

# PEN CITY CURRENT

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

Monday, January 11, 2020 | 14 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 15



[www.pencitycurrent.com](http://www.pencitycurrent.com)

**TOP POST** - Nov. 5, 2020 - 10,938- views, 822 engagements

## Hwy. 61 reopens



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Subcontractors pull up signage at the intersection of Hwy. 61 and 6th Street on November 5. The construction project lasted almost a full year, with the next stretch from 6th to 10th street in the works. The city's reconstruction of the one-way pairs at 18th and 20th Streets are also moving closer to reality.

**DECEMBER 4, 2020** - 8,949- views, 2,913 engagements

## No children hurt in morning CL bus crash; man hospitalized

WEST POINT – An area man has been airlifted to Iowa City hospitals after crashing into the back of a Central Lee school bus Friday morning.

According to Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber, the accident happened at about 7:30 a.m. in the 1900 block of West Point Road.

“No children were injured as a result of the accident,” Weber said. “But an adult male who struck the back of the bus was airlifted from the scene to an Iowa City hospital.

“The bus driver did a good job protecting the kids and Central Lee schools got to the scene very quickly to handle the students.”

Weber said the students were



WEBER

removed from the bus and taken to a shelter supplied by Jones Contracting, away from the scene.

Central Lee Superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier confirmed that all of the students and the driver were without injury. He said students and the driver were checked out by paramedics at the scene and by school nursing staff back on the property.

“It wasn't a full bus and it was at the start of our route so sometimes timing helps and that was the case today,” he said.

“Because it was the start of our route, I don't believe there were any

kids in the back of the bus and we're very thankful for that.”

Crozier was out of town at a meeting and said he believes the bus was driven back to the school.

He also thanks Pat and Maggie Jones of Jones Contracting for sheltering the students in one of the company's sheds.

“We're also very concerned about the driver of the vehicle and it's our hope that he's okay,” Crozier said.

The accident remains under investigation by the sheriff's department, but Weber said the bus was stationary facing south on a student pick-up when it was struck from behind by a vehicle also heading southbound.

### LOOKING BACK ON 2020

## Elections and virus keep making news

*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.



VANDBERG

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.

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### WEATHER

MON 11 Jan.....Overcast, 32° F/ 15° F  
 TUE 12 Jan.....Clear Skies, 37° F/ 27° F  
 WED 13 Jan.....Overcast, 39° F/ 31° F

### IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 01/09.....9 25 29 30 39, Star Ball: 10, All Star Bonus: 4  
 LUCKY FOR LIFE 01/07.....3 20 25 30 38, Lucky Ball: 18  
 MEGA MILLIONS 01/08.....3 6 16 18 58, Mega Ball: 11 Megaplier: 2  
 PICK 3 01/07, 01/08, 01/09 MIDDAY.....0 4 9, 5 6 0,  
 PICK 3 01/07, 01/08, 01/09 EVENING.....0 9 8, 8 9 3,  
 PICK 4 01/07, 01/08, 01/09 MIDDAY.....7 5 1 8, 5 8 9 5,  
 PICK 4 01/07, 01/08, 01/09 EVENING.....7 6 9 5, 3 4 7 5,  
 POWERBALL 01/09.....14 26 38 45 46, Powerball: 13, Power Play: 2

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## 2020 – A Year in Review: November & December

# We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2020

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Reva Marlene Anderson  
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Andrews, Jr.  
Carmen Arnold  
Opal Jean "Nick" Arnold  
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Nancy Mae Baker  
Verlin Morris Baker  
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William J. Bartlett  
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William G. Bennett  
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Edna Martha Bentzinger  
Rosalie Jane Bentzinger  
Dr. Harvey Stanford  
Benveniste  
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Bigelow, Jr.  
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Ronald R. Blint  
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Terry Lynn Bode  
Elmer John Boegner  
Jeannette P. Bolanos  
Donald G. Boldt

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Ramon D. Brown  
Carmella Lucy  
Brunnelson  
Shirley Maxine (Bryant)  
Batley  
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Matthew Warren Burford  
Ronnie Lee Butler  
Julia Louise Byrne  
George William "Bill"  
Cackley  
Kevin Greg "Pops"  
Cahoon  
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Margaret Jean Campbell  
Mary Marjorie Campbell  
(Peterson)  
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Louise Collins  
Dustin Thompson Colyer  
Cheryl Connors  
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Rosa M. "Skip"  
Coppage  
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Corvaia

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rison  
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Connie Charlene Hart  
William "Bill" Allan Hart  
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Hazel L. Hawes  
Garnet M. Hayes  
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Thomas R. Helling  
John Joseph Helwig  
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Kratzer  
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Judith Kay Patricia "Judy"  
Krogmeier  
Karen T. Krogmeier  
Ronald Eugene  
Krogmeier  
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Terry Kunde  
Michael Todd Lamm  
Nellie Mae Ruth Lamma  
Annabelle Lammering  
Wendell Woodson Land  
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Analie S. Leininger  
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# PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

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2020 – A Year in Review: November & December

# We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2020

Michael "Mike" Philip Mauzy  
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 Ray P. McCarl  
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 Jacob "Jake" Alan Pezley  
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 Richard M. Poulter  
 Leroy Pounder  
 Steven Lee Powelson  
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## 2020 – A Year in Review: November & December

**NOV. 27, 2020** - 7,017 views, 1,168 engagements

### Steffensmeier ladies launch Subtle Impact

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – We're all stuck inside, but Rachel Steffensmeier of Fort Madison made the most of her time wandering around at home during this throttle back of socialization.

