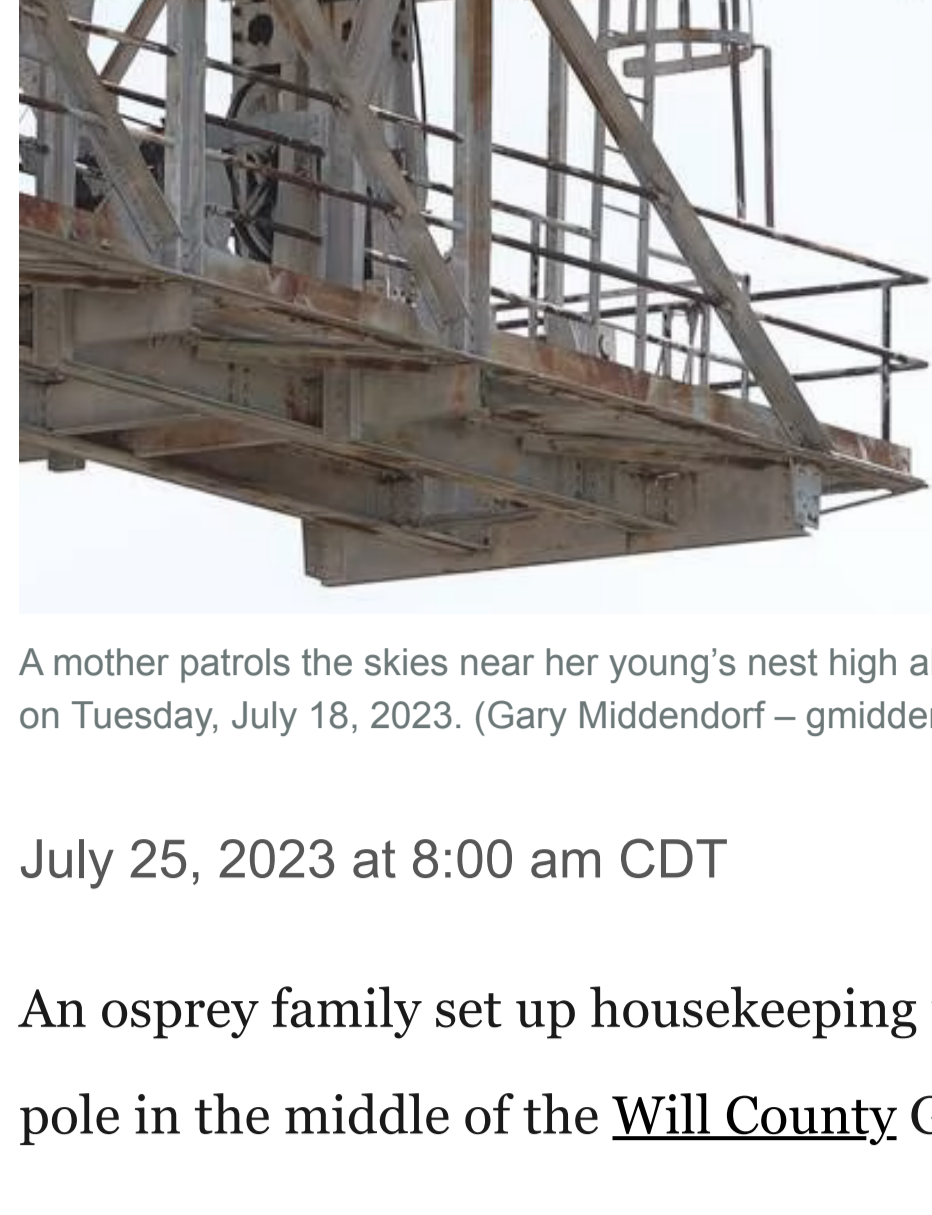


# Osprey family, a threatened species, makes a home at Romeoville plant

Phil Raush, plant manager: 'You can see the adults go down the surf and look for and catch food'

By Denise M. Baran-Unland

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A mother osprey patrolls the skies near her young's nest high above the DNR decommissioned facility in Romeoville on Tuesday, July 18, 2023. (Gary Middendorf – gmiddendorf@shawmedia/Gary Middendorf)

July 25, 2023 at 8:00 am CDT

An osprey family set up housekeeping in the perfect location: on top of a pole in the middle of the **Will County** Generating Station in **Romeoville**.

