

# PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Monday, January 4, 2020 | 14 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 10



www.pencitycurrent.com

## TOP POST OF 2020: The tragic death of our daughter, Kelsey Ray Vandenberg

Feb. 21, 2020 - 31,460 views, 9,376 engagements

FORT MADISON - Despite the radiant light of the beautiful face above...our world is darker forever.

After a two-year battle with pulmonary hypertension, an idiopathic siege, that served side-by-side with the debilitation of Type 1 diabetes, our youngest daughter Kelsey was taken from us at 6 a.m. Thursday morning.

We are blessed to have a publication in which we provide news and information to North Lee County. But as a family business that people have come to rely on for the past four years, we have to sometimes be transparent in why you didn't get your product.

This sassy wonder brought joy to Fort Madison School teachers, but never really fit into the mold of the high school peer. She left high school early to start her education toward becoming a forensic psychologist. Kelsey made the Dean's List at the University of Iowa this year.

Our morning was horrific as we told her it was OK to let go. Lee and I have been twisted and torn. Our oldest daughter Taylor couldn't get back fast enough to say "Good Bye" and I'm a little mad about that. She said her good byes in private to her only sister through an open window at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinic's Decedent Care.

Give your children an extra hug... an extra look... and an extra kiss today and think of them. Running off to work... to school... to play, and remember that there is no doubt - "Every day is a treasure.... and today, our Kelsey is your key."

We love you all..... we'll be back..



## LOOKING BACK ON 2020

# 2020 will weigh heavy on us all

Editor's Note:

See ya 2020.

There was little to smile about in 2020 and the loss of our beautiful Kelsey made this past year at times insurmountable, unbearable, and improbable - often all at the same time.

But pressing on we managed to continue to provide local coverage of the events that matter most to you.

From crime, politics, and business, to sports, obituaries, and yes, health, we put together 224 E-editions, while maintaining 24/7 website traffic, and social media channels.



VANDEMBERG

Each year as we start the new year we look back at the news and events that shaped the lives of those in north Lee County.

The coronavirus will carry a heavy presence editorially this year. With daily reports on 14-day positivity rates, and the actions taken at all levels of government to help the public stay clear of the virus that is being connected to almost 4,000 deaths in Iowa alone in 2020 took up a lot of column inches this year.

We've lost loved ones, watched others suffer from afar, and heard the heroic tales of the front line health care professionals.

We've written about schools scrambling to serve the interests of not just students and staff, but families across Lee County.

And we've seen the gaping holes the virus has uncovered in our ability to stay connected in and between our rural communities.

The criteria for selecting the stories is based on Google analytics and social media traction on a month-to-month basis. We will combine two months per issue for the next six issues.

Current news will continue to be posted on our website and social media channels.

We hope you enjoy looking back on the year with us as we usher in a new year with a glance to regressing coronavirus and the peace that should follow along.

We thank you for your patronage and wish you a wonderful new year.

## JAN. 10, 2020: Carbon monoxide to blame in Denmark woman's death

4,340 views, 1,920 engagements

BY CHUCK VANDEMBERG  
PCC EDITOR

DENMARK - Area law enforcement suspect carbon monoxide poisoning may have caused the death of a Denmark woman and sent her husband to the hospital early Thursday morning.

Denmark Fire & Rescue personnel along with Lee County EMS and the Lee County Sheriff's Dept. were called to the

1400 block of 295th Avenue just north of Hwy. 16 on the west side of Denmark where two adults were found in a home.

Rescue crews pulled the victims from the building at around 7:45 a.m. and began ventilating the home.

Joan Lee Stevenson Pumphrey Walker, 87, of Denmark died as a result of the incident. Her husband Randall Walker was taken to an area hospital. No condition report on him was available.

Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber said findings won't be confirmed until toxicology reports are returned.

"Our office suspects this is possibly carbon monoxide poisoning and our thoughts and prayers are with the family," Weber said Friday.

## JAN. 6, 2020

# Area man tazed after chase through Lee County

4,626 views, 1,501 engagements

LEE COUNTY - An area man was tazed and taken into custody after being stopped by area law enforcement Monday afternoon.

The name and age of the individual

has not been released, but Lee County Sheriff's deputies along with Iowa Motor Vehicle Enforcement, Iowa State Patrol and West Point Police scrambled to capture a man who allegedly rammed a vehicle in the 1800 block of 345th Avenue near Wever, and then got out and punctured the tires of the vehicle.

A chased then ensued westbound on Highway 16 through Denmark at speeds between 60-80 mph. Authorities deployed stop sticks in his path and punctured the right front tire.

The suspect continued on the tire and made a northbound turn on 265th Avenue where the vehicle became disabled and pulled off the road.

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## WEATHER

THU 09 Jan..... Overcast, 35° F/ 27° F  
FRI 10 Jan ..... Overcast, 36° F/ 26° F  
SAT 11 Jan ..... Light Rain, 38° F/ 34° F

## IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 01/02 .....14 15 16 36 41, Star Ball: 4, All Star Bonus: 5  
LUCKY FOR LIFE 12/31 ..... 11 28 30 39 43, Lucky Ball: 14  
MEGA MILLIONS 01/01 .....8 24 53 68 69, Mega Ball: 17 Megaplier: 3  
PICK 3 12/31, 01/01, 01/02 MIDDAY ..... 0 75, 18 1, 2 8 5  
PICK 3 12/31, 01/01, 01/02 EVENING .....9 95, 4 0 2, 2 8 7  
PICK 4 12/31, 01/01, 01/02 MIDDAY .....6 6 8 7, 2 5 2 1, 5 1 1 3  
PICK 4 12/31, 01/01, 01/02 EVENING.....8 0 5 7, 8 0 4 8, 9 7 3 7  
POWERBALL 01/02..... 3 4 11 41 67, Powerball: 5, Power Play: 2

OpenWeatherMap

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## 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

# We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2020

Zephan William Abel  
 Lyle E. Acker  
 William M. "Bill" Adams  
 Mary L. Amann  
 Tawnya K. Ammer  
 Reva Marlene Anderson  
 David A. Andrews  
 Ronald David "Dave"  
 Andrews, Jr.  
 Carmen Arnold  
 Opal Jean "Nick" Arnold  
 Delene Rae Atterberg  
 Danny C Bailey  
 Mary "Lucille" Bailey  
 Nancy Mae Baker  
 Verlin Morris Baker  
 Richard W. Baldwin  
 Wayne E. Ball  
 Richard Lee Ballew  
 Warren "Barney" Barnum  
 Rodney J. Bartholomew  
 Jack Richford Bartlett  
 Rosanna Bartlett  
 William J. Bartlett  
 Philip "Phil" Beelendorf  
 Thomas J. Bell  
 William G. Bennett  
 Anna Mae "Mick" Bentler  
 Edna Martha Bentzinger  
 Rosalie Jane Bentzinger  
 Dr. Harvey Stanford  
 Benveniste  
 Betty Bernice Biddenstadt  
 Donald Gene "Biggie"  
 Bigelow, Jr.