And if she has her way you'll be doing curls while your chicken risotto is simmering, or your whites are tumbling.

With the help of her mom Jenny, the two have launched a new product of home decor weights called Subtle Impacts.

These are incognito work out tools that double as art-deco placed around your home.

"Weights look kinda dumb laying around on the floor," said Rachel with a laugh. "And I've seen other people use different things for weights like milk jugs or other knick knacks, so we've designed something that fits that, but also works in any room."

The new line can be found at the following website: <https://subtleimpacts.com/> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/subtleimpacts/> and also on Instagram.



Courtesy photo

Jenny Steffensmeier, left, and daughter Rachel Steffensmeier have launched a new line of home decor exercise equipment called Subtle Impact. The weights double as room decor and fit almost any room in your home.

Rachel said she was nervous about presenting the idea to her mother, but said Jenny jumped right on board.

"It's her idea," Jenny said.

Jenny Steffensmeier is the owner of Steffensmeier Welding & Manufacturing in Pilot Grove, and said the two tinkered around with the ideas at the shop, but ultimately ended up working with a foundry

out of Webster City, Iowa.

The two have just launched the product line and are starting with just the Impact line to judge reaction to the products.

"It's gonna be fun along the way when we see the questions and suggestions people come up with. That will definitely be part of the design concepts down the line."

**NOV. 11, 2020** - 5,751 views, 1,487 engagements

### Firemen pull man to safety off island

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison Fire Lieutenant Neal Gathers said in 20 years of fire service, Tuesday night was near the top of his list of scariest things ever in service to others.

The Fort Madison Fire Department was dispatched to a stranded boater just north of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe bridge at about 4:45 p.m. Tuesday.

The boater was in a 25-foot pleasure boat and had been spotted by residents on high point with an anchor in on the south side of Dutchman Island just north of the bridge.

Gathers said the original call to LeeComm was at about 4:22 p.m. and originally went to Department of Natural Resources officers, but after no response was received Lee Comm dispatched Fort Madison Fire at about 4:44 and rescue personnel were on the river at about 5:20 p.m.

The man was taking his boat from Minnesota to Louisiana and got beached due to the high winds on the river – winds that wreaked havoc on the fire department as they tried to get to him.

Firefighters Justin Cain, Dale Brisby and Gathers took the boat out.

"When we headed out it was so gusty and dangerous, in 20 years that's one of the five scariest things I've ever had to do," Gathers said.

"We got stuck going out in the main channel – got pushed into the mud then had waves and muddy water coming into the boat and had it half full. We had to throw an anchor out to get pulled out and around and headed up river."

**DEC. 3, 2020** - 6,130 views, 424 engagements

### Bloodhounds finally get to mat after COVID start

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The final pieces to the puzzle are in place for the Fort Madison wrestling team, as the season opens this weekend in New London.

The Bloodhounds were originally scheduled to compete in the packed two-day Independence Invitational, but that event has been cancelled and the Bloodhounds are staying a little closer to home.

The New London Invitational will feature about 10 teams on Saturday starting at 10 a.m.

Smith said the Hounds wrapped up team competitions Wednesday to see who will have the top spots going into this weekend.

"Some of the weight classes are only one person deep," Smith said Wednesday. "But we have capable kids that are willing to jump into a spot."

Anchoring the Hounds this year will be 2020 state qualifier Owen Kruse who's starting the year at 132 lbs and beat Brock Califf in final tryouts Wednesday. Kruse will likely scale down to the 126 weight class early in the season.

We'd like to get him back to state and get him on the podium," Smith said.

Gavin Wiseman is a junior coming off a 24-win season and finished 3rd and 4th at districts in his freshman and sophomore year. He'll go for the Hounds at 145 this year.

"He's been right there and Mason's (Schau) has been right there, but our goal is to maximum everyone's potential and when it's all said and done we want them to know they gave it their all," Smith said.

"Wherever they end up we want them knowing it wasn't from a lack of effort. They got the most out of themselves. If they can do that – we can live with that. With that being said, if everyone does that we'll have contenders for state."



#### New season

Fort Madison's Matthew Steffensmeier works on a Fairfield wrestler last season. The 2020-21 season was slow to start due to a COVID shutdown of winter sports pre-season practices.

Photo by Chuck Vandenberg



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# 2020 – A Year in Review: November & December

**NOV. 19, 2020 - 5,840 views, 797 engagements**

## FMCH CEO says accountability critical to ease pressures

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Iowa is closing in on 200,000 positive cases of coronavirus and is now over 2,100 deaths.

Statistically speaking, that means currently 1.1% of the people who get COVID in Iowa die from it.

Fort Madison Community Hospital CEO Shelby Burchett said that's an incredibly high price to pay for not wearing a mask and keeping socially distant.

"You can look at this in the aggregate if you want to, but 1% to all of us will seem like 100% if it's a loved one," Burchett said Thursday morning in an interview with Pen City Current.

Burchett said hospital resources locally and throughout the state are being stretched thin in all areas from equipment, to staffing, to facilities and even transport abilities, due to the record setting numbers throughout the state.



