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Funding announced for training academies

\$24M to help expand manufacturing positions

Nida Tazeen

AI-assisted reporter
USA TODAY NETWORK

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity announced that \$24 million in grant funding is now available to establish six new manufacturing training academies at community colleges in the state's downstate regions.

The academies aim to expand training for high-demand manufacturing jobs, according to a community announcement. Grantees will be selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity process.

Pritzker highlighted the importance of the state's skilled workforce in making Illinois a manufacturing powerhouse. The announcement builds upon recent success in the manufacturing industry as a growing list of

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8 things to do around Freeport this weekend

Kathi Edwards

Special to the Freeport Journal-Standard
USA TODAY NETWORK

The weekend brings Elvis Spectacular, a hat burning event and Don McLean, along with fundraisers, live music and more to the Freeport area.

Winter RV Show

What: The annual Winter RV Show includes a showroom full of the latest RVs with show prices. Free lunch will be served from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Enter to win prize giveaways.

When: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Jan. 16 and Jan. 17; 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Jan. 18

Where: Collier RV, 7373 Harrison Ave., Rockford

Cost: Free admission and parking

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AN EAGLE EYE VIEW

Watching events for national bird to return in IL this month

Nida Tazeen AI-assisted reporter | USA TODAY NETWORK

Bald eagle spotting season is here, and Illinois is rolling out the welcome mat with a series of eagle-watching events across the state, according to a community announcement.

From now through March, families, birders and nature lovers can catch a glimpse of America's national bird as it soars above rivers and bluffs, according to an announcement. Winter is prime time for eagle viewing, as the birds migrate south in search of open water for fishing.

Several state parks and nature centers are hosting guided hikes, live bird shows and hands-on activities to celebrate the annual migration. Here's a look at some of the events planned.

Bald Eagle Festival and Bird Show in Jersey County

Kicking off the season is the Bald Eagle Festival and Bird Show at Pere Marquette State Park Lodge and Conference Center near Grafton. The event runs from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Jan. 18 and features educational activities, vendors and opportunities to view eagles.

Starved Rock Eagle Watch Weekend in LaSalle County

One of the state's most popular eagle events returns Jan. 24-25 with Eagle Watch Weekend at Starved Rock State Park. The two-day festival includes guided hikes, programs, activities and exhibits at four locations: the Starved Rock State Park Visitors Center, Starved Rock Lodge, Utica Village Hall Gym and the Illinois Waterway Visitors.

Bald Eagle Days at Pere Marquette State Park

Pere Marquette will host a series of Bald Eagle Days programs Jan. 30, Feb. 2, Feb. 3, Feb. 4, Feb. 18, Feb. 19, Feb. 20, Feb. 25, Feb. 26, Feb. 27, March 6. Learn how to distinguish between immature and mature bald eagles, what eagles eat, why they spend winter months in Illinois and more. Programs begin at 8:30 a.m. at the park's visitors center.

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Spot bald eagles in Illinois this winter. Explore festivals, hikes, and programs at state parks and museums from January to March.

SCOTT P. YATES/ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR



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