The problem is, company spokesman Dave Schrader said, the Will County Generating Station was retired in June 2022 and is currently being decommissioned. Additionally, osprey are a threatened species.

Fortunately, the construction company that surveyed the area and planned the removal of the large structures saw the nest, plant manager Phil Raush said, who also noticed that the osprey chose a light pole that the company isn't removing.



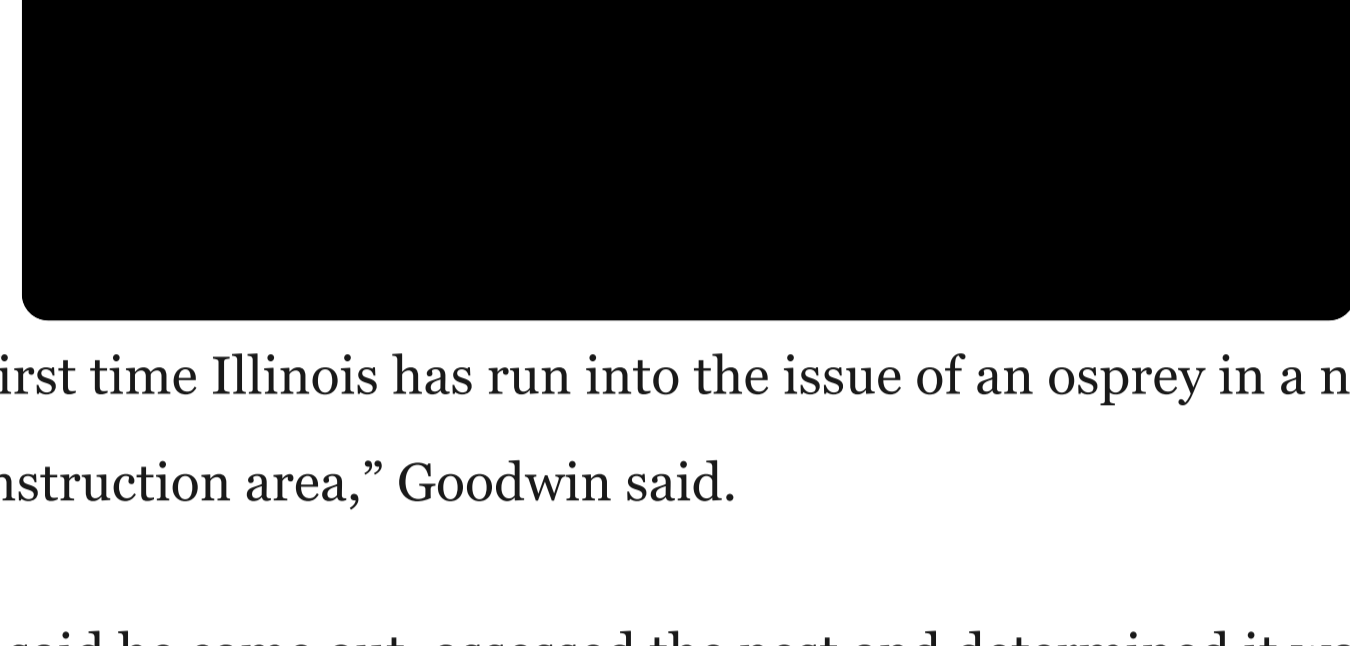
Young osprey sit in a nest high above the DNR decommissioned facility in Romeoville on Tuesday, July 18, 2023. (Gary Middendorf – gmiddendorf@shawmedia/Gary Middendorf)

"We did a little research to make sure we did not damage or harm these little birds," Raush said. "Then we brought Tommy [Goodwin] in."

***You can tell right away this is not the normal bird you will find in your back yard.***

— Philip Raush, plant manager of the Will County Generating Station

Tommy Goodwin, a project consultant at Civil and Environmental Consultants, said the company reached out in June saying it might have an osprey nest on its property. Goodwin said his bread and butter is ecological work, but the situation was unusual even for him.



"It's the first time Illinois has run into the issue of an osprey in a nest in an active construction area," Goodwin said.

Goodwin said he came out, assessed the nest and determined it was indeed an osprey nest.

## Why osprey are special

"It's a really unique-looking bird, probably close to an eagle or hawk species," Goodwin said. "They've got a white breast, white-brown forehead and are dark around the eyes – bright yellow eyes."