**BURCHETT**

Great River Health System CEO Matt Wentzel and Medical Director Dr. Michael McCoy will be giving a system update on Friday sponsored by the Greater Burlington Partnership. FMCH now operates as part of Great River Health.

Burchett said social distancing and wearing face coverings are the two biggest arrows in the quiver, but personal accountability will be the biggest driver in slowing the spread. She pleaded with everyone to follow local health department and Centers for Disease Control recommendations because the coronavirus doesn't discriminate.

"It matters. And the scarier thing is you just don't know how it will affect each person. Someone who is seemingly healthy could succumb to this," she said. "It takes on its own form for every person it affects. It's very scary."

The Lee County Board of Health put out a directive

earlier this week saying it expects everyone over the age of 2 to be 100% compliant in wearing masks, with the exception of medical conditions that make it difficult.

Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds got as close as she ever has to instituting a mask mandate on Monday requiring masks indoors where social distancing isn't possible and at all high school, college and professional sporting events.

She also limited indoor groups to 15 and outdoor groups to 30 and pleaded with Iowans to stick with immediately family over the holidays.

Burchett said she agreed with tougher stance and asked again for residents to give value to those recommendations.

"Those requests may seem extreme coming up on the holidays, but it is really critical to focus on enjoying our immediate families and using other methods like Zoom, Facetime, and even the telephone for extended family," she said.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

West Point Mayor Paul Walker issues a proclamation to honor Sonny's Supermarket and owner Deina Merschbrock for their efforts with disabled employees as part of the Hope Haven program. Merschbrock was honored at Monday's West Point City Council meeting.

**NOV. 28, 2020 - 5,997 views, 1,182 engagements**

## Long-time legislator, farmer Fraise dead at 88

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – Former southeast Iowa State Senator Gene Fraise has passed away due to complications of COVID-19.



**FRAISE**

Fraise was born and raised in the West Point area where he established his roots raising his family and farming. His served on the Lee County Board of Supervisors for seven years and served and retired from the Iowa Senate after 27 years.

He was the longest serving senator in District 42.

He was instrumental in the building of the 61 Bypass, the Bridgeport Bridge project and serving as the only non-lawyer judiciary committee head in the history of the state of Iowa.

Schmitz Funeral Home in West Point is handling the arrangements.

**NOV. 24, 2020 - 5,269 views, 439 engagements**

## Moeller named LCHD hospice top volunteer of 2020



**MOELLER**

LEE COUNTY – November is National Hospice and Palliative Care Month. Lee County Health Department-Hospice is announcing that their 2020 Volunteer of the Year is Herb Moeller.

Herb was recently honored at the Hospice and Palliative Care Association of Iowa Virtual Conference. Herb has been helping with LCHD-Hospice since 2005 when his wife Sandy was a Hospice volunteer.

Before Sandy died, she told Herb her wish was that he would become a volunteer and continue the work that was so very important to her. Herb has been a full time volunteer since Sandy's death in February 2018.

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# 2020 – A Year in Review: November & December

**NOV. 5, 2020 - 5,594 views, 1,154 engagements**

## Donnellson woman pleads to have Bengal cats returned

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

DONNELLSON – A Donnellson woman is pleading with local officials to return several cats that were trapped near her property and taken away.

In a story that's turning out to have more than nine lives of its own, Donnellson city officials, PAW animal shelter are all wrapped up in the relocation of "Mama" ... and apparently another cat that was taken to the country as a stray.

Debbie Gilman is a senior living in and out of a home in Donnellson and she has six cats, four licensed with the city. The cats are semi-secure, but Gilman admits they wander around into a field behind a neighbor's home and could be wandering elsewhere.

Several of the cats living on Gilman's property are highly sought after Bengal cats. Bengals are from a lineage of Egyptian Maus and Asian Leopard cats. It's not unheard of for these animals to go for more than \$1,000 a piece.

The cats are energetic and inquisitive and are bred for revenue and have unique stripe and spot patterns similar to leopards.

Gilman said she has sold a few of the cats, but has been battling illnesses and just wants to retire to the countryside and live with the pets.

On or around Oct. 10, one or more of her cats were live trapped and taken away. One was taken on the 10th was called "Mama", a pregnant Bengal that was taken by Donnellson City Clerk Rebecca Schau to the PAW Animal Shelter in Fort Madison.

The cats, according to everyone but Gilman, were taken from a neighbor's garage in a live trap that was set up there. Gilman said she isn't sure that's the case. She said no one has shown her proof where they were trapped.

West Point/Donnellson Police Chief Brad Roberts said no trap was put on her property. He said the cats were trapped roaming in a neighbor's garage after that resident called in a complaint that they were in the garage.

"We got a call from a citizen who said strays were in her garage and wanted to know if we could remove them. Our policy is to provide a live catch, and then if we catch them and they have tags we make an attempt to find the owner. If that's not available we take the animal to PAW."

**NOV. 2, 2020 - 4,898 views, 704 engagements**

## Lee County virus activity reaches all-time high

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – Coronavirus activity is almost at an all-time high in Lee County since data began being collected in March.

Over the weekend, 49 new positive cases were identified and on Monday 24 more new cases were discovered for a total of 73 new cases since the last report from Lee County Health Department on Friday at 3:30 p.m.

There was also an additional death reported bringing the county total fatalities attributed to COVID-19 to 13.

The county's 14-day positivity rate now stands at 13.1% with 1,104 positive cases and 688 of those reported as recovered, leaving 416 residents still fighting the affects of the virus.

