

PEN CITY CURRENT

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

Wednesday, June 30, 2021 | 9 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 128



www.pencitycurrent.com

FMCH, Great River become one

NEW NAME: Great River Health, Fort Madison Community Hospital now Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison Community Hospital sign was missing from the top of the entry way signs early Tuesday morning, but by 11 a.m. a Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center sign was up and welcoming visitors and patients to the south campus of the newly unified hospital system.

Great River Health CEO Matt Wentzel was flanked by FMCH CEO Shelby Dickens and about 35 other SIRM staff and Fort Madison Chamber Ambassadors as the hospital unveiled its new brand Tuesday afternoon.

In August of 2018 Great River Health formed a partnership with Fort Madison Community Hospital to operate under the same Great River Health umbrella. However, much of the autonomy of the two separate hospitals remained, aside from staff adjustments due to efficiencies in operations.

In December of 2020 Great River health announced it would apply for Sole Community Hospital classification to enhance reimbursements through Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Service. To get to that designation, the hospitals had to join under one brand to sidestep some proximity limitations on the classification.

Wentzel said the opportunity puts the hospital on better reimbursement footing and allows it to move forward with their vision sooner.

“This was an opportunity that came up that we took advantage of where we have two hospi-

See **SEIRMC**, page 8



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

From left to right FMCH CEO Shelby Dickens; Matt Wenzel CEO of Great River Health, and CFO Jeremy Alexander pose in front of the new Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center sign on the former Fort Madison Community Hospital campus Tuesday.

ECONOMIC UPDATE

LCEDG efforts “pivot” during pandemic

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Lee County is facing what Dennis Fraise is calling “stiff headwinds” and asked area leaders to be a part of the force that pushes ahead.

During a regular update breakfast at Comfort Inn & Suites in Fort Madison, Fraise, president of Lee County Economic Development Group, said the group had to pivot during the pandemic. He then outlined the current status of economic development efforts for about 35 county, community and business leaders Tuesday morning.

Fraise pointed to several important data points in Lee County that need to be addressed.

One of those was child neglect and abuse rankings. The county has the most reported incidents of child neglect in the state ranking 99 out of 99 counties. The county is 79th in reported incidents of child abuse.

“Think about that. We have the highest incidents of child neglect in the state of Iowa,” Fraise said. “That’s awful.”

He also pointed out that one in four people have left Lee County in the past 50 years. The county is also ranked 88th in educational attainment after high school and 40% of high school students do not have a plan after high school.

“Governor Reynolds said 70% of all jobs in Iowa in the next decade will require training after high school. We’re at about 24%. That’s a headwind.”

He said the county is in the top 10 counties in being least healthy.

Fraise said those numbers come front and center when companies are looking to expand as they do Google searches on the county.

“We have to do better. We didn’t get hear overnight, we’re not getting out of this overnight,” Fraise said.



FRAISE



MILLARD

WEST POINT

Conservation district to seek state trails grant for Pollmiller

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – The Lee County Conservation Board has approved applying for a \$100,000 trails grant to help with the costs of reconstructing the Pollmiller Park trail.

The board has already committed \$100,000 split between funds from the district’s REAP account and the district’s trust fund.

The \$100,000 grant, if approved through the Department of Transportation’s State Recreational Trails Program, would be used to replace the

walking trail through Pollmiller Park in West Point.

The West Point Community Club has also been involved with the project and recommended a complete concrete overhaul of the trail

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WEATHER

OpenWeatherMap
WED 30 Jun Rain, 77° F / 68° F
THU 01 Jul Light Rain, 80° F / 66° F
FRI 02 Jul Light Rain, 74° F / 58° F

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Education News/For the Record



Courtesy photo

The Fort Madison Elks Lodge recently honored three seniors from local schools with scholarships. Gavin Lorence from the Fort Madison High School received the local Elks Lodge Scholarship; Abigail Wellman from Central Lee received an Iowa's Most Valuable Student Scholarship; and Kyle Knipe from Holy Trinity received an Iowa Southeastern District Vocational Scholarship.

Board approves grant application unanimously

TRAIL - Continued from Page 1

rather than milling the current trail at a cost of about \$230,000.