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Goodwin said he also found three nestlings hatched but not yet able to fly in the nest.

"Because this is a migratory bird and native species the Migratory Bird Treaty Act came into play," Goodwin said. "This is also on the Illinois state threatened species."

A threatened bird has less than 25 nests a year over the past 10 years, Goodwin said. He then proposed a plan that coincided with what the Will County Generating Station already did: install a 100-foot buffer around the nest area.

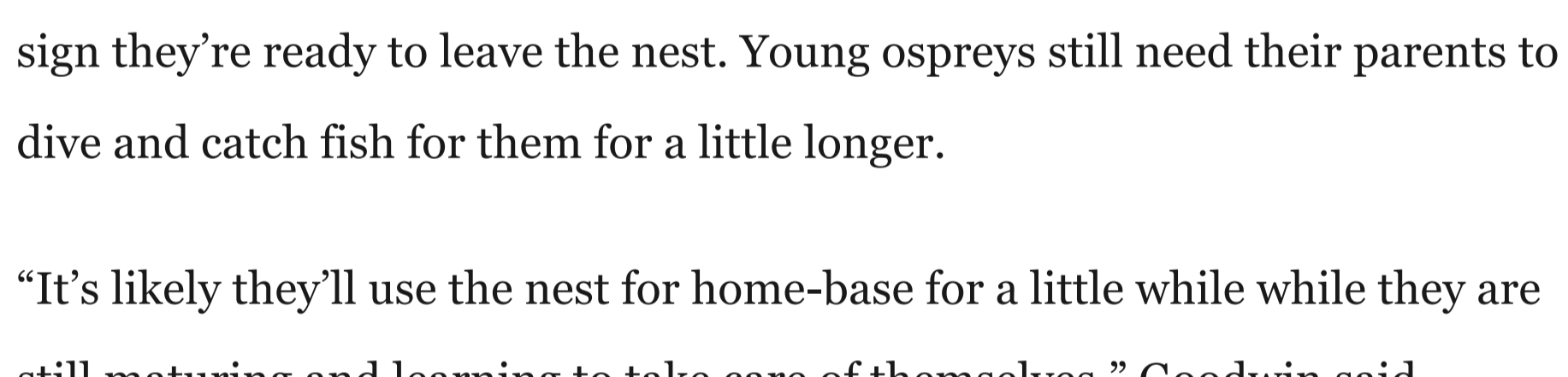
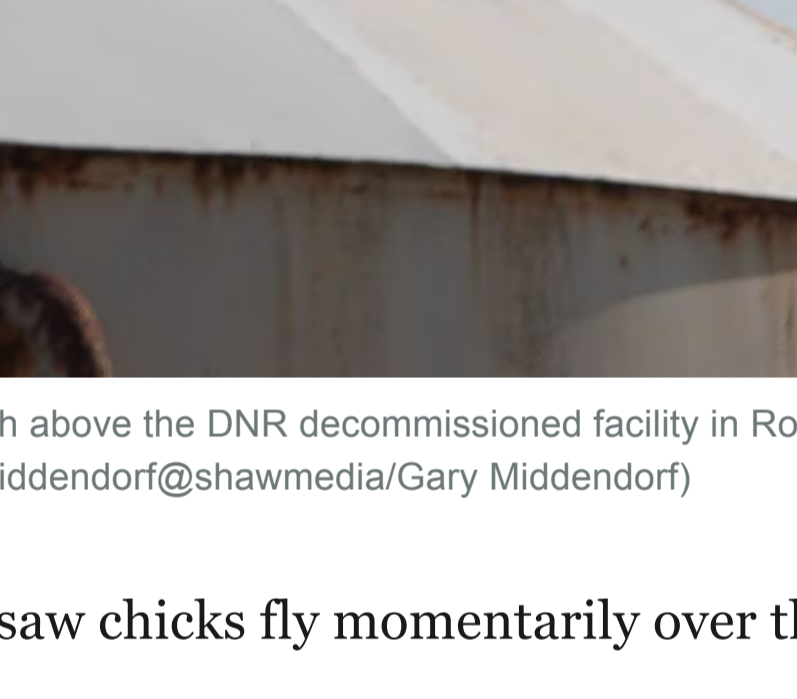
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"No work would be done within that buffer until the birds were no longer using the nest or no longer disturbed by the activities," Goodwin said.