The state, as of today, is at its second highest 14-day rolling total of positive cases at 23,641. The high was 23,698 on Sunday.

Lee County's rolling 14-day total stands at 224, with a high of 260 on Aug. 31.



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**NOV. 14, 2020 - 5,358 views, 417 engagements**

## Califf, Poe get district Players of the Year honors

FORT MADISON – Five Fort Madison Bloodhounds were put on the All-District team for 2020 season, but two seniors were given special recognition.

Keaton Poe was named the District 5 Defensive Player of the Year, and classmate Brock Califf was named Specialist of the Year.

Poe was 2nd in the district in total tackles with 61.5 behind Mt. Pleasant's Klayton Kleinkopf with 63. He was tops in the district in solo tackles with 37.

Califf was tops in the district in kickoff return yards with 441 yards. Of Califf's 12 kickoff returns he scored touchdowns on three, with longest being 88 yards, both also tops in the district.

Also getting first team All-District honors were lineman Ethan Deacon, running back/defensive back Calem MacLearn and wide receiver/defensive back Tate Johnson.

Deacon had 23.5 tackles and sack on the year, but anchored one of the most prolific Hounds offensives in three decades.

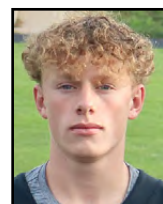
MacLearn rushed for 392 yards on the year averaging 6.3 yards per carry, which was 5th overall in the district for back with more than 50 carries.

Johnson had a solid year on both sides of the ball. The senior had 306 yards in receptions, but scored seven touchdowns, which tied with two others for tops in the district. Johnson was fifth in the district in tackles and fourth in picks with three on the season including two for touchdowns.

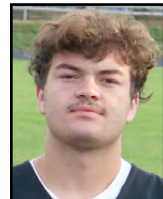
Making second team All-District were Landes Williams at Quarterback, Will Larson, QB/WR/Def. Back, Levi Lowney, lineman, and Bryce Britton, lineman.

Juniors and senior named to the All-Academic team were Williams, Califf, Gavin Wiseman, Larson, Johnson, Jakob McGowan, Maclearn, Poe, Seth Mendez, Joey Dodson, Abram Lorence, Britton and Deacon.

Joey Dodson received the team's Stephen B. Saunders award at a banquet last week. The Tom Walljasper Leadership Award went to Poe. The Jeff Pieper Top Defensive Lineman Award went to Britton and the John "Pete" Peters MVP award went to Brock Califf.



CALIFF



POE

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## 2020 – A Year in Review: November & December

**NOV. 13, 2020 - 5,068 views, 513 engagements**



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

The Scooters Coffee drive thru in the Fareway Meat and Grocery parking lot in Fort Madison began construction in November. The new unit is now open for business.

**NOV. 17, 2020 - 4,316 views, 1,175 engagements**

### Lee County Board of Health issues strong statement

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Following Monday’s live televised address to the state by Gov. Kim Reynolds on the recent surge of the coronavirus, the Lee County Board of Health issued new strongly worded directives to Lee County residents.

The Board of Health met Tuesday morning and went a step further in recommending that people stay away from any gatherings where people may not be masked.

The directive tells residents to wear an appropriate face covering every time they leave their home, and when they might be within 6 feet of anyone outside their household.

“The purposes of your face covering is to protect others and the purposed of their face covering is to protect you,” the directive read.

“If you find yourself in a place where other people are not wearing face coverings appropriately, you are at great risk. You should consider leaving or avoiding that place altogether.”

Michele Ross, administrator at LCHD said the intent

of that language is to encourage people to avoid putting themselves in high risk situations.

“If you go somewhere and people are gathering and not socially distancing or not wearing face coverings, you are putting yourself in a high risk situation for potential exposure to the virus since we do have substantial community spread,” Ross said.

As with any mask recommendations, the exceptions are for children less than 2 years of age, or those with legitimate medical conditions that would preclude them from wearing a face covering.

“However, it is anticipated that the majority of people in the community can wear a face covering and 100% usage in public is expected to get the maximum benefit from this measure,” the release indicated.

“During this pandemic, Lee County Board of Health asks each citizen of Lee County to immediately comply with these recommended directives to slow the transmission of the virus.”

**NOV. 5, 2020 - 4,334 views, 542 engagements**

### Reynolds says elections affirms state’s handling of coronavirus

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

DES MOINES – Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds said Thursday that election results show Iowans approve of how she’s handled the state’s COVID crisis.

At a press conference held Thursday morning from Des Moines, Reynolds said virus activity is high, and Iowans need to hunker down for the next three weeks. But she said overall, Iowans said Tuesday that agree with her handling of the crisis.

“Iowans said, through this election, they agreed with how we’ve handled COVID-19,” Reynolds said. “It was a critically important election that reflects Iowans somewhat agreed how we handled not only COVID 19, but the conservative fiscal approach we’ve taken.”

She said nine months ago experts didn’t know as much about the virus and the state took large mitigation efforts to curb the spread.

But now there’s more information, more testing, and more enhanced treatments for the disease and those decisions aren’t required now despite the surging numbers of infections and hospitalizations in the state.

The state reported 41,000 new coronavirus cases in October with a positivity rating of 14.3%. Hospitalizations went from 393 on Oct. 1 to 676 on Oct. 31.