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 Ronald R. Blint  
 Sharon Kay Bode  
 Terry Lynn Bode  
 Elmer John Boegner  
 Jeannette P. Bolanos  
 Donald G. Boldt  
 Randy Keith Boltz  
 Tilden A. Bottger  
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 King Edward Bradley, Jr.  
 Reggie Ray Brannon  
 Sandra "Sandy" E.  
 Bremhorst  
 John W. Briscoe  
 Devyn Michael Broeker  
 James William "Buzz"  
 Brooks, Jr.  
 Sharon L. Brotherton  
 Joy Lee Brown  
 Ramon D. Brown  
 Carmella Lucy  
 Brunnelson  
 Shirley Maxine (Bryant) Batley  
 William "Billy" Buckner  
 Matthew Warren Burford  
 Ronnie Lee Butler  
 Julia Louise Byrne  
 George William "Bill" Cackley  
 Kevin Greg "Pops"  
 Cahoon  
 Mary Louise Calfee  
 Margaret Jean Campbell  
 Mary Marjorie Campbell  
 (Peterson)

Ronald Eugene Carr  
 Billy Joe Carroll  
 Richard L. "Dick" Carson  
 Jackie "Jack" D. Carter  
 Charles A. Chambers  
 Brad J. Christensen  
 Evelyn D. Christian  
 Jeremy Scott Claman  
 Dewey Lee Clark  
 June Anne Clippert  
 Sharon L. Cockrell  
 Mary Jo Cole  
 Henry Edward Collins, Jr.  
 Louise Collins  
 Dustin Thompson Colyer  
 Cheryl Connors  
 Jay Frank Cook  
 Benita B. Coons  
 Laura Joan Cooper  
 Larry Gene Coppage  
 Rosena M. "Skip"  
 Coppage  
 Joseph "Joe" Daniel  
 Corvaia  
 Cecil Eugene Cossel, Jr.  
 Dr. Rick C. Courtney  
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 Karen J. Cox  
 Ruby Rose (Cron) Smith  
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 Daugherty  
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 Elizabeth Jane Dodge  
 James L. Doore  
 Alga "Colleen" Douglas  
 Judith Kay Dowell  
 Thomas J. Durgin

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 Donna S. Eaves  
 Jack Edward Eaves  
 Dale Joseph Eckhardt  
 Elizabeth Edwards  
 Lillian Renee Lynn Eid  
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 Jerry Elliott  
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 Calvin Elschlager  
 Francis Mark Enderle  
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 Cindy J. Faul  
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 Thomas Harold Ferguson  
 Connie Ferrill  
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 Judy Ann Fullenkamp  
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 Victoria Marie Green  
 Steven E. Greenig  
 Steven Griffiths  
 Martha E. "Marcy"  
 Grimwood  
 Alice Jane Groene  
 John William Grogan

Aarin J Guzman  
 Eleanor Eunice "Ellie"  
 Hagmeier  
 Ora J. Halferty  
 Felix M. Hall  
 Evelyn M. Hamilton  
 Neoma M. Hamm  
 Dennis Dean Hamma  
 Tony O'Neil Hand  
 Carol K. Hardin  
 Linda Kay Hardin Ohnoutka  
 Nedra Hardin Adkins  
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 John "Jack" Harrington  
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 Carla Hart  
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 Thompson  
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 Holtkamp  
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 Lucene T. Kramer  
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 Lillian "Lil" Faye Kraus  
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Merry Christmas



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JAN. 9, 2020

Huffman named to STEM board  
 4,096 views, 675 engagements

BY PCC STAFF  
 DES MOINES – Fort Madison's Jason Huffman, of Huffman Welding & Machine Inc., and Huff-

man Farm & Home, has been selected by Gov. Kim Reynolds to sit on the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council.

Huffman is one of 32 members of the advisory council that gives direction to Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics efforts across the state.

Huffman is a 2008 graduate of St. Ambrose University with a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in industrial engineering.

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PEN CITY CURRENT  
 It's Black & White and Read all over

Member LION Publishers  
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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.

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

## 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

# We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2020

Karen T. Krogmeier  
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 Linda Jo Kruse  
 Terry Kunde  
 Michael Todd Lamm  
 Nellie Mae Ruth Lamma  
 Annabelle Lammering  
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 Donna Martin-Netherton  
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 Karen R. Martinez  
 Thomas Wayne Matheis  
 Allen Lee Matous  
 Clifford Mathew Matta  
 Gerald S. Matter  
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 Rebecca Ann Mauzy  
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 Wanda M. McClellan  
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 Patrick Leonard McEntee  
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 R. Forrest McFerren  
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 Mae Lu Meister  
 Carolina M. Mendez  
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 Corinne "Cory" Menke  
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 Myron Wayne Pundt  
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 William Delbert Real  
 Gwendolyn Diane Redd  
 Carol G. Reed  
 Liam Shayne Reitinger  
 Marvin "Dale" Richardson  
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 Cynthia Christine Rippenkroeger  
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 Oweda Irene Schneider  
 Robert Andrew Schneider  
 Donald Lemoyne Schrader  
 William Eugene Schulze  
 Nicholas James "Nick" Schwartz  
 Paul Leo Scott  
 Franklin D. Secord  
 Ray Stephen Selby  
 Mary Kathryn Sickels  
 Celia Siegrist  
 Kelly F. Skelton  
 Belva A. Skinner  
 Barbara Ann Smith  
 Irene Smith  
 Joseph M. "Little Joe" Smith  
 Michael T. "Mickey" Smith  
 John "Jack" Smutzer  
 David Eugene Soppe  
 Jan Lee Sorensen  
 Gary Allen Sprague  
 Gregory John "Buzz" Stark  
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**JAN. 9, 2020**

## Area braces for winter storm

**4,626 views, 1,535 engagements**

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
 PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – A potential major winter storm is brewing for southeast Iowa, and area officials are keeping an eye to movements in the storm.

Both Lee County and Fort Madison officials have regular plans in place to react to the storm, including having road personnel on call depending on what type of precipitation hits the area.

According to the National Weather Service at 12:30 p.m. Thursday, a winter storm watch is in effect for southeast Iowa including Lee County. The NWS has also issued a wind advisory until 6 p.m. Thursday for the immediate area.

Winds from the south are expected to be between 15 and 30 mph with gusts up to 45 mph, which could cause limbs to fall, unsecured objects to blow around, and possible power outages.