Goodwin said he checks on the ospreys once or twice a week, and the ospreys remained at the plant as of Friday.

"Up to this point, there are no signs of harm to the birds," Goodwin said.



Young osprey sit in a nest high above the DNR decommissioned facility in Romeoville on Tuesday, July 18, 2023. (Gary Middendorf – gmiddendorf@shawmedia/Gary Middendorf)

Last week, Goodwin saw chicks fly momentarily over the nest for the first time. That's a sign the osprey may fly in a week or two, he said, but it's not a sign they're ready to leave the nest. Young ospreys still need their parents to dive and catch fish for them for a little longer.

"It's likely they'll use the nest for home-base for a little while while they are still maturing and learning to take care of themselves," Goodwin said.

None of this activity is hidden from view.

"You can see the adults go down the surf and look for and catch food," Raush said. "You can actually hear them; they make quite a bit of racket. They are definitely visible and audible from the plant. They are very large birds. Clearly this is no average blue jay; these things are pretty big. You can tell right away this is not the normal bird you will find in your back yard."

## Taking responsibility for protecting the environment

The construction crew won't need to get into the nesting area for another month to six weeks, so the feathery neighbors aren't affecting the work. By the time the crew might need to work within that area, the ospreys should be gone.

"It's a win-win for everyone," Raush said.

Raush said the osprey's pole is adjacent to the I&M Canal, a plentiful source of food.

"I firmly believe that we've been living with these birds for some time," Raush said. "Now that we're doing some more disruptive work on the site, we're a little more sensitive to it."

Goodwin said he appreciates working with **businesses** that value wildlife.

"It's nice to have that breath of fresh air where companies are trying to do what's best for those around," Goodwin said.

Raush said the company's mission statement stresses both safety and the **environment** are valued over production.

"This is clearly an example of environment over production," Raush said. "We changed our schedule, we changed our work, to actually support these elite birds until they grow. It's an example that we model and value safety and the environment. We live by those values and support our nature while we do some work to part of the power plant."

