

PEN CITY CURRENT

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

Monday, November 22, 2021 | 9 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 212



www.pencitycurrent.com

United Way at 80% of goal

UWGRR looking to blow top off 2021 campaign goal after pandemic year

BY PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – United Way of the Great River Region is on a record-setting pace to beat the fall 2021 campaign goal of \$200,000. “We are excited to have reached nearly 80% of our campaign goal already this year. With your help we can blow the top off the campaign thermometer!” Karen Siefken, Executive Director at UWGRR said.

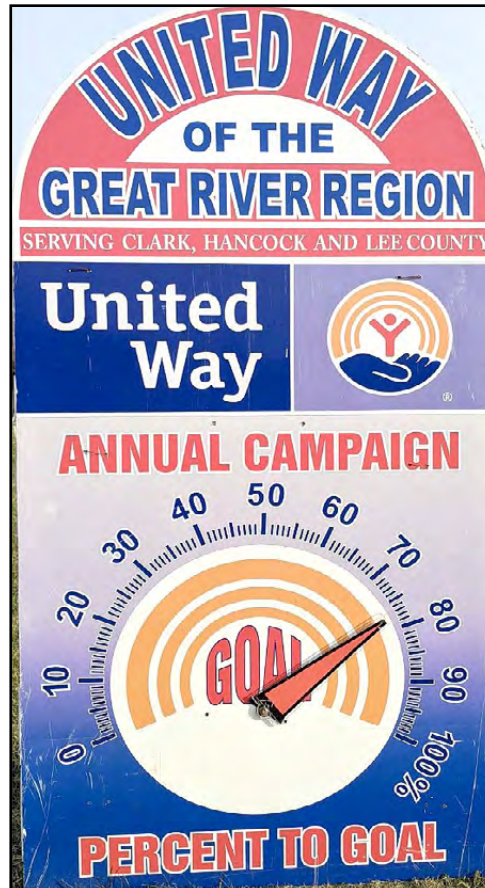
The funds from the annual campaign help support over 20 local non-profit partner agencies in Clark County, Missouri, Hancock County, Illinois and all of Lee County, Iowa and ninety-eight and a half cents of every dollar donated stays in the 3-county service area.

“Whether it’s the Fort Madison Food Pantry, local YMCAs, Community Action of Southeast Iowa, Elliott Test Kitchen, Clark County Council on Aging, or Carthage Kiwanis, all UWGRR partner agencies maximize our funding to provide programs or projects that directly relate to the United Way cornerstone values of health, education, and financial stability. We connect individuals in need with the resources and networks to help them succeed,” Seifken said.

The United Way campaign is largely fueled by the employee giving campaigns at many area businesses and industries. UWGRR also accepts private donations from individuals.

“Whether someone gives \$5.00 or \$1,000.00 to our campaign, it helps United

See **GOAL**, page 3



Debate is an important part of news

This week was a weird week of news.

It started with a grandmother who, despite a heinous crime, wanted to tell her adopted community the story of her grandson.

A woman who didn’t appear to harbor any ire for a life that’s been a series of sidesteps to keep her family away from a life of gangs, drugs, and in a very tragic twist of irony, violence.

She instead accepted – at this point anyway – the fate of that very life, and has lived with the mantra, “you gotta watch your back”. She never saw it coming.

A city council meeting turned dark quick when one Fort Madison city councilwoman accused another member of the council of making a racist comment.

There’s been efforts to clean it up since then. I sat in the meeting as one of two journalists. I didn’t think the comment was racist when Councilman Tom Schulz said the city’s demographics are changing and it’s leading to more violent crime.

Schulz wants beefier neighborhood watch programs to supplement a short-staffed Fort Madison Police Department. We really have one of the best neighborhood watch programs you’ll ever see in the 34th Place Neighborhood Watch, right under our nose.

I’ve been at their meetings on several occasions, including citywide neighborhood watch gatherings. The best people in the city to get those programs growing is that 34th Place group. They’ve always been willing to help those who

See **DEBATE**, page 5



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Workers with Quality Striping Inc. out of Des Moines work a grinder on Avenue E westbound in the 500 block Thursday afternoon. It looked as though QSI was putting down one-way white striping, but Fort Madison Public Works Director Mark Busselot clarified the company was scraping the paint spots making it look white. The company followed up with yellow striping on Friday.

