heard, a hearing will be held upon the Petition to have the child declared to be a ward of the Court under that Act.

THE COURT HAS AUTHORITY IN THIS PROCEEDING TO TAKE FROM YOU THE CUSTODY AND GUARDIANSHIP OF THE MINOR, TO TERMINATE YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS AND TO APPOINT A GUARDIAN WITH POWER TO CONSENT TO ADOPTION. YOU MAY LOSE ALL PARENTAL RIGHTS TO YOUR CHILD. IF THE PETITION REQUESTS THE TERMINATION OF YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS AND THE APPOINTMENT OF A GUARDIAN WITH THE POWER TO CONSENT TO ADOPTION, YOU MAY LOSE ALL PARENTAL RIGHTS TO THE CHILD.

Unless you appear, you will not be entitled to further written notices or publication notices of the proceedings in this case, including the filing of an Amended Petition or a Motion to Terminate Parental Rights. Unless you appear at the hearing and show cause against the Petition, the allegations of the Petition may stand admitted as against you and each of you, and an Order or Judgment entered.

Dated: August 29, 2025

Pamela Coduto, CIRCUIT CLERK

Published in The Boone County Journal: 9/9, 9/16, 9/23/25- C

ASSUMED NAMES

STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE COUNTY ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION

No. DBA4245 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a PILOT CAR business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of TOM GRAY PILOT CAR SERVICE that its location is or will be 117 Galleon Run in Poplar Grove, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 815-218-7044

THOMAS C. GRAY 117 GALLEON RUN POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065
I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: August 18, 2025

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder

Published in Boone County Journal 8/26, 09/02, 09/09 - P

STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE COUNTY ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION

No. DBA4246 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a BARBERSHOP business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of PREMIER BARBERSHOP LLC that its location is or will be 120 N State Street in Belvidere, in the County of Boone County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

Phone Number: 815-319-0738

JOSE MANUEL FERNANDEZ JR 850 SCOTTS ARMY TRAIL
BELVIDERE, IL 61008

I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: August 26, 2025

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder

Published in Boone County Journal 09/02,09,16 -P

STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY of BOONE COUNTY ASSUMED NAME CERTIFICATE OF INTENTION

No. DBA4247 - The undersigned person(s) do hereby certify that a HAIR AND NAILS business is or is to be conducted or transacted under the name of HAIR BY ASH that its location is or will be 813 STUYVESANT DR in Loves Park, in the County of Winnebago County, State of Illinois, and that the true or real name(s) of the person(s) owning, conducting, or transacting the same with the post office address or address of said person(s) is shown below.

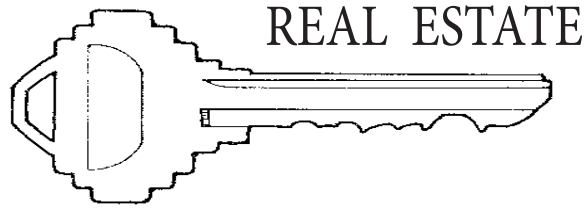
Phone Number: 815-979-0742

ASHLYN DAKOTA MARRIE 813 STUYVESANT DR
LOVES PARK, IL 61111

I, Julie A. Bliss, County Clerk And Recorder of Boone County, in the State aforesaid, do the hereby certify that the within is a true and correct copy of an Assumed Name Certificate on file in my office. Dated: September 4, 2025

Julie A Bliss, County Clerk and Recorder

Published in Boone County Journal 09/09,16,23 -P



IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT BOONE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

**U.S. BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, Plaintiff,
-v- 2024 FC 23**

**ANGYALKAK SPAK, JONATHAN N. SPAK, CANDLEWICK
LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC., FIRST MID BANCSHARES, INC.
SUCCESSOR BY MERGER TO BLACKHAWK BANK, ILLINOIS
HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, Defendant
NOTICE OF SALE**

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above cause on December 17, 2024, an agent for The Judicial Sales Corporation, will at 1:00 PM on September 29, 2025, at the Advocus National Title Insurance, 530 S. State, Suite 201, (Logan Avenue entrance), Belvidere, IL, 61008, sell at public in-person sale to the highest bidder, as set forth below, the following described real estate:

LOT 275 IN CANDLEWICK LAKE UNIT 5, ACCORDING TO THCommonly known as 104 ROCHESTER ROAD NE, POPLAR GROVE, IL 61065

Property Index No. 03-22-326-023

The real estate is improved with a single family residence.

The judgment amount was \$126,660.42.

