

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's **Black & White** and **Read** all over

Wednesday, August 25, 2021 | 15 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 154



www.pencitycurrent.com

READY TO RODEO



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Area residents are ready to get back to the Tri-State Rodeo which kicks off a week from Saturday with Ready to Rodeo events including the Lil' Spurs Rodeo on Labor Day, Sept. 6 at 10 a.m. A complete list of events and entertainment can be found at <https://www.tristaterodeo.org/tri-state-events/>.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: Special Kids Rodeo still in need of mentors for participants

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – With the Tri-State Rodeo's activities set to begin in just 10 days, officials say this could be the biggest year ever.

With the Rodeo cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID Pandemic, the committee has rolled right into the 2021 rodeo week with a full head of steam.

Pre-Rodeo Chairman Bobby Holtkamp said all the Ready to Rodeo events will include the traditional, successful events that have brought people in from all over Missouri, Illinois, and the Hawkeye state for decades.

Special Kids Rodeo – 10 a.m. Saturday Sept. 4, – Rodeo Arena

One of them most treasured events is the Special Kids Rodeo. Registration is currently ongoing for kids and adults with special needs. Chairwoman Lisa Wood has been an integral part of the event from its inception 20 years ago when 13 kids participated – to drawing as many as 350 kids with special needs to the rodeo grounds.

She has chaired the event for the past 18 years and said the pandemic is still having an impact on registrations, but kids continue to sign up daily.

Pre-registration for the event is over, but participants can



register Saturday Sept. 4 the day of the event starting at 8:30 a.m. at the rodeo grounds. Anyone wishing to volunteer can show up Saturday by 9:30 a.m to help.

“Registration is a little bit slower this year. Every year we send out entry forms in the mail. But with the two-year lull a lot of clientele have moved and that's part of the problem,” Wood said Tuesday. “The scare of COVID is still a part of the problem, but we are close to 100 pre-entries already and I get more every day.”

Holtkamp said the Rodeo has a liaison who makes sure the Rodeo is working in conjunction with the guidance and recommendations of the Lee County Health Department.

“(Rodeo Chairman) Tony (Johnson) brought in Matt Horn, who been assisting with entertainment to help with all of that. His job is COVID control. He's the one that will make sure we have everything in line to meet Lee County Health Department needs and are meeting all their protocols for a safe

register Saturday Sept. 4 the day of the event starting at 8:30 a.m. at the rodeo grounds. Anyone wishing to volunteer can show up Saturday by 9:30 a.m to help.

“Registration is a little bit slower this year. Every year we send out entry forms in the mail.

See **RODEO**, page 6

100th Anniversary

Eight to vie for Mexican Fiesta queen

Committee still looking for sponsorships to help cover unexpected costs

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The bands are booked, the royalty court is in place, the menus are ready and the beer has been ordered.

The 100th celebration of the Fort Madison Mexican Fiesta, which was officially established in the fall of 1921, will kick off Sept. 16 and run through Sept. 18 in the village along Avenue Q.

Fiesta Committee President Scott Huffman said despite a few bumps in the road, which typically accompanies most events, plans are coming together for the celebration honoring Mexico's Independence from Spain.

“We're on track for everything. We got stuck with some extra expenses right here at the end that we need to figure out. So we still need to get some donations in to deal with those unexpected costs,” Huffman said. “I would say about \$3,500 for sure.”

He said the costs were associated with some rental increases due to property changing hands recently.

Jamie Mesecher, who also volunteers on the festival committee said plans are still coming along strong, following a meeting of the committee Sunday afternoon at the shelter house on the grounds.

“We weren't quite ready for this kick, but things are going to be fine. There are still some sponsorships out there that haven't come in yet, but they will,” Mesecher said.

The committee also got \$2,500 from city coffers this year to help put on the event.

“We're proud of them for stepping up this year because it's their festival. It's the city's festival,” Mesecher said.

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Obituaries/Scene Around Town

OBITUARIES

CADE K. WEAR

Cade Kyle Wear, two day old son of Andrew and Kortnie Corethers Wear died Friday, August 20, 2021 at University of Iowa Hospital in Iowa City, IA.

He was born August 18, 2021 at Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center-Ft. Madison, IA. Cade only lived a short time, but his life impacted everyone around him.



STEFFEN

He is survived by his parents, Andrew and Kortnie Wear of Keokuk, grandparents, Tracy Hartis (Ron) of Keokuk, Gary Corethers (Jessica) of Keokuk, Steve (Donna) Wear of Keokuk and great-grandmother, Sheldia Wrieden of Keokuk. He is also survived by four uncles, Steven Kyle Wear Jr., James Kramer, Broc Hartis and Ronnie Hartis, Jr. and many great aunts, uncles and cousins.

He was preceded in death by his great-grandparents, John Wrieden, Leonard and Gladys Reeves, Claudia Shanks, Seldon and Barbara Wear and Ray Corethers.

Visitation will be held after 3 p.m., Wednesday, at the Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk, IA with family meeting with friends from 5-7 p.m.

A private family graveside will be held in the Oakland Cemetery in Keokuk.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.

