

# PEN CITY CURRENT

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

Thursday, February 18, 2021 | 8 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 43



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

## Different Ash Wednesday

**COVID IMPACT:** School system finds way to keep safety protocols in place and still celebrate start of Lent

Submitted article

FORT MADISON – Holy Trinity Catholic continued the Christian tradition of distributing ashes to our students to mark the beginning of the Lent – Ash Wednesday. Typically our students are able to gather together for Mass but with our safety and health in mind, Holy Trinity students have gathered in smaller groups to worship God each week.

This year for Ash Wednesday the Holy Trinity fifth grade elementary students worshiped in St. Mary's Church in West Point while the other elementary grades watched and participated from Facebook Live in their classrooms. Fr. Dennis Hoffman then distributed ashes to the students in the school gymnasium.

Fr. Dennis Hoffman sprinkles ashes over Rhett

Pieper (1st grade) on Wednesday

For our Holy Trinity students in grades 7 – 12, the freshman class had their turn to worship during Mass in the school chapel with Fr. Dan Dorau while the rest of the student body and faculty watched via Zoom in their classrooms.

Along with masks and social distancing, Covid 19 precautions also changed the way in which our students received their ashes. In place of receiving the ashes on their foreheads, everyone received a small sprinkling of ashes on top of their heads. This is actually the common practice throughout much of the world including many European countries.

Holy Trinity students are tasked during this Lenten season to remember their mortality and to find ways to draw themselves closer to God.



Photo courtesy of Holy Trinity Catholic

Fr. Dennis Hoffman sprinkles ashes over first grader-Rhett Pieper on Wednesday.

## GET OUT THE SHOVELS City to start notices on sidewalks

PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison city officials are notifying residents that starting Thursday, notices will be given to property owners that have not cleared public sidewalks of snow and ice.

City Building Director Doug Krogmeier said due to excessive snow over the last month, compounded with extreme temperatures, the city has given property owners time to clear walkways.

“As the weather warms and people begin to get out again, it is important that property owners maintain safe conditions for pedestrian travel,” Krogmeier wrote in an email Wednesday.

“While the City intentionally held off from requiring public sidewalks be

See **SHOVEL**, page 3

## COVID Reynolds turns down Microsoft proposal

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

DES MOINES – Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds said Wednesday the state will be looking to enhance current systems for COVID vaccine scheduling rather than partner with Microsoft.

At her weekly press conference, Reynolds said the state looked hard at a proposal from Microsoft for a centralized vaccine coordination system, but has decided to refocus on enhancing systems already in place.

She said the integrating current systems with the Microsoft system wasn't advantageous to the state.

See **VACCINES**, page 3

## CANINE CORRAL

### Dog Park gets a \$5,000 matching donation for paths

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Just three months after an anonymous donor offered up a \$5,000 matching grant to help spur efforts to clean up City Cemetery, another \$5,000 is being offered to the Canine Corral in Fort Madison.

This time the funds will be used to kick start fundraising for the cement walking paths at the dog park, located

near the Tri-State Rodeo grounds at the top of 15th Street.

Donna Amandus, chairwoman of the five-member Canine Corral committee and 3rd Ward City Councilwoman, said the anonymous donor will be matching up to \$5,000 in funds received from now until April 2, 2021 at 5 p.m.

The funds can be general donations to the cost of the concrete used for the paths, or people can earmark donations of \$100 or more to brick memo-

rial pavers that will be used as part of the path.

“Those start at \$100, but they can go all the way up to \$5,000 if people want a big slab,” Amandus said. “Anyone who needs additional information on that can call me directly at 319-470-4881.”

Amandus said she didn't know if the benefactor was the same person who donated to the cemetery or not, but

See **CANINES**, page 6

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## WEATHER

THU 09 Jan.....Scattered Clouds, 20° F/ 4° F  
FRI 10 Jan.....Light Snow, 23° F/ -2° F  
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# Obituaries

## OBITUARIES

### MARILYN J. SCHNEIDER

Marilyn Jo Schneider, 76, of rural Fort Madison, Iowa, passed away at 6:50 a.m. Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at her home.

Marilyn was born on February 6, 1945 in Fort Madison, the daughter of Cecil and Essaline (Scott) Hamilton. On June 29, 1968, she married Robert Andrew Schneider at St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church in West Point, Iowa. He preceded her in death on May 5, 2020.