The concrete option carries a heftier price tag and would expand the width of the trail to 10 feet to be ADA compliant.

"This is just simply saying your are supportive of filing an application for the Pollmiller Trail project. We will be requesting \$100,000 from the trails grant,"

Unsworth said.

Board member Tom Pollpeter asked what the timeline on the grant would be.

"We could know this month potentially," Unsworth said. "I think it's a pretty quick turnaround."

The board approved applying for the grant funding with a unanimous 5-0 vote at a special meeting Tuesday afternoon.

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

06/28/21 – 8:40 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 300 block of Avenue G.
 06/28/21 – 11:12 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 700 block of Avenue G
 06/28/21 – 12:00 p.m. – Fort Madison Police cited Travis Lee Blint, 37, Fort Madison in the 2200 block of Avenue C, for a charge of a dog running at large.
 06/28/21 – 12:18 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 2700 block of Avenue K.
 06/28/21 – 4:02 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 1900 block of 48th Street.

– Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Umad Elijah Ismail, 19, of Keokuk, at the sheriff's office, on a judgment hold.
 06/28/21 – 3:35 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Maurice Vashon Tellaarrow Sargent, 47, of West Burlington, at the sheriff's office on a warrant for domestic assault. He was taken to Lee County Jail.
 06/28/21 – 7:59 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Justin Allen Hahn, 36, of Fort Madison in the 2600 block of 265th Avenue in Fort Madison, on charges of 2nd-degree theft, and trespassing. He was taken to Lee County Jail.
 06/28/21 – 8:07 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Anton Robert Kempker, 44, of Fort Madison in the 2200 block of 265th Avenue, on a warrant for failure to appear. He was taken to Lee County Jail.
 06/29/21 – 12:17 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies cited Nathan James Kull, 42, of Keokuk, on warrants for violation of probation. Those listed above are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Lee County Sheriff's Report

06/28/21 – 5:58 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Evan William Boden, 18, of Quincy, at Hwy. 61 and Main Street in Keokuk, on a charge of possession of a controlled substance. He was taken to Lee County Jail and released on his own recognizance.
 06/28/21 – 11:08 a.m.

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From the Front

Fraise points out hurdles to growth

HEADWINDS - Continued from Page 1

He pointed to Bridges out of Poverty effort to help break the cycle of generational poverty, and the LCEDG's Grow Lee reaching out at the grade school levels.

A countywide strategic plan will soon be created to improve the neglect and resilience of families in Lee County, led by Brianna Kramer-Reisberg at Lee County Health Department.

"We need to connect all of you to this effort because honest to God, there's no way we want to be number one in child neglect and top ten in child abuse. We can do better and it's going to take all of us to do better," Fraise said.

"This is the hard stuff, not the fun stuff. But you look at all those numbers, all those headwinds, we just have to be better. So make sure you're plugged into all those efforts."

Fraise said the people in the room are the calvary, but no one else is coming.

"You gotta saddle up and be part of the solution," he said.

LCEDG's Project Coordinator Dana Millard pointed out how much the county was able to do in the past 16 months as the pandemic all but shut down most regular in-person economic development efforts.

She said the pandemic brought attention to retention as the COVID virus impacted just about every facet of employment in the county.

One of the projects LCEDG worked on was creating a virtual tour of the Southeast Iowa Development Center in Keokuk that can be accessed online for those looking for office and lab space.

LCEDG also hosted a virtual tour of Hendricks River Logistics, a coal exporter in Lee County for more than a century. The industry is slowly drying up so LCEDG fostered a virtual open house that attracted more than 30 business owners, through a partnership with BNSF.

"Even though we had to pause for a little bit, we grouped. We came back stronger than ever. And I'm excit-



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

LCEDG Project coordinator Dana Millard said the group impacted 4,619 students this past school year despite the pandemic variables in place. That number is 44% bigger than the previous school year.

ed to not go back, but go forward learning what we have over the past year, so we stay relevant," Millard said.

Fraise said some of the efforts now are focusing on helping get certified sites in Keokuk, near the former Carbide site, and a certified site in Fort Madison on the west side of town, and in Wever near the Iowa Fertilizer Plant. He said the Iowa Economic Development Authority has a saying, 'no property, no project.'