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.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

The 2021 Mexican Fiesta queen candidates front row left to right are Bella Estrada and Jessiona Jaciunde. Back row left to right are Marlee Wieler, Olivia Puga-Vass, Shayna Eid and Hattie Schrepfer. Not pictures are Ada Taylor and Marrissa Frantz. This year's event runs from Sept. 16-18 and donations are still needed to help with some unexpected costs this year.



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PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Founded in 2016
P.O. Box 366 | Fort Madison, IA

Member LION Publishers

www.lionpublishers.com



Pen City Current and www.pencitycurrent.com are products of Market Street Publishing, LLC. Pen City Current is published Sunday through Friday mornings by 6AM.

From the Front

Fiesta needs volunteer for public work day coming

QUEENS - Continued from Page 1

The committee has eight queen candidates vying for the Mexican Queen crown and two princesses.

The queen candidates include Bella Estrada, 14; Jessiona Jacuinde, 14; Marlee Wieler, 13; Olivia Puga-Vass, 17; Shayna Eid, 16, and Hattie Schrepfer, 17; Ada Taylor, 14; and Marrisona Frantz, 16. Estrada and Eid are previous candidates for queen and princess.

The two princess candidates this year are Jackie Vincent, 9 and Diamond Garcia, 8, are the current candidates for princess.

The candidates are required to submit essays, engage in community service, and engage in festival preparation and participation. Canisters are also out in the community where each candidate will get one vote for every penny deposited in their canisters as part of the overall judging.

There is still time to enter the queen and princess contests. Those interested should contact Michelle Hess at 319-470-6890.

Coronations take place on Friday, Sept. 17 at 6 p.m.

The festival will feature The Crooked Cactus and then Ted Brooks. Bluzallion will playing on Thursday. A full schedule will be reported as soon as available.

The festival is also raffling all a large Corona cooler sponsored by Golden Eagle.

There are also plans in place for an eating contest prior to entertainment on Saturday, Sept. 18.

The committee currently is at about 15 people. Mesecher said the original seven or eight committee members are still in place, but volunteers are needed.

"We can definitely use some more volunteers for sure," Huffman said.

He said a public work day will be set in the next coming weeks with food and beverages provided. The day of that work day will be provided after the committee's next meeting on Sunday.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Left to right, Jackie Vincent, 9, and Diamond Garcia, 8, are the candidates for this year's Mexican Fiesta Princess title. Voting and judging are based on several criteria including a penny-per-vote donation program with canisters at city businesses.

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For the Record

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

08/17/21 - 2:09 a.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Josh Isaac Daniels, 37, of Fort Madison, in the 600 block of 8th Street on a warrant for assault. He was taken to Lee County Jail.
 08/17/21 - 4:17 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 2100 block of Avenue E.
 08/17/21 - 7:11 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 3900 block of Bluff Road.
 08/18/21 - 8:27 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1000 block of Avenue H.
 08/18/21 - 10:08 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 2000 block of Avenue L.
 08/18/21 - 3:57 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a hit and run in the 2000 block of Avenue L.
 08/18/21 - 10:42 a.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Andres Lee Diaz, 40, of Fort Madison in the 800 block of Avenue G, on a warrant for harassment. She was taken to Lee County Jail.

08/19/21- 12:09 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 400 block of Avenue E.
 08/19/21 - 1:18 a.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Shasta Kayelle John, of Burlington, in the 4500 block of Avenue O, on a charge of simple assault. She was taken to Lee County Jail.
 08/19/21 - 1:26 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a stolen vehicle in the 1500 block of Avenue G.
 08/19/21 - 1:36 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 400 block of Avenue E.
 08/19/21 - 3:11 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 3500 block of Avenue Q.
 08/19/21 - 8:02 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 2600 block of Avenue L.
 08/20/21 - 12:14 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 3000 block of Avenue N.
 08/20/21 - 12:34 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of

vandalism in the 2600 block of Avenue L.
 08/20/21 - 12:57 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 2600 block of Avenue L.
 08/20/21 - 4:22 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 200 block of Avenue G.
 08/20/21 - 8:19 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 1700 block of Avenue L.
 08/21/21 - 7:06 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 2300 block of Avenue L.
 08/21/21 - 4:48 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 600 block of 23rd Street.
 08/21/21 - 6:10 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 1400 block of 28th Street.
 08/21/21 - 8:24 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 1100 block of 16th Street.
 08/21/21 - 11:49 a.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Sarah Lorraine Teitsorth, 36, of Fort Madison, in the 1800 block of Avenue, on a warrant for probation violation. She was taken

to Lee County Jail.
 08/22/21 - 6:32 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 2300 block of Avenue L.
 08/22/21 - 7:46 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 900 block of Avenue F.
 08/23/21 - 11:40 a.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested John Robert Winkle Mead, 42, of Fort Madison, in the 2400 block of Avenue G on a charge of disorderly conduct.