SCHNEIDER

Survivors include her mother: Essaline Rooney of Fort Madison; six children: Rose (Brad) Hills of Fort Madison, Iowa, Roger (Sonja) Schneider of West Point, Iowa, Anita (James) Hatfield of Fort Madison, Iowa, Andy (Amanda) Schneider of Monmouth, Illinois, Steve (Heather) Schneider of Unionville, Missouri and Shelly (Mac) Schneider of Donnellson, Iowa; ten grandchildren: Kayla Hills, Reann, Breann and Tristin Schneider, Stephanie (David) Corns, Dominic Destiny, Daelynn Schneider, Cody Schneider and Clayton Geerdes; one great grandchild: Aneira Corns; twin sister: Carolyn Barnes of Fort Madison, Iowa; two brothers: William (Sandy) Hamilton of Burlington, Iowa and Michael (Jean) Hamilton of Fort Madison, Iowa; one brother-in-law: James J. (Suki) Schneider of Burlington, Iowa.

She was preceded in death by her husband: Robert; father: Cecil; step-father: Eugene Rooney and sister: Colleen Hamilton.

Marilyn was a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church and the Altar and Rosary Society of the church. She worked at American Paper Co. and helped her husband on the farm. She enjoyed flowers, hummingbirds, gardening and canning. Marilyn loved Christmas, Elvis Presley and most of all, spending time with her family, especially her grandchildren.

Friends may call from 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. Friday, February 19, 2021 at Schmitz Funeral Home in West Point.

A funeral service will be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, February 20, 2021 at Schmitz Funeral Home in West Point with Father Joseph Phung officiating.

Burial will be at Calvary Cemetery in West Point.

A memorial has been established in her memory for West Point Fire and Rescue, Lee County Hospice or PAW Animal Shelter.

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

### MARY E. SANDERS

Mary E. Sanders, 87 of Burlington and formerly of Ft. Madison, passed away on Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 12:42 PM at the Great River Medical Center.

She was born on March 30, 1933 in Duluth, MN to Hubert and Florence Bryant Kroning. On June 27, 1964 she married John M. Sanders in Hudson, WI and he passed away on August 15, 2011. Mary was a Phlebotomist for the team Doctor for the Minnesota Twins and was a homemaker. She was a member of the Moose Lodge and a Past President of the Women of the Moose. She obtained her blackbelt in Judo. Mary loved going to car races for sixty years and had been to over one hundred tracks.



SANDERS

Survivors include two sons, Daniel (Kathy) Sanders of Burlington and Brendan Sanders of Ft. Madison; seven grandchildren; two daughters, Shelly Wagoner of Ft. Madison and Jaime Sonnenberg of Riveria, TX; seven grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband and a son, Michael Wagoner.

Per her wishes, cremation has been entrusted to King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory. A graveside service in Oakland Cemetery will be held at a later date. A memorial has been established for PAW Animal Shelter and online condolences may be left at [www.kinglynk.com](http://www.kinglynk.com).

#### Pen City Current obituary policy

The Current runs obituaries one time at no charge to funeral homes and they run the day they are submitted in most cases. They are also run as submitted by the funeral homes.

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## From the Front

# State may see more weekend vaccination clinics

**VACCINES** - Continued from Page 1

“We’ve been exploring every tool available to improve the vaccine distribution process,” Reynolds said.

“After learning more about the breadth of Microsoft’s solution and reviewing the challenges faced by other states in their roll-outs and speaking with our various vaccine partners, we have made the decision not to move forward with the contract.”

Reynolds said there would have been significant disruptions to the current systems already in place in the state and she didn’t want to risk slowing down the progress the state is making in getting people vaccinated.

According to [coronavirus.iowa.gov](https://coronavirus.iowa.gov), the data center for the state on all things COVID, the state has vaccinated close to 500,000 people and now is ranked 21st by the Centers for Disease Control in vaccination efficiency. The state was in the bottom three just two weeks ago.

The state has vaccinated 488,936 Iowans to date and 509,090 total doses have been administered.

Lee County is ranked 17th in the state for vaccines initiated, which means those receiving the first dose, with 2,415 and 1,370 county residents have received both doses.

Three additional cases were discovered in the past 24 hours for a total of 3,471 total cases in the



REYNOLDS

county. Of those, 3,168 are listed as recovered. The current 14-day positivity rate in Lee County, according to Lee County Health Department is 5%. The state website has Lee County’s positivity rate for the past seven days at just 3% of all tests administered.

She said 87 of the state’s 99 counties have 14-day positivity ratings of under 10% and one hospital in Des Moines has closed its COVID dedicated wing.

Reynolds said the state will now shift its focus from building a different system to optimizing the overall registration and scheduling process for Iowans. She said those efforts would be done in partnership with local public health and vaccine providers.

Iowa’s weekly dose will be increasing next week by 24% to 62,000 doses, up from the 49,500 the state had been receiving.