She asked Iowans to “double down” on efforts over the next three weeks to help curb the rise in infections going into the holiday weekend.

“It’s up to every single one of us to do the simple things that each of us can do in our daily lives that will make a difference,” Reynolds said.

“Wear a mask, social distance, wash your hands, stay home when sick, get tested, follow your quarantine if you have the virus, and I’ll add get a flu shot,” she said.

“As weather changes and more activities move in doors carefully consider whether certain events are worth the risk. Consider holiday gatherings and make a plan to celebrate together safely and responsibly.”



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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.
- WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN!

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# 2020 – A Year in Review: November & December

**NOV. 5, 2020** - 4,194 views, 330 engagements

## Swink gets Middle school AD honor

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Just three years into the new gig, Fort Madison Athletic Director Jeremy Swink has been named Southeast Iowa Middle School AD of the year.

Swink, who was hired as the Fort Madison AD in 2018, said he was surprised even being nominated by was humbled by the honor.



SWINK

“To be recognized by your colleagues and peers is something very humbling,” Swink said. “But I have a feeling that there’s others out there that are more deserving than me.”

Swink said ADs throughout the country are scrambling right now day to day to redo schedules, working with other ADS and administrators.

The honor comes from the Iowa High School Athletic Directors Association that honors five middle school and five high school ADS each year.

Swink said he’s not even sure he cast a ballot after the nomination forms were sent out due to hectic schedule he’s been dealing with the school being in remote learning models.

“It was certainly nothing that was on my radar and honestly, I don’t know that I saw the ballots,” Swink said. “I would certainly say this is a surprise to me.”

Swink was the Athletic Director, teacher and coach at Burlington Notre Dame for three years prior to coming to Fort Madison.

**NOV. 30, 2020** - 1,835 views, 138 engagements



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Residents lined Avenue G in downtown Fort Madison on Friday night as the annual Lighted Parade made its way between thousands that came out to kick off the holiday season.

**NOV. 10, 2020** - 1,386 views, 122 engagements

## Local historian Killoren chronicles Old Fort in video

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – A local historian has reached back in time to chronicle the building, razing, rebuilding, disassembling and reconstruction of the fort that ultimately became the namesake of Fort Madison.

Michael Killoren spent the last three years researching and producing the 32 minute video called “The Building of Fort Madison – The First Fort on the Upper Mississippi.”

The video is being sold at the Old Fort for \$9.95 with all proceeds going to the Old Fort.

Killoren grew up in Fort Madison and never saw a fort here and always had a curiosity of that anomaly considering the city’s name.

“When the opportunity presented itself, I took it on.” Killoren said Monday during a press event commemorating the first official sale of a video to Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld at the Fort.

“I didn’t realize how big it would be. We left out a lot, but for me it was very personal in getting to know the people who are responsible for it.”

Killoren takes viewers on quick historical tour of the Fort’s beginning and relatively short life. The Fort was originally called a Factory, because it was a place where governmental officers called Factors would trade for needed goods.

Old Fort Director Dr. Eugene Watkins provides narratives, along with other notable Fort Madison figures as historical records and logs are read into the account.

After a short run of just over a decade, the fort ran into supply issues, most notably food stuffs began to rot and had to be disposed of and fort leaders decided to burn the fort in 1813 and fled the area by boat.

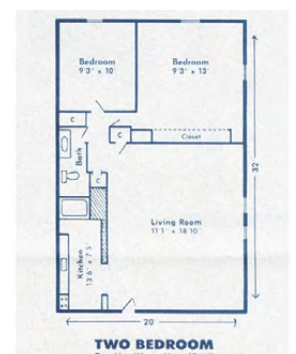
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# 2020 – A Year in Review: November & December

**NOV. 17, 2020** - 4,501 views, 480 engagements



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison firefighters work to get inside a Honda Monday afternoon after an accident near the intersection of Hwy. 61 and Iris Lane..

**DEC. 1, 2020** - 3,699 views, 702 engagements

## Supervisors make ATV/UTV ordinance permanent

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Lee County Supervisors are looking to end the sunset clause in an ordinance created last year to allow ATVs and UTVs on county roads.

At Tuesday's regular board meeting, Supervisors discussed the ordinance with Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber.

Weber said the county has had no major issues with regard to usage of the vehicles on secondary roads. Weber went so far as to say the operators are doing a good job "policing themselves."

"We've had very little issues in the county. People have been very respectful and really have done a good job of policing themselves which we appreciate." Weber said.

"Just this morning I passed a UTV operating lawfully and he had his speed set at exactly 35mph. Really gentleman, I think this has been a good thing for the county and I think it would be safe to proceed."

The ordinance was set to sunset on Dec. 31, 2020 which required the Board of Supervisors to review the ordinance and the impact on the county.

Board Chair Ron Fedler said, after speaking with Weber and Lee County Attorney Ross Braden earlier this week, he would prefer that the sunset be eliminated from the ordinance.

"I have talked with sheriff and county attorney and both had no objection and said that there really wasn't a lot of problems or incidents," Fedler said.

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## 2020 – A Year in Review: November & December

**DEC. 4, 2020 - 3,080 views, 271 engagements**

# Mohrfeld, Homes for Iowa bring IPI home to West Point

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

WEST POINT – It was moving day of sorts in West Point Thursday morning.