Lee County Sheriff's Report

08/17/21 - 12:22 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Tiffany Danielle Baumle, 44, of Hamilton, Ill., at the sheriff's office on a charge of being a fugitive from justice. She was taken to Lee County Jail.
 08/18/21 - 1:32 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Anna Marie Tampio, 26, of Burlington, at the sheriff's office on a court-ordered hold. She was released on bond.
 08/18/21 - 7:48 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Robert Thomas Nuebel, 54, of Montrose, in the 700 block of Avenue F, on a warrant for failure to appear. He was

taken to Lee County Jail.
 08/19/21 - 11:01 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested a 17-year-old male from Mediapolis at the Juvenile Detention Center in Montrose on charges of 4th degree criminal mischief. He was held for juvenile court.
 08/20/21 - 2:33 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Kyle Max Ray, 33, of Fort Madison, in the 700 block of Avenue F, on warrants for violation of probation and failure to appear.
 08/20/21 - 6:24 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies responded to a two-vehicle accident in the 3000 block of Hwy. 61. According to reports a vehicle driven by Michael D'Angelo Davis, 17, of Keokuk was headed southbound on Hwy. 61 when another vehicle driven by Harold Wendell Pundt, 85, of Keokuk, was stopped at a stop sign at the Hwy. 218 intersection striking Davis' vehicle. Pundt was cited for failure to yield entering a highway. No injuries were reported.
 08/20/21 - 9:48 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Cody Henry Richard Roberts, 29, of Kahoka, Mo., at the Des Moines County line, on a warrant for failure to appear. He was taken to Lee County Jail and released on bond.
 08/21/21 - 2:55 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Jamie Lynn Wisner, 51, of Donnellson, at the sheriff's office on a judgment hold. She was taken to Lee County Jail and

released for time served.
 08/22/21 - 12:42 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Darcy Terrill Jackson, 20, of Tchula, Miss., in the 3100 block of Hwy. 27, on a warrant for being a fugitive from justice. She was taken to Lee County Jail and held.
 08/22/21 - 1:45 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Scott Edward Graham, 56, of Burlington, in the 700 block of Main Street in Montrose on a charge of public intoxication. He was taken to Lee County Jail and held.
 08/23/21 - 12:00 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Obie Taylor, II, 42, of Burlington in the 700 block of Avenue F in Fort Madison, on a warrant for failure to appear. He was taken to Lee County Jail.
 08/23/21 - 2:41 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Candi Isabella Kay Medina, 27, of Fort Madison, at the sheriff's office on a charge of 5th degree criminal mischief. She was taken to Lee County Jail.
 08/24/21 - 1:52 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Justin Matthew Stewart, 36, of Keokuk, in the 800 block of Johnson Street Road in Keokuk, on charges of unsafe stopping, driving under suspension, drug trafficking, four counts of possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was taken to Lee County Jail.
Those listed above are arrested on suspicion of a crime, and are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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SOUTHEAST IOWA REGIONAL AIRPORT
 DAILY FLIGHTS CHICAGO AND ST. LOUIS

Sports

Central Lee's girth could be key to productive season

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP
PCC SPORTS

DONNELSON – The desire is there for the seniors on Central Lee's football team.

The Hawks have won just two games over the last three seasons, and now that the program is in its second season under head coach Chuck Banks, the feeling is progress is being made.

"I have some seniors who are hungry to win some games," Banks said.

The path to that progress, though, starts up front, and Banks likes what he has in his offensive line.

The Hawks have the size that can certainly create openings for the running game as well as protect starting quarterback Bryce Finney.

Junior Brody Fuller is close to 300 pounds. Junior Ben Seamons is 6-foot-5 and weighs 330 — "He's an absolute beast," Banks said — and senior Devin Brecount is 6-4, 285.

Those three, plus center Braedon Barlow and two-year starter Keating Fuger, provide the base for what Banks wants to do with his offense.

"Last year, we struggled in the trenches a little bit," he said. "We had a hard time, we had to spread (the offense) out a little more. With this group, we'll be more balanced, which is exciting."

Finney moves to quarterback after catching 18 passes for 84 yards last season. Corbin Pohren and Hunter Gregory will split time at tailback, with Justin Snider at fullback.

"Being big up front is going to help us run the ball," Banks said.

That size will help on the defensive line as well. Banks projects a rotation of linemen that include Tanner DeMoss, who will also start at tight end.

"We want to keep everyone fresh," Banks said.

"But we still have a lot of size there."

Gregory, Snider and Josh Hawk will be the main group



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Central Lee quarterback Bryce Finney takes a snap in a 3-way workout earlier this month. Finney will lead the Hawks' large and experienced front five this year.

of linebackers, and the Hawks will be deep in the secondary as well.

Central Lee has just eight seniors on its roster, so the bulk of this group will be around next season. The progress has room to grow.

"I like this young crop," Banks said. "It's a year in with me, and my offseason programs, stuff like that. Just seeing them work so gosh darn hard in the weight room, and being so coachable. This group is phenomenal when it comes to coaching."

The Hawks went 0-9 last season, but Banks saw improvement.

"We got nicked up early," he said. "We definitely competed. There were wins in a lot of those losses last year,

games in which we definitely got better.

"The key for this year is just playing down to down. Just keep getting better and better, and progressing."

The Hawks play two of their three non-district games on the road, opening at Van Buren on Friday. They'll play Cardinal at home on Sept. 3 before playing at Albia a week later. Central Lee opens district play Sept. 17 at Williamsburg.

