



Southern Champaign County TODAY

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Menards Pet Supplies Drive

Wed., April 1 and running until Sunday, May 31. Menards has started a Pet Supplies Drive at all store locations. There are more details on the attached press release, plus a Menards Store Manager list to contact your local store manager for an interview or questions.

Tolono Food Pantries

Every Monday from 5-6:30 p.m. and Friday 9-10:30 a.m. at St. Patrick Catholic Charities, Tolono. Free Food Pantry located at the Parish providing fresh produce, meat and pantry items. Serving all of Champaign County.

Every Wednesday from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. The Giving Place is open in Tolono to help families in need of food items.

Fun Day Committee Meeting

Third Thursday of every month Tolono Fun Day Committee Meeting 6:30 at the Police Station.

Senior Luncheon

St Pat's Parish Hall (304 E Vine in Tolono) with 2nd Wednesday of the Month Senior Luncheon (55+) Coffee Social Hour starts at 10:30am, eating at 11:30am (bring \$3 and a side to share) Pantry is open Mondays 5-6:30pm and Fridays (9-10:30am)

Historical Society and Veteran's Museum Mtg

Tolono Historical Society and Veteran's Museum (101 E Holden) meets at 9:30am

Unit 7 events this week

Apr. 9 Fine Arts Festival in the Unity High School Gym starting at 4pm

Easter Bag goodies at the Kleiss residence



Tolono's Divine Mercy Group gathered at the Klieiss residence on (Palm) Sunday, March 29th to stuff goodies into Easter Bags. Around a couple of dozen volunteers made an assembly line after bringing treats, small note books, promotional prizes, toys, candy and prayer cards to put in the festive sacks. Some of the people in the prayer group got financial donations to help offset finances. The prayer group had Monical's pizza after working together for a couple of hours. Nearly 25 places taking care of the elderly in nursing homes, memory care and assisted living facilities, as well as shut in's and people leaving Catholic Mass services received this free gift with around 3,500 Spring Treat Bags in total. Submitted photos.



Infrastructure upgrades needed for competitive edge

By TAMMIE SLOUP
FarmWeek

The U.S. grain transportation system, particularly the inland waterways, is considered a competitive edge for America's farmers. But a century-old lock and dam system along the Mississippi River and a pending rail merger could present challenges in the future.

"Part of the success we've had in exports is because we have this really efficient inter-modal system of river and rail and roads that all work together, and it's important to keep those systems up, because when we're talking about moving such the large volume that we produce here, being able to get that to an export destination efficiently is really important," National Corn Growers Association Chief Economist Krista Swanson told FarmWeek.

Illinois is a bit different from other states with its vicinity to the Mississippi, Illinois and Ohio rivers, which allows for more "exposure to the international market than some other places," said Collin Watters, IL Corn's director of exports and logistics.

The Mississippi River system is one of the most critical logistics corridors for the U.S. corn export system, which makes advocating for federal investments to modernize the waterways a priority for IL Corn and Illinois Farm Bureau.

During a recent Leaders to Washington trip, members advocated for legislator support to improve infrastructure along the Mississippi, particularly the aging lock and dam system.

Tom Heinold, chief of the operations division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District, said routine maintenance has pretty much stayed on schedule, but non-routine repairs have not been well funded the past couple years.

"I think 2022 was the last time we got a large infusion of infrastructure money for our locks and dams and so things are breaking faster than we can repair them right now," Heinold told FarmWeek. "But I have to caveat that and say that during the 2000s, 2010s, and the first couple of years of the 2020s, we took very good care of the locks. ... My next big concern is the dams. Those dam gates out there, there are a few hundred of them across all of our dams between the St. Louis, Rock Island and St. Paul districts, and they have gone largely unmaintained ... and they're starting to show signs of decay."

According to USDA, close to 60% of U.S. grain exports are shipped by barge and roughly 32 million tons of corn per year are barged down the Mississippi River system to Louisiana export terminals.

Barges dominate because Midwestern corn can be loaded on rivers and moved cheaply to Gulf export ports. Most corn used within the U.S. moves by truck or rail (to ethanol plants, feedlots or processors).

"Right now, we do have a competitive edge because we've invested in this (river) system, and it's reliable and very, very efficient. If we fail to invest in this system (in the future), that price point could go the other way, and Brazil and other ag producing nations in South America, for instance, could eat us alive," Heinold warned.

Drought and consistent low water levels in the lower Mississippi also continue to be a concern, while the upper river is "looking pretty good," Heinold said March 9.

"On the lower river, they have gone for about four years in a drought condition, and unfortunately, that condition, more or less, is persisting. We've got some recent rain, but it hasn't been enough to cancel out the drought and put a great deal of water back into the river system down south. The system is all connected, so it might be worth watching the potential drought on the lower river."

This could mean light-loading barges, which in turn affects prices.

"When you have to make more trips with a tow boat to get the same product to market, that gets passed on," he said.

See TIF on page 3

See INFRASTRUCTURE on page 4

Talks on TIF II in Tolono

A special meeting for the Village of Tolono was held on April 2nd in the Township Hall (111 E Holden St.) at 6pm as the Mayor Terrence Stuber called the meeting to order, had the Pledge of Allegiance and prayer for God's blessing on those attending and to be respectful of each other. As the gathering started to wear on after two and a half hours, that hopeful thought at the beginning of the

meeting started to lose it's luster. Two professionals that deal with Tax Incremental Funding (TIF) on a regular basis, were introduced at the front of the room, to explain advantages to using this plan, as the towns current agreement expires soon. Gwen Crawford came in from the city of Normal and works with an economic development group with attorney Nic Nelson, who introduced the

concept on this developer driven plan and how blighted, stagnant and lower value property could benefit those who would like assistance in the district.

Concerned citizens then made remarks (with a 3 minute timer displayed in hopes to be fair when airing their grievances) that were mostly negative, mainly describing complaints about their neighborhoods that haven't seen any progress in

the last 23 years that we were locked into this contract that restricts some of the money that is given to our schools, fire department, parks and library because it was being redirected for projects meant to reinforce growth and progress in our community. Former Mayor Kent Plackett's wife, Susan had prepared a few statements about

Just a Reminder...

Our New Deadline Is Approaching!

Ads, Legals, Submitted Photos and Editorial Deadlines will be noon Friday starting our next edition.

