

Delayed Dealing with tragic loss

I reach to the sky
And call out your name
And if I could trade, I would
And it feels, and it feels like
Heaven's so far away
And it stings, and it stings now
The world is so cold
Now that you've gone away—
The Offspring "Gone Away"

Nearly 30 years ago, which doesn't seem possible, The Offspring's Dexter Holland penned the lyrics to this song after he and his wife were nearly gunned down while standing in line at a SoCal ice cream shop. The thought of losing his partner spurred his mind to writing from the position of someone who had indeed lost someone special.

A little over five years ago, on February 16, 2021, I lived that sort of loss in real time, and I've never really come to grips with it.

You see, my kid sister Roni, who was the best of us, passed suddenly at the age of 47 in the middle of the bastard pandemic. She was director of nursing at a skilled nursing facility in Dawson Springs, KY, the town where she grew up, and she worked tirelessly to keep her residents safe and healthy during Covid, regularly putting in 80- and 90-hour weeks. It was said that her heart finally gave out from work and worry about the sweet souls under her charge, and I can believe it. Although I didn't get to see her often, for reasons that were out of our control and not worth mentioning at this point, the times I did get to hang with her



By Tony Hooker

were joyous. She was a beautiful person, physically striking yet even more lovely in spirit, and everyone who met her came away impressed. I think the only person who wasn't impressed with Roni Lynne was Roni Lynne. Because like all beautiful souls, it never occurred to her that she was special in any way. She was just the kind nurse who cared deeply about her patients and her staff and brought brightness into every situation she encountered, and luckily for us, she also brought that effortless kindness into everything she did for and with her family.

She wasn't perfect, but in my eyes she came close. She was known to sneak a few puffs from a Marlboro Light on occasion. Not really a drinker or cusser, and I'm not really sure of her religious sincerity, but knowing how she lived, it would be hard for me to believe that she didn't have a close relationship with our Holy Father.

For me, the worst part of losing her isn't the years that



I've been and will continue to be deprived of her company. No. The part that's like a gut punch is knowing that her two young sons and grandchildren won't know her. Won't know what an absolute angel on earth she was. I am sure that her two oldest will keep her memory alive, and I hope that those kids know that she's watching down from heaven, doing what she can to make them happy. I know I feel her presence every once in a while. She truly was the best of us, and I love and miss her, always.

Thank you for allowing me to indulge in this little piece of writing therapy. It's the first time I've allowed myself to think about her loss.

Next week I'll do my best to get back to zaniness and hijinks, I promise. Also, I think it would be cool to write a "pick my topic" column, so message me if you think of something about which you want me to share my twisted perspectives. Have a great week, and as Mark Wahlberg says on *Hallow.com*, "Stay prayed up."

USDA investment will expand agricultural fertilizer access for Illinois farmers

(Champaign, Ill., February 26, 2026) – U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Illinois State Director Jesus Ortega today announced that the agency is providing a \$1 million loan to the Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative. The loan will relend funds to Beaver Creek Ag LLC. The company, which sells agricultural chemicals and fertilizer to the farming community, will use the funding to expand its operation.

"Under the leadership of President Trump and Secretary Rollins, USDA is committed to strengthening the agricultural infrastructure that supports American farmers," said Ortega. "Our partnerships with cooperatives help bolster rural prosperity by fostering local economic growth, providing essential services and creating jobs."

Beaver Creek Ag LLC will use the funding to purchase

and install a 500,000-gallon welded steel tank, and for construction of a new 60 feet by 80 feet insulated-metal building. The building will house equipment for loading liquid nitrogen and fertilizers for sale.

This is one of several projects that USDA Rural Development and the cooperative have partnered on over the years to increase rural economic development in Illinois. The investment to Beaver Creek Ag will create two full-time jobs initially, and potentially up to six full-time jobs by 2028.

This investment is through USDA Rural Development's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program. The REDLG program provides funding for rural projects through local utility organizations. Rural Development provides zero-interest loans to local utilities which they, in turn, pass through to local businesses for projects

that will create and retain employment in rural Illinois.

"The REDLG program is one of several relending programs that allow rural businesses to get the zero-interest loan financing they need to expand and grow so they can provide more goods and services that support rural prosperity in Illinois," said Ortega. "For some businesses, a relending program can be a more feasible option than a traditional loan."

