



Dates:



March 25
National Agriculture Day

April 8
Annual Town Meeting

May 1
Deadline for Rural Nurse
Practitioner Scholarship
Applications

May 26
Memorial Day

Did you know...

In 2012, the average age of principal farm operators was 58.3 years, up 1.2 years since 2007, and continuing a 30-year trend of steady increase. Of the 2.1 million principal farm operators, 6 percent were under 35 years old; 61 percent were 35 to 64 years old; and 33 percent were 65 years and older. (2012 US Census of Agriculture) What does this say for rural medical needs?



Accessing local government info

The variability of availability is astonishingly pronounced

by Kevin Rund

Have you ever stopped to think about how much information there is out there about governmental units in your own area and whether you might be able to access it? What got me to thinking about it was a call from a county Farm Bureau® manager last week asking where to find maps depicting the boundaries of the fire protection districts within the county.

In this day and age of electronic data, it would seem a simple matter to do. But it turns out, that wasn't the case.

The county manager had already done some digging locally. The Chief County Assessing Official offered to print a map, but the scale was so small as to be unhelpful. The State Fire Marshall's Office reportedly said they would provide it

only through a Freedom of Information request.

That prompted me to go poking around in some of the usual venues I use for other types of local government information. The Illinois Comptroller's Office can offer some helpful data—especially financial, but much of it is dated. The Secretary of State's website has some information, too, like elected officials. But beyond availability of boundaries for general purpose units (counties, municipalities and townships) and for school districts, I found no mapping for special purpose districts.

So I turned to what I've found often to be the richest source of local government data in a given locale, the county

(See **Accessing** on page 5)

Township Government

The grassroots form of government

by Brenda Matherly

Illinois is known for its many units of local government; 6964 units to be exact, as of 2012. Included in that number are the 1,431 civil townships spread through 85 counties in the state, not to be confused with congressional townships.

In Illinois, there are two kinds of townships. The civil township refers to the

actual unit of government, which is different from the congressional township. The congressional township is a measurement of area set up in a grid-like system consisting of six-mile squares across the state.

While the concept of township government dates back to the Anglo-Saxon era in England, it was not established in Illi-

(See **CSFOT** on page 4)

Simon names 2014 Rural Illinois Champion

Gibson City hospital employee, Robin Rose, dedicated to improving the quality of life for rural residents

Source: Lt. Governor's Office

Lt. Gov. Sheila Simon named Robin Rose, the chief operating officer of Gibson Area Hospital & Health Services, as the 2014 Rural Illinois Champion on March 5 at the 25th annual Rural Community Economic Development Conference in Peoria.

Rose is the first woman to win the award, designed to honor those working to make a difference in rural Illinois. This is the third year the award has been extended by Simon, chairman of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council.

"I am excited to recognize Robin for her hard work and tireless efforts to improve the quality of life in our rural communities," said Simon. "She has gone above and beyond to make sure the residents of her area have access to top-notch health care and services."

Rose joined Gibson Area Hospital & Health Services (GAHHS) as chief nursing officer in 2004 and has been instrumental in the recruitment and employment of physicians for GAHHS and the communities it serves. Under her leadership, GAHHS has increased the number of its rural health clinics to nine, which led to an increase in the number of family practice/OB physicians and orthopedic care.

Also, through Rose's encouragement and support, several local registered nurses have returned to school and are now providing care at various clinics. In collaboration with the hospital's administrative team, Rose has increased services at GAHHS to include a Geriatric Behavioral Clinic, Behavioral Well-

ness Center, Sleep Disorder Center, Elite Performance Center and orthopedic programs.

Rose has received the Louis Gorin Award for Outstanding Achievement in Rural Health Care and the Jackson & Coker Staff Physician Recruiter Award. Gibson City recognized Rose in 2012 with the Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award.

Illinois residents working to bring about change in rural Illinois communities were considered for the Rural Illinois Champion Award. Themes of service included: eco-

nomics development and community revitalization, agriculture, education and empowerment, sustainability, public service, community and/or public health.

Past award winners include Norm Walzer, founder of Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at Western Illinois University, and Jerry Townsend, who worked nearly 40 years in rural development with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

[LINK](#)

2012 Ag Census

Data a tool for rural development analysis

The USDA released the 2012 Census *Preliminary Report* in February for an early look at some census results. The Census of Agriculture can often be a helpful source in the analysis of rural issues and rural development needs.

The highlights show that the long-term decline in the number of farms continued, dropping by 4.3 percent in the period 2007 to 2012. In that same period, the amount of land in farms in the United States declined from 922 million acres to 915 million acres. This decline of less than one percent was the third smallest decline between censuses since 1950.

