



**Home is where the equity is.**

A Home Equity Loan or Line of Credit (HELOC) is a smart way to fund home improvements, make a large purchase or pay off high-interest debt.

Visit [midilliniu.com](http://midilliniu.com) to get started today!

**MID-ILLINI CREDIT UNION**

\*Credit approval required. Rates and available equity will vary. See website for details.

# The Sunday Pantagraph

BECAUSE NEWS MATTERS. SUPPORT LOCAL JOURNALISM.



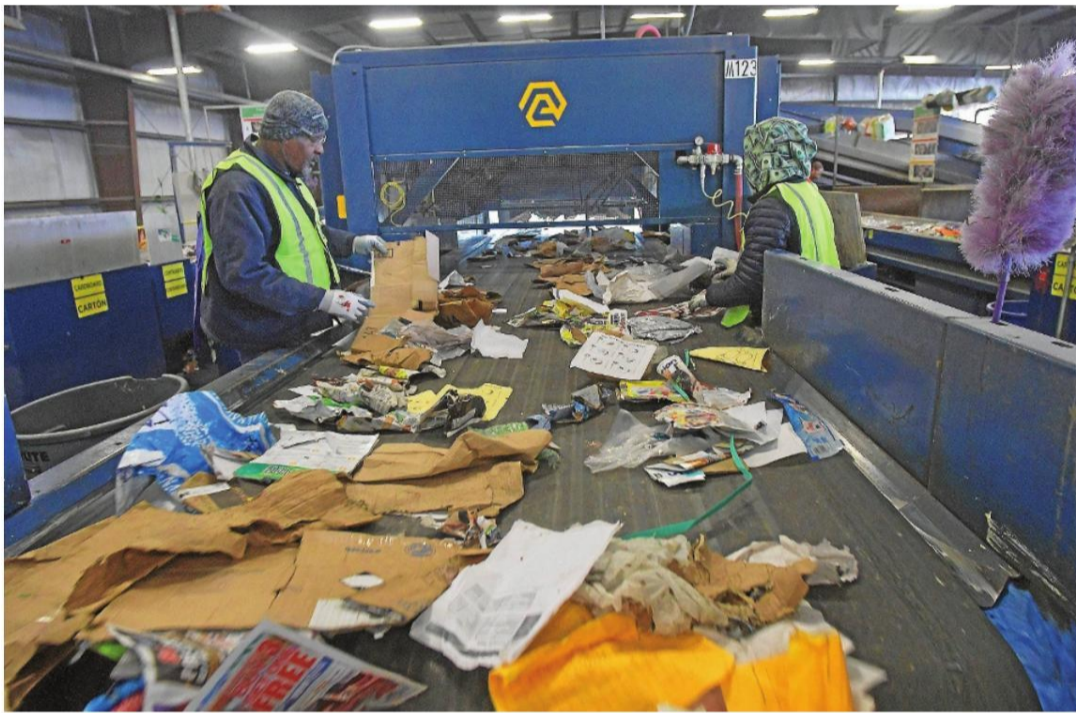
**Young refs ease shortage**  
Rigsby, Marcopulos receive high marks **SPORTS, B1**



**Spirited showing**  
Thousands turn out to back 100 teams in state cheerleading finals in B-N **LOCAL, A3**

 **NOT AS COLD 33 • 12** FORECAST, A8 | **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2022** | Powered by Pantagraph.com

**OUR ENVIRONMENT**



DAVID PROEBER, THE PANTAGRAPH

Workers sort paper from other items as part of Midwest Fiber's recycling business. The conveyor belt system allows several workers to screen items closely.

## MATERIAL MATTERS

Local recycling efforts evolve to reduce waste 'glut'

**KADE HEATHER**  
kade.heather@lee.net

BLOOMINGTON — As long as you place everything that has a recycle symbol into your recycling bin, you shouldn't have to worry about where it goes, right? That depends — mostly on its shape.

Some items, even though they are labeled as recyclable, could properly go through the entire sorting and recycling process and yet, "it's just going to sit

somewhere and it's never going to move and eventually there is going to be a glut of that material," said Ecology Action Center Executive Director Michael Brown.

Todd Shumaker, director of new business development at Midwest Fiber in Normal — a main recycling processing cen-



Brown

ter for McLean County — said the hardest thing to educate people with is what's acceptable for plastic.

