

PEN CITY CURRENT

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

Monday, January 3, 2022 | 13 pages | Volume 6 • Issue 10



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TOP WEBSITE STORY Jan.-April: Strange suds deemed harmless out of IFC facility

Bubbles dot landscape in Wever



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Kristen Brookhiser takes a picture of strange white bubbles that dotted the landscape near Wever on March 16, 2021. The bubbles turned out to be harmless cleaning residue from towers at Iowa Fertilizer Co., but drew the interest of residents in the area. Officials at the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Iowa Fertilizer Plant indicated that the suds were a harmless byproduct of a sugar-based surfactant used in the cooling tower.

March 16, 2021

Pageviews: 6,437, Facebook views: 6,522

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

WEVER – Residents southwest of Wever in rural Lee County woke up Tuesday morning to what looks like a visit from Mr. Bubble, but they're not joking about wanting answers.

Suds that resemble what you would see in a bubble bath were laying lightly in the fields and yards southwest of the Iowa Fertilizer plant. The bubbles could be seen along Hwy.

61 south of the plant almost to first Fort Madison exit, but not beyond that.

Resident Kristen Brookhiser said she noticed the bubbles at about 6:25 a.m. when she started her morning getting her children ready for the day.

She then made a call to the fertilizer plant to report the incident and was told by assistant manager Zach Adamson at the facility that everything was safe and there was no cause for alarm.

"He reassured me it was safe and there was no danger, but I requested that evidence," Brookhiser said. "He's sending me the safety data sheets on the particular detergent that was

TOP FACEBOOK POST

Feds look into Rashid Pharmacy

March 21, 2021

Pageviews: 5,269

Facebook views: 64,664

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Federal agents are being very tight-lipped about an investigation that began Tuesday morning at Rashid Pharmacy & Wellness in Fort Madison.

Agents from the Department of Health and Human Services and the FBI were on the property when the pharmacy opened and ordered the pharmacy closed.

One agent from HHS at the scene only would say the investigation was joint venture between the two agencies and declined any further comment.

Lee County Attorney Ross Braden said he was not made aware of Monday's events and didn't have a comment.

The agent on the scene directed all inquiries to the United State's Attorneys Office for the Southern District of Iowa.

Fed OKs vaccines for 65 and older

Jan. 20, 2021

Pageviews: 1,773

Facebook views: 14,592

FORT MADISON – Iowa health officials have moved Phase 1B of COVID vaccine rollouts to include Iowans 65 and older, per a Centers for Disease Control recommendation made 10 days ago.

Governor Kim Reynolds made the announcement today as part of a press conference to update the state's vaccine protocols and numbers.

Before Reynolds had finished the presser, Lee County Health Department Administrator Michele Ross issued an updated statement indicating that those in the county 65 and older should be calling LCHD to get on their list of eligible people to receive the vaccine.

Jan. 26, 2021

Pageviews: 1,627, Facebook views: 16,522

Mayor rolls out plans for new 5-star FM Marina project

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR



MOHRFELD

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld rolled out a new conceptualization of the what a group of stakeholders envisions for the city's marina.

And if things come together as planned, part of the concept could be in place as early as April 2022.

When Mohrfeld was elected mayor in 2020, the first order of business

was a revamped budget process that included workshops before approving the budget.

Prior to that, budgets were presented by City Manager David Varley and then approved by the City Council at a following meeting.

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WEATHER

MON 03 Jan Clear & Cold, 42° F / 33° F
TUE 04 Jan Scattered Clouds, 47° F / 41° F
WED 05 Jan Overcast, 35° F / 28° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 01/01 3 23 33 50 51, Star Ball: 4, All Star Bonus: 2
LUCKY FOR LIFE 06/03 10 13 19 36 48, Lucky Ball: 12
MEGA MILLIONS 12/31 2 5 30 46 61, Mega Ball: 8 Megaplier: 3
PICK 3 12/30, 12/31, 01/01 MIDDAY 4 3 8, 9 7 6, 7 8 7
PICK 3 12/30, 12/31, 01/01 EVENING 7 2 6, 5 7 4, 1 8 0
PICK 4 12/30, 12/31, 01/01 MIDDAY 1 4 7 6, 7 8 6 9, 7 3 3 7
PICK 4 12/30, 12/31, 01/01 EVENING 0 9 6 6, 4 7 0 9, 7 6 6 3
POWERBALL 01/01 6 12 39 48 50, Powerball: 7, Power Play: 2