Crews from Ferneau & Sons House Moving and Raising, Inc out of Marshalltown, brought in the sixth home built by a program called Homes for Iowa, and pulled it onto a foundation built by Michael Mohrfeld's Green Oak Development.

Mike Norris, the executive director at Southeast Iowa Regional Planning, is the vice president of Homes for Iowa and has been part of the group's efforts since it's founding almost six years ago. Barb Smidt of Two Rivers Bank & Trust in Keokuk is also a board member.

Norris was on site as the crews pulled the home onto the foundation.

"We've been working on this Homes for Iowa for five and a half to six years now," Norris said. "We started the first phase of building laying down some boards in May of 2019 and we moved our first house in February. In 2020 we're hoping to move eight house and in 2021 we're going to try and ratchet that up to 24."

The homes are built at a medium security prison in Newton and then hauled to locations around the state helping to bolster new housing stock in communities with marked need.

The program has seen a mix of public and private engagement. Norris said an Oelwein project and a West



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Mike Norris, vice president of Homes for Iowa, and executive director of Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission, and Michael Mohrfeld of Green Oak Development shoot pictures of a Homes for Iowa home being moved onto a foundation in West Point December 3.

Burlington project are both public projects slated to move yet this year, but Thursday's move in West Point was a private venture for Green Oak.

The moving crews brought the home in on a large

trailer that actually disassembled and became part of a beam-and-run system where a tractor hooked up to the home with a heavy log chain and pulled the home onto a prepared foundation along a series crossbeams.

**DEC. 2, 2020 - 3,058 views, 160 engagements**



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

## Lights up

Matt Barnes, left, and son Max, work on some of the Christmas lights at their home on 28th Place Tuesday afternoon.

**NOV. 24, 2020 - 2,367 views, 173 engagements**

## Supervisors give OK to county digital radio upgrade bonds

BY PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – Lee County Supervisors has given a nod to bond approximately \$6 million to move forward with a digital radio overhaul for the county's emergency responders.

Following a public

hearing at Tuesday's regular Lee County Board of Supervisors meeting, supervisors approved issuing the bonds on a unanimous vote.

Board Chairman Ron Fedler said anyone can challenge the decision of the supervisors to spend

the money by asking a judge to look at whether the supervisors exceeded their authority.

Lee County Attorney Ross Braden said it's his opinion the board has the authority, but there is a stipulation that allows for the review.

The spend will result in a 18-24 month transition onto the state's ISICS (Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System) system and will provide guaranteed 95% coverage in the county for all emergency responders.

**DEC. 9, 2020 - 2,989 views, 386 engagements**

## City could be looking at Hotel/Motel tax dip

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

to be down about \$100,000 for the year, but it's looking now like that fund will be off closer to \$50,000.

FORT MADISON – The city's portion of hotel/motel taxes is taking a big hit as people around the country try to duck the coronavirus pandemic. City Manager David Varley told the Fort Madison City Council at its regular meeting Tuesday night that there was good news and bad news with city finances.

Varley called the city's finances a "mixed bag" saying the city has received more revenues than staff thought in two of the last three months in the road use funds, but those revenue contributions from the state have been up as much as 50% and off by as much as 37%.

Varley said he was projecting the road use fund

"The bad news is the hotel/motel tax is taking a beating. We just received our second quarterly payment and if things continue the way they are that fund could be down about \$90,000 to \$100,000 out of about \$210,000."

He said that reduction will likely have an impact on Old Fort funding and could affect the budget for the Amtrak passenger depot maintenance.

During the last city council meeting, the council approved resolutions to initiate franchise fees on gas and electrical utilities within the city to help generate revenues.

In an unrelated issue, the council voted 3-2 on the final reading of the ordinance banning parking on the south side of Avenue E from 2nd Street to 24th Streets. The 3-2 majority actually failed because councilmen Chad Cangas and Kevin Rink were absent and the three yeas don't constitute a majority of the entire council.

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## 2020 – A Year in Review: November & December

**NOV. 30, 2020 - 4,097 views, 176 engagements**



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison shoppers watch the Rose Carriage Service escort residents around downtown Saturday as part of Mistletoe on Main.

**DEC. 1, 2020 - 3,169 views, 276 engagements**

### Vasin Thurman scores 31 in HTC win over WACO

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

WAYLAND – It was the Thurman brothers show at the offensive end of the floor in Holy Trinity’s 71-48 season opening win over WACO Tuesday.

The Crusaders got 50 from the twins, 31 from Vasin Thurman, 16 in the first half, and 19 from Jason Thurman.

The duo had a nice inside-out game working with Vasin getting all of his points around the basket, while Jason fired in four 3-pointers, three in the first half to keep the WACO defense off balance.



THIURMAN

Head Coach John Hellige said Vasin could have easily put up 40 points but came up short on some free throws.

“He was on his way to 40, but he missed about seven free throws,” Hellige said. “I don’t have a count but I think he had about 15 rebounds too. He just played really well.”

But Hellige said he got strong performances from everyone on the floor including some solid minutes for freshman Connor Gehling would finished with four points in his first varsity contest.

“They all played really good. It’s a little faster at the varsity level and some of the younger kids aren’t use to that yet. Jason had a great game and Mikey DiPrima played well coming off an injury, and then Kadin Medland had a good game too.”

Outside of an early 3-0 hole, the Crusaders took the lead at the 3-minute mark and never trailed again opening up leads as big as 23 points toward the end of the first half.