The current forecast is calling for one to two inches of rain Friday that could eventually turn to sleet and freezing rain

making travel very difficult. Saturday morning the ice is expected to change to all snow ending Saturday night. The highest potential for freezing rain and sleet is extreme southeast Iowa, west central Illinois, and northeast Missouri.

The NWS report indicated that significant ice and snow accumulations are possible with blowing snow making travel difficult. According to mapping from the NWS at 3:30 a.m. Thursday, the area between Burlington, Fort Madison and Keokuk could see as much as 8" of snow before Sunday morning. But the report also says confidence is low on the track of the storm.

Fort Madison City Manager David Varley, who's overseeing the Public Works Department ahead of the start of Mark Boussetot on Jan. 20, said the city is watching the situation.

"We're keeping a sharp eye on it. If temps drop we'll have guys ready on call and if hits the way they're saying it might, we'll be out on the streets," Varley said.

He said the city doesn't pre-treat for ice, but we'll quickly respond to ice conditions by getting sand trucks on the streets.

May the timeless message  
of Christmas fill your heart and  
home with joy now  
and throughout the coming year.

MERRY  
CHRISTMAS  
& HAPPY NEW YEAR

From all of us  
at Holy Trinity Catholic Schools

HOLY TRINITY  
H.T.C.  
CATHOLIC

# 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

**FEB. 17, 2020**

## Accident sends two to area hospital

**4,533 views, 1,811 engagements**

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – A two-vehicle accident on 15th Street in front of W-M Johnson Truck Line Monday afternoon sent two people to Fort Madison Community Hospital.

According to witnesses who saw the accident, a blue Mercury Cougar was southbound on 15th Street and had two tires slide off onto the west shoulder. Upon correction, the vehicle struck the back side of a FedEx truck heading northbound.

The FedEx truck slid sideways and rolled several times coming to rest into the west ditch.

Personnel at W-M Johnson and a motorist pulled the FedEx driver from the vehicle through the front window and tended to him while awaiting emergency responders.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

A Mercury Cougar sits in the middle of 15th Street after colliding with the FedEx truck that rests on its side in the west ditch near W-M Johnson Truck Lines Monday afternoon. Two were sent to the hospital as a result of the collision.

**FEB. 17, 2020**

## FM YMCA takes over Donnellson daycares

**4,356 views, 1,328 engagements**

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

DONNELLSON – The Fort Madison YMCA will be taking over operations of two day care centers in Donnellson.

The Raisin’ Em Up Early Learning Center in Donnellson, and Raisin’ Em On Up, also in Donnellson will begin operations under the Fort Madison YMCA on March 30.

Fort Madison YMCA director Ryan Wilson said the YMCA only began looking at purchasing the day care providers on Jan. 16 of this year.

“We had a board meeting on the 16th and I had actually received a call that they were for sale earlier that day,” Wilson said Monday.

“We didn’t want to rush

into anything. So we put a committee together to hash it out to make sure it makes sense financially and fits the mission. Then I reached out to the owner and began discussions.”

Wilson said he took several YMCA board members out to tour the facilities and has spoken with staff on site.

The facilities came under fire from the Iowa Department of Human Services through most of 2019, and on June 13 had 15 complaints filed against the facilities and owner Sarah Tweedy after unannounced visits were conducted in April and June. Tweedy appealed the complaints and the situation was working its way through the DHS administrative process at the time of the sale.

At one point DHS

officials started a 10-day revocation timeline against Tweedy, but the appeal delayed the license revocation.

In August, Laura McDowell, a site supervisor for the daycares, was charged with child endangerment after an incident at the facility resulted in the death of a child in December of 2018. McDowell has pleaded not guilty in that case and pretrial conference has been set for Feb. 14, with a pre-trial motions deadline set for March 10.

Wilson said he’s spoken with the Department of Human Services and the facilities will have a clean slate under the YMCA’s ownership, and the state is not requiring any changes to take place after the sale.

Wilson said additional one-on-ones are scheduled with current staff, but he said plans are to keep the

current staffing, hours, and rates at least for the first 90 days.

“If we need to make any changes to we may look at that at the beginning of the next school year,” he said.

Once ownership changes hands the facilities will be tentatively be called the Fort Madison YMCA Early Learning Center, and the Fort Madison YMCA Learning Center for the older children.

Wilson said initial reactions to the YMCA taking over has been good.

“We’ve heard nothing but great things from the community about us taking over,” he said.

He said there is room for additional children at the facilities. With the unknown future of the centers as DHS officials considered the appeal, families have taken their children to other places.

**JAN. 11, 2020**

## Jeep plows through garage on new S curve

**4,205 views, 1,180 engagements**

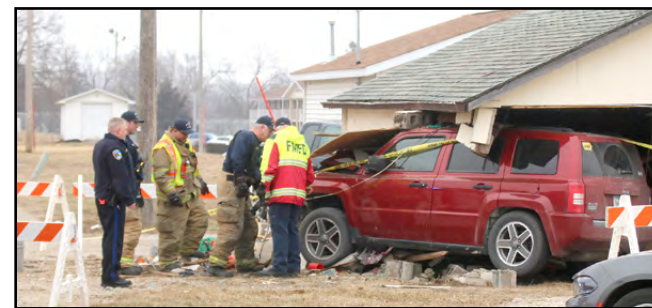
BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – No injuries were sustained when a red Jeep plowed through a garage on the newly constructed S Curve in the 3500 block of Avenue L Friday afternoon.

According to Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren, a woman, who’s name was not available at press time, admitted to distracted driving and failed to negotiate the turn and crashed into a garage on the south side of Avenue L, taking out the northwest corner of the garage and coming to rest half in and half out of the garage.

Rescue personnel were on hand to stabilize the building before removing the vehicle.

Herren said the garage suffered roughly \$10,000 damage, and the Jeep is likely totaled.



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# 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

**FEB. 17, 2020**

## Car thieves hit Jim Baier

**4,522 views, 1,349 engagements**

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – An overnight break in at Jim Baier Ford in Fort Madison has police looking for at least four vehicles.

According to owner Jamie Baier the suspects broke into the business on the west end of Fort Madison sometime overnight and drove two vehicles off the showroom floor, including a 2020 Dodge Charger Hellcat Daytona, one of only 501 built.

The suspects also took a 2020 orange Ford Mustang off the floor.

They left a 2020 Silver Jeep on the floor.

“Maybe they didn’t know how to drive stick,” Baier said from the dealership Monday morning.

Fort Madison Police are also looking for a 2019 black Dodge Challenger and a 2015 white Dodge Challenger taken from the lot.

Baier said the suspects smashed the key box in the sales bullpen that holds the keys and drove the vehicles right out the front door.

According to Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff, the method of operation has the marks of a professional ring that has been working in the Midwest and indicated an investigator has been called to the scene.