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2021 – A Year in Review: January - April

Shooting sends one to hospital

March 20, 2021

Pageviews: 3,332, Facebook views: 9,194

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison Police are investigating a shooting that took place Saturday right at noon, that sent one Fort Madison man to the hospital.

Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff said police were called to the 2600 block of Avenue I at 12:01 p.m. after a man was shot as a result of an escalating fist fight

Rohloff said the victim, Zachariah J. Raines, 19, was shot in the shoulder with a hand gun and was taken to Iowa City via helicopter. He was reported to be in good condition. Raines was located after the shooting a short ways from the incident in the

same block.

A 19-year-old Fort Madison man, Wade Lee Shaffer was arrested and is currently being held at the Lee County Jail as a result of the shooting.

He has been charged with disorderly conduct and reckless use of a firearm causing injury.

“You can assume the charges will be elevated with the circumstances we have,” he said.

“We are currently working with the Lee County Attorney’s office and obtaining search warrants for two residences and two vehicles in the area,” Rohloff said.

The city street was barricaded for more than five hours as the search warrants were executed.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Lee County Sheriff’s deputies and Fort Madison Police cordoned off the 2600 block of Avenue I after a shooting at noon on Saturday March 20, 2021 in Fort Madison.

FMHS student arrested when loaded gun found

April 28, 2021

Pageviews: 4,192

Facebook views: 7,683

FORT MADISON – A Fort Madison High School student was taken into custody Wednesday morning after school officials learned the student brought a loaded handgun into the building.

School officials released a statement to the media and parents at about 12:40 outlining the situation and indicating that there are no immediate safety concerns associated with the incident.

Wednesdays are typically early out days and the district made the decision to dismiss classes following the incident about 30 minutes earlier than the normal 1:15 p.m.

No injuries were reported and there is no indication the gun was fired.

According to the statement from the district, the student had not made any direct threat to other students or staff, but upon learning about the weapon, administrators followed the safety protocols and immediately notified Fort Madison Police, located the student, and confiscated the weapon. The student was also removed from the building.

Suspect arrested in downtown shooting

Feb. 7, 2021

Pageviews: 3,636

Facebook views: 6,882

FORT MADISON – A Fort Madison High School student was taken into custody Wednesday morning after school officials learned the student brought a loaded handgun into the building.

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Man sneaks into Central Lee posing as student

March 25, 2021

Pageviews: 3,337, Facebook views: 5,939

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELLSON – Central Lee Superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier confirmed Thursday morning that a man slipped into the district high school Wednesday morning posing as a transfer student.

The man, who wasn’t identified, but was said to have been approximately 21 years of age, sneaked into the school alongside a military recruiter.

He wasn’t identified by staff greeting students.

The man slipped through the halls and into a desk in a classroom where a teacher and a counselor real-

ized the man didn’t belong and called the office.

School Resource Officer and Lee County Deputy Tommy Oberman and Principal Nicole Herdrich immediately responded to the classroom and escorted the man to the office and then out of the building until he was taken by ambulance to Fort Madison Community Hospital.

Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber said the man was transported at about 3 a.m. to a mental hospital out of the area.

Weber said the man was unarmed and no one was injured in the incident.

The school went on a short soft lockdown and deputies, including Weber, walked the hallways of both buildings to assure students and staff everything was safe.

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2021 – A Year in Review: January - April

Email oversight lets Kahoka man off vehicular homicide charge

Feb. 25, 2021

Pageviews: 3,177, Facebook views: 5,976

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – A Kahoka man is now serving one year in Lee County Jail with work release for his role in the deaths of Laverne and Michael Faulkner, two Farmington farmers who were killed as a result of a two-vehicle fatality in 2019.