The governors said five counties in the state did have vaccines withheld last week due to poor vaccination efficiencies, but she said it wasn’t a punishment for those vaccine providers.

“I want to be very clear that wasn’t meant to be punitive, but to allow local health officials to administer remaining vaccines before new supplies

arrived,” Reynolds said.

She said all counties will be getting their allotments for the upcoming week.

“Our goal is to vaccinate as many eligible Iowans as possible based on the supply and we’re working together to make that happen.”

She said she was informed during a call with the White House Task Force that the FDA is close to a decision regarding emergency authorization of Johnson & Johnson’s single-dose vaccine by the end of the month.

“While that supply will be limited to just a few million doses at the start, Johnson & Johnson wants to distribute more than 100 million by the end of June,” Reynolds said.

She said the state will also be pushing for increased weekend vaccinations as federal officials are seeing “significant decreases” in vaccinations and hours over the weekends.

“I fully support this approach,” Reynolds said. “Increasing clinics will help us meet our goal of vaccinating as many as possible and that’s what we want.”

One reporter asked Reynolds what was the best advice for elderly who still haven’t been vaccinated and don’t have access to the Internet.

Reynolds said those people should get in contract with Area Agencies on Aging to help with the process.

## Sidewalk notices to start today

**SHOVEL** - Continued from Page 1

cleared for the safety of the property owners due to the extreme cold temperatures, the weather is warming and it is time to address these sidewalks.”

Starting tomorrow, Thursday, February 18, 2021 the City will begin issuing notices to property owners that have not cleared their public sidewalks of snow and ice.

Property owners will be given three to four days to clear snow from public sidewalks. If said snow is not substantially removed, City contractors will perform the task and the owners will be notified that the cost of abatement will be applied to the property taxes.

City Code indicates that snow and ice not removed from public sidewalks within 12 hours of the snow and ice stopping is a nuisance that can be remedied by city action

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**Charles Vandenberg, Editor**

(319).371.1670  
editor@pencitycurrent.com

**Lee K. Vandenberg, Sales Manager**

(319).371.4125  
sales@pencitycurrent.com

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## Scene Around the Area/Opinion



Photo courtesy of Lee County Sheriff's Dept.

The Fort Madison Rotary Club voted to donate \$1,000 toward purchasing gear and equipment for the new Lee County Sheriff Rescue Boat. Pictured are Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber, Lee County CrimeStoppers representative Tammy LeMaster and Fort Madison Rotary President Ryan Wilson.

## Picture in W-MU hallway kick starts coverage memories

A photo can sometimes be worth a thousand reactions.

I was at Winfield-Mount Union High School last week for Holy Trinity's girls basketball tournament game when I saw a photo of Jess Settles from his high school days hanging in the hallway.

Naturally, I had to get a photo of it. I covered Settles in his last two years of high school and his six seasons at Iowa. I know him well — he's a friend and a good source when it comes to college basketball.

I also had to post it on social media, because Settles has always been a favorite of Hawkeye fans, both for his play and for the length of time he spent with the program.

It didn't take long after the photo was posted before my phone started beeping with the reactions. Everyone liked the photo, and many commented, some wanting to joke with Settles about how young he looked in the photo, or to give him a hard time about the longevity of his college career.

What was interesting, though, were the memories of southeast Iowa fans about the high school basketball during Settles' time at W-MU.

There were the battles between Settles' teams and Marquette High School. They were two of the top teams among the small schools in the



state, and when they met during the regular season, you had to get to the gym early to get a seat. I remember covering one game while sitting on the stage in the Marquette gym, because the bleachers were crammed beyond capacity that night.

Both teams qualified for the Class A state tournament in 1992, put in different district/substate brackets by the IHSAA. W-MU reached the championship game, losing to Aplington, the only defeat for the Wolves that season. Marquette lost in the first round to Pomeroy-Palmer.

A year later, W-MU was favored to win the state title, but the Wolves lost in the semifinals, and ended up finishing third. The program would make five consecutive state tournament appearances overall, winning the championship in 1995.

Those teams were part of a greater era for boys basketball in southeast Iowa. Marquette reached the state tournament championship game in 1987. Fort Madison had Ryan Bowen, who would

go on to play at Iowa and then in the NBA. Harmony High School played in its only state tournament in 1991.

As a young sports writer, I got to see a lot of these teams play. It's where I learned my lesson about getting to the gym early, because it was always difficult to find a seat anywhere you went. Games on Tuesdays and Fridays were must-see events in gyms around the area. There were stories that were fun to tell.

The talent that was on display was fun to watch. W-MU's Klay Edwards went on to a great career at Iowa State. Another player from the program, Burt Lappe, went on to play at Northern Iowa.