"There's a lot of plastic, but in reality, we're looking for plastic containers," Shumaker said. "We try to explain to folks that it's typically purchased at a grocery store and the neck is narrower than the base," for example, water and soda bottles, containers for laundry detergent, ketchup, as well as yogurt and butter containers.

Midwest Fiber also processes steel and aluminum. However, while a clothes hanger might be steel or a ladder might be aluminum, they're only looking for cans or smaller household items.

Please see **RECYCLING**, Page A6

 **VIDEO:** Go inside Midwest Fiber's recycling operation. Watch the video by pointing your smartphone camera at this code and tapping the link. **NEWSVU**

**BUDGET ANALYSIS**

## Speech, reaction set up election

Pritzker, GOP trade barbs over budget

**BRENDEN MOORE**  
brenden.moore@lee.net

SPRINGFIELD — When Gov. J.B. Pritzker delivered his combined budget and state of the state address Wednesday, one phrase in particular stood out: "spelunking for misery."

"Contrary to those folks who spend their time orbiting Illinois politics just spelunking for misery, our state has a lot to be proud of," Pritzker said, calling out Republicans critical of his — and, by extension, Democratic legislative supermajorities' — stewardship of the state.

The phrase later took on a life

Please see **BUDGET**, Page A10

 **VIDEO:** Watch Gov. Pritzker's budget address. Aim your smartphone camera at this code and tap the link. **NEWSVU**

**COVID | STATE**

## B-N schools look at ruling blocking Ill. mask orders

**KAREN ANN CULLOTTA**  
Chicago Tribune

SPRINGFIELD — Students at scores of districts across the state may be freed from wearing a mask in the classroom, with an Illinois judge ruling Friday that Gov. J.B. Pritzker's COVID-19 mandate was authorized illegally.

Sangamon County Circuit Judge Raylene Grischow on Friday granted a request from attorney Tom DeVore to temporarily halt the governor's executive orders on masking and quarantining for schools, finding that

Please see **MASKS**, Page A8

**FROM THE EDITOR**

## NewsVu brings new experience to print

QR codes a gateway to related, in-depth content on website



CHRIS COATES

When snow was in the forecast last week, we mobilized our team of journalists to cover the story and the impact all day long. Our Thursday newspaper chronicled what happened through strong visuals and storytelling.

camera about what was coming next. Our digital and mobile readers had access to all of that — plus photo galleries, updated

maps and other material. Giving Pantagraph subscribers a pathway to that wealth of digital material from our newspaper is the goal of a new tool called NewsVu.

It works like this: Starting today, you'll see a special code on certain stories in our newspaper. Aiming your smartphone's camera at the QR code brings up a link that will direct you to special digital content. That may be a photo gallery or video

related to the story or a podcast with our staff. Or it could open documents, other materials about the story you're reading