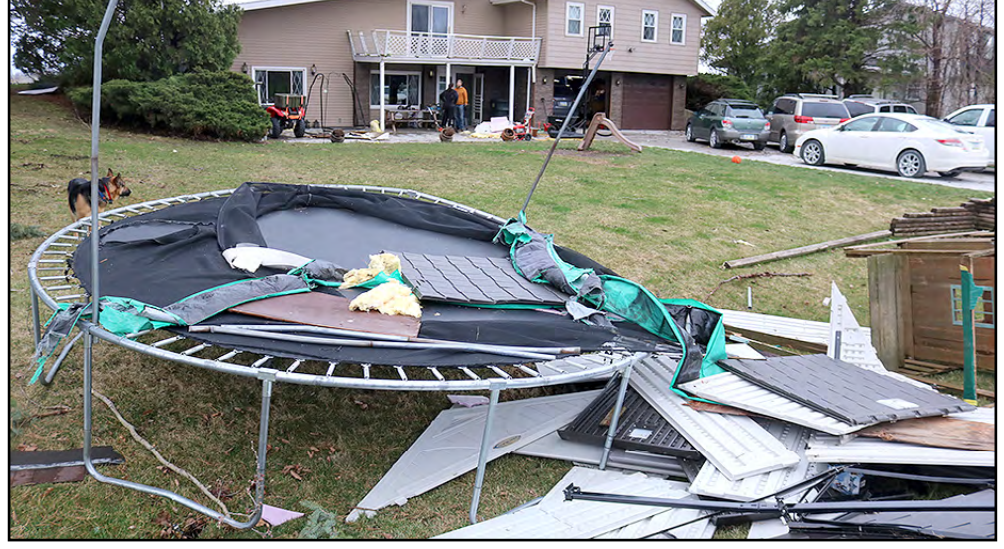
Robert LeRoy Boyd, 29, was originally charged by the Lee County Attorney's office with two counts of vehicular homicide and one count of OWI as a result of the collision that occurred just after 1 a.m. on the morning of June 9.

According to reports, a 2000 Ford pickup driven by Boyd allegedly failed to negotiate a curve in the road on Highway 2 at 140th Avenue.

Investigators believe that Boyd was intoxicated and lost control of his vehicle and overcorrected crossing the center line where he struck a 2005 GMC Yukon driven by Laverne, 63 at the time, nearly head-on. Michael was a passenger in Laverne's vehicle. Both were transported to area hospitals and pronounced dead.

Boyd was taken to University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics where he recovered from injuries. He was charged on Aug. 30, 2019 by Assistant Lee County Attorney Kym Auge with the three counts.

Boyd, through his attorney Curt Dial of Keokuk, waived his right to a speedy trial in September. Additional motions and continuances pushed the case through the end of 2020. A trial date had been set for April 6.



Aaron and Christine Schwerin assess the damage near their home on 4 Seasons Road just north of Fort Madison March 24.

Confirmed twister damages home north of Fort Madison

March 24, 2021

Pageviews: 3,025, Facebook views: 7,042

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – A family living on 4 Seasons Road is cleaning up substantial damage after a twister struck their home just after 7 p.m. Tuesday night as part of line of strong thunderstorms that pushed quickly through from the southwest.

Rich Kinney with the National Weather Service out of the Quad Cities, and Lee County Emergency Management Agency Coordinator Jason Dinwiddie said they believe the damage was caused by an EF-0 tornado, the smallest value on the Enhanced Fujita Scale. EF-0 indicates rotations with winds in the 65-85 mph.

"We both think it was a small isolated tornado. That's what our suspicions are. There wasn't any other real damage and it was very localized," Dinwiddie said.

Dinwiddie drove the area just north of the Hwy. 61 bypass of 193rd Street last night after the storm. He said no one actually witnessed a twister but damage assessments and photos indicate a small tornado touched down.