Baier said the dealership doesn’t have showroom alarms because he’s never had anything like this happen. He did have camera footage, but that was taken as well.

Baier said the suspects also got away with dealer plates.

“I’m sure they put these plates on. But these cars aren’t hard to see.”

Anyone with information or observing the vehicles is encouraged to contact the Fort Madison Police Department.

Jim Baier staff are still completing a total inventory of the dealership.



PCC File Photo

The Ford Mustang above was just one of four showroom vehicles taken from the Jim Baier dealership in Fort Madison on Feb. 27, 2020. None of the vehicles were recovered.

**JAN. 17, 2020**

## FM ConAgra announces facilities expansion

**4,124 views, 662 engagements**

BY PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – The Lee County Conagra Brands facility announced today that they are expanding their facilities, investing \$31,900,000 and adding approximately 91 jobs. The Lee County facility currently employs approximately 450 individuals.

To help facilitate this expansion and creation of jobs, the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) board has awarded Conagra \$1.2 million over five years as part of the High Quality Jobs tax credit program. In order to qualify for this program, the jobs must pay a minimum of \$17.09 per hour at the beginning of the project and at least \$20.51 once the project is completed.

“Conagra has been a great partner to the community,” commented Lee County EDG Project Director Dana Millard. “We are excited about the announcement of this project and bringing additional high paying careers to Lee County,” Millard said.

The project will bring the production of canned beans to the Fort Madison facility. The expansion involves a significant investment of machinery and equipment however they do not plan to expand the physical footprint of the building. Equipment installation is scheduled to begin at the end of July.

“We are excited to expand production at our facility,” said the plant’s manager, Bryan Langerud. “We continue to focus on the growth of our business and are pleased to create more opportunities in the Fort Madison area,” he said.

The plant has been part of the community since 1972 when it was opened by the Dial Corporation. In 2011, two additional lines were added to the plant to produce Birds Eye.

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# 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

**JAN. 31, 2020**

4,076 views, 611 engagements



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Former Vice President Joe Biden tells about 120 potential voters at Quality Inn & Suites Friday why the Republican party doesn't want him to be the nominee.

**FEB. 28, 2020**

## State, federal grants kickstart Sheriff's GHOST team

3,943 views, 529 engagements

BY PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – A federal and state supported grant has put a Lee County Strike Team on the ground rooting out habitual drug and gun offenders.

According to Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber, the Lee County Sheriff's Office applied for and received a grant for overtime costs associated with the Guns & Habitual Offenders Strike Team (G.H.O.S.T) to be formed to combat certain repeat offenders in the county.

This unit was formed under a memorandum of understanding with both Keokuk and Fort Madison police departments. The unit was awarded nearly \$26,000 in funding to pay for officers from all three agencies to work collectively to combat repeat offenders who are determined to deal drugs, commit felonies, and carry illegal firearms.

On Tuesday this unit officially hit the streets. Officers were able to identify and arrest three different felony level wanted subjects and one misdemeanor level subject. Methamphetamine was also seized and one house was searched.

The focus of this unit is to seek out repeat offenders who continue to be armed illegally while violating Iowa laws. This unit will work with the Lee County Narcotics Task Force to help disrupt organized crime and dismantle criminal organizations.

The unit consists of two deputies, one Fort Madison police officer, and the Keokuk Police Department has not made an assignment at the time of this release.

Any additional comments and news releases will come from either Commander Donaldson of the LCNTF, the Lee County Sheriff, or the chief of the participating agency.

This funding is made possible by a grant provided by the Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy and the United States Attorney's Office –Southern District of Iowa.

**JAN. 7, 2020**

## YMCA opens cardio studio downtown

3,822 views, 580 engagements

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Another cardio workout center is coming to neighborhood near you.

If you live on the city's east side, you'll soon be able to access the YMCA downtown, according to Fort Madison YMCA executive director Ryan Wilson.

Wilson told the Fort Madison City Council, during a new community update section of the meetings, that the YMCA will be signing a lease at 802 Avenue G, where The Bookmark and The Avenue were located.

"That's now going to be ours. Barker Financial and the YMCA have come to a partnership where we will occupy the

entire main floor. On the west side is our jiu jitsu and gymnastics. On the east side will be cardio and weight equipment in the front," Wilson said.

The back area that used to be a hair salon will become some sort of yoga, tap or balet studio, he said.

Wilson said the YMCA will manage the property and will work on the projects, but tenants at the Old Lee County apartments and the Kingsley guests will have access to the facility as well.

He said current YMCA members will also have access to the facility.

Wilson said he hopes the future of the YMCA includes some sort of all-day child care. He said it's the top inquiry he gets at the YMCA, but he said space is also a concern.

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## 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

**JAN. 8, 2020**

### Barker projects garner state 1,000 Friends award

**3,935 views, 340 engagements**

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

project and some really good work,” Galloway said Wednesday.

“I didn’t know anything about the award until today.”

According to release from the 1000 Friends of Iowa Tuesday, the work is inspiring other activity in Fort Madison’s Historic District.

“Fort Madison’s Downtown Commercial Historic District included the Lee County Bank, built in 1893, and Cattermole Library, built in 1894. Both sat vacant for many years. Barker Financial Group rehabilitated and renovated the exterior and interior of both buildings, leading to a renewed downtown area.

FORT MADISON – The Iowa City firm that resurrected the rehabilitation of two of Fort Madison’s oldest downtown buildings will be recognized for its work at a ceremony Tuesday in Des Moines.

The three-year renovation of the Old Lee County Bank building and the Cattermole Library by Barker Financial out of Iowa City is getting an award from the 1,000 Friends of Iowa as part of the group’s 2019 Best Development Awards.

The projects tied for Best Mixed Use projects and Kyle Galloway, Chief Financial Officer for Barker Financial, said he was surprised by the recognition.

“I think Dan Rice with RDG Construction saw the value in the project and submitted it. It’s an incredibly well-done

**JAN. 22, 2020**

### Denning named to Forbes list

**3,702 views, 584 engagements**

FORT MADISON – Joshua R. Denning, CRPC, CLTC, a Private Wealth Advisor with Ameriprise Financial in Fort Madison, IA, was named to the list of “Best-in-State Wealth Advisors” published by Forbes magazine. The list recognizes financial advisors who have demonstrated high levels of ethical standards, professionalism and success in the business.

The rankings are based on data provided by over 11,000 of the nation’s most productive advisors. Denning was chosen based on assets under management, industry experience, regulatory and compliance record and revenue produced over a three-year period. Denning is part of Joshua Denning & Associates a private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc. Denning graduated from St. Ambrose College with a degree in finance/economics.

