

# PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Friday, November 5, 2021 | 8 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 201



www.pencitycurrent.com

## Teen charged with murder

**SHOOTING:** 17-year-old arrested in connection with Wednesday fatal shooting

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison Police Department is reporting the arrest of 17-year-old Dimari D. J. Meredith of Fort Madison in the shooting death of a



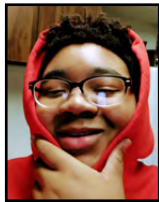
MEREDITH

15-year-old boy Wednesday in Fort Madison. Meredith is being charged with 1st degree murder and is being held at the Southeast Iowa Juvenile Detention Center.

He's accused of shooting Deeunta Ceaser, 15, of Fort Madison at home in the 4200 block of Avenue L.

Both were students at Fort Madison High School.

According to a release from Fort Madison Police Chief



CEASER

Mark Rohloff, Meredith was detained and questioned at the scene and was taken into custody.

He was then transferred to the detention center to wait an arraignment.

A search warrant was obtained and a weapon was discovered at Meredith's home along with other items that were taken into evidence. The Iowa Department of Criminal Investigations is also assisting with the investigation.

Meredith is arrested on a suspicion of the charge, and is considered innocent until proven guilty.

The shooting is the second murder in Fort Madison in the past four weeks. A Keokuk man was stabbed to death in an apartment hallway in the 600 block of 8th Street in Fort Madison.

Bob Huffman, Sr. talks with Lee County Economic Development Group President Dennis Fraise Thursday during Huffman Welding & Machine's 50th anniversary celebration



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

### 50th Anniversary

## Huffmans celebrate half a century with community

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Bob Huffman Sr., who started Huffman Welding in 1971, doesn't own a computer. He barely uses his cellphone.

He said, in an ultimately charming and simple fashion – "I'm too private. I don't want anyone knowing too much about me. I'm sure they know more about me than I

think they do."

It was the understatement of the year for the 87-year-old who stood on the floor of Huffman Welding and Machine on Thursday afternoon while about 100 people had lunch and talked with workers as the company celebrated a half a century in business.

People certainly know what he's done now.

The patriarch of Mike, Hank, and

Bobby, Jr., helped usher in a company that now sits as a global player in metal fabrication.

As Bob Jr. says, "It's not just welding your broken chair, we'll still do that, but there's a lot more going on behind these walls than people realize."

Fabrication machines with price tags in the millions were on full dis-

See HUFFMANS, page 8



## Every point was a lesson for Crusaders

Mary Kate Bendlage had just delivered one of her 10 kills.

Then the Holy Trinity sophomore turned to her teammates to celebrate, punctuating each word with a foot stomp. It was her first state volleyball tournament in a program where making it to the final eight was a tradition, and Bendlage, as well as the rest of her young teammates, were embracing their first opportunity at what it was like.

Bendlage and the Crusaders would fall to Notre Dame in three close games in Wednesday's Class 1A semifinals, but the week had been an education for a young team that has a future to build.

The state tournament has always had a been-there-done-that feel for the Crusaders — it was the program's 11th appearance in the last 12 seasons — but for many on this year's team, playing in the Alliant Energy PowerHouse was a new experience.

The disappointment in the 26-24, 26-24, 27-25 loss to the rival Nikes still hung with the Crusaders moments after the match, but there was a sense that this was only a beginning.

"They're going to do great things," senior Kassi Randolph said. "And they're going to do great things for years and years to come."

Randolph had been part of three state tournament teams, so she knows how important it was for the Crusaders to be here after missing last season.