USDA Rural Development invests in rural America with programs to promote rural prosperity. These programs expand access to high-speed internet, electricity, and transportation infrastructure, and support economic growth, healthcare, education, housing and other community essentials. Discover more investment details and historical data in the Rural Data Gateway and learn more about the agency at www.rd.usda.gov/il.

The Sydney Scoop

By Ann Rhoton
Phone 217-688-2812



Spring Fling event is coming

Happy March Everyone!

The next regular monthly meeting of the Village of Sidney Board of Trustees will take place on Monday, March 2 at 7:00 p.m. in the Sidney Community Building located at 211 East Main Street in Sidney. All monthly meetings, unless otherwise posted, are held in the Sidney Community Building meeting room.

The Sidney American Legion Post 433 will hold their next monthly meeting at the Post Home located at 221 South David Street in downtown Sidney on Monday, March 16 at 6:00 p.m. Prospective new members are always welcome and encouraged to attend and all monthly meetings, unless otherwise posted, are held at the Post Home.

Plans are in the making for the Countryside United Methodist Church Annual Auction and Flea Market!

The church will host a clothing and linen sale ahead of the auction and flea market on Friday, March 27 from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. in the fellowship hall and the auction and flea market will take place on Saturday, March 28 from 7:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Ninety percent of the proceeds from this year's event stay with the church and ten percent of the proceeds go to Unity East Elementary.

Bring your Easter baskets, hunt for goodies, and visit with the Easter Bunny at the 9:00 a.m. Saturday, March 28 Sidney Improvement Group Easter Egg Hunt at Witt Park! Age groups for the event are: toddler – 2 years, 3 – 5 years,

6 – 7 years, and 8 – 10 years of age. The event will move to the Sidney Community Library in the event of rain.

The Sidney Lions Club will host their 67th annual donations accepted fish fry on Saturday, May 2 from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Sidney Community Building located at 211 East Main Street in Sidney.

Alaskan pollock with all the fixings, pork and beans, coleslaw, potato salad, desert, and more are on the menu. Proceeds from the fish fry go toward Sidney Lions Club college scholarships and their eye glasses program.

The Sidney Lions Club will also be giving the community an opportunity to purchase Sidney Lions Club 2026 Christmas Cash – New Year's Dash raffle tickets at their fish fry. Tickets are \$10.00 each and can be purchased at the fish fry, from Sidney Lions Club President Bill Hensch, or from any Sidney Lions Club member.

The inaugural Sidney Spring Fling event brought to you by The Goose & The Gander, LLC and the Sidney Improvement Group will take place on South David Street in downtown Sidney on Saturday, May 9 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. The event will take place the day before Mother's Day so vendors will focus on gifts for Mom and more.

Anyone interested in being a vendor can visit The Goose & The Gander, LLC website at <https://www.tgandt.com/> for more information and <https://www.tgandt.com/uploads/b/fa354110-deb1-11ef-a011-0349c58ae8ca/Spring%20Fling%20>

[vendor%20contract.pdf](#) for a vendor contract form.

Folks can also reach out to Brett Franzen at The Goose & The Gander, LLC at (217) 530-5696 or by email at tgandtglc@gmail.com with questions concerning the event.

Your correspondent will publish more information about the event as it is made available.

Pastor Jeff Stahl reported to your correspondent that plans are in the making for the Countryside United Methodist Church to have a special Sunday, September 13 50-year anniversary celebration of the church.

Pastor Stahl shared a little history about the church with your correspondent by providing that the church parsonage was actually built first followed by the church.

They are also trying to get past pastors of the church to come to the 50-year anniversary celebration.

Your correspondent will keep you updated as plans continue to evolve.

Have a great week!

If you or your organization have news items you want published drop a line to Ann Rhoton at P. O. Box 491, Sidney, IL 61877 or call (217) 688-2812 between 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Don't hesitate to leave a message if there's no answer.

News items must be turned in by 10:00 a.m. each Friday to be published in the following week's paper. Items submitted after the deadline will be published in the following week's column.

Venus will look like an airplane

Your attention should be on the western sky this week and through the weekend as two planets pass each other. If you look close to the horizon right after sunset, brilliant Venus will look like an airplane coming in for a landing with landing lights on. Tonight Saturn will be placed to the upper left of Venus but the separation will rapidly shrink over the next few days. You may need patience until Saturn emerges from the bright twilight. Saturn appears to be getting closer to the Sun while Venus gains altitude. The pair are closest Saturday night at a

In the night sky

By David Leake



little more than a degree separation – about the width of your pinky finger held at arm's length. Binoculars will help if you have them. And if you miss Saturday, keep looking each night as the two planets will then separate with Saturn

below Venus. Saturn will pass behind the Sun from our point of view on March 25th when it will reappear in the morning sky in April while Venus will be with us in the evening sky through the summer.