Getting some victories for a program that could use them is important, Banks said.

"Oh, it would be huge," he said. "This senior class, it would mean the world for me to put together some wins for that group and get the younger guys excited, so we can move forward on the trajectory where we want to be."

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From the Front

Local events bring community together before main event

RODEO - Continued from Page 1

event," Holtkamp said.

"We want to be on the same team as them and we'll do everything to follow their recommendations."

Wood said there are few new twists to the Special Kids Rodeo this year with cowboy hats and t-shirts for prizes and a hippity-hop style barrel race instead of the regular stick-horse barrel races.

But she said it's seeing the kids enjoy the rides on the horses that keeps her coming back every year.

"This is an amazing event. I have a special needs child and I know when I see those kids get up on the horses and their bodies just soften and they are totally relaxed... that just melts my heart," she said.

Those in wheelchairs can even ride the live horses with special double saddles that allow people to ride with them, while people walk on the side to make sure the kids feel comfortable and safe.

She said for those that aren't comfortable there is a glide horse that allows them to get the feel of riding a horse without having to get on. There is also a mechanical bull, "Casey" that kids can ride that day as well.

The event usually runs from 10 a.m. to about 1 p.m. with all families, volunteers and participants getting a free lunch following the event.

She said if one thing is needed it's additional volunteers to help mentor the participants to each event.

"The thing that we need to get out is we really need volunteers .I'm afraid it's going to be a really big year because people are ready to get out. We need mentors to take kids around each year and each event needs to be manned," Wood said.

Holtkamp also said securing volunteers has been slower than in the past.

"We've had a little bit of a challenge getting some volunteers, but some of the groups have come through and we've seen some new people sign up. All in all, I can't complain too much," he said.

Lil' Spurs Rodeo – 10 a.m. Monday, Sept. 6, Rodeo Arena

Scott Meller, the chairman of the Lil' Spurs Rodeo said the registrations for that event are coming in at strong levels. He said the mutton-bustin event is already maxed out for the Monday Sept. 6 Labor Day event. The rodeo gets underway at 10 a.m.

All participants and families are required to have a Tri-State Rodeo button to attend. Those are available at multiple businesses in Lee County and the day of the event. Registration check-in starts at 8 a.m. on the north end of the rodeo grounds.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

A competitor in one of the Lil Spurs events holds on for a ride during the 2019 event. The rodeo was completely canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic, but Ready to Rodeo events kick off on Saturday, Sept. 4 at the Tri-State Rodeo grounds.

"Registration is going really well and we're actually doing okay with volunteers," Meller said. "We usually have a team of four or five that lead those efforts and they have volunteer staff under them."

The Lil' Spurs Rodeo will have the same traditional format as in the past. Meller said each year there is always consideration of changes, but sometimes you don't fix what isn't broken.

"It's a very special event just as it is," he said.

Lil Miss Rodeo/All Around Cowboy – 6:30 p.m. Monday Sept. 6, Rodeo Arena

Committee chairwoman Trishia Eaves-Fedler said the year away seems to have made people miss the event.

"We've got a larger group of participants than even I thought we'd have," she said. "We've got 14 girls and seven boys participating"

She said there is plenty of room in the stands to spread out for the events and the talent portion should be some of the best ever.

"We've got some great kids and some great talent, and some of these you are just not going to want to miss," she said.

This year's pageant takes place at 6:30 p.m. on the south side of the rodeo arena. Canisters are still out in the community for donations to each contestant. The kids are judged on attire, stage presence and personality. The donations are only used in the event of a tie and the judges don't know how much each contestant raised.

Eaves-Fedler said she hasn't heard any negative feedback with the pandemic still looming with the Delta variant of the virus. She said participants are free to wear a mask if they choose, but it is not required during the outdoor event.

Holtkamp said the Ready to Rodeo schedule is very similar to previous years.

"Everyone knows when they get chili. That's what they go by...we don't mess with chili night," he said.

That event is the sole Sunday event and runs from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Fareway is providing the food for chili night and they are also sponsoring the pancake breakfast Saturday from 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Hy-Vee is again providing the pulled pork dinner Monday from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Pee-Wee Barrell racing takes place on Tuesday night at the Saddle Club Arena. Registration starts at 4:30 with the action kicking off at 5:30 p.m. The top 8 finishers will advance to ride during Thursday and Friday night's rodeo. Registration, and a full list of Tri-State Rodeo events is available at <https://www.tristaterodeo.org/tri-state-events/>.

The professional rodeo action kicks off with the CINCH Chute-Out starting at 7 p.m. Wednesday.

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Local News

Fireworks spark fire that destroys FM home

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison firefighters worked to extinguish a structure fire at a home in the 1200 block of 26th Street just east of Hy-Vee early Friday morning.

According to Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren at the scene, the cause of the fire has yet to be determined, but he said firefighters were pulled from inside the building when he arrived on scene due to the uncertainty of the structure’s stability, and the amount of debris inside.

However, fire officials determined that fireworks were the cause of the blaze.

