



BECAUSE NEWS MATTERS. SUPPORT LOCAL JOURNALISM.

Herald & Review

Monday, August 25, 2025

WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

Powered by herald-review.com • #TogetherDecatur

ILLINOIS

OUTDOORSY ‘BEAUTY TO BEEKEEPING’



TOM O’CONNOR PHOTOS, MEDILL ILLINOIS NEWS BUREAU

Luke Harvey, owner of the Riverview Road Apiary, inspects a frame of bees.

Ill. beekeepers battle losses, costs to keep hives buzzing

TOM O’CONNOR
Medill Illinois News Bureau with Capitol News Illinois

CHILLICOTHE — Luke Harvey established the Riverview Road Apiary in 2014, perched along the Illinois River in Chillicothe, just across from the home where he grew up north of Peoria. Surrounded by birdsong on the back porch of the house, Harvey recently reflected on his history with bees.

“The love of beekeeping is also about the love of being outside, being closer to nature and being close to the world that we just aren’t really involved in.”

It’s an idyllic scene, one that can make it easy to overlook how challenging beekeeping can be for Harvey and the more than 5,400 other registered beekeepers across Illinois. Nearly 89% of them are hobbyists managing 10 colonies or fewer, according to the fiscal year 2025 Apiary Inspection Annual Report from the Illinois Department of Agriculture released in July.

Losses

Bee loss is a persistent issue throughout the state. It’s not uncommon for beekeepers to lose over half of their colonies each year, primarily during winter, due to disease, competition, poor nutrition or limited resources. That’s a trend mirrored across much of the Midwest and the country.

One long-standing threat is the varroa mite, which feeds on a bee’s hemolymph — a fluid similar to blood — and fat body, a key part of the bee’s immune system. These mites can weaken bees and act as vectors of viruses that can spread rapidly through a hive and beyond.

Many beekeepers indicated that it is difficult to keep colonies healthy. The IDOA’s FY25 report suggests a rise in varroa mite levels in the state, though it cautions that this may partly be because of environmental variables or when and where inspections occurred.

Pollinator expert Brittany Buckles said many of the biological challenges in Illinois are recurring and somewhat pre-



Bees work in one of nearly 100 hives at the Riverview Road Apiary in Chillicothe, not far from Peoria.

dictable but not always completely avoidable or easy to manage.

Buckles has worked with bees for about a decade and holds a master’s degree in entomology, specializing in pollinators. Now based primarily in northern Illinois, she teaches classes through the Chicago Honey Co-Op in addition to her other pollinator-related work.

She reports an annual colony loss rate of around 40% in the hives she’s involved with — lower than many in the state — and partly attributes that to precise, timely treatment and close hive monitoring.

Buckles emphasized the importance of reliable information, recommending the University of Minnesota’s Beekeeping in Northern Climates guide.

Cost

Beyond biology, there are financial hurdles as well. Newcomers often face startup costs between \$600 and over \$1,000 for a hive and the required equipment.

“Life is already expensive enough,” Harvey said, adding that beekeeping is complex and many first-timers face difficulties managing hives. “People get frustrated.”

Please see **BEEs**, Page A4



A lighthearted warning sign at the edge of a small gardening plot at Chicago Gaelic Park in Oak Forest.

EDUCATION

Critics: WH silent on legacy admissions

‘Hereditary privilege’ college acceptance seen as ‘shameless’

COLLIN BINKLEY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As President Donald Trump attempts to reshape college admissions, he promises a new era of fairness with an emphasis on merit and test scores and a blind eye toward diversity.

Yet the Republican president has been silent on admissions policies that give applicants a boost because of their wealth or family ties. While he pressed colleges to eliminate consideration of a student’s race, he made no mention of legacy admissions, an edge given to the children of alumni, or similar preferences for relatives of donors.

Trump often rails against systems he describes as “rigged,” but he overlooked a glaring instance in higher education, said Richard Kahlenberg, a researcher at the Progressive Policy Institute think tank who has written about admissions.

“It’s hard to think of a more flagrant way in which the system is rigged than legacy preferences,” Kahlenberg said. “Rarely is a system of hereditary privilege so openly practiced without any sense of shame.”

In recent weeks, Trump took actions to scrub race from admissions decisions, suggesting some schools ignored a 2023 Supreme Court decision that struck down affirmative action. His administration negotiated settlements with Brown and Columbia universities that included provisions to share admissions data. He also issued a call for colleges nationwide to submit data to prove they do not consider race in admissions.

Some urge Trump to go further.

Please see **COLLEGE**, Page A2

HEALTH CARE

Investigators demand trans patients’ data

GEOFF MULVIHILL
Associated Press

When the U.S. Justice Department sought information from doctors and clinics that provide gender-affirming care for young transgender patients, officials weren’t just asking for policies. They also demanded information about individual patients.

Attorney General Pam Bondi announced July 9 that the department sent more than 20 subpoenas to doctors and clinics that provide the care. The request represented an elevation in President Donald Trump’s administration’s effort to halt the medical treatment for transgender youth, even in states where it’s legal.

Bondi said the requests were part of investigations into “healthcare fraud, false statements, and more.” No charges were announced so far, but the probes had a chilling impact on the availability of care.

Specifics of the requests were not made public until a court filing in a separate lawsuit this week and were first reported by The Washington Post.

Advocates say the requests are invasive and unnecessary.

“It turns doctor-patient confidentiality into government surveillance,” said Jennifer Levi, GLAD Law’s senior director of Transgender and Queer Rights.

Please see **TRANS**, Page A2