It's different than any other arena where the Crusaders play during the season — quarterfinal and semifinal

See STATE, page 8

### INDEX

AARP.org/Caregiving.....P.5  
Business Directory.....P.7  
Complete Rental.....P.8  
ConAgra Brands.....P.6  
BUSINESS NEWS.....P.8  
CLASSIFIEDS.....Ps.6-7  
Fort Colony Family Restaurant.....P.4  
Fort Madison Community  
Neighborhood Watch Groups.....P.3  
FROM THE FRONT.....P.8  
Fullenkamp Insurance.....P.2

IOWA NEWS.....P.5  
LCK Roofing.....P.4  
Lee County  
Economic Development Group.....P.6  
Lee County Health Department.....P.6  
LOCAL NEWS.....Ps.3-4,8  
OBITUARIES.....Ps.2-3  
• Deeunta Q. Ceaser, 15  
• Danny H. Hawk, 77  
• Virginia A. Wigenjost Bezoenik, 92  
OPINION.....P.8

Pen City Current.....Ps.2,4,6-8  
Pilot Grove Savings Bank.....P.4  
Pothitakis Dentistry.....P.3  
Scotts Miracle-Gro Company.....P.6  
Sonny's Supermarket.....P.8  
SPORTS.....P.8  
StopTextsStopWrecks.org.....P.7

### WEATHER

OpenWeatherMap  
FRI 05 Nov.....Cool and Clear, 53° F/ 34° F  
SAT 06 Nov.....Cool and Clear, 59° F/ 39° F  
SUN 07 Nov.....Partly Cloudy and Cool, 66° F/ 44° F

### IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 11/03.....4 8 10 32 40, Star Ball: 9, All Star Bonus: 3  
LUCKY FOR LIFE 11/03.....7 19 25 32 45, Lucky Ball: 3  
PICK 3 11/03 MIDDAY.....5 6 7  
PICK 3 11/03 EVENING.....9 2 7  
PICK 4 11/03 MIDDAY.....7 4 8 3  
PICK 4 11/03 EVENING.....2 8 6 4  
POWERBALL 11/03.....1 2 24 50 57, Powerball: 26, Power Play: 2

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# Obituaries

## OBITUARIES

### VIRGINIA A. WIGGENJOST BEZOENIK

Virginia Ann Wiggenjost Bezoenik, 92, passed away on Friday, October 22, 2021 at Palomar Medical Center in Escondido, CA. Born April 26, 1929 in Fort Madison, IA, she was the daughter of Joseph and Pauline Wiggenjost. On August 10, 1969 she married Joseph Bezoenik at San Luis Rey Mission in Oceanside, CA. He preceded her in death on July 21, 2006. Virginia graduated in 1946 from Catholic Central High School in Fort Madison. She worked as a secretary at Sheaffer Pen Company. Virginia moved to Escondido, CA in 1962. She taught at Ramona High School and Palomar College. She later graduated with her Masters in Education from the University of San Diego in 1972 and worked as an administrator and a counselor at Colton Unified School District in Colton, CA until her retirement in 1995. Virginia was a woman of strong faith. She loved her Sheltie dogs, birds, music, dancing, and traveling to visit family and friends. Highlights in her musical life were playing the saxophone, piano, accordion, organ, and ushering at Lawrence Welk shows for

over 20 years.

Survivors include three nieces, Diana (Phillip) Bell of Overland Park, KS, Marlyn (Paul) Anderson of Raymore, MO, and Joan (Michael) McAnany of Bucyrus, KS; two nephews, Gregory Siegrist of Olathe, KS, and David (Tiffany) Siegrist of Montgomery, TX; grand nephews and nieces; sisters-in-law Karen and Maryrose Bezoenik. Virginia was preceded in death by her parents; husband Joe; one sister in infancy, Maria Wiggenjost; brother Ralph Wiggenjost; and sister Iona Siegrist and brother-in-law Jim Siegrist; brothers-in-law Brian and Neal Bezoenik.

A rosary will be recited at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, November 8, 2021 at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory. A graveside service will immediately follow at 11:00 a.m. at Gethsemane Cemetery. Online condolences to Virginia's family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: [www.kinglynk.com](http://www.kinglynk.com). In lieu of flowers, a memorial has been established in her memory.

## OBITUARIES

### DEEUNTA Q. CEASER

Deeunta "Dee" Q. Ceaser, 15 of Ft. Madison passed away on Wednesday, November 3, 2021 at the Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center ER, Ft. Madison.