**JAN. 8, 2020**

### City starts work on PORT Connector trail

**3,969 views, 760 engagements**

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The first meeting of the newly structured Fort Madison City Council was highlighted by a move to put the construction of the PORT Connector Trail to Rodeo Park in action.

The Community Health Foundation, a joint venture of Great River Health System-Fort Madison Community Hospital, pledged \$1.5 million to the project this summer.

The city serves as the pass-through for the money to get the work done. At Tuesday’s regular city council meeting, the council voted 6-0 to approve a professional services agreement for \$214,000 with HR Green of Cedar Rapids for design and construction administration services for three segments of the trail.

Segment 1 will be built on the west side of 15th Street from Avenue B to Rodeo Park. Segment 2 will be constructed along the north side of Avenue B from the 15th Street to Fort Madison High School. A third segment is planned along 15th Street from Avenue H to Avenue G.

The City has placed segments 1 and 2 as priorities

over segment 3.

Former Public Works Director Larry Driscoll was on hand to speak on the issue along with Tim Cutsforth of HR Green and Angie Budnik representing the Community Health Foundation.

“This is another example of the wonderful work the PORT committee does,” said City Manager David Varley.

“It’s a very ambitious group and I haven’t seen another group that can match the energy it has and the success it has had in raising funds. Their work has been phenomenal.”

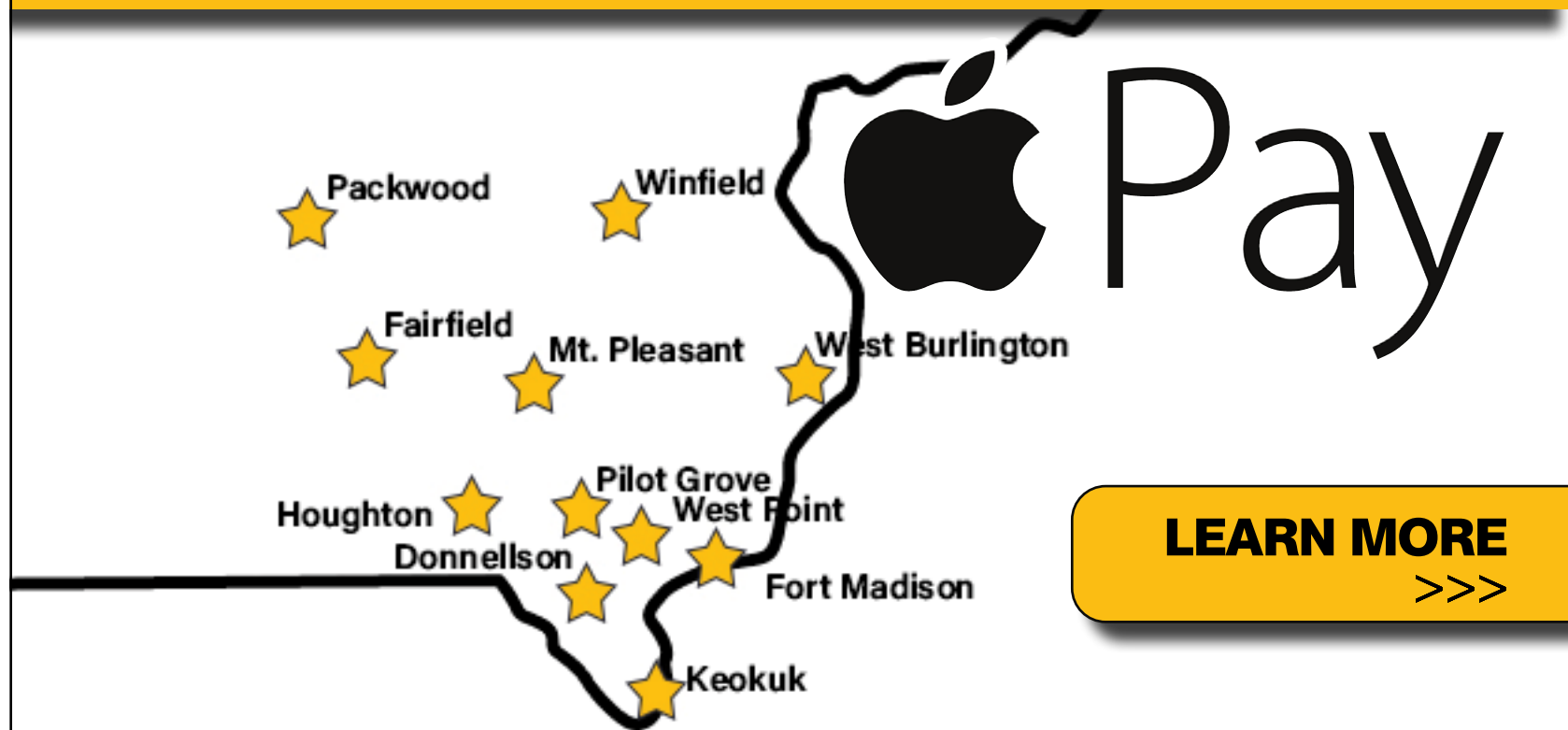
Driscoll said segment one has to be done in 2020, as part of a commitment to the foundation as part of the grant. He also said the foundation reserves the right to name the trail as part of the donation.

Councilman Tyler Miller asked Driscoll how long the project would take to complete.

“I would think if everything went well from start to finish, 12 months for two segments would be acceptable,” he said.

“They are very committed to this project and obviously would like to see it. come to fruition,” Budnik added.

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# 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

**JAN. 8, 2020**

## City watching Humphrey building closely

3,719 views, 947 engagements

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCG EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The city of Fort Madison is keeping a close eye on progress of a building that is structurally deficient in the middle of downtown.

Activity has been seen at the building, which according to the Lee County Recorder's information is owned by Bryan Humphrey and is located at the corner of 8th Street and Avenue G. City officials cordoned off 8th Street south of Avenue G to the alley and in front of the building more than three months ago.

At Tuesday's regular city council meeting, councilman Mark Lair asked for an update on the progress of the building and the barricaded streets.

"I've been getting a lot of questions from the downtown area because of a certain building that's in disrepair and taking a lot of parking spaces from retailers. Do we know where we're at with that," Lair asked.

Mohrfeld said he was in a staff meeting on Friday and told city staff this can't go on.

"This cannot be the face of our community. We can't be held hostage by one irresponsible property owner.

It's not right. We have to do everything we can."

Mohrfeld said city Building Director Doug Krogmeier was working hard on the situation, but he said there is a mitigation plan in place and city officials only know of some of that progress.

"Is it moving as fast as we want, No. But we will know when the building is stabilized," the mayor said.

Mohrfeld said work is happening on the building but city officials don't know the timeline of the internal repairs to stabilize the building. He said it will be joint effort to expedite the mitigation.

"It's just not acceptable that that's what you see when you turn into our city," Mohrfeld said.