Hellige said he was worried about a little slide coming out of the locker room, but WACO wasn’t able to get any traction.

“We were up pretty big at halftime. I was afraid we would have little let down, but I couldn’t be happier.”

**NOV. 3, 2020 - 1,426 views, 50 engagements**

### Fedler wanted radio bonds in front of voters

PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – Lee County Board Chairman Ron Fedler is hoping to put a \$5.7 million digital public safety upgrade in front of voters.

At Tuesday’s regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Fedler said the expense of the upgrade is too high for him to feel good about the board making the decision.

The board can approve bonding for the money because it falls under emergency services, and if the public is opposed to the bonding, individuals can gather signatures and petition the board for a special election to approve borrowing the money.



FEDLER

“I’m not saying we don’t need this and I think we do,” Fedler said.

“But look at what’s happening in the economy. We have a tremendous amount of retired people living on a limited income and they pay taxes and if those keep going up too much we could end up putting them in a very serious financial situation.”

Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren said he pitched the upgrade and its cost to city councils throughout the county and he said all of those public bodies have provided letters of support for the upgrade.

Fedler said he hadn’t heard of nor seen any letters. Herren said he handed the letters to the supervisors at the meeting.

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## 2020 – A Year in Review: November & December

**NOV. 18, 2020 - 3,842 views, 627 engagements**

# Mayor takes engineers to task over change orders

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A city-hired engineering firm took another scolding Tuesday night from Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld.

This time the issue was the PORT trail extension that runs along Avenue B east from Fort Madison High School property to 15th Street and then up to Rodeo Park.

Mohrfeld was upset with HR Green Inc, which engineered the project, after fielding complaints from neighborhood residents. Mohrfeld said there was a lack of a clean flow of the project along Avenue B.

“From the day I met with the team on this project.

I said avenue B is an opportunity that we have to be careful with because we’re going through people’s front yards. And we are failing miserably,” Mohrfeld said.

Mohrfeld cited a failure to do grades or utilities correctly and said he didn’t blame residents in the area for being upset.

“Before anybody jumps on and tells me it’s somebody else’s surveying, I’m pretty sure its HR Green stamps on the prints that we are guided by,” Mohrfeld said.

Tim Cutsforth, a project engineer with HR Green, was on the call and asked Mohrfeld what he meant by clean flow of the trail.

Mohrfeld told Cutsforth that when they originally met on the project the mayor outlined concerns for property owners, including inclines in driveways and

possible other options to reduce the impact on the neighborhood.

“I’m not 100% deniable, but I’m still frustrated,” Mohrfeld said. “I just don’t think our reservations about the clean flow of that trail through people’s front yards was taken to heart when we did the planning on this.

“I think we dropped the ball and I hope this doesn’t continue as we go up the hill on this project because I love this project.”

Cutsforth said he wasn’t going to blame other company’s surveying work and would be willing to meet with the city again to walk the project. But he said all options were considered and discussed before moving forward with plans.

**NOV. 3, 2020 - 2,672 views, 111 engagements**

# GOP rolls in local, state elections

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Absentee balloting fizzled like a balloon with a leak for Lee county Democrats Tuesday night.

With just over 9,400 absentee ballots being reported in Tuesday night’s general election in Lee County, and more than 16,000 ballots total cast in the county, Republican’s Garry Seyb Jr., Jeff Reichman, and Martin Graber all unseated incumbent Democrats for county and state offices.

“I would definitely say that, obviously, if you were predicting results this would be a shocker,” said Graber who knocked off first-term State Representative Jeff Kurtz for the 83rd District State Representative’s seat.

“But at the same token I’m not really shocked. The Lee County Republican team has been out doing their work and running the headquarters. This is a multi-year effort. The challenge now is to make sure we go and get something done.

“I want to say thank you to all the people who supported me either financially or with time. Without them we wouldn’t have been victorious.”

Graber defeated Kurtz by about 800 votes 6,959-6,194. Kurtz won in absentee voting by almost 1,100 but the Republican in-person turn out was too much to overcome with Graber winning in every single precinct in the county.

Reichman knocked off District 42 State Senator Rich Taylor, who was trying for a fourth term and is currently an Assistant Democratic Leader and ranking member of the Veterans’ Affairs Committee. Reichman won with almost 60% of the vote, 16,738-11,211. Lee County voters chose Reichman 9,604-6,821.

Reichman said he was called and congratulated by Gov. Kim Reynolds at about 11 p.m. before the county’s absentee results had been published.

“How exciting was that. I get a call from a friend who’s sitting with former Gov. Terry Branstad, who congratulated me, and then Gov. Reynolds calls,” Reichman said.

“Should we say a referendum on the Democratic party?,” Reichman said. “They’ve revealed how far left they’ve gone. I’m about manufacturing and helping out labor and the working man to increase his standard of living and succeed.”

“That really says something for Lee County. I think people are sick of sticking their finger in light socket and made a change. Now we need to deliver something positive in Lee County. Get some growth and turn this county around and make a positive.”

First time candidate Garry Seyb, Jr, unseated County Supervisor Gary Folluo for the District 4 County Supervisor seat. Seyb was unavailable for comment late Tuesday.

**NOV. 17, 2020 - 2,458 views, 103 engagements**

# Schulz, Amandus appointed to council’s 2nd and 3rd wards

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – After close to 90 minutes of interviews, the Fort Madison City Council appointed Tom Schulz and Donna Amandus to fill two vacancies.

