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I-CASH Bright Start 529 IL ABLE

Treasurer's Note

June 24, 2025

Help Us Best Our I-CASH Record

Summer is the time when there seems to be a county fair, town festival, or block party every weekend. As a kid, I used to look forward to visiting the Champaign County Fair and the carnival in Rantoul around the Fourth of July.

I enjoyed the spinning rides, the fried and sugary foods, and the demolition derby or tractor pull at night. What I remember the most, though, was playing games where you could win a prize.

Many of these looked really easy. Tossing a softball into a peach basket didn't look like much of a challenge. Knocking down three milk bottles with a baseball didn't look too difficult. I shot baskets in my driveway all the time, so sinking a shot at the fair shouldn't be too hard.

The carnival barkers had tricks, however. The baskets were tilted so that it was very likely the ball would bounce out. The milk bottles were weighted and difficult to knock down. The basketball hoop was not regulation size. These games might look easy, but they were not easy to win.

Back in the day, I liked to shoot a BB gun at a red star on a white piece of paper to try to win a prize. It was difficult, but I distinctly remember one time, thinking I had won, only for the game operator to point out that a sliver of red remained. My dreams of taking home an oversized stuffed animal were crushed.

I shudder to think about how much money my parents spent so that I could take home a few cheap toys as trophies. I hope that my boys don't share the same obsession.

As a kid, I was pretty competitive. As an adult, I still can be, but I realize it is far better to give than to receive. That is why, at many of these fairs and festivals, my Civic Engagement team is there to reunite people with their unclaimed property through our [I-CASH program](#).



Here's a photo of a couple of members of my Civic Engagement team helping return money at a community fair.

Searching for your missing money may not be as much fun as shooting out a red star on a piece of paper, but I think the odds are much better. We find that about one-in-four people who search find money belonging to them.

When I came into office, claiming your money could be difficult. Today, it is much easier. I added electronic claims and eliminated red tape that slowed small-money claims. Our Enhanced Money Match program allows us to automatically return money to people without the need to file a claim. I added a "share" button that allows people to search [our I-CASH site](#) and alert friends and family if they find money waiting for them.

As a result, we have smashed records, returning over \$2.3 billion. Last year, we [set a record](#) returning more than \$300 million to people.

That competitive boy is still pretty competitive. That kid who liked to win prizes now likes to set records. We are coming to the end of the fiscal year at the end of this month, and we are close to setting another record, but I need your help. We are on track to have a very good year returning money to people, but we might not set a record unless we pick up the pace.

Don't wait until your next fair or festival to check for unclaimed property. You can visit [our website](#) today and search for yourself, your family, your business, or your favorite nonprofit. You will be helping yourself, our economy, and potentially putting a big smile on the face of that kid who just wanted to win at the county fair.

Sincerely,
Michael

Survey: What's Your Favorite Fair Food?



The [Illinois State Fair](#) is coming up Aug. 7-17 in Springfield. We're trying something new and want to have a little fun. We want to know: What tasty treats are you looking forward to? Take our quick survey and help crown the ultimate Illinois State Fair food favorite! (Winner announced in the next newsletter)

[Start Survey](#)

THE MAILBAG

Welcome to "The Mailbag," which is your opportunity to [ask me](#) about topics like our programs, other state government functions, or anything else that interests you.

Q. I work at a small business, and recently I have become more worried about my retirement, especially with concerns around Social Security. I am about 15 years away from retirement and do not know what to expect. I've read that you have a retirement savings program. Is that something I can participate in? — **Tom S.**

A. I understand your concern, and you are not alone. That is exactly why the [Illinois Secure Choice](#) program was created. It is a retirement savings option administered by my office that is open to any individual who is 18 years or older, has earnings, and is otherwise eligible to open an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). This includes part-time workers, gig workers, and individuals employed by small businesses. If your employer does not offer a retirement plan, you can enroll in Illinois Secure Choice on your own and begin contributing. Additionally, you can access retirement information through the [Illinois Financial Wellness Hub](#) (FinWell), an online resource available free of charge to all Illinois residents.

If you have a question for "The Mailbag," please [send me an email](#) with the subject line "Mailbag." I can't promise that every one of your questions will run, but we do read them all and try to respond. And let us know if we can use your name, or if you'd prefer to be anonymous.

[Email Your Questions](#)



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