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WEATHER

MON 22 Nov.....	Chilly and Overcast, 39° F/ 27° F
TUE 23 Nov.....	Clear and Cool, 52° F/ 28° F
WED 24 Nov.....	Overcast, 59° F/ 44° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 11/20.....	27 29 33 37 40, Star Ball: 9, All Star Bonus: 2
LUCKY FOR LIFE 11/20.....	12 22 24 26 30, Lucky Ball: 11
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Opinion

CURT SWARM

Author reunites with Prairie City high school teacher

We called him Mr. Johnson. Today he goes by Bob. He was my high school history teacher in Monroe. This was before Monroe had their high school fire and was thrown into emergency consolidation with arch sports rival, Prairie City. It would be called PCM—Prairie City Monroe. Legend has it that Monroe wanted their name to be first, as in Monroe Prairie City, but since Prairie City was helping Monroe out by taking in its students after the fire, Prairie City would be first. The same goes for the team names. Previously it was Monroe Wildcats, and Prairie City Mustangs. Now it is PCM Mustangs.

One of my last vivid memories of Mr. Johnson was when he awarded me an hour of detention after school. This made me late for football practice, for which I received the privilege of running 20 laps. Grrrr. So my last memory of Mr. Johnson isn't all that pleasant.

What was my infraction? My memory is vague, but it was either (a.) chewing gum, (b.) having my shirt-tail out, or (c.) not wearing a belt (called the Nobel Prize.) Considering how students dress nowadays—they wear shorts to school for heaven's sake—it's al-

EMPTY NEST

By Curt Swarm



most laughable. It wasn't funny then.

By the way. I was the class clown and

had the second most detentions in the whole school. Who was first? That poor soul was on permanent detention.

So, how did I come to meet up with my 86-year old high school history teacher? Well, his child wife, Suzanne (she's twenty years younger than him), and I are friends on Facebook. She likes art, I like art. I forwarded Suzanne a notice that Cecile Houel, a world famous French artist in Burlington, was having an open house. Suzanne was excited and wanted to attend. I said, "Well, why don't you and your husband, Bob, come to Mt. Pleasant, and Ginnie and I will take you to Burlington to meet Cecile Houel." Suzanne jumped at the chance.

Voila. This is how I came to meet up with my old

high school history teacher, Bob (Mr.) Johnson. He has quite a story. Teaching history at Monroe was his first and only teaching job. (By the way, he looks great and is in excellent health, his memory sharp as a tack.) He taught history and other subjects, like government and economics, at Monroe, and then, Prairie City Monroe. He came to Monroe at the tender age of 29, after graduating from the University of Iowa and a stint in the Army. The superintendent asked him if he would stay two years. Bob agreed and stayed 33. This was during the Vietnam war and teaching jobs were highly sought after as they were automatic draft deferments.

He met his wife to be while teaching school. Suzanne was a custodian. Bob and his teacher friends would meet after school and play basketball and lift weights. Suzanne would join in on the basketball playing and out-shoot them. Bob thought, "This is the one for me."

He asked her out on a picnic lunch to propose. Only he didn't bring the ring for fear of losing it in the tall grass. Fortunately, Suzanne was able to look beyond the absence of a ring and, knowing that Bob was frugal, would make a good husband. The rest is all history, so to speak. They've been married 41 years.

We had a great time in Burlington looking at art. I drove them down Snake Alley, the world's crookedest street according to Ripley, in Ginnie's car. (We didn't take mine because it "smelled mousy" according to Ginnie.) Ginnie freaked because she didn't think her car would "make the curves." It did fine.

We took my former history teacher and his wife out to dinner at a restaurant overlooking the Mississippi River. Mr. Johnson now has plenty of stories to tell his coffee drinking buddies back in Monroe, and I have my revenge for that hour of detention.

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



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Obituaries/From the Front

OBITUARIES

SCOTT A. COWLES

Scott Allen Cowles, age 64, formerly of Fort Madison, Iowa, passed away on Wednesday, November 17, 2021 at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital, Plano, Texas.