Please see **COATES**, Page A8

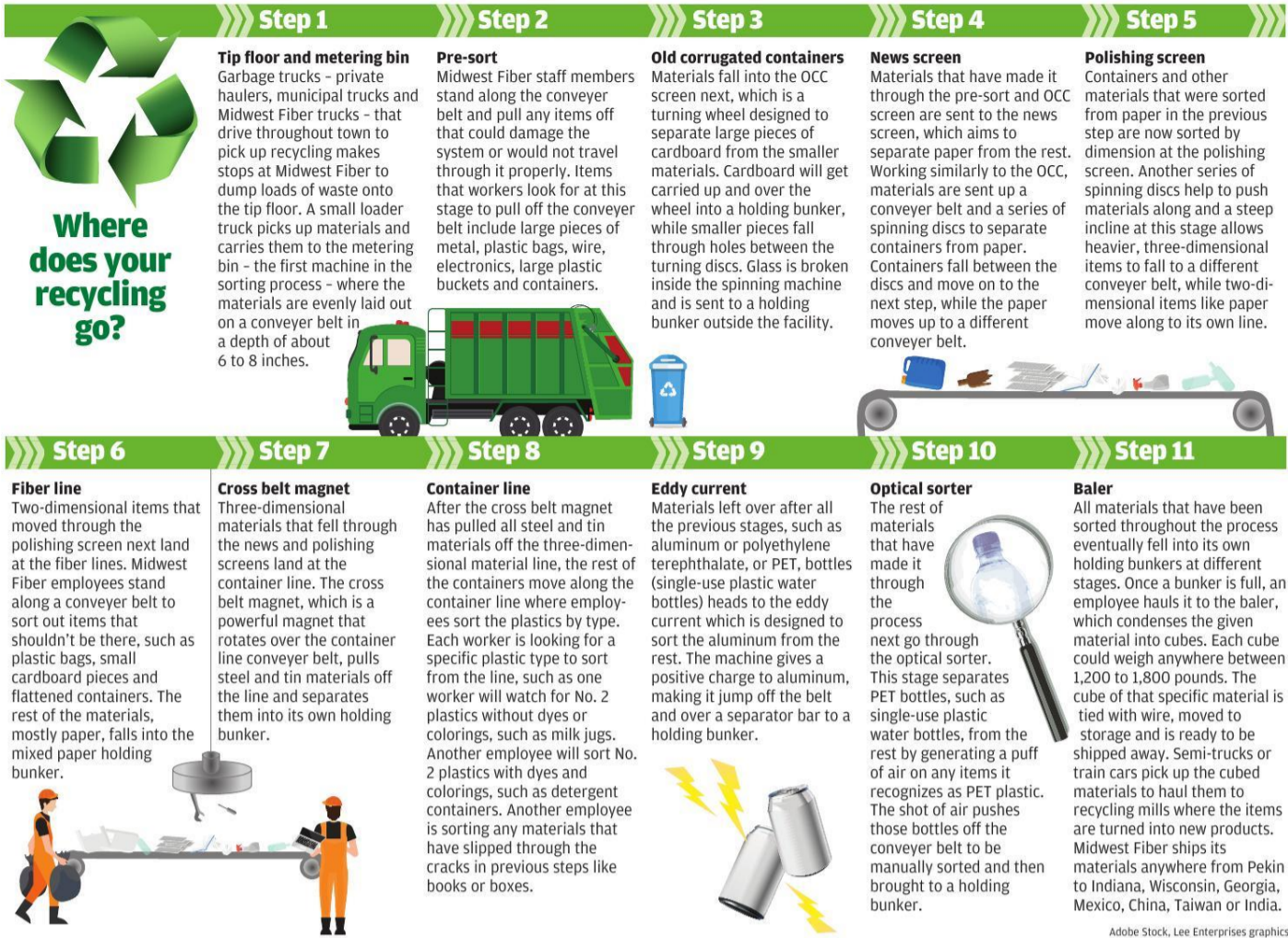
 **WATCH:** See a video of editor Chris Coates talking about new NewsVu technology. Point your smartphone camera at this code and tap the link. **NEWSVU**



**NEWS+ MEMBERSHIP:** Don't miss "The Sunday Extra," a weekly special E-Edition PLUS section that showcases some of the best national and international content from around the globe. **AT PANTAGRAPH.COM**

ABBY	D2	NATION/WORLD	A5
CLASSIFIED	C9	OPINION	C2
CROSSWORD	D5	OBITUARIES	C4





Adobe Stock, Lee Enterprises graphics

**Recycling**

From A1

In years past, there was a larger push and focus on recycling more items. Recently, the focus has shifted from quantity to quality - the types of plastic and the shapes of them.

"Too many people got in the habit of just throwing everything and anything in the recycling cart with the thought in their mind being, 'Oh, they'll take care of this at the other end,'" Brown said. "They thought it was better to leave it in if they were in doubt rather than leaving it out. Truly, now that is our motto: If in doubt, leave it out."

Larger items can cause problems at recycling centers like Midwest Fiber. Some materials could damage sorting machines. They also create more labor and hauling costs for recycling centers, which then reduces the net value of that commodity.

Shumaker said for bigger objects that the recycling center doesn't want - for example, a trailer hitch or ladder - workers will pull it off the line and recycle it separately. He added "99.99% of the time" that the facility receives recyclable commodities, those items are recycled.

Brown said recycling, especially plastics, is a market-driven system.

"Plastics recycling is focused heavily on the materials that have long-term viability to be recycled, and it tries not so much to focus on these items that have kind of intermittent market value that's very temporary, those things just aren't truly sustainably recyclable in terms of there being some demand for it somewhere," Brown said.