Our Favorite Monkey

If you've been on social media this past week, you've probably seen the monkey drama unfolding. At the Ichikawa City Zoo in Japan, a baby Japanese macaque named Punch-kun—Punch, for short—has captured the world's attention. Born in June 2025 and abandoned at birth, he was hand-raised by two zookeepers until January 2026, when he was moved to the zoo's Monkey Mountain with about 60 other monkeys. The hope was that he would integrate into the troop. Well... not quite.

Punch wasn't welcomed. Older monkeys pushed him around, ignored him, and left him clinging tightly to the Ikea orangutan plush he'd had since birth. Soon, videos of this tiny monkey dragging his stuffed animal around the enclosure—and cuddling it when frightened—went viral. The internet fell in love.

Crowds flocked to the zoo. People worldwide worried over him, sharing videos, spreading his story, and even offering large sums of money to "rescue" him. The zoo declined, instead posting updates on his progress, including a touching clip of an older monkey pulling Punch into a hug. I'll admit I was invested too. No one wants to see the smallest, loneliest little soul struggling to find his place.

I've always loved monkeys. When I was eight, our family

Holding It All Together

By Amy McCollom



visited friends in Camargo who owned a tiny monkey in a birdcage. I had never seen anything so small or fascinating. It sat on a swing, chirping and gripping the wires with tiny hands. Sadly, it didn't live long; exotic veterinarians weren't easily found in the 1970s.

A few years later, we briefly had our own capuchin monkey—though my ownership lasted all of two hours before my mom realized it wasn't a great idea and called my Aunt Pat and Uncle Wayne.

The monkey's name was Danny. A truck driver had won him in a poker game, and he came into our lives full-grown—about the size of a three-month-old baby, noisy and stinky, rattling his cage bars and flashing big canine teeth. I was both fascinated and a little scared.

My aunt and uncle, however, were thrilled. Living in tiny Dudley, Illinois, they had the perfect chaotic lifestyle for him. Danny adored my Uncle Wayne and spent most of his

time hanging on his neck, dressed in a diaper and baby clothes. My uncle smoked, and Danny would rub the cigarette smoke on himself like he was taking a bath. He was fiercely protective and wouldn't let anyone get too close to his favorite human.

Danny also loved beer—maybe too much. He could open cans himself, so the family had to keep the beer in a locked cooler or he'd help himself. He was extremely clever and could figure out any combination lock on his cage, so my aunt and uncle switched to key locks. Even then, he smuggled paperclips or bits of metal inside to try picking the lock.

In the summer, they'd take him outside and secure his chain to a cinderblock. Danny quickly learned that if he got a running start, he could shove the block a few inches at a time. Before long, he had pushed it all the way to the cooler and claimed a beer. Anywhere we went—parks, picnics, fishing trips—Danny came too.

Parkland

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Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno, Bengkulu.

He earned a bachelor's degree from the aforementioned university, a master's degree from Universitas Islam Malang, and a PhD from Universiti Sains Malaysia, all in English-language education.

"We were very excited to receive Dr. Hakim's request to visit Parkland College," Parkland Humanities Department Chair Brian Nudelman said. "Our time spent with Dr. Hakim was, as expected, interesting and thoughtful. Indeed, not only were faculty from Parkland's ESL program able to share information about our pedagogies and program structures, but we also learned how English-language instruction is taught within relevant academic programs in Indonesian colleges and universities."

In the 2024–2025 academic year, Parkland welcomed its first Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence in many years, Dr. Yousoupha Mane, who brought

West African perspectives to the college's instruction in the humanities, social sciences, and fine arts.

Since 1946, the Fulbright Program has provided over 400,000 students, scholars, teachers, artists, and professionals of all backgrounds with the opportunity to study, teach, and conduct research abroad. Notable Fulbright Scholars include 62 Nobel Laureates, 89 Pulitzer Prize winners, 80 MacArthur Fellows, 41 heads of state or government, and thousands of leaders across the private, public, and non-profit sectors.

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More information about the Fulbright program can be found on the Fulbright Program website.