CEASER

He was born on December 29, 2005 in Jackson, MS to Amica Ceaser. Dee was a sophomore at Ft. Madison High School. He was an avid sports fan and enjoyed playing football and basketball. Dee loved his music and played it as loud as he could. He was always very kind to everyone and carried an infectious smile all the time. He never met a stranger and was a friend to everyone.

Survivors include his grandmother, Willie B. Johnson of Ft. Madison; his mother, Amica Ceaser of Denver, CO; one brother, Dakari Ceaser of Ft. Madison; his uncle, Jeremiah Turner of Ft. Madison; great aunts, Alice Thomas of Ft. Madison, Doyal McNeil, Ethel Jones and Ruth Thomas all of Jackson, MS; great uncle, Willie Thomas, Jr. of Jackson, MS; several nieces, nephews and cousins. He was preceded in death by his grandfathers, Gregory Johnson and Cornell Ceaser and his maternal great grandparents.

Friends may call after 12 PM on Monday, November 8, 2021 at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory where the family will meet with friends from 4-5 PM. Dee will be buried in Jackson, MS with family.

Online condolences may be left at [www.kinglynk.com](http://www.kinglynk.com).

Honor your family members that answered the call to serve in our special Veterans Day edition on Thursday, November 11th.

**It is our honor to publish this information. There is no charge for this service.**

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Please include photo (color or black & white), veteran's name, branch of service, tour(s) of duty, your name and contact information in case of questions.

A brief personal message (10-15 words) is also welcome.

Submissions are due by the end of the day Tuesday, November 9th.

#### SAMPLE LISTINGS

(NOT SHOWN ACTUAL SIZE)



Leonard Anderson  
US Army  
Korean War



SSGT Ezekiel  
"Zeke" James  
Ross  
Iowa National Guard  
Charlie Company 224th  
Engineer Battalion,  
Operation Iraqi  
Freedom 2004-2005



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# Obituaries/Local News

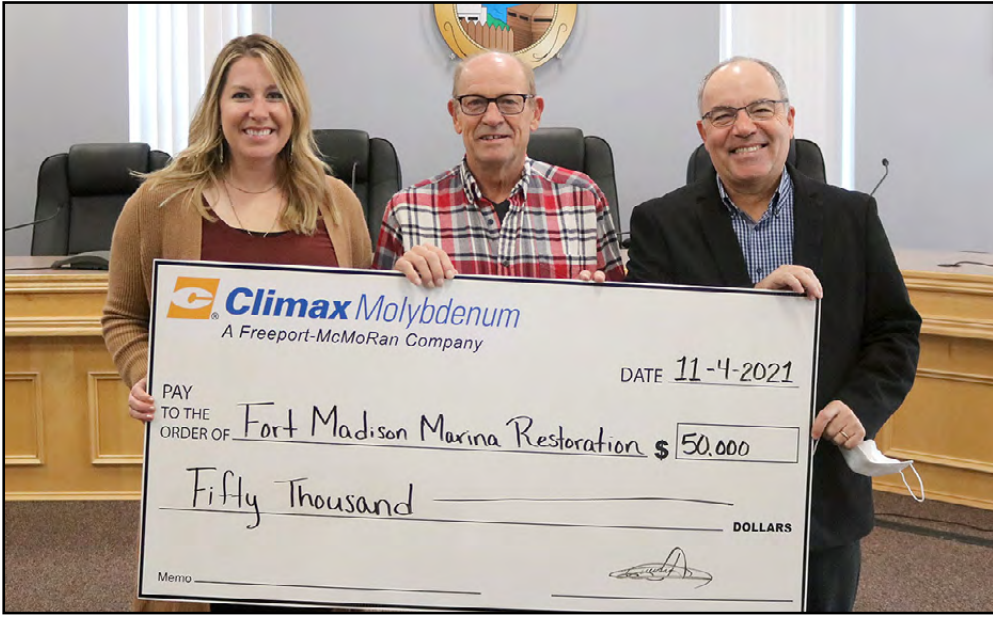


Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

From left to right Emily Benjamin, Community Development Specialist for Climax Molybdenum, Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld and Climax General Manager Javier Guevara stand at City Hall with Climax's initial \$50,000 donation to the city's marina project.