COWLES

Scott is survived by his wife of 43 years, Mary Lou (Poetting) Cowles of Carrollton, Texas; his son Dustin, of Carrollton; and two sisters; Desiree (Ken) Frye of Spring Hill, Florida and LaSha (Greg) White of Lakeland, Florida. He is preceded in death by his father, Billy Gene Cowles, and mother, Nancy Carol (Kurtz) Cowles.

Scott was born on December 20, 1956 in Salt Lake City, Utah to parents Billy and Nancy. He graduated from Fort Madison High School, Fort Madison, Iowa in 1975. Scott served two years in the United States Air Force with honorable discharge in 1977. Scott and Mary Lou were married on July 29, 1978 in Fort Madison, IA. The Cowles family has resided in Carrollton, Texas since 1984 and Scott worked for many of those years beside his father in the construction trade. Scott was a dedicated, loving husband and great father as well as best friend and life-long companion to his son Dustin. They shared many common interests including a passion for the Iowa Hawkeyes and Miami Dolphins, and all things that go with the pomp and showmanship of professional wrestling.



A graveside service is scheduled for 11:00AM on Monday, November 22, 2021, at Hilltop Memorial Park, 1810 Perry Road in Carrollton. Family and friends are welcome to attend and share in celebrating Scott's life.

Funeral arrangements are made by Metrocrest Funeral Home, Carrollton, TX. There will be no visitation separate from the graveside service. Memories and wishes can be shared online at: <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/funeral-homes/carrollton-tx/metrocrest-funeral-home/9657>.

Pen City Current obituary policy

Pen City Current runs obituaries one time at no charge to funeral homes and they run the day they are submitted in most cases. They are also run as submitted by the funeral homes. Reposting of obituaries due to changes can only be requested by the submitting funeral home and will be assessed a \$15 reposting fee.

OBITUARIES

LORI L. MENKE

Lori L. Menke, 52, of Roseville, Ill. died October 27, 2021, at her home with her husband and son by her side. She was born July 31, 1969, in Canton, Il the daughter of Charles F. and Shirley Joan (Lafary) Wust. She married Douglas Menke April 24, 1999.



MENKE

Lori is survived by her husband Doug of Roseville, her son Gunnar Menke of Roseville, Il, her mother Joan Wust of Smithfield, Ill., and her two sisters Linda (Jim) Bainter of Peoria and Leigh (Don) Hines of Cuba, Ill., and by numerous nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her father. Lori was a volunteer wish granter of the Make-a-wish Foundation for twenty years. She worked at Western Illinois R.O.T.C. Reserve officer training corps. She was an office manager at Big Brothers and Big Sisters in Peoria. Lori was a peer ambassador at Spoon River College. She was an EMT. Lori was highly active in her Cuba High School Reunions.

Funeral services were held Saturday, October 30, 2021 at the Wise Family Funeral Home in Roseville, Ill. Visitation was held two hours prior to the service. Graveside services were held at Oak Hill Cemetery in Lewistown, Ill. Memorials may be made to the Make-a-wish Foundation. Online condolences may be made at www.wisefamily-funeralhome.com. Wise Family Funeral Home Roseville was in charge of arrangements.

United Way having great campaign start

GOAL - Continued from Page 1

Way fund the important work our partner agencies are doing in tri-county region. Our funding helps empower and educate kids, reduces hunger across all age groups, helps families overcome challenges like past-due heating bills, and much more," Emily Biddenstadt, Past President of UWGRR, said.

You can help "blow the top" off the campaign thermometer by donating to United Way of the Great River Region before December 31, 2021.

If your place of employment is interested in starting a United Way employee giving campaign, please contact Karen Siefken at United Way of the Great River Region. Anyone can donate by sending a check to United Way of the Great River Region, PO Box 251, Keokuk, IA 52632 or by going to the UWGRR website at www.unitedway-grr.org and looking for the donate now button.

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Sports

Lady Hounds will play with shorter numbers this season



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Senior Malarie Ross and junior Camille Kruse will be looking to lead Fort Madison this year. The Lady Hounds started the year with a 57-56 Hall of Pride scrimmage win over West Burlington Saturday.

Hound girls want to build on 17-3 campaign last year, but won't field jayvee squad

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP
PCC SPORTS

FORT MADISON – It could be a lonely bench for Fort Madison girls basketball coach Tony Sargent this season.