"Anyone with an interest in numbers will find a treasure trove of data in the ag census," said Bob Young, chief economist at the

American Farm Bureau Federation. "Also revealed are important trends about farmers that relate to their role in the economic health of rural America and the agriculture sector overall. Information about who farmers and ranchers are, how old they are and what type of food or farm animals they raise is available," he said.

The disparity in farms widened. Middle-sized farms declined in number between 2007 and 2012. The number of large (1,000 plus acres) and very small (1 to 9 acres) farms did not change significantly in that time.

Click here for more of the [Census of Agriculture](#).

[LINK](#)

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

To the legal voters, residents of the Town of _____
in the County of _____ and State of Illinois, that the Annual Town Meet-
ing of said Town will take place on
Tuesday, April 8, 2014
being the second Tuesday of said month
at the hour of 6:01 o'clock P.M. at [Location]
for the transaction of the miscellaneous business of the said town; and after a
Moderator having been elected, will proceed to hear and consider reports of
officers, and decide on such measures as may, in pursuance of law, come before
the meeting; and especially to consider and decide the following:

[Agenda]

That notice (above) will be appearing soon on bulletin boards, light poles, town hall doors and in store windows. It can also show up in local newspapers. It heralds the coming of a form of true democracy still functioning in 20 states in this nation.

Every township in Illinois must hold an Annual Town Meeting on the second Tuesday of April. It should be held at 6:00 p.m. (unless the electors fix some other time) at a place in the township picked by the township board.

While anyone is welcome to attend these meetings, only the electors of the township (persons registered to vote in the township) are eligible to vote on ques-

tions put before the assembly. All questions on motions are determined by a majority of the electors present and voting. A call for a "division of the house" may be made.

Notification of the meeting is to be given by the town clerk by posting written or printed notices in three of the most public places in the town at least 10 days before the meeting, and if there is an English language newspaper published in the town, by at least one publication in that newspaper, before the meeting.

A moderator, elected from among all electors at the meeting, presides over the meeting making announcements of the business, pre-

serving order, and deciding all questions of order. The moderator has the same power as an election judge.

At a town meeting, the town clerk is the only elected township official to have an assigned role; he/she must keep minutes of the proceedings. The other elected officers of the township have no special authorities; they are like any other elector present.

The powers that may be exercised by voters at the Annual Town Meeting are extensive and include tax rate increases and disposition of property. For a complete list of those powers, visit: <http://www.toi.org/Resources/Download-Center.aspx>, and select "Powers of Electors" towards the bottom of the list.

Special Town Meetings may be held when the board of trustees of the township, or at least 15 voters of the town, shall file in the office of the town clerk, a statement, in writing, that a special meeting is necessary for the interests of the town, and setting forth the objects of the meeting.

For more on the Annual Town Meeting, visit the Township Officials of Illinois website at: www.toi.org/events/default.aspx

LINK

Flood Insurance Fix

The US Senate and House of Representatives have passed a bipartisan flood insurance bill intended to bring relief to property owners facing steep rate hikes. Those scheduled hikes were the product of the *Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Act of 2012* (BW-12), and were intended to keep the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) solvent. The new legislation, known as the *Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act* does not abandon the rate increases altogether, but it switches to a gradual rate increase instead of having it hit homeowners all at once. Still, that includes an average 15 percent-per-year increase for some homeowners until reaching actuarial rates, with a maximum 18 percent annual increase. Other provisions in the new legislation include: permanent repeal of the shift to full-risk rates when a house is sold; protection of existing properties from premium increases when an area is remapped, and a requirement that FEMA notify property owners when remapping takes place. The President is expected to sign the bill.

Townships

(Continued from page 1)

Illinois until 1848 under the 1848 state constitution. At that time, Illinois had 99 counties. In the first year, a quarter of those counties adopted this structure of government. By the second year, over two thirds of the counties were on board. Today, 85 of our 102 counties operate under the township form of government.

Its popularity is due, in part, to its accountability. This form of government is often referred to as the grassroots government because it is one of the closest levels of government to the people.

The role of township government, by statute, is to provide three primary functions: general assistance programs to qualifying residents; property assessment; and maintenance of township roads and bridges. General assistance at the township level provides help to the impoverished, according to local standards and needs. Accurate property assessments provide income by valuing property for the purpose of taxation used to help fund all local units of government.

Beyond these mandated functions, many townships offer a variety of social services designed to improve life for their residents. These services can include senior citizen and youth programs, transportation, and cemetery maintenance.