## Climax puts \$100,000 into city's marina rehab project

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld was all smiles Thursday morning as he stood with a check from Freeport McMoRan for \$50,000.

Mohrfeld was joined by Climax Molybdenum General Manager Javier Guevara and Community Development Specialist Emily Benjamin at City Hall to present the check for the Fort Madison Marina rehabilitation project.

Mohrfeld said this will be the donation that he highlights when launching a new community capital campaign to bring more funds to bear on the \$11 million overall project.

"We're right in the middle of a community capital campaign that starts tomorrow. This will be the big contribution that

we're gonna hang our hat on because that's geared around industry, business, professionals, and individuals," Mohrfeld said.

"You don't know how much this really helps us because now all of a sudden we get to say someone just set the bar up here at \$100,000."

Guevara said Freeport McMoRan is always looking for sustainable community projects that the corporation can help with, and the marina project fits the bill.

"Freeport always looks at supporting communities on sustainable development projects. Revamping the marina is a really good thing for Fort Madison," Guevara said.

"If the city can end up with a modernized marina that will help the city with tourism. Tourism is the smokeless industry, and a sustainable industry, and it's a good thing for the community for a

number of reasons."

Guevara is a native of Peru and said tourism is once again rebounding after the pandemic in his home country. He said he will be getting a chance to revisit his home after nearly two years being unable to travel.

"I come from a country (Peru) where tourism is getting big and it's very important for our people, he said. "We hope we

See GRANT, page 4

### OBITUARIES

## DANNY H. HAWK

Danny Howard Hawk, 77, of Donnellson, Iowa, passed away at 5:30 a.m. Thursday, November 4, 2021, surrounded by family, at his home in Donnellson.

He was born on June 6, 1944, in Bloomington, Indiana, the son of Donald, Sr.



HAWK

and Dorothy (Phillips) Deckard. When Danny was six weeks old, his mother passed away and he was adopted by his uncle and aunt, Howard and Ica (Phillips) Hawk. On October 12, 1961, he married Sandy K. Bryant at Santa Fe Methodist Church in Fort Madison, Iowa.

He is survived by his wife: Sandy; five sons: John (Sheri) Hawk, Jamie (Cheryl) Hawk, Joe (Joanie) Hawk, Jason (Heather) Hawk and Jeremy (Tiffany) Hawk; ten grandchildren; seven step grandchildren; six great grandchildren; five step great grandchildren; two brothers: Sam (Betty) Deckard of Bloomington, Indiana and David Hawk of Montrose, Iowa. Also surviving are several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his four parents; one son: James Michael Hawk; two brothers: James Deckard and Don Deckard, Jr.; one sister: Sylvia Haas; two sisters-in-law: Gerry Hawk and Geneva Deckard; one brother-in-law: Bob Haas and one nephew: Roger Stewart, Jr.

Danny was a 1962 graduate of Central Lee High School. He retired from the Iowa State Penitentiary in 2006. He had been owner/operator of Hawk's Lawn Care for many years and operated Bryant's Locker in Donnellson. Danny enjoyed hunting, fishing, golfing, gambling, watching the grandkids at their sporting events and spending time with his family. He was known by family and friends as an avid jokester and prankster. Most of all, Danny was a loving husband, father and grandpa.

Friends may call after 12:00 noon, Sunday, November 7, 2021, at Schmitz Funeral Home in Donnellson, where the family will receive friends from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. that afternoon.

A funeral service will be held at 10:00 a.m. Monday, November 8, 2021, at Schmitz Funeral Home in Donnellson with Reverend Bob Molsberry officiating.

Burial will be at Donnell Cemetery in Donnellson.

In lieu of flowers, memorials have been established in his memory for Green Acres Golf Club or St. Paul's United Church of Christ.

Online condolences may be made to the family at [www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com](http://www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com). Schmitz Funeral Home of Donnellson is assisting the family with arrangements.