The roster numbers for the Bloodhounds in the preseason have been so low, it's been hard to install any schemes.

"We haven't put any offense in, defense in, out of bounds ... nothing," Sargent said. "There's a lot of drills we can't do because we don't have enough kids."

Sargent's hope is to have a rotation of 8-9 players — there isn't enough to have a junior varsity team

this season — but getting everyone healthy and on the same page is the goal for the opening weeks.

"It's been quite interesting," Sargent said. "It's been hard at times."

The Bloodhounds went 17-3 last season, winning the Southeast Conference title for the first time since 1998.

"I was hoping winning would be contagious," Sargent said. "I thought that would be a big thing. Hopefully that can carry over from last season."

There is talent among the low numbers, though, which gives Sargent optimism.

Malarie Ross, an IGCA all-district selection last season, averaged 20 points per game last season and was one of the team's best defenders, with 109 steals.

"She's just good," Sargent said. "She brings the whole package."

Sargent's daughter, Irelynd, started five games as a freshman last season. She was second on the team with 115 rebounds and third with 49 steals.

"She's one of my best defenders," Sargent said. "We can put her on any player and she does a great job."

Junior Camille Kruse averaged 8.3 points last season, and was third on the team with 109



ROSS



KRUSE



SARGENT

rebounds. She led the team with 61 assists.

"Camille has the skill," Sargent said. "She can be as good as she wants to be."

Junior Molly Knipe started 15 games last season and was third on the team with 110 rebounds.

The Bloodhounds add Anna Lynk, who didn't play last season but did play with the team during the summer.

"She's done really well," Sargent said.

Sophomores Ajia Jenkins and Taylor Johnson will also play significant roles.

Sargent likes to play a fast offense and pressure defense to counter the Bloodhounds' lack of size.

"Once we kind of get in shape, once we get there, we'll be able to put more pressure on the ball," Sargent said.

Sargent said he's maintaining a positive outlook despite the numbers.

"If I can get the puzzle put together, I think we can be OK," he said. "I really think we've got a lot of talent. I know what the girls are capable of, if we can just pull everything together."

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From the Front

Some coverage is meant to kickstart local debate

DEBATE - Continued from Page 1

will help themselves.

They felt early on that the city had no interest in supporting their efforts, but that dynamic has been changing a bit. Schultz has spent time with the group as has Mayor Matt Mohrfeld and Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff.

But saying Schulz comments were racist was a fight this council doesn't need.

There's progress here. Real progress. Coffers are getting refilled, Mohrfeld has ushered in a monstrosity of a marina makeover, streets ARE getting fixed, businesses are opening, parks continue to be a private/public partnership, a dog park is up and running, and PORT has just about encircled the west half of the city in recreational trails.

There's always seemed to be a bit of a rift in the recesses of the personalities of the council, but cooler heads have prevailed. Councilwoman Rebecca Bowker asked Schulz to clarify his remarks about what he meant by demographics and Schulz was cooked without even knowing it. Bowker never uttered the word race, a savvy move on her part, but Amandus left no doubt.

Mohrfeld tried to gavel back to better conversations, but too late. It was out, and as journalists we can't sweep that one away.

Race will always be a part of our geopolitical society. It's unavoidable. We are a melting pot.

But here's the thing with that, it's society's unfortunate and inherent responsibility to sort that out. And quite honestly we're aren't doing a very good job.

I sat in Grandma Bea's house with a family member, Breanna Kramer-Riesberg of Empowering Families, and Deb Hentzel from Fort Madison High School, and we talked about Deeunta Ceaser. Here's a woman completely overflowing with character, who just lost her grandson. I know about loss and grief. At Kelsey's funeral I tried to eulogize with what Kelsey remembered me for, always trying to bring levity, but inside I was dying.

This woman I think was feeling the same thing and I had a kindred conversation with her. We shared a hug after we spoke and I couldn't help but feel that somehow, despite all that may be revealed in upcoming court hearings, that society missed something here.

I invited Kramer-Reisberg to sit in on the conversation, with Bea's blessing, because I thought she might be able to pull something for her Empowering Families' efforts. That's a group specifically tasked with taking a bite out of child neglect in Lee County. Their first priority - Uniting Lee County.