Firefighters were called to the scene just after 5 a.m. “I’m familiar with this building and there’s just a lot of debris in there. We weren’t sure how sound the floors were, so I got them all out when I got here,” Herren said.

Firefighters pulled two young black dogs from inside the building and EMTs on the scene tried to perform life saving measures on the animals but were unsuccessful and both dogs perished.

Firefighters then went to work on the exterior of the building including busting out most windows and then cutting into walls and the roof to try and get to the fire.

At one point after about 90 minutes, Herren pulled firefighters back from the building that was still smoldering from the roof and eaves, to give them a rest. He said crews would be on the scene for several more hours.

Herren said there was no insurance on the home and it will be a complete loss. The city will be responsible for demolishing the unit.

According to Lee County Treasurer’s records, the building, located at 1222 26th Street, is owned by Lance and Michelle Meredith, who purchased it in 2020 from JICTB Inc.

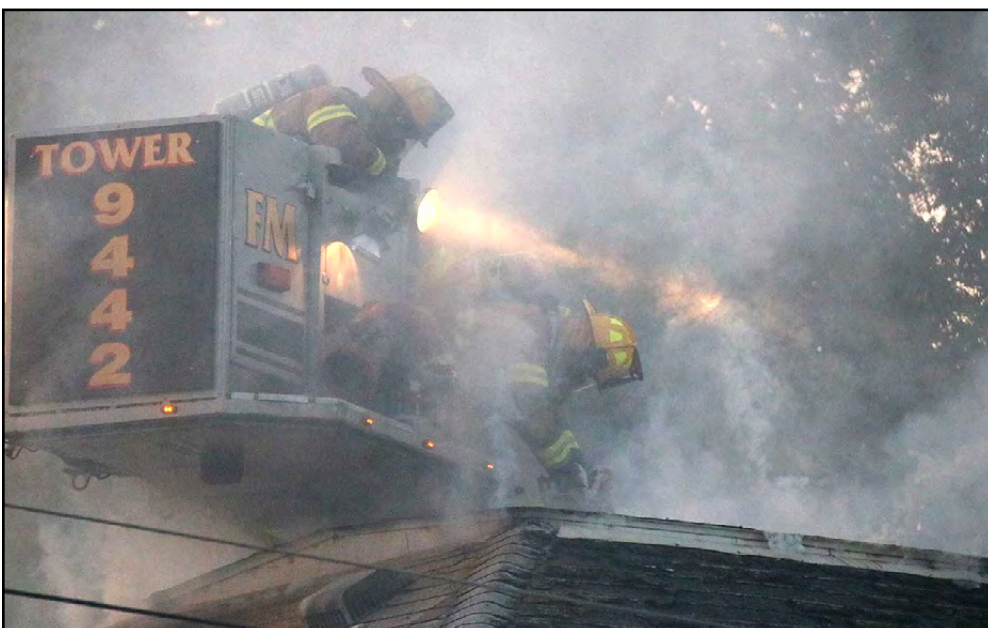


Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

At left, two unidentified Fort Madison firefighters work on the roof at a home at 1222 26th Street Friday morning. The home caught fire right around 5 a.m. and firefighters were on the scene for close to three hours. Above, the ladder truck moves firefighters to the roof of the structure.



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Opinion/Health News

More secrecy unwise in universities' hiring decisions

Iowa's three state universities made a U-turn this summer, and they now are headed down the road toward secrecy with some hiring decisions.

The about-face should trouble taxpayers of this state. It also should bother members of the Legislature, who have expressed concern in recent years that the universities are out of touch with the people of Iowa.

First, some background about this change:

For many years, the universities have followed affirmative action hiring practices. These are intended to ensure a diverse array of qualified candidates is considered when jobs are filled in the administrative ranks, on the faculty, and for professional and scientific positions.

Among the requirements is advertising job openings. This allows interested people to apply, especially existing employees, women, and racial or ethnic minorities.

The affirmative action policies do permit university administrators to seek waivers under certain limited circumstances. One of the checks on potential abuse has been the waiver documents being available for public review.

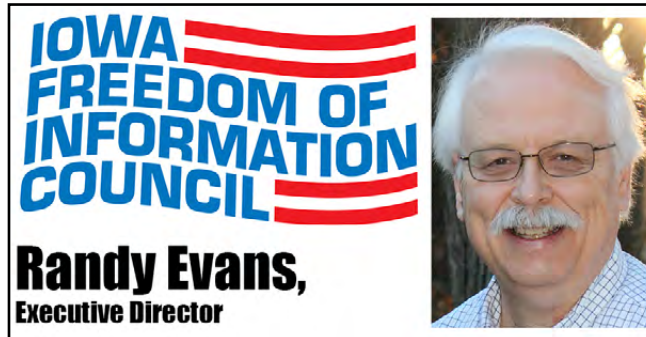
But now the three universities say the public no longer is able to see these to find out which jobs are being filled with waivers and which employees are being hired without a competitive search process.

The policy change was disclosed last week by the Cedar Rapids Gazette.

Officials at the University of Iowa, Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa say their lawyers now believe the waivers are part of employees' confidential personnel files. The Iowa Freedom of Information Council, the nonprofit organization I lead, disagrees.