Christine Schwerin, who lives in the 2900 block of 4 Seasons Road about 3/4 of a mile north of the Hwy. 61 bypass and a mile west of 303rd Avenue, said her family ran to the southwest part of their partially in-ground home when rain was horizontal out the window.

"It was so calm, and then all of a sudden we looked out and it was downpouring, but not making a lot of noise," she said. "Then all of a sudden the rain went sideways and we were outta there, and headed to the safest part of the house.

"Then we heard something hit the house and then all this rustling... and then it was done. Calm... crazy... and then calm."

Fortunately no one in the neighborhood was hurt in the brief storm.

Explosive device found near Avenue O

April 20, 2021

Pageviews: 2,782, Facebook views: 4,714

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The State Fire Marshal's office is looking into a device that was found in the 2800 block of Avenue O Monday night.

Fort Madison Police were called to the area at around 8:10 p.m. Monday and asked for assistance from the Fort Madison Fire Department.

Firefighters were called at 8:14 to investigate what is being described as a possible explosive device. After barricading the scene and blocking off an the Intersection of 28th Street and Avenue

O, the fire marshals office was contacted.

Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff confirmed today that the incident is under investigation.

"I can confirm that a State Fire Marshall was requested to respond to a suspected explosive device. It was crudely constructed and found abandoned by a citizen," Rohloff said Tuesday morning.

"Although no persons or structures were endangered, precautions were taken by having the fire department on scene. The components are being analyzed and it remains under investigation."

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2021 – A Year in Review: January- April

Father-son scuffle leads to county arrests

April 15, 2021

Pageviews: 2,052

Facebook views: 4,275

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – A 28-year-old Missouri man was charged with simple assault after an incident with his father turned physical in southern Lee County Wednesday night.

Rex Allen Wright, II was accidentally shot in the leg with a .22 pistol by his father after the two got in an altercation about a dog. According to reports the son had assaulted his father and knocked him to the ground when the father pulled out a gun and accidentally discharged it striking his son in the leg.

The incident took place in the 1800 block of 340th Street in Lee County.

Wright tried to drive to an area hospital for help, but called 911 and was instructed to pull over and apply pressure to stop the bleeding as emergency crews were sent to the scene.

According to Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber, the only charges in the case were a simple assault against Wright for knocking his father down. A review of the evidence with the Lee County Attorney's office determined the father was within his rights on his property to defend himself with the weapon under Iowa's Stand Your Ground laws.

This is the second case in the past two weeks where the law has been applied and charges have been dismissed against someone for the use of a firearm in an altercation.

Judge gives city access to Humphrey Building

Feb. 21, 2021

Pageviews: 2,721

Facebook views: 6,106

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – With the unexpected death of former Fort Madison attorney Bryan Humphrey, city officials are now relying on their attorneys to sort out the future of Humphrey's building in downtown Fort Madison.

A court hearing was held Friday morning at the North Lee County Courthouse to show cause as to why Humphrey hadn't acted to shore up his building on the southeast corner of Eighth Street and Avenue G, including a possible contempt charge.

No confirmation has been received on the cause of Humphrey's death, but parties involved in Friday's hearing learned of the situation at that time.

Fort Madison Building Director Doug Krogmeier said Monday due to the circumstances no contempt order was requested or issued, but a district judge gave the city some rights to correct building deficiencies.

"We did get the right to evacuate and secure the building," Krogmeier said. "But how we proceed from



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

A Lee County Judge gave city officials some access to the Humphrey Building back in February of 2021 after former attorney Bryan Humphrey failed to make required repairs

here, our attorneys don't even know yet."

He said the building may end up in an estate and then legal proceedings would sort the issue out.

Humphrey was facing possible contempt of court charges for not following court orders to shore up the building before Dec. 15, 2020.

Krogmeier said the city's attorneys are now looking into how the case will progress in the wake of Humphrey's death.

Humphrey's building has been a source of contention between him and the city. Humphrey lived on the top floor of the building, but the west side had deteriorated to the point of structural sagging.