### Pen City Current obituary policy

Pen City Current runs obituaries one time at no charge to funeral homes and they run the day they are submitted in most cases. They are also run as submitted by the funeral homes. Reposting of obituaries due to changes can only be requested by the submitting funeral home and will be assessed a \$15 reposting fee.

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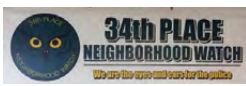
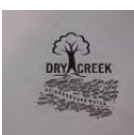
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## Local News/From the Front

# Renewal, other changes coming to Fort Madison library

**BY SARAH CLENDINENG**  
FM Public Library Director

**FORT MADISON** - Changes to Library Services

There are a couple of exciting new changes in library services. First, the library catalog will now attempt to automatically renew your library materials. If unreturned items are eligible for renewal, they will be renewed on their due date. If you are signed up for e-mail or text notifications, the system will notify you that it will be doing this and then let you know whether or not it was successful. That said, materials can only be renewed once and they cannot be renewed if someone else is waiting for them so you will still want to keep an eye on your library account.

Secondly, there is currently a nationwide trend of libraries looking for ways to remove barriers to library service, including not charging fines for overdue materials. The library board has approved a trial period of not charging fines for overdue materials to evaluate the effect this will have on library services and materials. The library will not be charging fines on overdue materials from November 1 through May 1. As part of this trial, patrons will also not be able to check out new materials if they have at least one item overdue by a month or more, or three or more overdue items. Once overdue materials are returned, patrons will be able to check out new materials. Additionally, while patrons who have excessive overdue materials or existing fines or fees on their account cannot check out materials until those are paid, they will now be able to use the public desktop computers.

Art Installation December 3 and 4: Thread Library

Save the date! The library will be hosting a two day, pop-up art installation on December 3 and 4. "Thread Library" is an installation art piece India Johnson created for the Iowa City Public Library in February 2020 and has since travelled to libraries across Iowa.

"Thread Library" is a collection of threads, and each thread is cataloged as if it were a book.

In addition to being able to view the collection, there will also be a workshop from 3:45-4:45 on Friday, December 3 and a public talk at 11am on Saturday, December 4. Space is limited at the workshop and registration is strongly encouraged. Registration will be available beginning November 16. No registration is necessary for the talk on Saturday.

In addition to being on display, "Thread Library" is also accepting donations to be cataloged and added to the collection. Based on information provided by the donor, each thread is assigned a title, author, description, and subject headings. This makes "Thread Library" both a work of visual art and a creative writing project. Contact Sarah Clendineng at the Fort Madison Public Library (319) 372-5721 about the process for donating thread.

October Book Recommendations from Library Board Member Sharon Groene

Still Life by Louise Penny (Inspector Gamach series) (MYS PEN)

This Tender Land by William Kent Krueger (MYS KRU)

Ordinary Grace by William Kent Krueger (MYS KRU)

Iron Lake by William Kent Krueger (Cork O'Connor series) (MYS KRU)

Maisie Dobbs by Jacqueline Winspear (Maisie Dobbs series) (MYS WIN)

The Girls in the Stilt House by Kelly Mustian (F MUS)

The Paris Library by Janet Skeslien Charles (F SKE)

The Lost Apothecary by Sarah Penner (F PEN)

Beartown by Frederik Backman (F BAC)

Us Against You by Frederik Backman (F BAC)

Upcoming Events at the Fort Madison Public Library

For the safety of library employees and other patrons,

please do not come to library programs if you feel ill, have a fever or are waiting on the results of a coronavirus test. The library is still offering curbside book pick-up if you need something to read, watch or listen to but want to keep your community healthy by temporarily quarantining.

The Library will be closed on Thursday, November 11 for Veteran's Day. The library will be closed Thursday, November 25 and Friday, November 26 for Thanksgiving. The Library will be open on Saturday, November 27.

Pre-School/Toddler Story Hour -Wednesday morning at 10:30.

Thursday Crafternoon -Thursday, 3:30-5:00, for ages 14-adult. This program is an opportunity to spend some time working on an in-depth project during the whole month. November will be a chance to work on a fall craft.