Another important function of the township is to hold the Annual

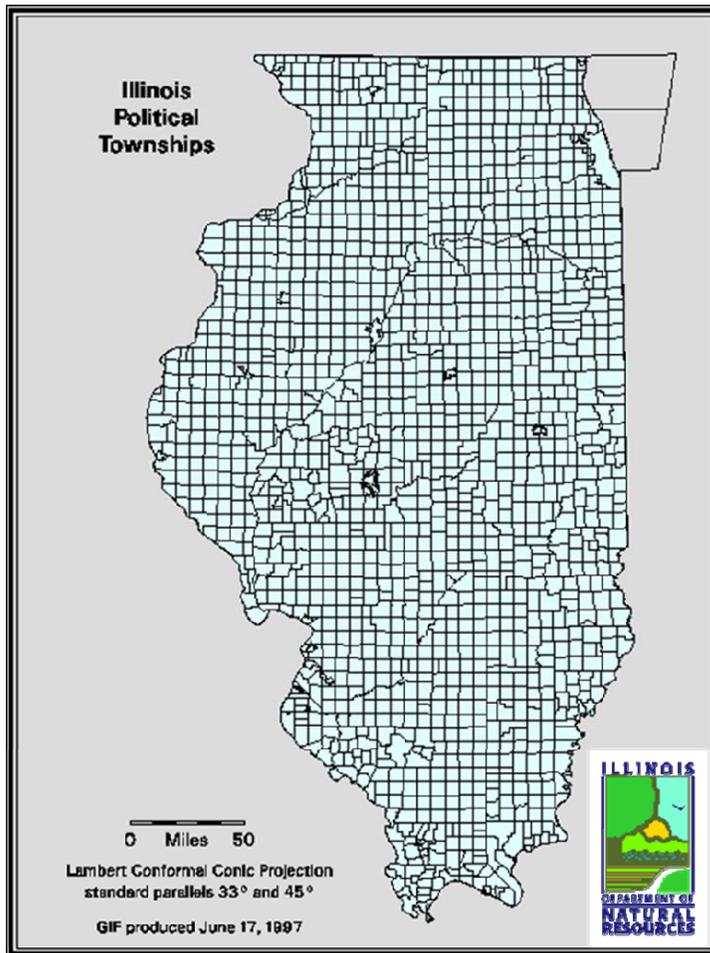
Town Meeting. Every township is required to hold this meeting on the second Tuesday in April each year. So mark your calendar for April 8 this year. At these meetings, those that show up have the power. Attending this meeting is the only instance in which the citizens have a direct say in how their

she also serves as treasurer of the township funds, ex officio treasurer of the road and bridge fund, supervisor of general assistance and a member of the board of trustees.

The town clerk, also elected, is the keeper of all the township records, performs election duties, distributes advertisements and notices for the township and the road district, and convenes the Annual Town Meeting.

Each township has four trustees elected at large, known as the board of trustees. Generally speaking, the board of trustees serves as the legislative body and sets township policy.

And finally, the township highway commissioner is the elected official in charge of the roads and bridges in the road district. While the highway commissioner might be considered a township official, the road district is really a separate unit of government. This means the the board of trustees and the township supervisor have no authority over the highway commissioner or the operations of the road district, except for approval of the road district budget.



government is run. *For more information on the Annual Town Meeting, check out the related article in this publication.*

Townships have elected officials who are responsible for performing prescribed duties to help facilitate the roles and services of the township. The supervisor is one of those elected officials. By statute, the supervisor is the chief executive officer of the township. He or

Getting to know your township officials and learning more about how that unit of government is run is a great opportunity to better understand the opportunities and challenges facing your community and your government.

For more information on township government visit the website of the Township Officials of Illinois (TOI) at <http://www.toi.org/>.

LINK

Accessing

(Continued from page 1)

government websites.

That makes sense. After all, with virtually every unit of local government being reliant on the property tax, the County Clerk would have to identify all the special districts that overlay any given parcel before calculating rates and sending out the tax bills.

The County Clerk also has responsibility for voter registrations and sorting each voter by the various local districts in which that person is eligible to cast a ballot.

However, with its often greater reliance on GIS systems, its just as likely you'll find that mapping capability in the office of the Chief County Assessing Official. Special district boundaries can be used there for assessments—the value of a home or home site could vary based on the availability of services.

County highway departments, too, often have GIS mapping, but seldom have need for special district boundaries.

Of course, the ultimate goal would be for all units of local government—especially those within a given county—to have access to the same database of GIS information. That would spread the work load, avoid duplication and ensure uniformity. We're not there yet—but progress is being made.