Rashid says pharmacy committed to area

April 1, 2021

Pageviews: 1,900, Facebook views: 9,996

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The owner of Rashid Pharmacy & Wellness in Fort Madison issued a statement following a Tuesday investigation that shuttered operations for the day.

Joe Rashid, who owns the pharmacy and Rashid Long-Term Care, said Thursday evening his company remains committed to its customers and the level of service to which they've grown accustomed.

"Rashid Pharmacy & Wellness has been serving residents of Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri since 1963.

Earlier this week, authorities limited services our pharmacy was able to provide, so they could complete their work," Rashid said.

"Our pharmacy has been open since that time and we remain committed to delivering the same exceptional services and highest quality of care – as we have since our founding nearly 60 years ago."

Investigators with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of the Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation gathered information on Tuesday.

Four hurt in Feb. 27 mishap near Donnellson

Feb. 27, 2021

Pageviews: 1,966

Facebook views: 4,423

BY PCC STAFF

DONNELLSON – Four people were sent to area hospitals Saturday just after noon when an SUV and a pick-up collided near Central Lee High School.

Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber said two people in each vehicle were taken to area hospitals by Lee County EMS following the collision.

All of those transported had suffered moderate, but non life-threatening injuries. AirEvac was on standby for the accident, but no one needed to be air lifted to another hospital.

Weber said people need to watch their speed and be careful with motorists turning in and out of the school at that section of Highway 218.

Lee County EMS, Donnellson Fire & Rescue, Lee County Sheriff's Dept, and the Iowa Department of Transportation assisted with the incident.

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2021 – A Year in Review: January - April

FM Police make second arrest in downtown shooting

April 6, 2021

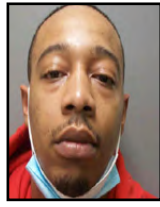
Pageviews: 1,897

Facebook views: 3,873

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A second man has been arrested in connection with the early morning Feb. 7 shooting in downtown Fort Madison.

Fort Madison Police Detective David Doyle confirmed Tuesday morning that Darius Lee Porter, 32., of Burlington was taken into custody on Friday evening on charges of aiding and abetting attempted murder.



PORTER

“Porter was arrested Friday evening at Catfish Bend Casino by Burlington Police and transferred to Lee County I believe on Saturday morning,” Doyle said.

He said the arrest was in connection with the shooting that took place just before 3 a.m. that Sunday morning. One more person is still being sought in connection with the incident.

“We are still seeking the apprehension of one more individual and getting closer on that,” Doyle said. “Other than that, there’s not a whole lot more we can say at this point.”

A third suspect in the shooting, Tommy Dwayne Ross, 43, has already been charged with carrying weapons, reckless use of a firearm, and being a felon in control of a firearm, as a result of the on-going investigation.

Ross was taken into custody by Des Moines County Sheriff’s shortly after the incident and was charged with OWI. He has since been released on bond.

Several downtown business had damage to property as a result of the shooting, but the investigation hasn’t turned up any injuries as a result of the incident.

Porter is being held in Lee County Jail on a \$50,000 cash only bond.

LCHD issues new vaccination protocols for virus

Jan. 6, 2021

Pageviews: 1,773, Facebook views: 3,909

LEE COUNTY – In response to the many calls and requests for vaccine information and updates, Lee County Health Department (LCHD) would like to inform the public of the following:

Currently the entire state of Iowa, including Lee County, has activated Phase 1A priority groups for receiving vaccinations under the state’s COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

Phase 1A priority groups include health care personnel and long-term care residents and staff only. Therefore, all of Lee County’s COVID-19 vaccinations are currently being administered to these priority groups in Phase 1A only.

This phase will most likely continue for the next 3-4 weeks across Iowa.

As more vaccines become available, Iowa’s Infectious Disease Advisory Council (IDAC), will review guidance issued by the CDC’s advisory group, the Advisory Council on Immunization Practices (ACIP), to further prioritize populations to receive the vaccine across Iowa.

IDAC is currently reviewing ACIP recommendations for Phase 1B and 1C priority populations.