There are good memories from those years, and it was interesting to see the reactions of people who were there, either as players or spectators.

It's funny what an old photo can do.

John Bohnenkamp is a national award-winning reporter and editor and is a contributor to Pen City Current. He can be reached at [editor@pencitycurrent.com](mailto:editor@pencitycurrent.com).

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# Sports

## REGIONAL BASKETBALL

# Central Lee girls can't catch up to West Burlington

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP  
PCC SPORTS

WEST BURLINGTON — Central Lee had eliminated West Burlington in the girls basketball regional tournament the last season.

It's why, after the Falcons won both regular-season games against the Hawks this season, West Burlington coach John Vandenberg didn't want to change anything in the game plan.

"We beat them twice with what we had," Vandenberg said.

The third time worked, too.

West Burlington shut down Central Lee in the second and third quarters to take a 49-38 win in Wednesday's Class 3A regional semifinal.

The Falcons (20-1), ranked No. 5 in the state, will play No. 9 West Liberty in Saturday's regional final at Wapello.

Central Lee, which came into the game on a five-game winning streak, finished the season 13-9.

West Burlington went on a 12-3 run to close the first half, then outscored the Hawks 13-3 in the third quarter.

"We just went back to kind of just standing around offensively," Central Lee coach Jay Baldwin said.

"Everything we planned, we didn't do. We did nothing that was in our game plan offensively. I don't know if it was nerves or what. We didn't put the ball in the basket, and then couldn't get any confidence on the defensive end because of it."

"I don't know if we could have played better in those first three minutes (of the second half)," Vandenberg said of the way the Falcons pulled away to open the third quarter.

There was one little tweak to the Falcons' game plan — they were able to keep Central Lee's Mya Merschman out of the lane. Merschman, second in the state in scoring at 28 points per game, finished with 19.

"She's a great player," Vandenberg said. "She's going to get her touches, she's going to get her points. She scored 19, and she's averaging, what, 30? We were happy with that."

"When I got this job, I didn't really know her," Baldwin said. "That girl is one of the fiercest competitors I've ever seen. She hates to lose as much as I do. She's been nothing but absolutely fantastic. She's done everything we've asked her to do."

Alivia Myhre added 12 for the Hawks.

Sydney Marlow led West Burlington with 18 points. Abbey Bence had 10.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Mya Merschman (24) found herself hounded plenty in the lane Wednesday night in the Hawks' Region 5 loss to West Burlington in West Burlington. Merschman scored 19 in the loss. At right, Alivia Myhre works the perimeter, and below Makayla Morrison plays defense on the Falcons' Sydney Marlow.



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## From the Front/Classifieds



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Donna Amandus, left, and Sharman Steeples, talk with a DNR officer during a tree planting in November at the Canine Corral in Fort Madison. A matching \$5,000 anonymous donation is now in play to help pay for cement paths at the park.

# Next step at dog park is shelter houses

**CANINE** - Continued from Page 1

said whoever it is is doing good things for the city.

The dog park is essentially one year in the making. Amandus said she got a reminder on her phone that it was one year ago today she, along with Ken and Sharman Steeples drove to Iowa City to get a look at their dog park for ideas.

“We wanted to go up there and take a look to make sure we did this right down here,” she said.

In November, the committee, along with the help of about 30 volunteers planted 60 trees on the grounds. The path work is set to begin on June 25. All the labor for the new paths is being donated privately, but Amandus said the materials for the path will be about \$10,000.

The paths will be 5-feet across and ADA compatible.

She said the final step in the preliminary plans for the park includes two shelter houses on each side of

the park about half way up the path, to provide seating and shade.

Donations for the path can be sent to Amandus c/o Chair of Canine Corral at 412 24th Street, Fort Madison, IA 52627. Checks must be written out to FMEDC, the Fort Madison Economic Development Corp. Amandus said that group is the functioning non profit for the committee.

She asked that donors write “dog park” in the memo line of the check.

Also serving on the committee spearheading the efforts are the Steeples, Linda Smith, Patrice Jordan, and Anne Heitz.

Amandus said the dog park, according to city officials, is now the most used park in the city.

“We’re just super excited about all the response and support we’ve received and all the people that have come out to the park,” she said.

