



WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2026



**JENNIFER
BERTINO-TARRANT**
WILL COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Dear Residents,

Last week, I attended the grand opening of Voortman Steel Machinery's new \$51 Million expansion project in Monee. This expansion project by Voortman of their U.S. headquarters and production facility is a major economic win for Eastern Will County, creating 51 new jobs, retaining 40 existing positions, and serving as an example of our increasing role as an advanced manufacturing hub.

Will County has all the assets to continue to drive strong economic development, including access to an international transportation network, a strong workforce, diverse business and employment sectors, and vibrant communities that people want to live and work. But we have to remember that this is not just economic growth for the sake of economic growth. Projects like these create long-term, sustainable, and well-paying career opportunities close to home for our residents and drive continued interest in our local communities.

While we're continuing to lead the state in job creation, population growth, and home construction, this expansion is a clear indicator that our proud history as a manufacturing hub is not behind us. This opening, as well as the recent announcement about Hyundai Translead's new facilities in Joliet and Channahon, demonstrates that manufacturing remains a core part of our local economy.

The State of Illinois continues to recognize Will County as a strong economic partner. I look forward to seeing the positive local impacts of continued job growth in our communities.

Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant

Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant | Will County Executive



Celebrate "Barktober" with Will County APS!

In celebration of National Adopt a Shelter Dog Month this October, Will County Animal Protection Services (APS) is making it easier for families to bring home a new four-legged friend!

Throughout the month, Will County APS will waive adoption fees for all dogs 6 months and older. All standard adoption policies and requirements still apply. The fee waiver includes eligible dogs available at Will County APS adoption partners, including Animal Care Center of Shorewood and All Pets Wellness Center in Aurora.

Interested adopters can view available dogs and other adoptable pets on Will County APS' Petfinder page and schedule a meet-and-greet by contacting the office.

To kick off the celebrations, all residents are invited to Barktoberfest, a special pet-friendly event being held at Soundgrowler Brewing Company (8201 183rd St., Tinley Park) on October 9 from 5-8 p.m. Barktoberfest will include adoptable dogs, pet trivia, raffle prizes, customized apparel for sale, and a fun opportunity to support shelter pets! A portion of sales from Soundgrowler's Oktoberfest Festbier Lager will be donated to support the pets at Will County APS during this event.

Adopt a Pet: <https://www.petfinder.com/member/us/il/joliet/will-county-animal-protection-services-il1035/>

Celebrate Barktoberfest: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1114016207825032>



Joliet Slammers Close Out Season Supporting Imagination Library

To celebrate Dolly Parton's legacy and her lifelong commitment to childhood literacy, the Joliet Slammers recently partnered with the Imagination Library of Will County to host a dynamic fundraiser during their last three games of the season.

The "Dolly's 9-5 Dream Deal" donated a portion of ticket sales to the program, which provides local children with access to free, age-appropriate books mailed directly to their home from birth to age five. Fans of Dolly came out to support the program, honor Dolly's inspirational life, and enjoy the final games of the Slammers season. Imagination Library of Will County volunteers were on hand to share information about the program with parents and raise awareness about how anyone can sponsor one year of free books for a child with just a \$16 donation.

The Imagination Library of Will County is a local partnership between Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant, the Will County Center for Economic Development, and the Dollywood Foundation. The Will County program launched in July 2025 and has already enrolled more than 10,000 children, becoming a leading program in the state.

Thank you to the Joliet Slammers for the promotion and to everyone who came out to show your support!



Will County Allocates Federal Community Development Funds

Will County has approved the allocation of federal community development funding to 16 programs and projects around the county to address local priorities, including rental and homeownership access, homelessness prevention, food access, and increasing accessibility for senior and disabled communities. The Will County Board approved over \$3 Million of community investments from annual federal funding sources, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME), and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG).

Over \$1 Million was approved for local public infrastructure improvements, with an emphasis on water infrastructure projects. Additionally, funding has been allocated to improve community facilities, including repairs at United Cerebral Palsy and Easterseals, as well as modifications to Seratoma Star Services group homes in Crete.

A top priority of federal CDBG and HOME funds is promoting housing access. To this end, the County is supporting funding for a down payment assistance and tenant based rental assistance program, facilitated through the Will County Center for Community Concerns, supporting new home ownership and stable housing for local families. Funding was also awarded to Lincoln Prairie in Lockport to support a senior housing development providing seniors with options to downsize while staying in their communities.