Iowa's public records law already makes deeply personal information in employee files confidential — including the home address, date of birth, Social Security number, marital status, dependents and medical information.

But the law requires certain other personal informa-



tion to be made public. That includes the person's employment contract, salary, amount of vacation time and sick leave, insurance benefits, any deferred compensation the person accrues, and any severance package the employee receives when leaving a government job.

In addition, the law requires bosses to make public the "documented reasons and rationale" when a government worker is terminated, demoted or resigns under threat of being fired.

The Iowa FOI Council believes the employee's desire for privacy does not outweigh the public's desire to know when and why university administrators fill certain jobs without publicizing the opening and without taking applications.

The affirmative action policies were written for important reasons — including finding the best people for our state universities and avoiding hiring decisions based on cronyism. Without the public having access to the search waivers and written justification for bypassing affirmative action policies, the universities invite public skepticism of their commitment to diversity and inclusion when filling jobs.

The UI's policies say waivers should be granted only with "appropriate justification." But without access to the waiver documents, the media and citizens are deprived of the information that would allow them to assess whether certain hiring decisions do, or do not, meet this threshold.

The universities' policies allow waivers under limited circumstances. One frequently cited reason is filling

a job when a candidate's qualifications and expertise surpass what any other applicant would have.

The Gazette has done important reporting in recent years on the universities' use of these waivers. The newspaper found that in one two-year period, the UI and Iowa State hired 319 faculty and staff members without advertising the jobs or conducting formal searches. In contrast, UNI hired one person using a waiver in those years.

Ironically, waiver documents showed the UI bypassed the affirmative action process to hire an associate vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion, the Gazette reported.

The documents also raise questions about the fairness of some hiring decisions. Three former members of the Iowa House and one former member of the U.S. House were hired without advertising the jobs and without public searches. Kraig Paulsen, who was House speaker, and Rep. Jim Kurtenbach were hired by Iowa State. Rep. Dave Jacoby and former U.S. Rep. Jim Leach were hired by the UI.

Margo Foreman, assistant vice president for diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity at Iowa State, told the Gazette in 2016 that university officials need to be ready to justify their decisions to use the waivers.

"The world is watching," she said. "What I would say to individuals is be able to defend the decisions you make."

Of course, by keeping the public in the dark about the waivers, university officials will not have to worry about justifying those decisions to the public.

It comes down to this: If it is not an invasion of privacy for citizens to know the reasons and rationale for a government employee being fired, then it certainly should not be considered an invasion of privacy to know why an employee is hired by a university after officials skip the customary hiring process.

Randy Evans is executive director of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council and can be reached at IowaFOI-Council@gmail.com. Pen City Current is a member of the IFOIC.

FDA gives final full approval to Pfizer's COVID vaccine

DES MOINES — Today, the FDA authorized full approval for one COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine known as the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, will now be marketed as Comirnaty (koe-mir'-na-tee), for the prevention of COVID-19 disease in individuals 16 years of age and older.

"The FDA's full approval of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine offers Iowans and Americans who've not yet been vaccinated the assurance they need to do so now," stated Governor Reynolds. "The vaccine is the best defense against the virus, and it's been proven highly effective at preventing serious illness, hospitalization and death, even against variants. Vaccine is widely available in the state, and I encourage all eligible Iowans to get vaccinated as soon as possible."

The Comirnaty vaccine continues to be available under emergency use authorization (EUA), for individuals 12 through 15 years of age and for the administration of a third dose in certain immunocompromised

individuals.

Vaccine supply in the state is stable and vaccine appointments are readily available statewide. We encourage anyone with questions to reach out to their health care provider.

More than 3 million doses of vaccine have been administered in Iowa and more than 1.5 million Iowans are fully vaccinated. For more information about vaccination in Iowa or to find a vaccine provider near you, visit vaccinateiowa.gov.

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PUBLIC NOTICE MEETING NOTICE

The Green Bay Levee & Drainage District will hold a regular meeting at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, September 2, 2021, at Heartland Co-op, east of Wever.

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For a job description and to apply, download an application from our county website, www.leeconomy.org or you can pick an application up at the Engineer's office and return your completed application along with a resume to Lee County Engineer, P.O. Box 158, Fort Madison, Iowa 52627, or email it to bhull@leeconomy.org and copy it to shartson@leeconomy.org. Applications will be accepted until August 23, 2021.

If you have any questions please contact Lee County Engineer, Ben Hull at (319) 372-2541 or email him at bhull@leeconomy.org.



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Madison City Council at 5:30 P.M. on Tuesday, September 7, 2021, at the Council Chambers of Fort Madison City Hall at 811 Avenue E, Fort Madison regarding a request to rezone property from R-4, One Family Dwelling District, to B-4, Highway Business District. The address of the property is 1501 - 39th Street (Legal Description: Lots Four (4), Five (5) and Six (6) in Block Six (6) of Oakland Addition to the City of Fort Madison, in the County of Lee, Iowa.)