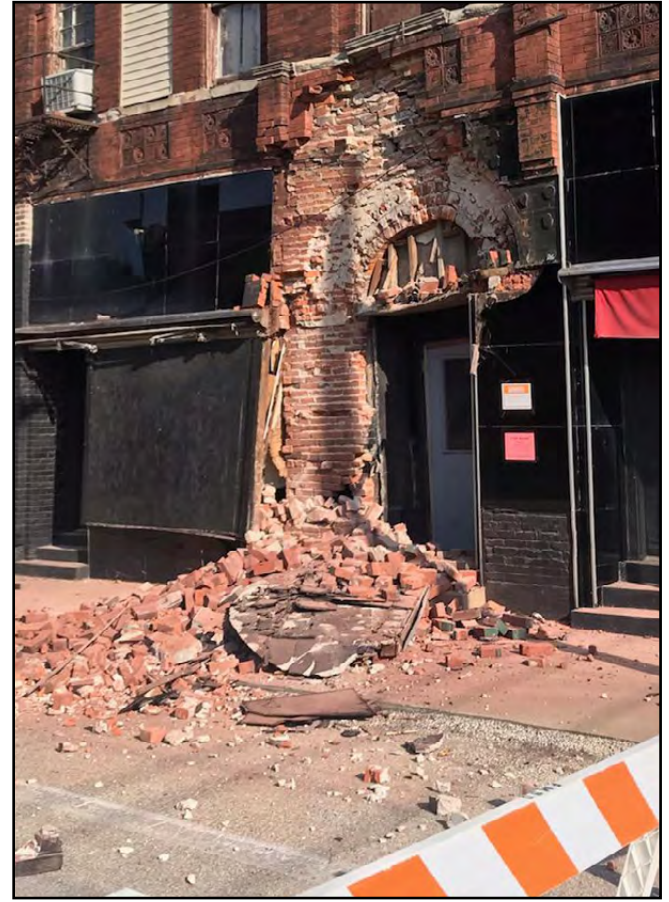
"It's one thing when it's a misfortune, but it's another when you start messing with other peoples' livelihood."

Lair said the people who have contacted him have retail businesses and have indicated they are missing out on up to nine parking spaces.

But Mohrfeld indicated the city will not pull the barricades until staff is confident the structure is safe.

"Be there no doubt, it is our responsibility to safeguard the public area," he said.

"It's tough situation...a tough situation."



City officials have been keeping a close physical and legal eye on the Humphrey building in downtown FM throughout 2020.

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# 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

**FEB. 16, 2020**

## Mohrfeld medals at state swim meet

**3,527 views, 236 engagements**

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

IOWA CITY – Holy Trinity Catholic’s Jacob Mohrfeld garnered a top five finish in the 100 breaststroke at the Iowa State Swim Meet Saturday in Iowa City.

Mohrfeld recorded a 58.54 in the 100 breaststroke, 5.39 seconds off the pace of Forrest Frazier of Iowa City High, whose 53.15 qualified him for All-American status. Mohrfeld, who swims for the Burlington Grayhounds, earned 14 team points for the finish.

Keokuk’s Dylan Jones was third in the event with a 57.38, earning the Keokuk team 16 points. Jones also tied for 11th in the 200 Individual Medley with a time of 1:56.73.

Mohrfeld said past experiences at the state tournament helped him keep perspective on the day.

“I’ve been to state the past two years so that experience helps,” he said. “I just kept thinking that this was my last high school event so I wanted to focus on that.”

Having Olympic-bound Frazier several lanes down in his heat in the 100 breaststroke didn’t intimidate Mohrfeld.

“He isn’t within reach. He’s in USA Swimming with me and I’ve seen at him at other events, so I don’t focus on him, I just go and try to compete with everyone else.”

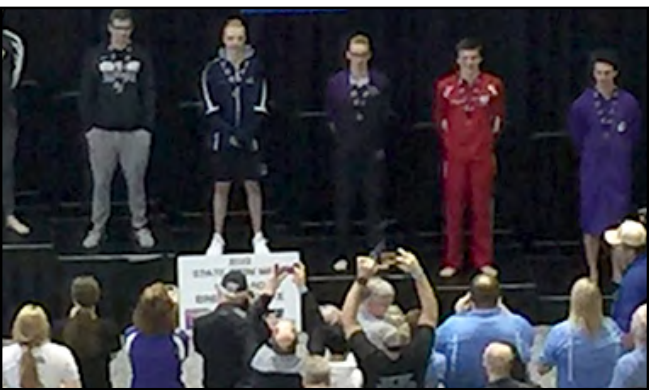
Mohrfeld said his future plans include swimming and he said he still has YMCA state and regionals to focus on in Iowa. He’s also involved with the USA Futures Championships and that usually requires some travel.

The HTC senior competed at the Speedo™ Championships held in Minneapolis last year and had times good enough to qualify for the USA Futures events.

“That’s pretty serious there. They have some really fast swimmers and they divide the whole country into four sections.”

Mohrfeld also competed in 200 meter freestyle and finished 21st with a time of 1:47.83.

The Burlington team of Wyatt Hellman, Colby Geiger, Taden Jameson, and Mohrfeld took 17th in the 200 meter freestyle relay, one position out of the points.



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**FEB. 3, 2020**

**3,469 views, 518 engagements**



“Quality control issues” were the story of the night during February’s Iowa Caucuses. Delays in reporting the results out of Iowa became a national news story as Iowa results took weeks to tabulate. Caucusers at Lincoln Elementary had to undergo several recounts on ballots.

**JAN. 11, 2020**

## Friends of Old Fort helping boost funding

**3,464 views, 373 engagements**

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The flooding of 2019 took a toll on the Old Fort as far as numbers, but the added American Cruise Lines traffic helped offset some of the loss.

Dr. Eugene Watkins, Site Manager of the Old Fort said a fundraising effort is currently underway through Friends of the Old Fort, which operates under the North Lee County Historical Society’s 501c3 arm.

Watkins said funds are needed to help replace some of the interpretive items at the fort.

“At this point, the main part of the fundraising is to replace those things that are wearing out,” Watkins said Wednesday afternoon.

“The fort is close to 30 years old and a lot of the equipment and clothing is just getting old and is need of replacement.”

Other items that will have to be replaced in the near future include firearms and trade goods that add to the factory display at the fort.

The historical society has set an immediate fundraising goal of \$10,000.

“Of course, we’d take more than that and can certainly use more than that, but at this point we’re trying to raise enough money for replacement of things wearing out, but we will also need to start looking at getting materials for additional repairs.”

Watkins said the flooding kept numbers down in the early part of the season, but the cruise lines helped the fort rebound as far as attendance.