That's a big step. One that Lee County Economic Development Group's Dennis Fraise and Dana Millard, and their respective board, have been working on since they planted a world record amount of tulips out at the Lee County Conservation Center five years ago. The flowers are gone, but the record still stands.

The final piece of the week looked at the health care staffing crisis looming. A

Jan. 4, 2022 mandate to be fully vaccinated, or be fired, is currently still active with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). That's the federal agency in charge of Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements. They've told health care providers who get reimbursements that 100% of their staffs will be fully vaccinated or they won't get reimbursed after Jan. 4.

That's a wicked mandate and strikes at the heart of our local health care services. It puts everyone - the staff, the hospitals, the patients, crushed between the rock and the hardest of places.

I've been vaccinated and I believe in people's right to choose what goes in their bodies. However, our health care system is the one single place where there can be no question about the complete safety of interaction.

State Rep. Martin Graber may have said it best when he said 18 months ago these people were our heroes, and now they're fired if they don't get a shot. Not much clearer than that. A tough, tough dilemma that can hopefully be cleaned up. Exemptions are available, but how they will be scrutinized is still to be determined.

But until the federal government or a court at some point puts a stay on that mandate, we're in for trouble.

So you may be wondering why I'm weaving these stories together. There's a simple denominator. The conversation.

If you have followed these stories on our Facebook outlet you've read, hopefully, the threads and where they have gone. These conversations are the building blocks to the action plans and correction. We hope that the Fraises, Kramer-Reisbergs, school leaders, community leaders, and health care providers are following the threads all the way through.

The answers to our problems - whether its violence, racism, or getting through and past the pandemic, and how this all integrates into our microcosm of time and community - are buried here in these conversations. We have to sniff it out.

I don't get paid for what I write so the value has to be in the compelling nature of the conversation, the attraction to news it creates, and the debate that ensues. That makes us valuable to advertisers. But the value to me is the story and the debate.

We will find great leadership to navigate these and other issues that punch us daily right now. In some small way, maybe we already have, but it's a slow moving turtle. Hegemonies are cyclical in nature and the United States certainly has had a turn. But we got there because we were bold in thinking and fearless in approach.

That doesn't have to be a national sentiment, it can be local, too - but that's Beside the Point.

Chuck Vandenberg is editor and co-owner of Pen City Current and can be reached at charles.v@pencitycurrent.com.

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Eastman Plaza, Suite 302
West Burlington, IA 52655
or email burldental@gmail.com
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ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT POSITION

The City of Fort Madison is taking applications for a Full-Time Administrative Assistant for the Planning, Zoning, Building and Fire Departments. Duties include answering the telephone, billing for the fire department and housing and nuisance abatement programs. The position will also respond to routine questions and requests regarding the rental housing inspection program, nuisance abatement, permits and zoning regulations as well as coordinate the rental program and assist with nuisance abatement paperwork. The City of Fort Madison provides equal opportunity in employment to all persons regardless of age, race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion or disability.

A complete job description is available at www.fortmadison-ia.com. Applicants must fill out a job application (available at www.fortmadison-ia.com) and submit a resume to dkrogmeier@fortmadison-ia.com. Applications will be taken until the position is filled.



PUBLIC NOTICES

**PUBLIC NOTICE
Lee County, Iowa
Board of Supervisors
Agenda**
**DATE: Monday,
November 22, 2021
MEETING
CONVENING TIME:
9:00 A.M. - 10:00 A.M.
(CDT)
LOCATION:
933 Avenue H
Fort Madison, IA**

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeet-ing.com/join/935432941>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: +1 (646) 749-3129

Access Code: 935-432-941

If you would like to pose a question to the Board, please use the Chat feature and wait for the Chairman to address you.

HELP WANTED

LINEMAN/ GROUNDMAN

The West Point Municipal Utility System has an immediate opening for a Lineman/ Groundman.

Applicant must be able to assist with electrical power line construction, maintenance, and repair. You install both aerial and underground lines and monitor transformer function. Your duties include assembling and preparing the line apparatus, digging holes, operating utility vehicles, reading and recording meters, stocking trucks, using hand and power tools, and cleaning up the area after project completion. A lineman/ groundman works regular hours, but you must also be available for any after hour call outs and emergencies.

Must be willing and capable to work on water distribution maintenance and repair and to be or become Grade 1 water distribution certified.