Some counties do a great job of making GIS-based local government information available to the public—and, obviously, to other local units in the county. One of the primary ingredients needed to achieve that level of success seems to be having the financial wherewithal. But just as important is an internal, shared decision to commit to that goal, and a willingness

Eminent domain resurfaces in DC

Source: AFBF

Farm Bureau-supported legislation that would strengthen private property rights was approved March 3 in the House of Representatives by a margin of 356-65. The bill, the Private Property Rights Protection Act of 2013 (H.R. 1944), prohibits states that receive federal economic development funding from exercising eminent domain for private economic development.

The measure addresses at the federal level the 2005 *Kelo v. New London* decision. In the *Kelo* case, New London, Conn., homeowners sued the city for the right to keep their homes, which the city had seized under eminent domain to let a private developer turn the area into a commercial complex. The Supreme Court on June 23, 2005, ruled 5-4 in favor of New London, allowing local governments to seize private property for economic development.

Under the House bill, introduced by Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.), any state that uses eminent domain in the name of private economic development would lose all federal economic development funding for two years. The bill creates a private right of action for any landowner who suffers injury as a result of a violation of any provision of this act. The bill also prohibits any use of eminent domain for economic development by the federal government.

The House vote is largely symbolic as neither the legislation nor the issue is expected to be taken up in the Senate this year.

to work with other units of local government.

One county website where finding fire protection district maps was no problem was in Lake County. Contrast that with many other counties where they might not even have a website; there data collection means going back to the books.

If you're a *QuickView* reader, you might have noticed an article by our lobbying staff about legislation calling for electronic postings by local governments.

The article points out that bills introduced by Senator Manar (SB 2967) and Representative Franks (HB 4572) would each "require counties, municipalities, and townships to provide all ordinances and resolutions adopted by the unit of government to the Comptroller to be placed on the Com-

troller's information warehouse website. This would provide a single point to find information on ordinances or resolutions impacting agriculture and farmers, improving transparency of local government.

"These units of government are already required to provide their financial information to the Comptroller, so the effort and cost to add this additional information should be minimal."

Illinois Farm Bureau® supports both bills.

As an exercise in good government, I encourage county Farm Bureau local affairs committees to get a handle on the status of electronic access to local ordinances, maps, and local official contact information in their county. If it

(See **Accessing** on page 6)

Summer Sun Brings Summer Fun

Use the *Prairie Bounty of Illinois* to Guide You

by Brenda Matherly

Surely most of us are ready to enjoy warmer days and the fresh fruits and vegetables that are soon to follow. Farmers' markets, pick-your-own locations and agritourism businesses will be drawing crowds to rural communities across the State to enjoy spring and summer's bounty. These types of operations have a positive impact on rural development by providing local growers an outlet to market produce.

These last few dreary days of winter might be the perfect time to plan your visits to these Illinois locations. You are just a few clicks away from starting your spring and summer "staycations."

The *Prairie Bounty of Illinois* serves as an on-line marketing directory for Illinois growers of certain specialty crops, including fruits, vegetables, and herbs, and can be found at www.specialtygrowers.org/prairie-bounty.html.

Prairie Bounty is provided by the Illinois Farm Bureau® and the Illinois Specialty Growers Association®. The directory contains the names, addresses and telephone numbers of Illinois producers who sell their products through pick-your-own, roadside markets, and who sell wholesale. The directory also contains information on fruit



and vegetable producers who own agritourism businesses.

While visiting an agritourism business, you are likely to enjoy any number of the following: pick-your-own pumpkins, apples or berries, corn mazes, petting zoos, inflatables, bakeries, restaurants, children's activities, etc.

If you're interested in the fresh flavors grown on the farm, this directory also lists close to 400 community farmers markets around the State.

In total, *Prairie Bounty* contains contact information and locations for more than 900 individual growers throughout Illinois, providing consumers with farms' contact information, products available and method of sale.

To help find a location close to home, all this information is searchable by city, county or zip code. And don't forget to check back frequently. *Prairie Bounty* is constantly updated as growers add their names and markets to the system.

If you are a grower and interested in adding your name and business to *Prairie Bounty of Illinois*, you

may contact Diane Handley at 309-557-3662 or via e-mail at dhandley@ifb.org.

You may also visit the Illinois Specialty Growers website at the link provided above for instructions on how to register - the more the merrier... I mean merrier.

LINK

Accessing

(Continued from page 5)
falls short of spectacular, you might want to encourage a greater emphasis on that effort in the coming years.

One of the most difficult hurdles you might find is the all-too-frequent unwillingness of units to cooperate. That's an excellent role for your organization—working to overcome that resistance, and any reluctance there might be to adopting new technological capabilities.

LINK