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Gathering for the holidays is something we look forward to all year long. Here are some tips to keep those you love healthy this year.

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- Gather in a space where families can stay 6’ apart, outdoors is best. If indoors, open the windows.
- Wear a mask and safely store your mask when eating & drinking.
- Bring your own food or have one person serve the meal.
- Use disposable plates and utensils.
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# 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

**JAN. 17, 2020**

## City initiates court action on crumbling Humphrey building

**3,622 views, 739 engagements**

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld announced Friday that the city has initiated court proceedings against the owner of a building in downtown Fort Madison.

Mohrfeld said the Humphrey building on the corner of Avenue G and 8th Street is a public safety and nuisance issue and is looking for judicial intervention.

According to Lee County records, the building is owned by Bryan J. Humphrey, a former practicing attorney in Fort Madison.

“Regarding the Humphrey Building located at 732 Avenue G, the Mayor and City staff are working diligently to resolve the public safety and nuisance issues,” Mohrfeld wrote in an email to the Pen City Current Friday morning.

“We hope to have a trial date before the Lee County District Court in the next ninety days.”

He said the city will continue to work with the owner to resolve the issues, but it asking the court for assistance during the process.

“If the conditions are not abated voluntarily before trial, the City will seek a court order requiring the issues to be rectified and authorizing the City to rectify them if the defendant does not comply with the order.”

Portions of 8th Street between Avenue G and Avenue H were cordoned off last fall when structural defects were observed that could jeopardize public safety.

In November, city officials expanded the barricade to include an entire half block from Avenue G to the alley south. About a week later settling occurred causing brick facing to fall to the sidewalk inside the barricades.

Work has been done to shore up the exterior of the building and city officials said plans were submitted to shore up the interior of the structure, but Mohrfeld said at a city council meeting two weeks ago that the city wasn't aware of how that work was progressing.

**FEB. 4, 2020**

## County Recorder says offices need better security

**3,469 views, 723 engagements**

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE – Lee County Recorder Nancy Booten wants the county supervisors to do something about security in Fort Madison.

And she wants it now.

After Tuesday's regular Lee County Board of Supervisors meeting, Booten told supervisors that in addition to her department holding active attacker training last week, police chased two men from the building Monday.

She said her staff is understandably concerned about their safety.

“We've heard for years, ‘let's do something about safety’, ‘what's a life worth. Well they don't feel like they're worth anything. They really don't because nothing's been done,” Booten said.

She said recently there were two customers that had made the staff nervous and warranted a call to law enforcement. After investigating footage it was determined the two had arrest records and were later arrested for theft the same evening they were in the North Lee County offices.

Booten said her department is first in the door and the height of the counter makes her staff and herself very susceptible to harm if something were to happen.

“You hear all the time it can't happen here... we heard it can't happen here, well it happened at (Scotts),” She said. “We want something done. We want a door and some teller windows.”

She said she didn't think it was very expensive for the improvements, and anything that could cause a delay to someone who wants to do harm could save a life.

Booten said the south Lee County offices were given security upgrades but nothing has happened in North Lee County aside from some occasional deputy presence.

“The state doesn't give us a dime, but we're protecting them. Our staff doesn't feel like we're protecting us,” she said.

“If I have to take it out of my budget, since we're talking about budgets... whatever. I just think we need to do something and we need to do it now.”

Supervisor Gary Folluo said there should be a hallway at North Lee County similar to what Keokuk has. “And you should be behind a wall of glass,” Folluo said.

Supervisor Matt Pflug said Booten was making valid points.

“The state doesn't give us anything and, again, we kick this can around a lot. I know it all takes money but it's a life,” Pflug said. “We have to do something, you're exactly right.”

**JAN. 30, 2020**

## FM man injured after being struck by vehicle on Ave. O

**3,455 views, 1,107 engagements**

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A 68-year old Fort Madison man suffered possible injuries after being struck by a car in the 4900 block of Avenue O Wednesday.

Fort Madison and Lee County rescue personnel responded to the scene just before 7 p.m. and found Larry Messerschmitt had crossed the street at an uncontrolled loca-

tion, and was struck by a vehicle driven by Richard Gary Scott, 55, of Fort Madison.

According to police reports, Scott was headed eastbound in the left lane on Avenue O when Messerschmitt headed northbound across the street. Scott veered to the left to try and avoid the pedestrian, but police said Messerschmitt struck the passenger front side of the Scott's 2003 Chevrolet Cavalier.

Messerschmitt bounced off the vehicle but was not run over. He was transported to Fort Madison Community Hospital complaining of hip pain and scrapes to his hands. No condition report on Messerschmitt is available per state privacy rules.

Scott's vehicle came to rest in the westbound left-hand lane.

The report also indicated that no marking were left on the dirt covering Scotts vehicle, nor was any damage reported to the vehicle. No citations were issued at the scene.

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# 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

**JAN. 17, 2020**



## FMEDC props up FMHS welding

**3,549 views, 360 engagements**

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison Economic Development Corporation (FMEDC) presented a check for \$1,000.00 to the FMHS Welding Program after challenging them with a match for any funds they raise – up to \$1,000.00.

These funds will go to help bolster the welding program at the high school, as well as provide the needed money to get a piece of equipment up and running, which will give the program the opportunity to fabricate projects that will allow them to raise money for the program.

FMEDC's mission is to improve the economy of the Fort Madison area through the retention of jobs, while realizing a constant growth in employment through: job creation, focusing on industrial relations and development. Continuing the on-going support for our trades program and giving the next generation of workforce the opportunity to experience these skills is a continued goal for the economic development group

**JAN. 7, 2020**

## FMCSO board puts PPEL levy in front of voters

**3,144 views, 303 engagements**

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – Local school officials have taken the next step in trying to get district facilities upgraded over the next 10 years.

The district voted unanimously at a workshop Monday evening to put a voted Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) on a March 30th special ballot.

The move would generate about \$1 million

per year, according to district business manager Sandy Elmore. Taxpayers would see a \$1.34 levy per \$1,000 of equalized assessed valuation on their tax bill.

But Elmore said even with conservative estimations of about a 1.5% allowable growth from the Iowa legislature this year, the district's tax asking would be in the range from static at \$12.86/\$1,000 EAV to possibly a couple cents lower.

**FEB. 10, 2020**

## WP Council kicks around levy bump

**3,372 views, 500 engagements**

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

WEST POINT – Taxpayers in West Point could see a substantial bump in their property tax rates this year.

At Monday's regular meeting of the West Point City Council, the council voted 5-0 to set a public hearing at a special Feb. 24 meeting to set the levy.

Because the levy increase is more than 2%, state law requires a special hearing for the levy to allow taxpayers to hear what the council is planning to do with the money.

The Iowa legislature put a new law on the books this year that places a 2% soft cap on property tax revenue growth on governmental bodies.