Hang Teen - Tuesday, 3:30-5:00 (except for November 16) for ages 12-19.

Minecraft -3:30-5:00, ages 9-18 on Mondays.

Wacky Wednesday - School is out early November 17, stop by between 1:30 and 2:30 to make a milk jug turkey.

All Booked Up! - The library's book discussion group meets on the first Thursday of the month at 1:30 p.m. On Thursday, November 4, we will be discussing "The Black Dahlia" by James Ellroy. On Thursday, December 2 we will be discussing "Brooklyn" by Colm Toibin.

Cook the Book -Please note change of date. In November, we will be meeting on the 3rd Tuesday. This month's cookbook is "Cookie Classics" and is available at the library. Pick a recipe and prepare it to share with the group on November 16 at 5:30 pm. In December, we'll be picking recipes from "Brunch @ Bobby's" by Bobby Flay.

# Freeport McMoRan investing in city's tourism efforts

**GRANT** - Continued from Page 1

are helping you guys collect the amount of money the project requires and we're happy to be providing that help."

The donation was a \$50,000 donation this year, and Benjamin said there are plans to follow that up with a

\$50,000 donation in 2022.

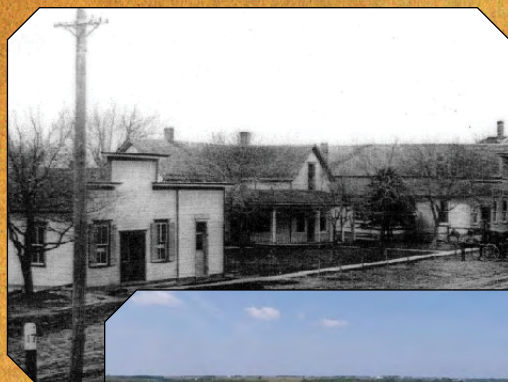
Benjamin said the Freeport McMoRan Foundation is providing the funding in two parts.

"This comes from our community investment fund, the Freeport McMoRan Foundation, and we've committed to \$50,000 in 2021, and \$50,000 in 2022," she said.

"We definitely see the marina as something that's going to draw people into town and make our recruitment and retention efforts more fun and enjoyable if we can take them out to eat on a nice restaurant on the river.

"We're very excited to see what you can accomplish and happy to be partners."

## Past. Present. Future.



Pilot Grove Savings Bank was established on May 12, 1911 when 23 investors pooled \$10,000 to meet the banking needs of the local community. Since that day, the Bank has continued to grow and prosper, serving customers in Southeast Iowa and the tri-state area as well as many other locations across the country. With customer loyalty on its side, Pilot Grove Savings Bank has prospered throughout the years. Now, with 14 offices, more than 100 employees, over \$760 million in assets and some of the most technologically advanced banking systems available, Pilot Grove Savings Bank's main goal remains as it was in 1911 - to serve the customer well.

Donnellson Fairfield Fort Madison  
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## Iowa News

# Reynolds starts child care shortage initiatives

DES MOINES — Gov. Reynolds today announced several key initiatives to address Iowa's child care shortage and advance the state's continued economic recovery.

Iowa leads the nation in the share of households where both parents work. But 23% of Iowans, including 35% of rural Iowans, live in areas lacking adequate child care supply. Annually, the child care shortage costs the Iowa economy approximately \$935 million.

"We know that the key to economic growth is a highly skilled and qualified workforce," said Gov. Reynolds. "A child care shortage that prevents parents from entering or remaining in the workforce hinders our ability to meet this challenge."

In March, Gov. Reynolds established the Governor's Child Care Task Force – comprised of both public and private members — to provide a comprehensive strategy and recommendations to address the shortage.

Based on recommendations in the final report, Gov. Reynolds is immediately implementing the following actions:

Implementation of a childcare management system  
This statewide, web-based platform will enable pro-

viders to leverage a shared services model for many business operations such as administrative tasks, group purchasing, and professional development. This system will be available in 2022.