Final determinations of these priority groups will be announced publicly by the state health department. Phase 1B activation will most likely occur in February 2021.

LCHD plans to inform the public of who will be included in the next priority group as soon as final determinations are made by the IDAC/state.

LCHD will then begin scheduling clinics for Phase 1B recipients as soon as this phase is activated and state vaccine orders are received. Information will be posted on LCHD’s Facebook page, shared through various local media outlets, and on the LCHD website at www.leecountyhd.org.

FMFD pulls stranded boat off river

April 11, 2021

Pageviews: 1,771, Facebook views: 4,227

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison firefighters pulled a stranded boat off the Mississippi River Sunday morning. No one was injured in the incident.

At about 10:20 am the Fort Madison Fire Department was dispatched for a report of a boat that was taking on water approximately a mile north of the Santa Fe bridge. Fire crews responded with the department’s utility truck, along with rescue boat 9481.

Upon arrival at the entrance of Riverview Marina, the crew made contact with the 911 caller. The caller provided the crew with the phone number of a person on the stranded vessel. Contact was made with the stranded boat which confirmed their location and that there were two people aboard. The rescue boat was launched from the Willow Patch boat access at 10:42

am. The crew arrived at the stranded boat at 10:53 am. Firefighters found a boat up against shore with two persons aboard. The boat had been swamped by multiple large waves prior to arrival causing it to no longer be operational.

Firefighters towed the boat, along with the persons on board, back to Riverview Marina arriving at 11:38 am.

While today’s incident had a good outcome, any incident on the river can quickly become dangerous. With the summer months approaching, FMFD would like to remind the public to practice proper boater safety and to never hesitate to call for assistance on the river.

The Fort Madison Fire Department is fully equipped to handle emergencies on the water.

West Point woman wins two lotteries in six weeks

Feb. 19, 2021

Pageviews: 1,464, Facebook views: 5,623

CLIVE, Iowa — A southeast Iowa woman has won a big lottery prize for the second time in six weeks.

Valencia Kassmeyer of West Point won an Extreme Green Progressive InstaPlay jackpot prize of \$135,902 on a ticket she purchased at Jet Stop, 603 Academy Ave. in Denmark.

“I couldn’t believe it that I would have two big wins like that that close together,” said Kassmeyer, who claimed a \$100,000 prize on Jan. 7.

“You see and you read on the Internet about that happening to other people, but you’re like, ‘Surely this isn’t happening to me.’”

The Extreme Green Progressive jackpot starts at \$20,000 and increases with each ticket sold statewide until it is won. Kassmeyer, 69, said she had

planned to buy a Crossword scratch ticket when she entered the store, but saw the increasing Extreme Green jackpot on the lottery screen as she walked to the counter.

“I said, ‘Well, just give me one of them instead,’” she recalled. “I said, ‘We’ll just try that.’”

Kassmeyer looked the ticket over, scanned it on the store’s self-checker, and then asked a store employee to check it on the lottery terminal, just to be sure. She said she was so excited she couldn’t sleep.

“The first thing I did was put it in my safe,” she said. “And then my adrenaline, I was just so keyed up, I couldn’t sleep.”

She claimed her prize on Thursday at the lottery’s Cedar Rapids regional office.

She said she wasn’t sure what she’ll do with her winnings, but buying a new couch was at the top of the list.

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2021 – A Year in Review: January- April

Downtown owners want city to take action after shooting

Feb. 15, 2021

Pageviews: 1,378, Facebook views: 3,751

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison City Council is slated to hear an update on a shooting that took place early Sunday morning in the heart of downtown Fort Madison.

Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff is scheduled to give an update on the investigation, and business owners could make an appearance during the public comment time at Tuesday’s regular City Council meeting.

At a very short meeting held last Wednesday at the Fox Theater attended by about 40 people including owners of businesses in the downtown area, Rohloff, City Manager David Varley, city council members Rebecca Bowker and Rusty Andrews, a statement was



Jus’ Try It, a Fort Madison event business was the focus of other downtown business owners after an incident that led to gunfire.

read and the meeting was adjourned.