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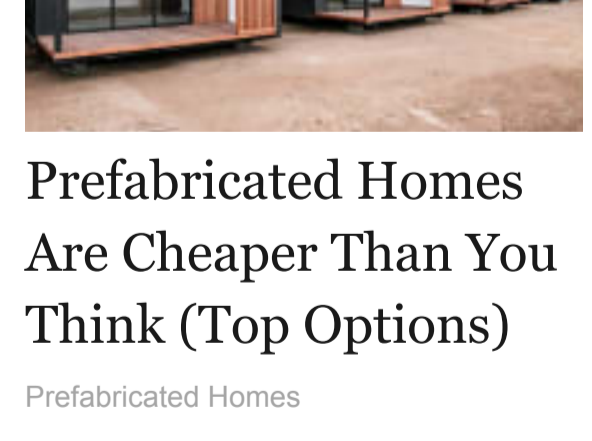
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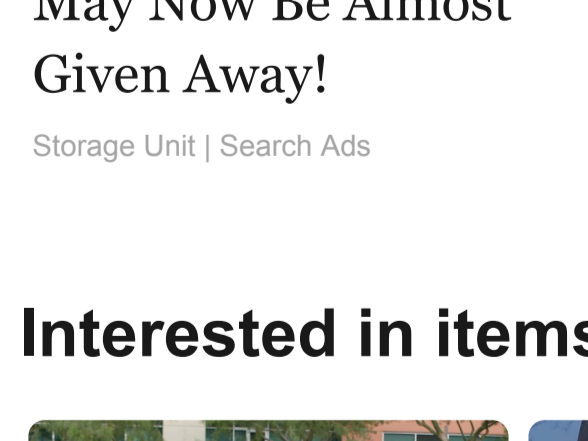
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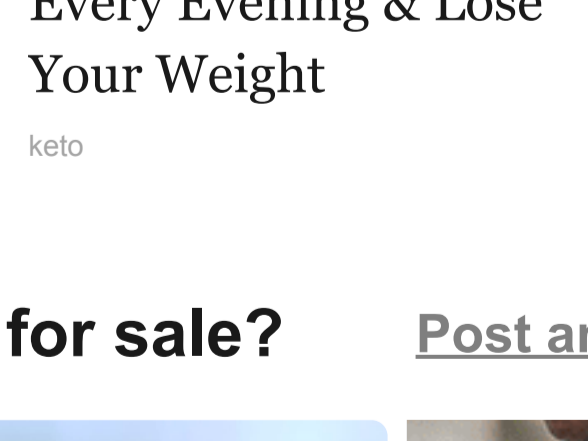
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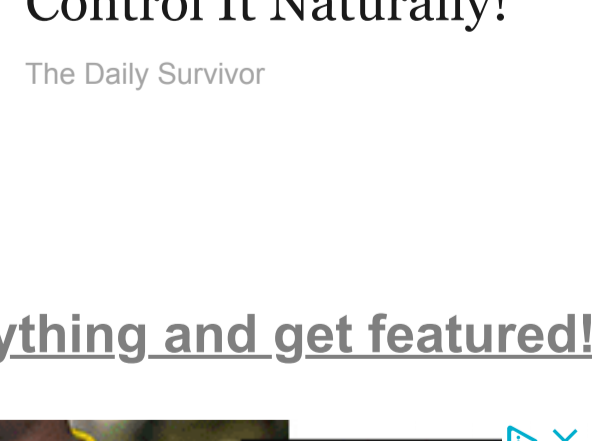