West Point officials are projecting a 7.44% increase for fiscal year 2020-21. In 2019-20 the district taxed residents at 7.31/\$1,000 of assessed valuation generating \$242,000. If the city held at that amount for the next fiscal year it would have created a levy of \$7.13/\$1,000 due to the city's taxable valuation increasing \$844,000.

However, City Administrator Dennis McGregor said the city is looking at some relatively steep insurance increases across the board. The city is also going to lease space for the West Point Police Department, which currently operates out of the West Point Fire Station.

The additional revenues needs are projected to be \$260,000, which would required a levy rate of \$7.66/\$1,000, which is a 7.44% increase. After the hearing, the city would then hold another hearing for the budget approval which would require a supermajority of 4 of the 5 councilman.

Along with the 2% soft cap, the new law requires the supermajority approval of the levy increase.

The new levy would still be .54 under the state's general fund property tax cap of \$8.10.

**FEB. 9, 2020**

## Kingsley Inn shows off wedding chops

**3,329 views, 294 engagements**

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – For about three hours Sunday, the Kingsley Inn became more than just a historical, boutique hotel overlooking the majestic Mississippi River.

As if that isn't enough.

The 109-year-old building was home to about 23 vendors as part of the Kingsley Inn Bridal Showcase held at the hotel in Fort Madison.

"We wanted to do a different format.

Not just herd you into the bridal show. This hotel is an experience," said Chi Eastin, Kingsley Inn Manager.

Eastin was on the third floor of the hotel Sunday afternoon as families and couples migrated from floor to floor, room to room, and vendor to vendor hearing from local businesses engaged in making any type of event a special one.

The hotel had a grand opening in February and has remodeled and "tweaked" rooms and decor.

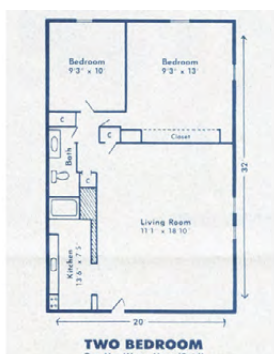
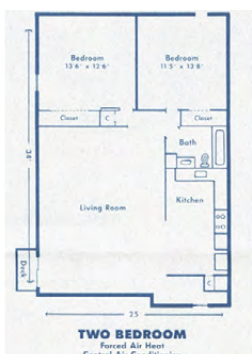
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## 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

**FEB. 15, 2020**

# Hounds send three to state wrestling tournament

**3,332 views, 383 engagements**

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

BETTENDORF – Fort Madison’s Will Larson has battled influenza since Thursday and took the mat at the Class 3A district wrestling tournament in Bettendorf Saturday exhausted.

But after three matches that went the distance, Larson seemed to always find a little left in the tank and advanced, along with Diego Lozano and Owen Kruse, to the Iowa State Wrestling Tournament starting Thursday at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines.

Wrestling at 138 lbs, Larson went 3-4 on the day. He advanced with an 11-4 decision over Burlington’s River Belger, who had beaten Larson two times this year, and then lost in the semis to eventual champion Griften Molle of West Burlington-Notre Dame-Danville 12-0.

The loss to Molle sent Larson into the wrestleback bracket where he faced Bettendorf’s Kohler Ruggles. The junior Bloodhound trailed 4-2 at the end of two periods and couldn’t seem to get anything going in the third until about 10 seconds left, when Larson dug deep again and slipped around Ruggles pulling him to the mat right into a near fall for 3 points with :03 left on the clock to eek out the 5-3 win.

That set up the 2nd place match with Muscatine’s Carson Harder, who lost in the title match to Molle. Larson and Molle went a full three periods and then into overtime in a gutcheck of a match where neither wrestler scored a point.

Owen Kruse got the upper hand in his 120 lb. match with Clinton’s Luke Jennings at the state district qualifier Feb. 15, 2020 in Bettendorf. Kruse, Will Larson, and Diego Lozano all qualified for the state meet in 2020.



**JAN. 7, 2020**

# Lee County EMS director says group needs more funds

**3,302 views, 419 engagements**

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE – Bill Young, the director of the Lee County Emergency Medical Services, asked the Lee County Board of Supervisors for additional support Tuesday morning.

After the board’s regular meeting, Young told the board Lee County EMS operated with a loss in 2019 and would need additional support to offset Medicare and Medicaid write-offs totaling almost \$500,000 of a total \$619,000 in charges.

Young said the reimbursement rates are the biggest sticking points in his operations.

“You can see where it makes it very difficult to purchase equipment, maintain equipment, pay bills,” Young said

Supervisor Matt Pflug asked how Young continues to offer services with those types of reimbursements.

When Young rattled off the numbers, several board members muttered that was ridiculous and board Chairman Ron Fedler, who was voted in as chair last week, said Young had his support.

“I’m just going to be very honest with you. It’s very stressful,” Young said. “EMS is my compassion but it’s what I was meant to do, I believe. So I’m gonna figure it out.”

Budget Director Cindy Renstrom said the county contributed \$429,624 to the service last year. Young said this year he’s requesting \$500,000 to help offset some of the services losses.

He said there is gap funding from the federal government and through the state as well, but he will not be able to see any of that funding as a private service provider.

“The Board of Supervisors should do what we we can to help you continue your services,” Fedler said. “I don’t think we have a choice.”

Young said EMS has already taken steps to curtail expenses including not having a standby ambulance in the rotation. The standby vehicles typically move to a central county point when two ambulances are in the same area.

“We’ve stopped doing that and haven’t really had any issues,” Young said.

Young said the future of the service will probably include a non-profit status to help take advantage of some additional funding and resources.

Young said it’s been almost 17 years since he’s asked the board for an increase in funding. He said he was told by several past supervisors to not ask for a raise.

**JAN. 4, 2020**

# Harmons welcome first baby to new year at FMCH

**3,529 views, 327 engagements**

PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison Community Hospital Birthplace welcomed their first newborn of 2020! Piper Elyse Harmon was born on Thursday, January 2, 2020 at 6:06 p.m.

Proud parents are Valaree and Burke Harmon. Piper will join siblings Bentley and Karsyn at home in Keokuk, Iowa. Dr. Yadira Garcia of the FMCH Women’s Center was the attending physician. Piper entered the world weighing 7 pound and was 20.5 inches long.

The FMCH Birthplace averages over 250 births each year.

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## 2020 – A Year in Review: January & February

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–Chuck & Lee

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Brian Mendez	Elect Ross Braden	HTC Music Boosters	Matt's Greenhouse	Southern Iowa Insurance Services
Brockman Chiropractic	Elect Tom Schulz for City Council	Huffman's Farm & Home	Matt Mohrfeld	Stacy Snaadt
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