Business owners were asked to sign a petition asking for “aggressive action” against operations being con-

ducted by a group of three men that own and operate Jus’ Try It.

The owners of Jus’ Try It – Dillen Eaves, Jon Eid and TJ Jones were present at the meeting and said they were just looking for a fair shake from the area owners.

Owners have been upset with the business since it opened with noise complaints and allegations of illegal alcohol consumption.

A confrontation that happened after a customer was escorted from an event on Saturday night, escalated into shots being fired damaging windows at area businesses and apartments.

Dana Bushong’s Jewelry and Elliott Test Kitchen both had bullet holes in their windows as did Jus’ Try it, all in the 800 block of Avenue G. Other unconfirmed damage occurred to upper level apartment building glass.

The incident remains under investigation by Fort Madison Police with one arrest and others anticipated.



“Leaving Iowa” arrives at FM OFP

April 12, 2021

Pageviews: 1,205, Facebook views: 3,835

BY DOROTHY SCHULTZ
Old Fort Players

FORT MADISON – If Iowa is a state of mind, can you ever really leave? Maybe not, but you can certainly try. Especially if it’s in a station wagon crammed with fighting kids, a dad who won’t ask directions and a peacemaker mom with a bottomless snack bag.

The actors at Old Fort Players invite you along for the ride as they hit the road on this hilarious romp through the Iowa countryside – as if there is any other kind! Co-Directors Ty Clute and Angela Sanford had been hoping to repeat the comedic success of “Drink-

ing Habits” (February of 2020) and this show certainly fits the bill.

“Leaving Iowa” written by Tim Clue and Spike Manton is produced by Special Arrangement with Dramatic Publishing Company of Woodstock, IL. The theater is still looking for a local business to sponsor this production. Please call (319-372-9559) if you are interested.

The idea behind “Leaving Iowa” comes from being children of parents from what is now dubbed “greatest generation.” The story is a toast to their idealism and character and a little roast of their undying dedication to the classic family road trip.

UTV accident injures three

April 27, 2021

Pageviews: 1,368, Facebook views: 4,806

BY PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – A Saturday evening rollover involving a 4-wheel utility vehicle resulted in two people being sent to area hospitals.

According to reports from the Lee County Sheriff’s office, deputies responded to the 2600 block of 160th Avenue at about 9:45 p.m. Saturday where the UTV driven by Todd Edward Daughters, 49, of Fort Madison lost control when the vehicle left the roadway, entered a ditch and became airborne flipping end over end, coming to rest on its wheels.

A passenger in the vehicle, Mabelle Renee Pezley, 50, of Fort Madison, was ejected from the vehicle and found by deputies unconscious south of the UTV’s final resting spot.

Pezley was taken by AirEvac to Iowa City for injuries she sustained in the accident. Daughters was taken by deputies to Fort Madison Community Hospital and treated for minor injuries.

The accident remains under investigation and further charges could be forthcoming.

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2021 – A Year in Review: January-April

Holtkamp to add \$5.5M expansion to The Madison

March 20, 2021

Pageviews: 1,068, Facebook views: 5,458

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A \$5.5 million expansion at The Madison is the latest in encouraging economic news in Fort Madison.

Former Fort Madison resident Mark Holtkamp, a 1994 graduate of Fort Madison Aquinas, purchased The Madison about a year ago, and is now planning to almost double the size of the facility.

“We’re just kinda getting started when you look at where we’re at and where we can from,” Holtkamp said. “I don’t even know if it’s a one- or two-story addition yet.”

But Holtkamp said there will be about 12 full time equivalent jobs in the new 34,000 square foot addition. The project will provide 24 new assisted living units and 12 Memory Care living units.

Holtkamp said city officials have made the decision to expand and easy one.

“The city has been really good as far as coming up with different ways to incentivize the project,” Holtkamp said.



Fort Madison Mayor dangled a 10-year tax abatement in front of the Fort Madison City Council informally at Tuesday night’s meeting. Mohrfeld said the typical 20-year TIF structure is too long.

