



JUNE 2022 E-NEWSLETTER



Treasurer's Note

Fighting for You



Sometimes, knowing that you are not alone can make all the difference in the world.

Just ask Jaroslav Sydorenko, a leader with the St. Andrew Ukrainian Church in Bloomingdale.

"Ukraine has been in a fight for its life for the last three months," he told us one rainy Wednesday morning inside of his majestic church. "All of us have relatives, families, mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers that are in Ukraine and affected by this war."

This is what 'Jerry' thinks of each time he hears a battleground update on the radio or sees the tear-soaked faces on the nightly news.

Instinctively, people want to help. This is why I directed our office to [search our unclaimed property database](#) for words such as Ukraine and Ukrainian.

The result: more than \$43,000 belonging to [St. Andrew's](#), a cultural and religious center for Chicago's west suburban Ukrainian community.

Typically, the church would have used the money to help restore its beautiful building, a project going into its third year that relies heavily on volunteers and a meticulous eye for detail. Instead, the money will be sent 'home' to help those uprooted by an immoral and unjust invasion led by Russian strongman Vladimir Putin.

Unclaimed property, also known as I-Cash, refers to money or accounts within financial institutions or companies in which there has been no activity for several years. Unclaimed property includes forgotten bank accounts, unpaid life insurance benefits, the contents of safe deposit boxes, and other items.

St. Andrew has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars in money and much-needed items to Ukraine since Russia invaded the country in late February 2022. On Saturdays, the church sells homemade vareniki (pierogi) and cabbage rolls to raise funds. Church officials say the money has helped Ukrainians buy tourniquets, diapers, and food. In addition, St. Andrew has collected medical supplies, including walkers, crutches, and wheelchairs. Church Board President John Jaresko and Pastor Rev. Victor Poliarny have led the way and stressed the importance of rallying around Ukraine and calling for the world to do the same.

"We appreciate all the work the Illinois State Treasurer's Office did with this project and helping us to receive those funds," Jerry said. "Ukraine has been in a fight for its life for the last three months. Due to this war, we will be forwarding all of the funds for humanitarian purposes in Ukraine."

To Jerry, President Jaresko, Pastor Rev. Victor Poliarny, the incredible congregants and volunteers at St. Andrew's, and the Ukrainian people here in Illinois and across our great country, please find comfort in knowing that you are not alone.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Frerichs

Illinois State Treasurer

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Facebook Checks

The check is in the mail.

It is in the mail if you are a Facebook user and you participated in the class-action lawsuit challenging Facebook's facial recognition system.

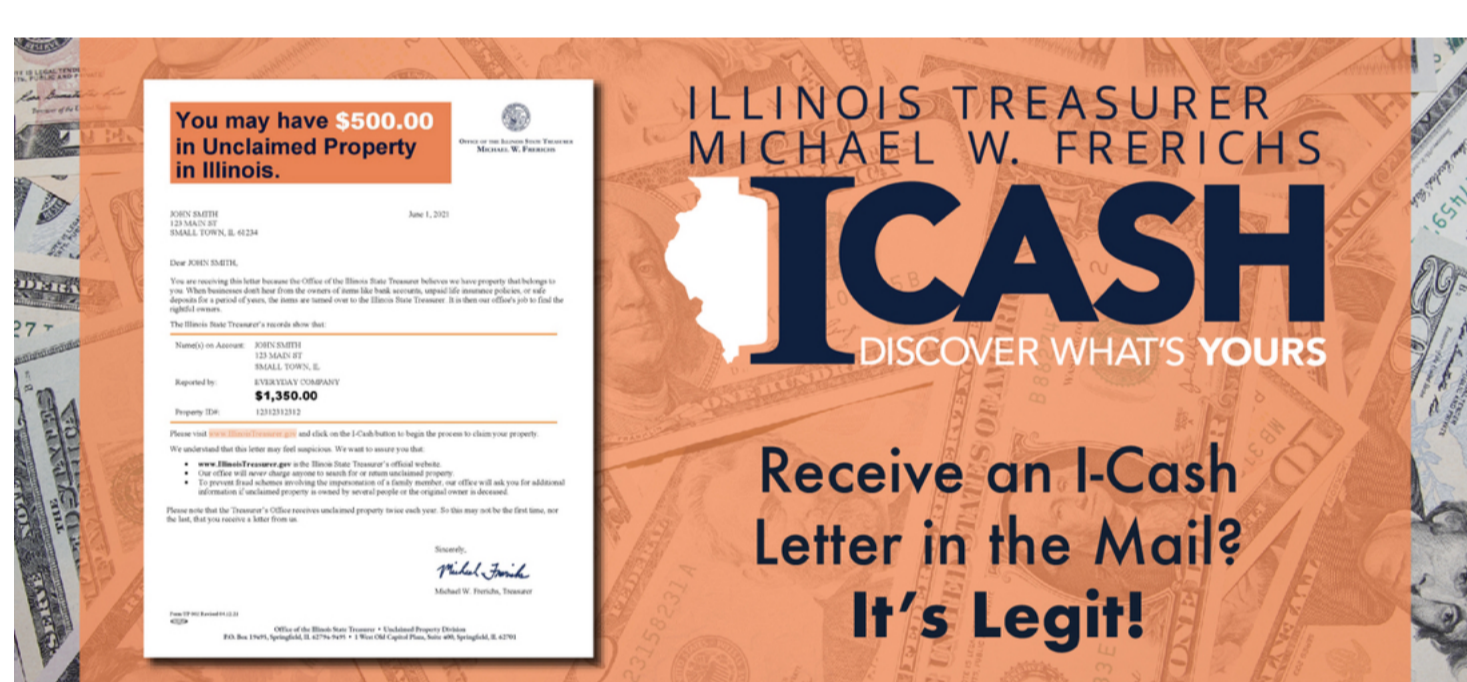
More than 1 million Illinois Facebook users who filed claims in the \$650 million biometric privacy settlement are set to receive checks valued at \$397.