The spots have been open for more than a month due to Tyler Miller’s resignation in the 3rd Ward and the untimely death of Bob Morawitz in the 2nd Ward.



SCHULZ



AMANDUS

The candidates got two questions from each the five sitting councilman on a variety of issues focusing on city revenues, nuisance issues, economic development.

Schulz was voted in on a 5-0 vote after a nomination from councilman Chad Cangas. Amandus was voted in on a 4-1 vote after Cangas’ nomination of Mike Chapman was defeated 2-3 with Councilwoman Rebecca Bowker voting fifth and casting a no vote breaking a 2-2 tie.

After being sworn in by Mayor Mohrfeld, Schulz and Amandus took positions for the regular agenda.

Jerry Hamelton, a candidate for 2nd Ward filed a petition that has yet to be verified. If verified, that petition would force a special election on December 29th, according to Lee County

Auditor Denise Fraise.

Originally Fraise said the election would be January 5th, but further investigation turned up the election had to take place with 90 days of Morawitz death which changed the date.

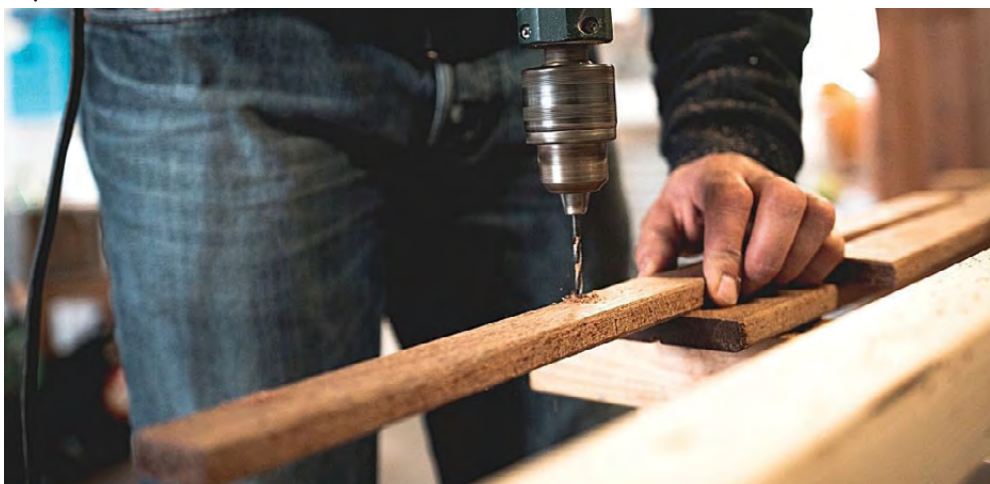
The other candidate for 3rd Ward was Brian Peterschmidt.

**NOV. 19, 2020 - 4,039 views, 328 engagements**



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

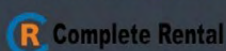
Crews with Meller Excavating work on the city parking lot at the corner of Avenue F and 8th Street. The city used a waste water treatment loan interest grant program to fund the project as well as the parking lot behind City Hall in Fort Madison.



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–Chuck & Lee

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Bob Morawitz	Edward Jones – Larry Kelch	Hope Associates Real Estate	Martin Graber for Iowa House	Sonny's Super Market
Brad's Pad Pizza	Edward Jones – Tony Fullenkamp	HTC Bunny Hop	District 83	Soroptimist International of Fort Madison
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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Chuck Osmanski	Fort Madison Elks Lodge	Kate Menke	New Dimensions	The Funky Cowgirl
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City of Fort Madison	Fort Madison Family YMCA	Kempker's True Value Rental	Palms Restaurant	The Samuel Hayes Show
Claws & Paws Pet Grooming	Fort Madison Housing Authority	Keokuk Auto Credit	Pam Dodds	Todd Schneider
Clear View Vision Center	Fort Madison Kids Committee	K's Fabrics & More	Paul Idol	Tony for Supervisor
Coats for Hope	Fort Madison Main Street	Kevin Rink,	Paul's Plumbing,	Tony Wolfe Insurance Services
Cobblestone Inn & Suites	Fort Madison	Fort Madison City Council	Heating, & Cooling, Inc.	Tracilyn Brown
Committee to Re-Elect Randolph for Mayor	Mexican Fiesta Committee	Kimberly Engle	Paul Schulte	Trish Eaves-Fedler
Complete Rental	Fort Madison Music Boosters	King-Lynk Funeral Home, Inc.	Peggy L. Steffensmeier	Tri State Outdoor Products, LLC
Conagra Brands	Fort Madison Partners	Kingsley Inn	Phyllis Anderson	Tri-State Rodeo
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Darin Gentry	Gary Folluo	Lee County Bank	Rashid Pharmacy & Wellness	West Point Fireman's Ball
Darlene Kraus	Geoff Shields	Lee County Democratic Party	Rebecca Bowker	West Point Fireworks Committee
Darrell Allman	George Shields	Lee County Conservation Board	Relay for Life of North Lee County	West Point Sweet Corn Festival Committee
Dave's Old Fashion Meats	Glo-Run	Lee County Crime Stoppers	Renee Clippert	W-M Johnson Truck Line
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Dawgs & Divas	Great River Regional Waste Authority	Economic Development Group	Rich Taylor for Iowa Senate	WorkSource Staffing
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