Sale terms: 25% down of the highest bid by certified funds at the close of the sale payable to The Judicial Sales Corporation. No third party checks will be accepted. The balance, in certified funds/or wire transfer, is due within twenty-four (24) hours. The subject property is subject to general real estate taxes, special assessments, or special taxes levied against said real estate and is offered for sale without any representation as to quality or quantity of title and without recourse to Plaintiff and in "AS IS" condition. The sale is further subject to confirmation by the court.

Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser will receive a Certificate of Sale that will entitle the purchaser to a deed to the real estate after confirmation of the sale.

The property will NOT be open for inspection and plaintiff makes no representation as to the condition of the property. Prospective bidders are admonished to check the court file to verify all information.

If this property is a condominium unit, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale, other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and the legal fees required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/9(g) (1) and (g)(4). If this property is a condominium unit which is part of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/18.5(g-1).

IF YOU ARE THE MORTGAGOR (HOMEOWNER), YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN IN POSSESSION FOR 30 DAYS AFTER ENTRY OF AN ORDER OF POSSESSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 15-1701(C) OF THE ILLINOIS MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE LAW.

You will need a photo identification issued by a government agency (driver's license, passport, etc.) in order to gain entry into our building and the foreclosure sale room in Cook County and the same identification for sales held at other county venues where The Judicial Sales Corporation conducts foreclosure sales.

For information, contact RANDALL S. MILLER & ASSOCIATES Plaintiff's Attorneys, 120 N. LASALLE STREET, SUITE 1140, Chicago, IL, 60602 (312) 239-3432. Please refer to file number 24IL00068-1.

THE JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION

One South Wacker Drive, 24th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606-4650 (312) 236-SALE

You can also visit The Judicial Sales Corporation at www.tjsc.com for a 7 day status report of pending sales.

RANDALL S. MILLER & ASSOCIATES

120 N. LASALLE STREET, SUITE 1140

Chicago IL, 60602

312-239-3432

E-Mail: ilpleadings@rsmalaw.com

Attorney File No. 24IL00068-1

Case Number: 2024 FC 23

TJSC#: 45-1911

NOTE: Pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, you are advised that Plaintiff's attorney is deemed to be a debt collector attempting to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

Case # 2024 FC 23

6088-957516

Published in The Boone County Journal 9/2, 9, 16/2025



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sionally just one day.
But just because payments started flowing again didn't mean social services agencies could immediately reopen their doors or ramp up capacity.

That impact could be seen at the Wells Center in Jacksonville, which provided drug addiction treatment for about 500 people each year but closed its doors in May 2017, one year shy of its 50th anniversary.

By the time the Wells Center became one of the last victims of the impasse, the state owed the non-profit nearly \$350,000. Shortly after being sworn in as comptroller in late 2016, Mendoza offered ways her office could pay a sliver of what the Wells Center was owed to keep it afloat. But the nonprofit's leadership indicated it was likely too late.

The Wells Center's facilities sat empty for months, but by the end of 2017, the Chicago-based Gateway Foundation had purchased the property. The new location opened its doors in June 2018.

Kasia Loniewska watched the budget impasse play out from Gateway's offices in Springfield and is now the program director over the entire Jacksonville site. She said it was crucial for Jacksonville, a small city about 30 miles west of Springfield, to have intensive inpatient addiction treatment services — along with supportive housing for those in recovery — available for the surrounding rural areas.

"Other than Springfield, there was nothing and we knew that there's definitely a need for it," said Loniewska, who credits her sobriety to a stay in a Chicago recovery home as a young adult. "Not everybody's able to relocate to Springfield and not everyone is able to afford the sober living facilities."

For those in and around Jacksonville, whose roughly 18,000 residents make it the third-largest town in the part of western Illinois sometimes referred to as "Forgottonia," the nearest inpatient offerings aside from Springfield are nearly 80 miles west in Quincy and more than 80 miles south in the Metro East.

Recent funding infusion

Pritzker has often pointed to "historic investments" in human services during his tenure as governor, though he occasionally blames his predecessor when the state has fallen short.

When the governor's director of the Department of Children and Family Services was held in contempt of court a dozen times in 2022 for the agency's continued failure to place foster children in appropriate settings, the administration pointed to the loss of 500 shelter beds during the budget impasse.

More than 6 ½ years into Pritzker's governorship, the number of state-funded youth shelter beds operated mostly by private agencies has not returned to pre-impasse levels, meaning some children still languish in psychiatric hospitals beyond medical need or remain in juvenile detention after their sentences end because they have no other place to go.

But other areas of human services, including homelessness prevention and anti-violence organizations — both hurt by the impasse — have seen an influx of cash from both state and federal sources.

The infusion of funding in recent years is evident in Illinois' three of its largest state agencies that oversee human services: the Department of Human Services, the Department on Aging and the Department

continued on page 8

of Children and Family Services.

