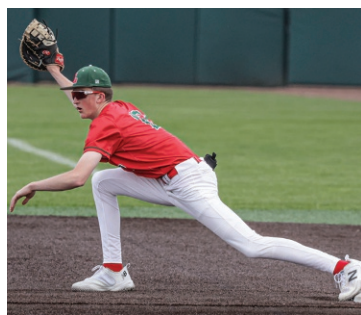




Early power sparks U High baseball to win over Lincoln



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Tailoring dying out due to costs, consumer habits

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Thursday, April 23, 2026

WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

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EARTH DAY

## ROOTING FOR BETTER DAYS



CLAY JACKSON, THE PANTAGRAPH

Ecology Action Center's Tess Wallace explains the proper way to plant tree saplings Wednesday, April 22, 2026.

### Volunteers gear up to plant trees, improve environment

D. JACK ALKIRE  
Daniel.Alkire@lee.net

BLOOMINGTON — Motorists along southbound Interstate 39 entering Bloomington-Normal might have noticed several people in bright vests Wednesday, April 22, walking through the grass between highways.

In a few years, motorists will see the hundreds of trees they planted for Earth Day 2026, each of them native to the land now known as Illinois.

The trees were planted through the Ecology Action Center's Tree Corps program, which started in 2021 with a goal to plant 10,000 trees a year, said Executive Director Michael Brown.

The center has partnered with the Illinois Department of Transportation to reduce flooding around the highway interchanges in McLean County, said Katie Vogler, education and outreach manager.

Please see **VOLUNTEERS**, Page A6

WORKFORCE

## Union: ISU workers illegal

AFSCME says contractors hired to circumvent strike

DREW ZIMMERMAN  
drew.zimmerman@lee.net

NORMAL — The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 31 is seeking a declaratory judgment that Illinois State University is violating state statute by hiring professional strikebreakers while roughly 350 of its unionized members are on the picket line.

According to a lawsuit filed Tuesday evening, AFSCME has identified at least five contractors ISU hired to perform work normally performed by members of Local 1110, who have been on strike since April 8.

This action is viewed by the plaintiffs as illegal and an attempt to gain leverage to "win" the strike.

Joining AFSCME Council 31 in the suit are Local 1110 President Chuck Carver, ISU students Owen McGregor and Sidney Davis as well as Normal Township Supervisor Krystle Able.

According to the Employment of Strikebreakers Act, no person shall knowingly employ any professional strikebreaker in the place of an employee whose work has ceased as a direct consequence of a lockout or strike or knowingly contract with a day and temporary labor service agency to provide a replacement for the employee during any period when a lockout or strike is in process.

The statute defines a professional strikebreaker as "any person who repeatedly and habitually offers himself for employment on a temporary basis where a lockout or strike exists to take the place of an employee whose work has ceased as a direct consequence of such lockout or strike."

An ISU spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment Wednesday morning regarding the lawsuit.

Local 1110 has been without a contract since June 2025. Pay for these building service, grounds and dining employees starts at \$16.60 and most make employees make less than the living wage standard for a single adult, according to the union.

Renee Nestler, staff representative for AFSCME Council 31, submitted a declaration that on April 14, she was notified of a social media post from 4M Building Solutions seeking temporary employees five days a week starting at \$17 an hour.

Please see **UNION**, Page A8

TORNADO AFTERMATH

## Storms shatter Twin Cities' 'bubble,' cleanup goes on

D. JACK ALKIRE AND  
MATEUSZ JANIK  
Daniel.Alkire@lee.net  
mateusz.janik@lee.net

BLOOMINGTON — Sally Parry was sheltering in her basement on Friday evening as tornado sirens blared, her cat Claudia calmly at her side while she read last Sunday's

edition of The New York Times.

When the storms finally passed, her neighbor Kaitlyn Selman called her to observe the damages in their shared driveway.

"Jeepers!" Parry recalled with a laugh, noticing a fir tree had fallen from her yard

and had been "caught" by a black walnut. It came to rest atop Selman's second level

Please see **CLEANUP**, Page A6

■ **INSIDE:** Storms tax police, firefighters; insurers see thousands of claims  
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CLAY JACKSON, THE PANTAGRAPH

Oak Bros Tree Care & Removal works to remove branches from a roof Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at a home on Linden Street in Normal.

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