Must either have or be willing to obtain a CDL and comply with Iowa CDL regulations.

We offer a comprehensive benefit plan including IPERS and health and dental coverage.

Send a confidential resume. Pre-employment physical and drug screening will be required.

West Point Utility System
313 5th Street
PO Box 69
West Point, IA. 52656
cityofwestpointiowa@gmail.com

If you are participating by phone, please wait until everyone is done speaking before addressing the Board. Please keep your microphone muted to cut down on background noise. If you are participating by phone, press #6, this will mute your phone.

Pledge of Allegiance
Approve Agenda
Public Input
Update on Powdertown Safety Update

Consider Approval of Resolution Lifting Embargo on Primrose Road
Consider Allowing Chair to Sign Appeal to Keokuk Board of Adjustment to Erect 300' Telecommunications Tower on Hilton Road

Consider Approval of Mileage Rate for FY23
Consider Approval of Tax Abatement Resolutions (3)

Consider Approval of Monday, November 15, 2021 Board Minutes

**YOUR AD
HERE
Call Lee
(319) 371.4125**

HELP WANTED

ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT

Lee County Bank is currently seeking a full-time Accounting Assistant to provide highly specialized accounting functions for maintenance and recording of financial transactions. Prepares status reports, responsible for accounts payable, journal entries, depreciation, and performs other duties as assigned. Typically requires progressive experience in an accounting department or a related field. Intermediate working knowledge of Microsoft suite including excel, word and office. Must have good communication, computer and interpersonal skills and be able to work independently and as a part of a team. Lee County Bank is an equal opportunity employer, Member FDIC – Equal Housing Lender.

Please send resume to:
Tamara Dietsch
tdietsch@leecountybank.com

DEADLINE
November 26, 2021



Consider Approval of Claims Personnel Actions:
A. Step Increase-Sheriff's Office
B. Step Increase-Secondary Roads
C. New Hire- EMS
D. New Hire- Attorney Reports:
A. Sheriff's Report of Fees Collected
Commission or Committee Reports
Adjourn

Workshop to Follow

PUBLIC MEETING
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319-372-3705
County Website:
www.leecounty.org

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Machine Operators \$19.00 per hour
Forklift Operators \$21.30 per hour
Production Supervisor (Rotating 1st/2nd Shift)
Warehouse Supervisor (Nights)

Benefits Package Includes

- 13 Company Paid Holidays annually (Including 2 paid days off for Independence Day, 2 paid days off for Thanksgiving and 3 paid days off for Christmas!)
- 12 Vacation Days annually
- 401k match above associate contribution
- Medical/Dental/Vision
- And more!

We're really proud of our Total Health Programs that offer Wellness Incentives that can reduce your monthly insurance premiums by up to \$110 each for yourself and your covered Spouse/Domestic Partner, enhanced Sick Time Benefits, expanded Parental Leave and so much more.

For full job descriptions and more information on these and other opportunities visit us at www.scottsmiraclegro.com/careers

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WE'RE HIRING



Executive Administrative Assistant

Lee County Economic Development Group is offering an opportunity to join a dynamic organization and serve in a key support role as Executive Administrative Assistant to the President and CEO.

This right-hand staff person aids the President and CEO and team with clerical and project management assistance, coordinates Board and committee meetings, processes minutes, and serves as a general office administrator.

For full job description and to apply visit
www.LeeCountyEDG.com/openings

Lee County EDG is an equal opportunity employer



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RELAY FOR LIFE OF NORTH LEE COUNTY 2021

Be part of the Shopping for Hope event, and help us in our Fight against Cancer!

The 2021 Relay For Life of North Lee County event has been re-imagined and we need your help to make it a success.

- Purchase your 2021 Relay For Life shopping bag and checklist to receive discounts/free items at local North Lee County area businesses.
- Cost is \$20.
- Present your checklist to receive the discount/free item at participating businesses- each offer is only good for one visit.
- Promotion runs November 5-26.
- Lumiarias are also being sold in memory or honor of our loved ones. Forms are available by contacting Michelle at the number below & will also be included in the shopping bags
- Luminarias will be displayed in Central Park on Friday, November 26, during the Lighted Parade.

For more information or to order your shopping bags contact Michelle at
319-383-0353