You may obtain further information or express your views concerning this issue either in person or through an authorized representative at the public hearing, or prior to the meeting by fax at (319) 372-8661, by telephone at (319) 372-7700 ext. 206, by E-mail at mblind@fortmadison-ia.com or in writing to the Fort Madison City Clerk, P.O. Box 240, 811 Avenue E, Fort Madison, Iowa, 52627 no later than 4:30 PM on September 7, 2021.
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Letters to the Editor

Central Lee taking newer proactive approaches

To the Editor;

Over the past year, there has been a lot of noise regarding the Joint Education Center in Lee County. You have likely read that Central Lee is back at the table for continued planning. This is true, and we are happy that many of our concerns have been addressed so far. While some concerns remain, we believe that with SCC taking on full leadership of this effort, we will find more solutions in the coming months.

There have been many things said to promote the concept of a Joint Education Center over the past year. One claim, made by Lee County Economic Development, was that 40 percent of Lee County students do not have a plan beyond high school. This is not based on any data from our public schools, the Iowa Department of Education, or the Iowa Workforce Development. In fact, in Central Lee, our postsecondary readiness report indicates 60.8 percent of our students typically are enrolled in post-secondary institutions a year after high school. In 2019, that number was at 75 percent.

While we understand the value of the Joint Education Center, we also will not wait to make improvements in our students' college and career readiness. Our district has embraced Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. The first habit is to "be proactive." It easily translates into, "you are in charge of yourself" or, "your choices and your actions lead to your results." Under this mindset, we are taking action now.

Starting this year, we are allocating a full-time staff member to lead our workplace learning efforts. We want local businesses and organizations to partner with us to find opportunities for students to gain real work experience while in high school. Brent Koller, a former ag teacher, will be leading this program.



Starting this fall, we have revamped our advisory period to encompass several areas of focus to begin molding our students' skills for the future. Our advisory time or SOAR sessions is a daily, required, twenty-eight-minute period dedicated to addressing necessities above and beyond academics. Each student has been assigned to a SOAR session group and will rotate with that group daily between five different sessions.

The five sessions include:

- English Language Arts Extension — Focused on providing additional support in English language arts standards.
- Math Minutes — Focused on providing additional support in math standards.
- LEAD Academy — Focused on building understanding and the implementation of the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.
- SOAR Culture — Focused on building behaviors and skills that facilitate a healthy, positive culture between people and organizations.
- Career Coaching — Focused on career opportunities and coaching students in taking actions that lead to success in their desired pathways.

Teachers have been assigned a SOAR session area based on their strengths and interests. We are excited

about using SOAR session time to meet the heart needs of our students and to fill their toolboxes with additional strategies that will better prepare them for adulthood.

We are also introducing a graduation capstone project for students who wish to graduate with additional honors, beyond those provided for academic achievement alone. The capstone project can be fulfilled in a variety of ways but will focus on student skills and learning in the workplace while they are in high school. We aim for this to be a larger focus when our students walk across the stage at commencement.

Lastly, we recognize that parent/teacher conferences have gradually lost their impact at the high school level. Therefore, in conjunction with our college/career readiness plan, we are introducing a new model next spring. Parents and students will meet with our staff on how we are preparing them for the next stage in their lives. It will be different and possibly uncomfortable at times, but we feel it will go a long way toward helping parents, staff, and students remain on the same page about their future plans.

Our high school leadership and staff have worked incredibly hard to make improvements that will benefit our students. If a Joint Education Center does come to fruition in the future, it will certainly enhance our offerings. Ultimately, we know that what we do in our building every day from this point forward will have a much greater impact on our students' futures.

After all, our priority is to create a culture in which all students are expected to achieve a better tomorrow!

Sincerely,
Dr. Andy Crozier
Superintendent

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Opinion

Chicago birthday trip was a right smart art weekend

When I saw the artwork of Bisa Butler advertised I knew we had to see her exhibit at the Chicago Art Institute. I've seen a lot of art in my day, but never art like this. An Afro American woman, Butler depicts scenes of black people on quilts. Simply put, it's stunning—some of the best artwork I've ever seen. I told Ginnie we had to get to Chicago to see this. She agreed. We debated how to get there. Amtrak? Too unreliable. Drive? In downtown Chicago? Gulp. Let's do it! It would be a birthday treat for us both. My birthday is July 28, Ginnie's is August 28. We decided to splurge and do the town. We're not getting any younger.

We made reservations for a two-night stay in a downtown Chicago hotel, and purchased tickets for the Art Institute. With Ginnie as my navigator, and her smartphone GPS in hand, we took off.

We learned the hard way. Don't drive Lower Wacker Dr. if you don't know what you're doing. By "Lower Wacker," Chicago means UNDERGROUND! And it's scary! Cars kept beeping at me—country boy in the city. Ginnie's GPS quit working and it was quite disorienting. By the grace of God, we were spit out of the Underground within sight of our hotel. Whew!

It was 4:30 on Friday night. Right across the street was Morton's The Steakhouse in the Morton building. It was early enough we didn't need reservations—old people like to eat early, you know. I had perhaps the best ribeye steak I've ever had—filet mignon for Ginnie. We really didn't need the double

EMPTY NEST

By Curt Swarm



chocolate mousse for dessert but, like I say, this was a special occasion.