Creation of a "Best Place for Working Parents" designation

This designation will recognize employers that go above and beyond to accommodate their employees with children. The new, public designation will help job seekers quickly identify family-friendly employers and will encourage businesses to invest in childcare. This program will begin in January 2022.

Additional \$10 million in funding for the Child Care Challenge Grant Program

To support the expansion of existing childcare facilities or construction of new centers that will increase the number of childcare slots available to Iowa families, Iowa Workforce Development, in collaboration with the Department of Human Services, has launched another round of funding for the Childcare Challenge Grant Program, available today.

\$100,000 for integrated model of child care and preschool learning opportunities

The Iowa Department of Education, through ESSER

III funds, is making available \$100,000 for grants that will advance planning efforts for blended childcare and preschool learning opportunities.

\$200 million for funding stabilization grants for financial loss due to the pandemic

The Iowa Department of Human Services is providing up to \$200 million in federal funding to assist eligible childcare providers who can verify financial loss due to the pandemic. This will ensure that Iowa providers are stable, can support expansion, and continue to serve the needs of Iowa's working families.

"We're not finished yet, this is only the beginning," said Gov. Reynolds. "These new initiatives are going to support our working families and ensure Iowa has the child care system needed to unleash our state's incredible workforce and set our economy on a path to long-term, broad-based prosperity."

Since the start of the pandemic, more than \$137 million in state and federal funding has been allocated to support child care across the state.

Gov. Reynolds will explore other recommendations to address the child care shortage through additional executive action and legislative priorities during the upcoming legislative session.



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# Classifieds

## HELP WANTED

**LEE  
CHD**

### Registered Nurse Hospice & Homecare

Lee County Health Department is seeking a full-time RN to work in the agency's hospice & home health care programs. Experience in completing comprehensive patient assessments and providing skilled nursing care based on patient's plan of care preferred. Skilled nursing home visits and patient care management responsibilities will be required. LCHD's operational hours are 8:00am-4:30pm Monday-Friday with each RN assigned an on-call rotation every 3rd to 4th weekend and limited evenings during the month. LCHD offers a team oriented work environment with competitive wages and excellent benefits. Please send resumes to Becky Fader, Program Manager, at [bfader@leecountyhd.org](mailto:bfader@leecountyhd.org) or to LCHD, PO Box 1426, Fort Madison, IA 52627 by November 8, 2021. LCHD is an EOE.



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### Scotts MiracleGro in Ft. Madison has 2 new opportunities on our Maintenance Team!

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**Some things you'll do in this role:**

- Program, repair and maintain programmable logic controller (PLC) systems used within a industrial high speed packaging plant
- Perform detailed mechanical and/or instrumentation/electrical troubleshooting, repair and preventative maintenance duties on plant process, utility, and packaging equipment.
- Perform multi-discipline maintenance and/or electrical work. Maintain equipment documentation for all equipment and revise per modifications.

**What you'll need to be successful:**

- High School Diploma or Equivalent
- PLC technician /Electrical educational courses
- 5 to 7 years in electrical maintenance field preferably in a manufacturing setting
- In depth mechanical/electrical aptitude, schematic reading/interpretation

#### Maintenance Mechanic

**Some things you'll do in this role:**

- Troubleshoots production machinery and equipment for electrical and mechanical malfunctions. Assists in the teardown and rebuild of machines.
- Performs scheduled preventive maintenance tasks and periodic inspections on production machinery and equipment. Lubricates and cleans parts. Adjusts devices positions and controls.
- Troubleshoots mechanical failures. Repairs or places defective parts. Dismantles devices to gain access to and remove defective parts. Installs parts into devices. Starts devices to determine their performance.

**What you'll need to be successful:**

- High School Diploma or Equivalent
- 3-5 years maintenance experience in a manufacturing environment.
- Must have basic computer skills, hydraulics and pneumatics aptitude.
- Must read and interpret Hydraulic, Pneumatic and Electrical schematics.
- Mechanical troubleshooting skills, electrical troubleshooting skills.

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## From the Front

# Bulk of Crusaders will be returning for another run

STATE - Continued from Page 1

matches are played with few court-level seats, so the noise, the lighting, everything about the stage, is a new experience.