He said consumers have a responsibility if they want to have a strong recycling market. That includes buying and demanding more materials made from recycled content.

**COVID-19 pandemic's effect on waste**

What has been recycled or not recycled, however, has changed throughout the pandemic, especially in 2020, when there were stricter stay-at-home orders in place.

Residential waste "skyrocketed" in 2020, while commercial and industrial waste decreased, according to the EAC. Corrugated cardboard waste also dramatically increased, as more people ordered items online to be delivered.

Shumaker said there was a noticeable difference at the beginning of the pandemic in household recycling such as aluminum cans or plastic bottles.

"But over the entirety of the pandemic, we've continued to see an increase in cardboard in residential recycling," Shumaker said.

McLean County's recycling rate in 2020 plunged to 35%, a rate not seen since 2015 after recycling steadily grew in the latter half of last decade.

Roughly 58,000 tons of solid waste was recycled in 2020, com-



A front end loader pushes a load of waste toward a processing station at Midwest Fiber's recycling business on Jan. 19. Trucks carrying waste paper and plastic arrive at the business around the clock. **DAVID PROEBER, THE PANTAGRAPH**



A series of conveyor belts wind through sorting stations at Midwest Fiber's recycling business on Jan. 19. **DAVID PROEBER, THE PANTAGRAPH**



Director of Sales & Procurement Todd Shumaker shows bundles of newspapers at Midwest Fiber Recycling in Decatur. The items are packed into semis and hauled to the facility in Normal for processing. **CLAY JACKSON, HERALD & REVIEW**

pared to about 88,000 tons in 2019 and nearly 95,000 tons in 2018, EAC data shows.

"Commercial and industrial waste generation decreased (in 2020), and collection and sorting practices were altered due to restricted workforce," the EAC wrote in its 2020 waste generation and recycling rate report in November 2021. "At the same time, residential waste generation skyrocketed, likely a result of intensified cleaning routines, carry-out meals, and disposable PPE (personal protective equipment.)"

Recycling rates for 2021 will not be known until late 2022.

**Recycling accessibility**

One large obstacle to higher recycling rates is accessibility.

Many residents live in apartment complexes that do not provide a recycling option or curbside services. Some of those residents may not know about recycling drop-off centers or may not have transportation

to those centers, forcing many recyclable items to be left in the trash week after week.

There are four recycling drop-off sites in McLean County. All are operated by Midwest Fiber and all are in Normal:

- 901 S. Cottage Ave., Normal
- 1101 N. Main St., Normal
- 300 Greenbriar Ave., Normal
- 300 S. Walnut St., Normal

The Normal Town Council passed an ordinance in 2018 requiring landlords to offer recycling services to tenants.

There is no such requirement in Bloomington.

Brown said it comes down to residents to demand that change, if they want it, but they should understand that it comes at a cost.

"It's not free for property owners to provide this," he said. "If residents really want it, are they willing to accept a slight increase in their rent if that's what it takes to be able to get it through their apartment or management company?"

compostable liners.

He said organic waste is one of several focus points in the EAC's 20-year solid waste plan, which was developed in 2017 for McLean County government in compliance with a state law mandating counties to generate a long-term solid waste plan.

The community composting program includes a drop-off site at Normandy Village in Normal.

"You can drop off food waste from your homes, whether it's scraps or leftovers, food gone bad, chicken bones or grease or whatever - all those can be recycled through a service we have now," Brown said.

He said it would be ideal to have curbside compost recycling, but that's "probably going to be a while yet."

Banana peels, for example, if they cannot be composted, are better off in a field than they are in the trash, which goes to a landfill.

A banana peel in a field will break down "relatively quickly" because it's exposed to oxygen, microbes, moisture and sun, Brown said.

"That same banana peel in a landfill does not (break down as fast) because it's missing at least one critical component, which is oxygen," Brown said. "The landfill is an anaerobic, or oxygen deprived, environment, so that banana peel could last for who knows how long, 15 years in a landfill."

Furthermore, when that banana peel in a landfill does eventually break down, it releases methane in that process, which is a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change.

Contact Kade Heather at 309-820-3256. Follow him on Twitter: @kadeheather