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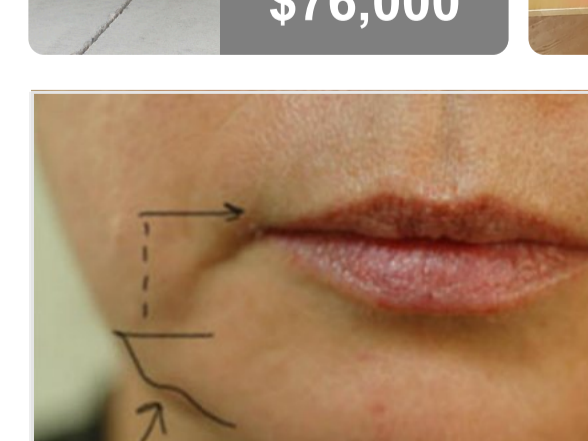
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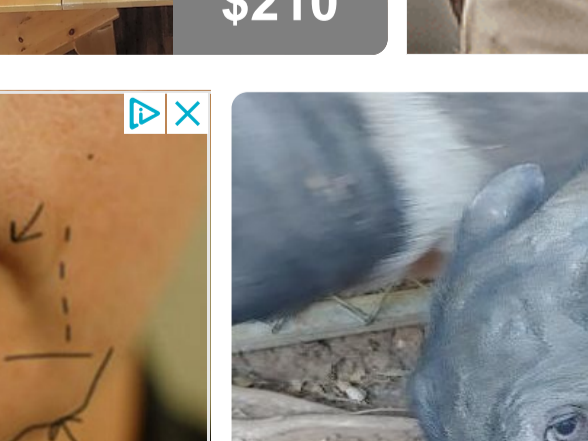
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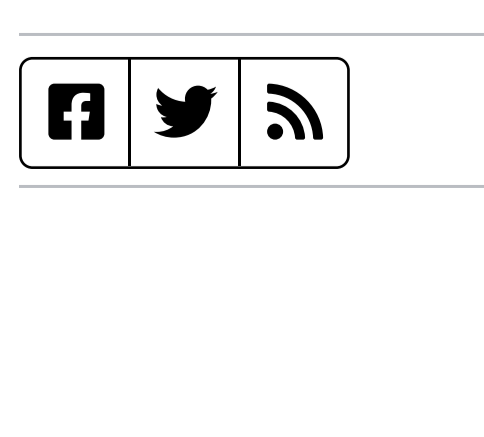
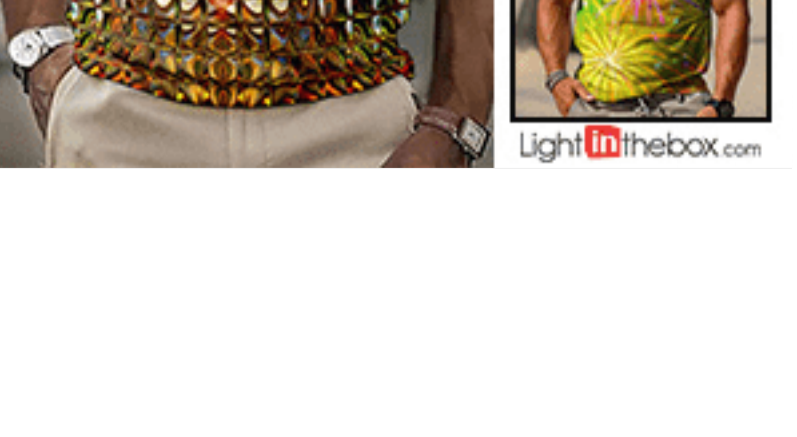
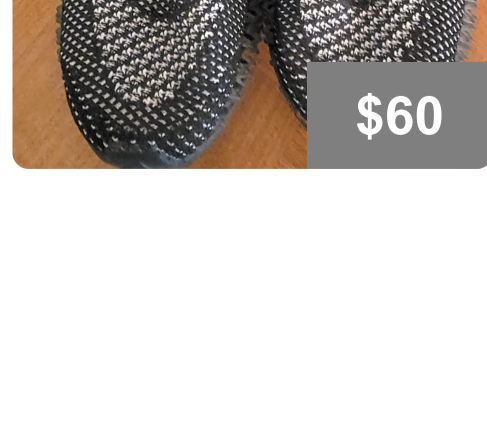
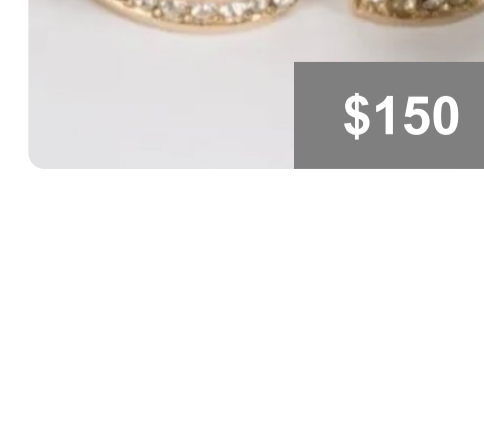