"It's a great help, because the atmosphere is so different," Randolph said. "The roars from the crowd come from above. To have that experience will really help them next year.

"Forty of the state's best teams — eight in each class — qualify each season. With that kind of talent, matches can come down to simple intangibles, and one of those is experience.

"You see your best teams up here," Holy Trinity coach Melissa Freesmeier said. "We've been here all week, so we've gotten to see them play. You see what it takes."

Randolph and libero Anna Sobczak were the only seniors for the Crusaders. The bulk of this team will be returning.

Bendlage had 19 kills in two matches. Natalie Randolph, Kassi's sister who is a sophomore, also had 19. Kayla Box, a junior, has emerged as a strong middle hitter. Junior Brooke Mueller had 17 kills in the two matches. Junior Alexa Dingman, sophomore Taegan Denning and freshman Teagan Snaadt got valuable minutes.

"I think it was important for them, because a lot of them hadn't experienced it before," Sobczak said. "Now they'll come back stronger."

The Crusaders advanced with a five-game win over Janesville before succumbing to the top-seeded Nikes.

That kind of experience in the crucible of the one-and-the-season-is-done tournament, knowing the value of every point, is a lesson for the future.

"They're going to be pushing to get back here next year," Freesmeier said.

"Next year, we'll be experienced," Natalie Randolph said. "We're going to come back here next year, and we're going to be stronger than ever."

Kassi Randolph knew what the week meant for the Crusaders.

"I've got all the confidence in them," she said, "and I'm going to be their biggest cheerleader."

*John Bohnenkamp is a national and state award-winning sports reporter and a regular contributor to Pen City Current.*

# Bob Huffman, Sr. started business with simple goal

HUFFMANS - Continued from Page 1

play Wednesday with purple and gold balloons tied to equipment, and swag for guests.

Bob Sr. donned in a Huffman baseball cap and a polo, in contrast to his sons in suit jackets, simply said he started the business to take care of his family.

"I started it 50 years ago to earn a living for my family. That's what my goal was. It wasn't to be the biggest machine shop in the area as we are now, it was to make a living. That's what we did."

Now the company produces parts, equipment, and metal answers for customers around the globe, and Huffman can quickly recall some of the countries his company has worked in.

"We've done jobs in China, Taiwan, Japan, Mexico, and Egypt," he said.

Bob Sr. was a certified welder and opened the shop to offer welding and fabricating. One of his original part-time people was Pat Brotherton. Brotherton sat at a lunch table with a sandwich Thursday talking with Fort Madison Partners Executive Director Tim Gobble.

"Pat over there was a part-time man with me early on," Bob said, pointing to him at one of the 12 banquet tables set up for visitors.

About five years into the business, Bob said he started selling supplies, because he himself couldn't always find what he needed.

"We opened up a distributorship because we couldn't buy anything from anybody. We were doing all kinds of different things. Sometimes we'd have to drill 3,000 or 4,000 1/4-inch holes and I could only find maybe one or two drill bits," he said.

"So I started stocking that kind of industrial stuff for other people, too."

Huffman said he never envisioned a facility on the scale that he walked through Thursday afternoon talking with people. When asked if he thought his sons had made the right decisions along the way, true to form with a simple answer, "They've done a good job," he said.

Bob Huffman, Jr. said he was flattered with the turnout that included many customers over the years, city leaders, economic development officials, and former employees.

"It's a really great turnout. It's nice to see so many people here recognizing what we've done and customers who've worked with us in the past," Huffman said.

Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld, who's had his own business in the city for 45 years, said the city has been fortunate to have the Huffmans a part of the community and their growth is something most people aren't fully aware of.

"Just so you know, when you say 50 years, I've seen most of those years and I've known the dad a long time," Mohrfeld said.

"Look around, they're hiring people living wage jobs and bringing projects into our community. That's like mine, when you can reach outside and bring that back to the community, that's where you have true economic success."

The day ended with an hors d'oeuvres reception in the evening with music and more shared memories and gazes to the future.

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