Certified sites are sites that are shovel ready for developers looking to move operations into Iowa.

Fraise also said the joint education center is something the LCEDG isn't giving up on. He said all the affected parties, including all county public school districts and Southeastern Community College, are back at the table.

"It's not going to be easy. It's not, but we're all at least

back at the table discussing the project."

He also pointed to several projects that the county worked on over the past two years, including a byproduct company that needed a large supply of natural gas that couldn't be provided.

"We cannot provide enough natural gas for another major project like Iowa Fertilizer or like the project I just described. There's simply not enough gas available locally," he said.

Efforts are still underway with the players involved in that like Iowa Fertilizer and natural gas companies to solve the issue, but he said it may cost \$25 to \$30 million.

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Sports

Vasin Thurman goes 4-for-4 for No. 10 Bloodhounds

BY CHUCK
VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison’s Vasin Thurman went 4-for-4 with two runs scored and 3 RBI and then came on in relief to shut down Davis County as the Hounds rolled 16-6 Tuesday night.

Fort Madison scored in every inning but the fifth and then exploded for eight runs in a bug-infested sixth inning that had fans leaving early before the Hounds rallied for the win.

Davis County got to within two runs in the top of the sixth inning when Thurman entered in relief to start the inning and gave up a double to left field just over the glove of Garrett Hannum.

A grounder to first would move the runner over to third and then a double from Clay Collier would score a run making the score 8-6 Fort Madison with one out. Thurman would get a fly out to left and a ground out to third to retire the side.

The Hounds went to work in

the bottom of the sixth. With one out, Hannum singled to left and Aidan Pennock got plunked. Both would advance on a passed ball and then Colton Engeman would draw a walk on seven pitches to load the bases.

Kane Williams would work a walk for an RBI and then Landes Williams would single to center scoring two runs. Jason Thurman would draw a walk to load the bases again. Kane Williams would score on a wild pitch and then Landes Williams would come around to score on Vasin Thurman’s hard grounder to short that slipped away for a hit.

Reiburn Turnbull popped out in the infield for the second out. Jason Thurman would score on a wild pitch, and then Hannum would single again to score two more runners to invoke the 10-run rule 16-6.

The Hounds slipped into the Class 3A top 10 for the first time in more than two decades. Vasin Thurman said that’s big news for the team.

“Being in the top 10 is huge

for our team. It gives us a lot of confidence to know we can play up with those other teams,” he said.

He said Davis County pitchers offered a variety of speeds that he was able to adapt to in each at bat Tuesday.

“I’m just following my approach. I didn’t see a lot of velocity, and then they gave me a couple of inside fastballs and was I ready to go early in the count. So I just got my hands ready and turned on it,” he said.

The Hounds face six conference games in the next six days that will determine the conference champs.

“We’ve got a lot left in us. We’ve got a couple big conference games coming up against Fairfield and Burlington and we want to get those four wins.

Walker said Thurman came up big in clutch situations Tuesday. But the coach said he was worried that maybe the Hounds had been seeing too much time on the field before Monday’s rain out.

“He came up big in clutch



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison junior Landes Williams dives back to first on a pick-off attempt Tuesday night in the Bloodhounds’ 16-6 win over Davis County.

situations. I’ve been a little concerned that we’re playing too much and then we do get a day off and we come out and sweat and I’ll take the blame for that,” he said.

A few fielding miscues made Walker a little nervous going into the middle innings, but he said the Hounds were good enough to overcome the mental mistakes.

“We’re a good team, but we’re not good enough to make mistakes, Fortunately we were good enough to make mistakes and them come back and put ‘em away.”

Walker used four pitchers which is rare for the Hounds who typically get four or five innings out of their starters and then go bring in relief arms.

“If it would have stayed 8-6

into the seventh, we would have had Kane come in close things up,” he said, which would have been the fifth pitcher of the night, more than the Hounds have used all year.

“We’re tired right now. A lot of that’s my fault again. I’m just getting them up and ready to play not to level of our competition, but playing Bloodhound baseball every pitch.”