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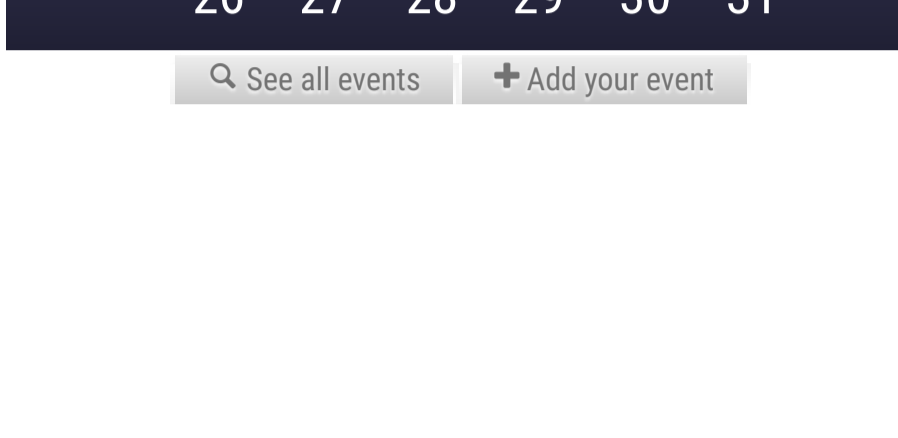
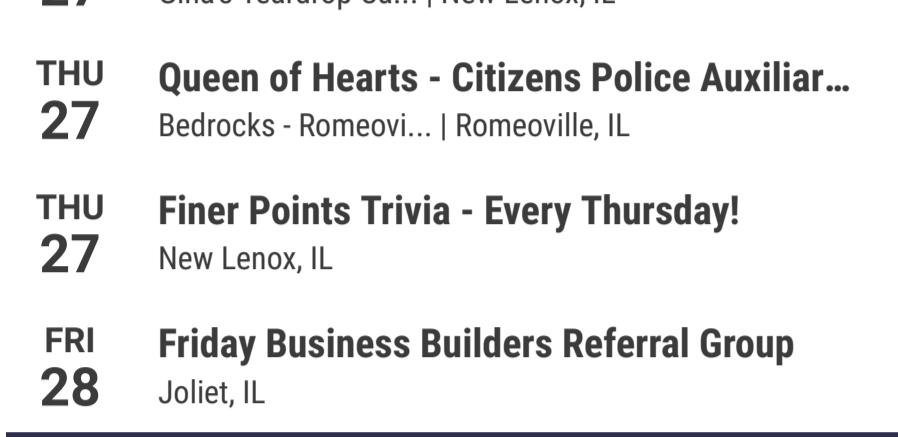
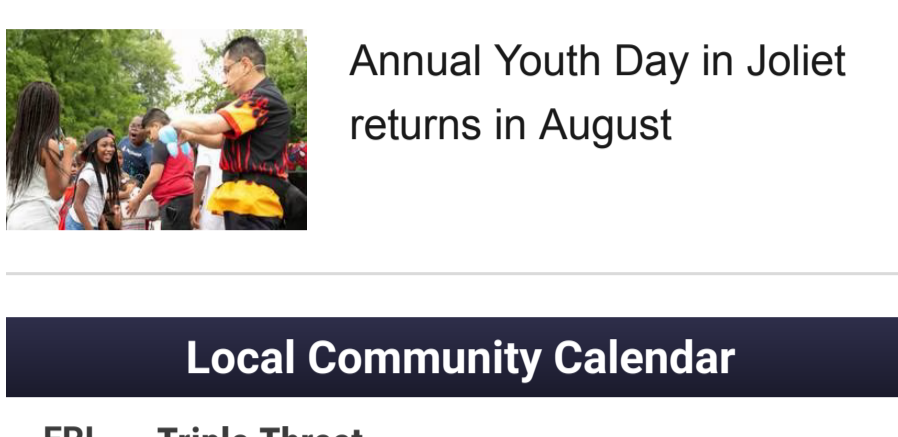
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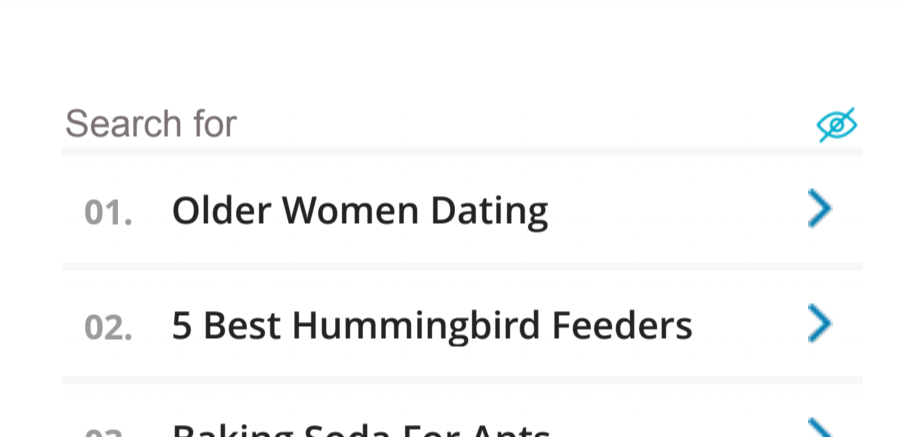
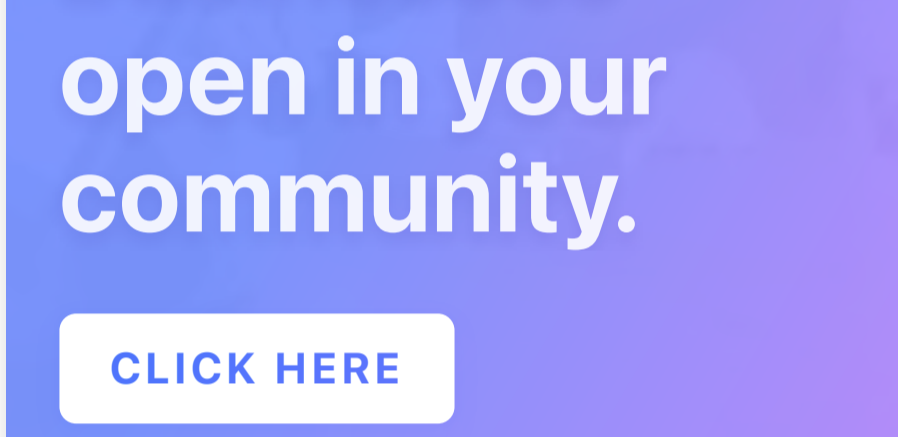
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