This is not a scam. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the [9th circuit last month upheld](#) the 2021 settlement for allegedly violating Illinois' [biometric privacy law](#).

To qualify for the payment, Facebook users in Illinois had to create and save a face template after June 7, 2011, had to live in Illinois for at least six months during the previous nine years, and file a claim by the November, 2020, deadline.

Facebook announced it will discontinue the facial recognition system and delete more than one billion stored templates.

Illinois lawmakers in 2008 passed the Biometric Information Privacy Act. It is considered among the strictest in the U.S.



Oh, the Pictures You Will Take!

Past Cream of the Crop Photo Contest Winners Share Memories, Advice for Young Photographers



Photo Deadline is June 22

Past winners of the *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest* are looking back fondly on how creativity, hard work and an eye for beauty helped them succeed as young photographers sharing their vision of Illinois agriculture. They're also looking to the future, offering insight to students who might be—or should be—thinking about entering the 2022 contest, hosted by Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs.

Frerichs is calling on Illinois students, ages 8 to 18, to submit photos for the 2022 *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest* by the deadline of **June 22, 2022**. Each student may submit up to two photos electronically at www.CreamoftheCropContest.com. Top photographs will be chosen in three age-based categories: ages 8-10, 11-14 and 15-18.

The contest, now in its 10th year, provides Illinois students with an opportunity to showcase their most innovative or scenic pictures that depict their vision of agriculture in our state. During the history of the contest, more than 500 students have participated, submitting nearly 1,000 photos.

One of those past winners, Anna Johnson of Durand, Illinois, still remembers what she was thinking when she submitted her photo for the 2021 competition: "It would be such a great opportunity to share a little piece of my life with everyone else who would see this if I win."

Johnson now is building her own photography business while studying agricultural business at college and holding down a marketing job. Winning the Cream of the Crop contest turned out to be "an amazing opportunity and experience," she said.

Emily Boecker of Morton, Illinois, recalled her photographic technique of "trying to get low to the ground to try to capture the best angle and framing that included the path, crop and silos on the family farm."

Boecker, who is now pursuing a degree in art, described how thrilled she felt when she was chosen as a 2017 contest winner. "It was the first time I had entered the contest. It was a very meaningful photo as it is the farm where four generations of my family have lived," she said.

Maria Schilder of Bolingbrook, Illinois, a 2015 contest winner, remembered taking her photos at a farm that had a friendly goat named Jack. Her cream of the crop photo, however, featured a different animal. "I was proud to submit my portrait of a chicken and even more proud when I was recognized for it," she said.

While Schilder was excited to learn that her winning photo would be included in the Cream of the Crop calendar, as all winning photos are, she got a bigger kick out of seeing her work displayed at the Illinois State Fair. "I love opportunities to be part of something bigger than me and my circle of friends," she said.

Other past winners offered additional advice for students who are considering entering this year's contest.

- "Do it!" said **Noah Sandage of Marion**, Illinois, a 2020 Cream of the Crop contest winner who plans to study engineering and history when he goes to college in the fall. "You never know what might come of the photo you submit! It is a great opportunity for both you and the community."
- "My advice would be to continue to practice and take pictures of everything you see," said **Tanner Mickey of Taylorville**, Illinois, a 2020 contest winner now studying agriculture in college. "You will begin to gain an eye for good photos and how to take the perfect shot."
- "Have fun taking pictures and submit something you are proud of!" said **Renee Gehrke of Byron**, Illinois, a 2017 contest winner and current college student.
- "Go out and capture the beauty in the world," said **Jennifer E. Johnson of Hoffman**, Illinois, a 2018 contest winner who is pursuing a career in radiology. "You never know where it could lead."

The *Cream of the Crop Photo Contest* is part of the Ag Invest program in the treasurer's office. Winning photos will be featured in Ag Invest marketing material, as well as at the 2022 Illinois State Fair.

To read the rules, terms, and legal conditions associated with this contest, visit our website at www.CreamoftheCropContest.com or contact Teri Whitfield at 217.900.0075.

If you would like to contact the Office of the Illinois State Treasurer, please visit our [contact us](#) page.

To modify your e-mail options or opt out of receiving the Office of the Illinois State Treasurer's electronic communications, please [click here](#).

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