Hannum, Engeman and Pennock all had multiple hit nights for Fort Madison. Pennock scored three runs, while Landes Williams, Jason Thurman, Reiburn Turnbull, Tate Johnson and Kane Williams all had hits in the win.

Hannum started and got the win going two innings and giving up two runs both earned on five hits. Landes Williams came on for an inning before

giving way to Jason Thurman who threw two innings of perfect relief striking out four. Walker pulled him so he was available Wednesday in favor of Vasin Thurman would finished things up allowing two hits and an earned run.

The Hounds will host Fairfield Wednesday in a doubleheader and then travel to Mt. Pleasant on Thursday for another Southeast Conference doubleheader. A showdown with Burlington looms on Monday, July 5 for what could determine the conference championship.

Fort Madison stands at 10-2 in Southeast Conference play and 17-4 overall. The Grayhounds are 11-1 in the conference with their only loss to the Bloodhounds. Burlington is 17-5 overall.



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Sports

Rehm's double turns into game-winner for Lady Hounds

Throwing error allows Rehm to come all the way around for game-winning run

BY PCC SPORTS

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison sophomore Neeley Rehm sent an 0-1 pitch into left field for a double to lead off the bottom of the 7th, but an error on the throw back in allowed Rehm to come all the way around with the winning run as the Lady Hounds upset Davis County 6-5 Tuesday night.

The Lady Mustang's Madeline Barker had the Hounds number most of the night carrying a 5-1 lead into the bottom of the sixth innings.

Fort Madison starter Erika Kruse was knocked out at the end of the second with Fort Madison down 5-0.

Emily Steffensmeier would get on with a single to start the bottom of the third and steal second. Rehm would then single on line drive to center to score Steffensmeier. Rehm would move to second on the throw home, but would get stranded there on a fly out to center with Fort Madison trailing 5-1.

Rehm would get the Mustangs 1-2-3 in the top of the fourth and both teams would go scoreless until Fort Madison tied things up in the bottom of the sixth.

Logan Johnson started the inning with a single to short. Aija Jenkins would slip in as a courtesy runner and quickly take second. Lexi Whaley would fly out to left for the first out. Kruse would then reach on an error that allowed Jenkins to come around to score cutting the lead to 5-2.

Lauren Helmick then popped up for the second out, but Taylor Johnson would keep things going with a single to right moving Kruse to third. Johnson would move over to second on throw through the infield. Al-



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison's Emily Steffensmeier takes off for second base in the early going of the Hounds' 6-5 win over Davis County Tuesday night in Fort Madison.

lyson Helmick would then single to right scoring Kruse and Johnson to cut the lead to one at 5-4.

Steffensmeier then doubled to left field scoring Helmick to tie things up at 5 before a strikeout ended the threat.

Rehm would get the Mustangs again in order in the top of the seventh setting up the drama in the bottom half of the seventh for the Hounds win.

Rehm was 2-for-3 on the night with a run scored

and an RBI. Steffensmeier had the same line and Logan Johnson also had two hits for Fort Madison. Whaley, Taylor Johnson and Helmick had the other hits for the Hounds.

Rehm gave up five hits in relief, but didn't allow a run and struck out four in getting the win. Kruse gave up five runs all earned, on three hits and struck out one.

The Lady Hounds will look to build on the win with a doubleheader at Keokuk's Joyce Park Wednesday night.

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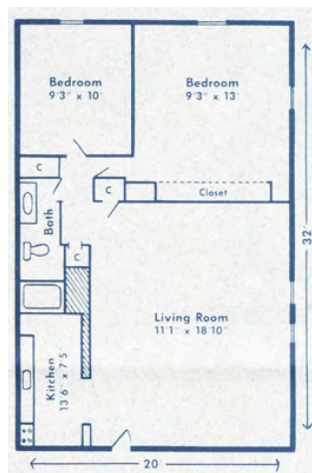
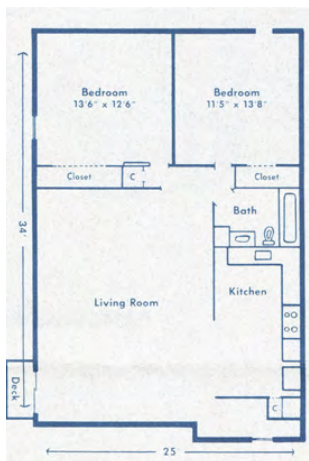
Lee County Health Department is seeking a part-time Certified Nurse's Aide to work in the agency's Homecare and Hospice programs. This position requires travel to client homes in the agency's service area. If interested please mail resume to LCHD, Attn: Becky Fader, PO Box 1426, Fort Madison, IA 52627 or email bfader@leecountyhd.org. LCHD is EOE.