Pritzker has boasted that doubling state funding to DCFS, which is subject to multiple federal consent decrees stemming from civil rights litigation spanning decades, has allowed the historically dysfunctional agency to grow its headcount from 2,615 in 2014 to 3,681 last year.

The number of children removed from their homes and in DCFS' care, which child welfare experts label as a lagging indicator for unmet needs in other areas of human services, began climbing just after the impasse ended in mid-2017. The figure peaked at more than 21,000 at the end of Fiscal Year 2021, according to agency snapshot data, though some of that increase can also be attributed to the pandemic.

The overall spending increases on human services were helped by massive infusions of federal COVID-19 money, much of which the state distributed as one-time grants. The COVID money is reaching the tail end of its spending runway just as major federal cuts under Trump are beginning.

Illinois comptroller's data shows that since 2022, the state has spent more than \$10 billion in federal relief money, including \$666 million in human services spending. That money allowed some nonprofits to boost their budgets and expand their services.

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, which had a budget of \$110 million before the budget crisis, and plunged to \$79 million during the budget crisis, now has a budget of \$157 million, said Stutrud, LSSI's CEO.

Arrowleaf, which closed its young adult homeless shelter in Rosiclare, now operates in seven counties and has doubled its employee headcount since the impasse. Thanks in part to receiving more federal grants, Crabb, the nonprofit's CEO, said her organization has increased its budget by about \$10 million since the impasse to a high of \$17.6 million in fiscal year 2024, though last year it fell to \$15 million.

She even cited a \$363,000 COVID-era "Rural Development Emergency Rural Health Care Grant" from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that Arrowleaf used to rehab its facility.

"It looks, probably, like one of the nicest buildings now in the city of Cairo," Crabb said.

Federal cuts as deja vu

Some organizations like Arrowleaf have achieved steady budget growth in part through increased reliance on federal money, which has helped them meet higher levels of need brought on by COVID and the last few years of inflation and a shifting labor market.

But that strategy, adopted to shield social service agencies from future instability like Illinois' budget impasse, has once again made organizations vulner-

able to the current political moment.

Crabb said she had to lay off 10 Arrowleaf employees earlier this year due to state budget cuts and in anticipation of federal cuts even before Republican majorities in Congress approved the new budget in July, which includes significant reductions to Medicaid.

The "Big Beautiful Bill" is expected to cut Medicaid spending in Illinois by \$46 billion over the next decade through new eligibility standards such as work requirements. It also limits the amount states can tax health care providers to pay for Medicaid — a lever Illinois has continually pushed to maximize federal match dollars for the program.

Paula Worthington, a senior policy advisor at the nonpartisan Civic Federation and lecturer at the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy, said Medicaid cuts may be more apparent in blue states like Illinois, which have chosen over years to be "more generous in terms of the services provided" by Medicaid dollars.

She cited Illinois paying for vision and dental care and offering longer timelines for new mothers and their babies to stay on a supplemental Medicaid program, which is offered regardless of immigration status.

"It's going to be more painful and obvious in states that have been more generous when that funding is cut back," she said.

Pritzker has warned that more than 330,000 Illinois residents will lose health coverage as a result.

And just like the long-term damage done by the budget impasse, Worthington worried southern Illinois and other rural parts of the state will be hit the hardest by Medicaid cuts and the shuttering of services reliant on those federal dollars.

"You can see that in rural downstate counties,

greater shares of the relevant population are reliant on these things," Worthington said. "Cook County, too — don't get me wrong. ... It's Cook County, and then it's downstate, rural communities that I think are most vulnerable."

Illinois Deputy Governor for Budget and Economy Andy Manar acknowledged that challenges remain "not just in rural areas" but in historically underserved areas like Chicago's south suburbs and shrinking population centers like Decatur and other mid-sized cities. Manar, a former state senator from rural Macoupin County, pointed to the human services agencies and programming that "cease(d) to exist" during the impasse.

"Rebuilding that has been a laborious process," he said. "And by the way, that doesn't happen by spending less money. You don't rebuild DCFS ... by hiring fewer people, by spending less money. You've got to spend more money."

In Jonesboro, Judy and Mike Stegle, now retired, take turns with the caregiving, never leaving 46-year-old Cortnie alone.

But they know they can't take care of her forever. Judy touches her hands, her fingers swollen from arthritis. She's not as strong as she used to be, and she's so far been unable to persuade the state or insurance to subsidize her purchase of a mechanical lift for Cortnie.

But she's not ready to think too far into the future. "I've done this since, well, in my 40s," she said. "Now I'm 72. ... But it's like, 'well, darn — there's nobody that cares.'"

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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