We paid for it the rest of the night with our stomachs grumbling.

The next morning, we were up and walking the half-dozen blocks to the Art Institute, through Millennium Park, with "Cloud Gate," also known as, "The Bean," and "Crown Fountain," also known as, "The Kissing Fountains." Kids played in the water while parents snapped pictures. The architecture of Chicago's downtown buildings is something to behold.

Bisa Butler's quilts are the most stunning art I have ever seen. I could sit and look at her quilts for hours, they are that magnificent. She puts so much emotion into every stitch. And these are quilts, folks. Goes to show you: art can be anyplace, anytime, anywhere. I'm not going to go into a long art monologue. Bisa Butler's art speaks for itself. Just seeing her quilts made the trip worthwhile.

And the Chicago Art Institute has so much more to offer, like the Obama Portraits, Van Gogh, Monet, and so on.

Wore out, we lunched in the shade in Millennium Park on genuine Chicago hot dogs with "the works!" Then it was back to the hotel for a nap, before trek-

king to the Navy Pier. We had dinner outdoors with the view of Lake Michigan, jet skiers, tour boats and seagulls stealing French fries. On the way back to the hotel, it was ice-cream cones for dessert. I tried to talk Ginnie into a ride on the ferris wheel, but she's wimpy.

Sunday morning we breakfasted on egg-and-bacon croissants at a French cafe. A double espresso coffee got me zinging for a Vincent Van Gogh interactive art exhibit that we took in before heading home. Only in Chicago will there be three Van Gogh exhibits going on simultaneously.

We had a couple of warnings about the violence in Chicago. Every weekend there are x number of murders. Let me tell you, downtown Chicago is jammed packed with some of the most beautiful, peaceful people in the world. Add to that the architecture, the beautiful weather we were blessed with, and it was a right smart art weekend. Happy birthday, Ginnie.

Have a good story? Call or text Curt Swarm in Mt. Pleasant at 319-217-0526, find him on Facebook, email him at curtswarm@yahoo.com, or visit his website at www.empty-nest-words-photos-and-frames.com.



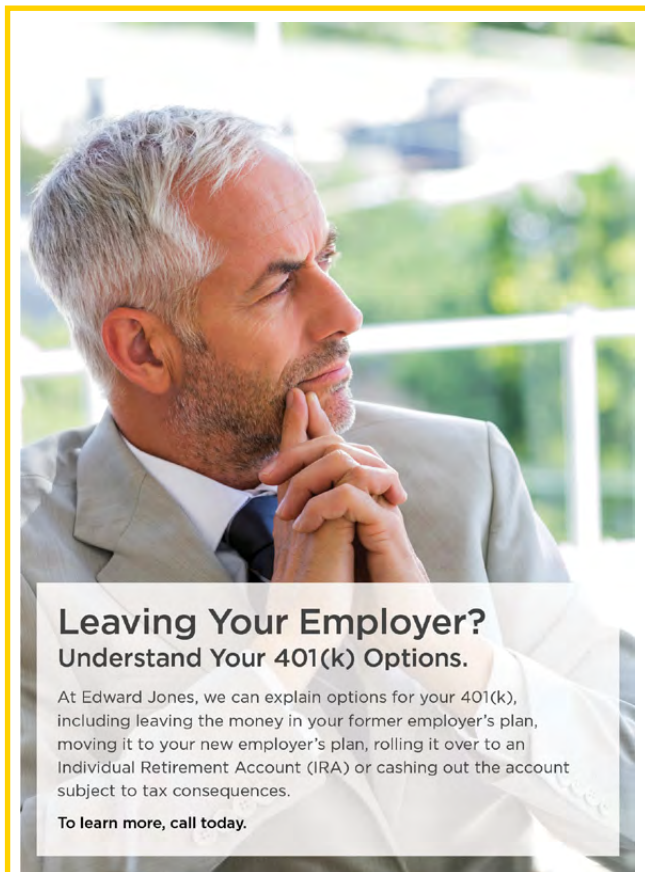
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AN EVENING WITH: JORDAN BOHANNON

SHEAFFER MEMORIAL GOLF COURSE

FRIDAY AUGUST 27TH

DINNER & SOCIAL HOUR 6-7PM

JORDAN SPEAKS 7-7:30PM

Q&A 7:30 - 7:45PM

MEET & GREET 8PM-

LIMITED 9 VIP TABLES AVAILABLE \$280 (SEATS 8)

INDIVIDUAL TICKETS \$35

DINNER, DRAFT BEER AND SODA INCLUDED WITH TICKET

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UNITED WAY Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2021

**KEOKUK YACHT CLUB
2029 RIVER ROAD
KEOKUK, IA**

**5-8 PM
DINE IN OR CARRY
OUT**

TICKETS \$10.00

**GET YOUR TICKETS AT THE
UNITED WAY OFFICES IN
KEOKUK OR FORT MADISON OR
FROM ANY UNITED WAY
BOARD MEMBER OR STAFF OR
PAY WHEN YOU GET THERE.**

**DINNER INCLUDES SPAGHETTI & MEATBALLS,
GARLIC BREAD, SIDE SALAD, ICED TEA &
DESSERT**