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To review the job description online and apply, download an application from our county website, www.leecounty.org or pick a copy of the job description and county application at an Iowa Workforce Development office or at the Engineer office, and return your completed application along with a resume to: Lee County Engineer, P.O. Box 158, Fort Madison, IA 52627, or email it to bhull@leecounty.org and copy it to shartson@leecounty.org. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

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



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From the Front

Move aimed at stabilizing area health care

SEIRMC - Continued from Page 1

tals and if we form one hospital with two campuses then we get the appropriate level of reimbursements to help make sure we're - No. 1 stabilizing health care in south-east Iowa, and No. 2 being able to get to our vision of empowering people and fulfilling our dreams that much quicker." Wentzel said.

He said the transition has been challenging, but smooth, and absolutely the right decision to make.

"It's been both. I think that as humans its just tough as we go through change and given the opportunity to change or not most would say 'Aah, I'm good' but we've gone through the past years and I commend staff at Fort Madison and Great River, as well as the boards for making decisions to allow this go through," he said.

"We've done it, and it's the right work, and it needed to be done."

Dickens said she wanted to recognize the staff of the organizations in helping make the partnership a reality.

"We appreciate all the ongoing support and encouragement from our community and I just wanted to say thank you to everyone for celebrating this with us," Dickens told the group.

She said the efficiencies that revealed themselves during the past three years have allowed the hospital to become more streamlined and will provide stronger, more encom-



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Members of the Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center administrative team and Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors cut the ribbon on the new name Tuesday, June 29.

passing quality of care for southeast Iowa.

"At Fort Madison, we realized a lot of resources that we did not previously have. We've been able to partner in daily processes to be able to adopt the best practices from each campus. Both campuses have really benefited from that," she said.

"It's taking the best of both worlds from the standpoint of the services we offer, the care we provide and how we provide that care."

Staffing will also remain at current levels for the time being, but Dickens offered that the administration will keep in tune to what health care demands dictate.

"We are where we are. As we move forward and things change we will be responsive to that," Dickens said.

"There are no plans for other changes presently, but as a health care provider we always have to have our finger on the pulse of what's going on and be doing the things that are in the best interest of hospital directly, and the community and patients that count on us, indirectly."

Wentzel agreed saying there aren't really other initiatives in the works. Henry County Health Center is also joining the system on July 1, the hospital will be going through an Electronic Medical Records conversion on July 1 and new backend system from Workday comes on line on July 1.

"I think for the next month, what the executive team has told me is that we need to come up for air," Wentzel said.

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\$5	Parthenon Pizza	Rev Fitness	Under the Sun	\$5

FORT MADISON'S 4TH OF JULY BINGO CARD Official Rules

1. Stop by any participating business and pick up a BINGO card.
2. Pick a card out of the basket. The game piece has a business name on it. Match it to the bingo card. Head on over to another business, repeat. (Only 1 card per day from each business).
3. \$5 space of your choice can be filled by spending at least \$5 at a participating business.
4. Try to match and get a BINGO. Bingo consists of horizontal, vertical and diagonal. Play for as long as you like to get as many Bingo's as you can. At the end of the game, your name will be entered into a grand prize drawing consisting of goodies from each business.

1 Bingo = 1 Chance **3 Bingo's = 3 Chances**
2 Bingo's = 2 Chances **4 Bingo's = 4 Chances**
Blackout = 5 Chances

5. Return your card with the game pieces to: Under the Sun, Griffin Muffler & Brake Center, the YMCA or the Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce.

Your all-American adventure happens June 28 – July 3, 2021

Cards must be returned no later than July 7, 2021

Winner will be drawn by July 9, 2021