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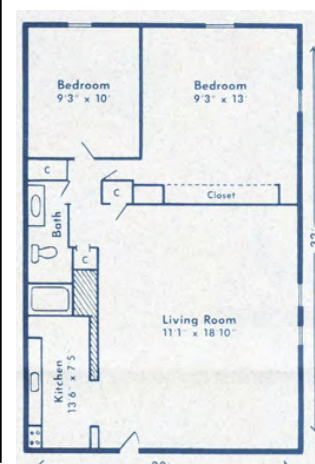
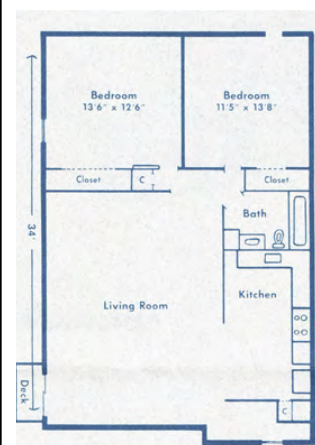
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# Iowa's rural areas face stiffer vaccination challenges

*From facilities to staffing to pure demand, rural areas find vaccination test tougher*

**BY NATALIE KREBS**

Iowa Public Radio and Side Effects Public Media

TAMA COUNTY - Across the Midwest, the rollout of COVID vaccines has been spotty. Lots of people are having a trouble with online signups. And vaccine demand far exceeds supply. That's made the process challenging, especially in rural areas.

For years, the Girls State Training School in central Iowa has sat mostly empty. But on this day, the main building buzzes as a local vaccination clinic opens.

Rooms labeled for social workers, psychologists and others who once helped delinquent girls are filled with health care workers and elderly residents from the rural area.

"It's zooming today. We've noticed that despite our best efforts to say come at your scheduled time, people are coming 10-15 minutes early," said Shannon Zoffka, Tama County Public Health director. "They're excited," said a volunteer in the background.

Zoffka said the clinic scheduled 110 people for their first doses. They were selected from a waiting list her department started last month.

But aside from the excitement in the air, Zoffka said her small staff is stressed. They have to maintain the waiting list while making appointments to dispense a limited number of doses.

"Once it gets here, and you get rolling, and there's just a lot of unknowns too, with how many

doses are we getting? How many people can we actually vaccinate?" she said.

Zoffka isn't the only rural health official feeling overwhelmed.

Chris Estle runs the department in Jefferson County. When word got out they were scheduling appointments, 180 slots were filled in about three hours.

"We could hold 100 voicemails, we couldn't even get through all the voicemails," said Estle.

Estle said about a quarter of county residents are 65 and older. Like many rural counties, that's higher than the statewide average. But she's not keeping a waiting list. She said it's too complicated with rapidly changing information coming in.

Estle said they're scheduling first-come, first-served appointments as doses come in. But high demand has pushed some to call or contact her through her personal Facebook account.

"Nope, not going to — not even starting that. Not, not even going to go down that road. So you have to set professional boundaries. And that's very, very difficult in a small rural community," Estle said.

Tinglong Dai, a professor of operations management at Johns Hopkins University, said rural areas have additional obstacles.

For example, most just don't have the ultra cold storage needed for the Pfizer vaccine, which accounts for just under half the doses administered in Iowa so far.

"I think we need to really think carefully about equity. So equity does not just mean the quantity of vaccines allocated to each area, it also means what kind of vaccines people are getting," said Dai.

And Dai said to address supply problems, Iowa should follow the lead from another rural state — West Virginia. It registers qualified residents at the

state level and gives them a place in line to avoid overwhelming small local departments. Gov. Kim Reynolds says Iowa is working on it.

"I don't think people really want to get vaccines like the next day, next hour, people just want to get that kind of assurance," said Reynolds.

That assurance is what Linda Robbins wants. She is 69 and lives in Epworth, a town of about 2,000.

Robbins hasn't heard anything from her county about how to get vaccinated. But several friends in Des Moines have gotten appointments at places like the Hy-Vee grocery store.

"Tell us something. You know, just let me know. I mean, I know there's a shortage. And I know I'm probably not going to be first, but just tell us what the plan is," said Robbins.

Back at the Girls State Training School, Debra Behounek, 67, is getting her first dose of the Moderna vaccine along with her husband and aunt.

Nurse: Do you want this in your right or your left arm?

Behounek: I think we're gonna go left.

Behounek said she feels incredibly fortunate to get her family vaccinated this quickly. She just happened to notice a Facebook post from the health department.

"You know, when you watch across the country, everybody, waiting and waiting. And then, it's just this is a miracle. We got the first day," she laughed.

Behounek said she would have been happy if her family got vaccinated by June.

*This story was produced by Side Effects Public Media, a public radio collaborative covering health-care. It is based at WFYI in Indianapolis and has partner stations in six Midwestern states, including Iowa Public Radio. Natalie Krebs works out of Iowa Public Radio. The story is reprinted with permission of [IowaWatch.org](http://IowaWatch.org).*



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