The award to Trinity Services, of nearly \$150 thousand, will be directed to homeless prevention services and rapid re-housing support for those currently experiencing homelessness. More than \$150,000 was also awarded to support local food pantry operations to supplement operations during a time of increased demand.

Applications for the 2027 Project Year are anticipated to open in the Spring.



Free Produce Pop-Up to be Held in Bolingbrook

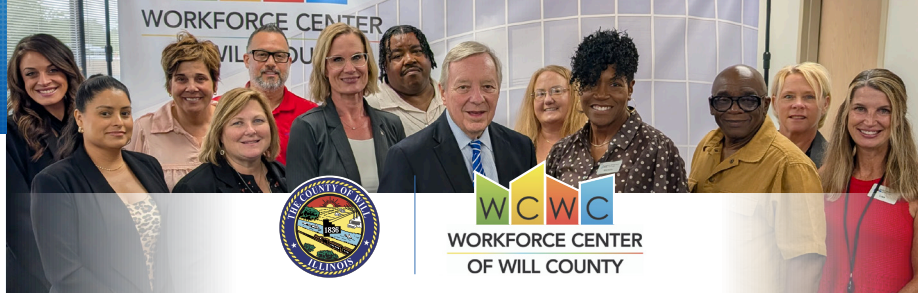
Will County residents are invited to attend a drive-up event to receive free fruits and vegetables in Bolingbrook on Oct. 10, hosted in partnership between Will County, Senator Meg Loughran Cappel, Representative Natalie Manley, and Representative Dagmara "Dee" Avelar.

The pop-up event will be held from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm, or while supplies last, at the Bolingbrook Aquatic Center, located at 200 Lindsey Lane in Bolingbrook.

No registration is required. Produce will be distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis while supplies last.

Register: <https://willcountyillinois.org/imagination-library/>

Support the Program: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/fundraising/donate-to-make-a-difference-3631>



Sen. Durbin Spotlights Will County Veteran Employment Program

U.S. Senator Dick Durbin recently visited the Workforce Center of Will County to learn more about the County is connecting veterans with employment opportunities.

Staff and leadership at the Workforce Center shared how Will County provides employment training and career services to residents, while offering Priority of Service to veterans. This offers priority access to veterans and eligible spouses for qualifying workforce programs and services.

The visit spotlighted the Workforce Center's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist, who provides individualized career services and employment assistance as part of a partnership with the Illinois Department of Employment Services (IDES).

The Workforce Center of Will County is located at 1300 Copperfield Avenue in Joliet, offering centralized access for residents to access local employment services. The building is at the heart of Will County's new unified Veteran Support Campus, with the Veteran Assistance Commission of Will County (VAC), Hines VA's Joliet Community Based Outpatient Clinic, and the Volunteers of America Illinois' Hope Manor Housing. VAC staff were on-hand to share how the new location has increased collaboration to connect veterans with more comprehensive wrap-around services.

Veteran Employment Resources:

<https://will.works/Job-Seeker-Services/Targeted-Populations/Veterans>



Will County at 190 September Spotlight

As part of Will County's 190th anniversary celebration, the Executive Office continues to spotlight local historic landmarks and milestones under the theme "Celebrating 190 Years of Community." This month's spotlight features two landmarks that represent Will County's earliest local agricultural and commercial history.



John Lane Monument | Lockport

An official Will County Landmark since 1995, this 1916 monument celebrates John Lane's historic contribution to farming and our region's agricultural legacy. Lane moved to his farm at this spot in 1833, where he later invented the first steel plow two years later. His design used strips of steel cut from a worn-out saw blade that were then used to face a wood molding board.

This was a great enhancement to farming and Lane would go on to build a factory to manufacture it. However, he refused to patent his invention because if people could benefit from it, he was glad to do it without remuneration. es the Monee Historical Society.



Monee Creamery | Monee

The Monee Cheese Factory, now commonly referred to as the Monee Creamery, was established one quarter mile away from the railroad tracks sometime between the 1870s and 1890s. It was a central feature of the town, with its proximity to the railroad, and was a gathering place for residents. It was constructed with limestone which is a unique and historically significant building material.

A 2011 analysis by Will County staff discovered that the Monee Creamery is one of the last remaining cheese factories in Will County. It was designated a Will County Landmark on July 21, 2016, renovated in 2021, and currently houses the Monee Historical Society.