“If you’re gonna invest \$6 million and throw jobs at the town, that’s worth a little abatement. Twenty’s too much. Somebody’s gotta pay for police and fire, but this would allow them to get into profit mode and do some payback and then get on the tax roles,” Mohrfeld said.

“It’s good thing.”

But it’s just part of what Mohrfeld describes as book-end economics – the presence of small and large expansion simultaneously.

“When you see the quaint stores downtown, and I can point to six of them right now, and then you look at

Mark, and ConAgra, you tend to get the middle. But I think if you don’t have both of those ends, I’m not sure you have the healthy growth you want.”

Holtkamp said he had a vision for the expansion when he purchased the facility in 2020. However he said he didn’t have a market study in hand to gauge the demand for more assisted living beds in the area.

“I kinda thought about it, but didn’t have that market study. But in my mind I thought it would be there,” he said.

Holtkamp said he’s happy to be part of the growth spurt taking place in the city.

“Every time I come home for anything, it’s so good to see all the new businesses popping up everywhere. And I’m really excited to be a part of that.”

Mohrfeld also pointed to the ease of the discussions with Holtkamp as a blueprint for future developments.

“The first thing I’ll say is Mark was a delight for myself and (City Finance Director Peggy Steffensmeier) and the city to work with. He’s a smart, good businessman who’s family is from here. We met early on in the project and he laid it out on the table.”

Mohrfeld said he’s not a big fan of the “forever abatement”, but said 10 years seemed reasonable. He said Fort Madison is starting to find formulas like that that work.

PAW finds shelter for animals during winter cold snap

Feb. 8, 2021

Pageviews: 1,027, Facebook views: 4,401

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Former Fort Madison mayor and Burlington businessman Brad Randolph is a man becoming a dog’s best friend.

Randolph worked with the PAW Animal Shelter over the weekend to get more than 20 dogs moved into a former convenience store he owns in Fort Madison.

With temperatures hovering near 0 over the weekend and into Monday, PAW Director Sandy Brown started working with Randolph Saturday to see if the space could be used to keep the animals warm.

“We have 18 indoor/outdoor runs for the dogs at the shelter now,” Brown said. “The rest are outdoor kennels and we have about 62 just outside kennels right now. So I’d been messaging back and forth and he offered to open that up for us.”

Brown said Randolph even told her to turn the heat up.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

PAW animal shelter Director Sandy Brown checked in on one of the 21 dogs housed at a convenience store being remodeled in Fort Madison. The dogs were there just during the cold snap to keep them safe and warm.

Kruse, Wiseman qualify for 2021 state wrestling tournament

Feb. 13, 2021

Pageviews: 118,
Facebook views: 4,284

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

IOWA CITY – Fort Madison senior Owen Kruse said getting back to Des Moines means everything to him.

Kruse was pinned by Class 3A No. 3 Grant O’Dell from Iowa City West in the title match at 126 lbs at Saturday’s Class 3A District 5 wrestling state qualifier at Iowa City West’s gym.

But Kruse wasn’t too bummed – this season had been about getting back to Wells Fargo Arena in February. He’ll join Gavin Wiseman who will be making his first trip after winning a wrestle back to take second place at 138 lbs.

Kruse said the title match was more than he expected.

“He came out really aggressive and I got a little deer-in-the-headlight going on, and

then I just didn’t wrestle very well after that,” Kruse said of the loss.

But Kruse battled through a tough semi-final match to get the championship. Taking on Pella’s Ryan Hancock, Kruse would score first with an escape for a 1-0 lead in the first period. The lead would hold through the second period, despite a very close take down where Kruse took Hancock to the mat outside the circle. The Hound seemed to have his toes on the circle, but was ruled out with the coaching staff yelling for two.

Kruse would then get a takedown with :13 left for the win.

“That was a tough semifinals match, but I had good pressure and was happy with the way that turned out,” Kruse said.

Now he said needs to go back to the practice room and fine tune some things. But the trip to Des Moines has been on his mind all year.

“It means everything to me to try and get back on the podium. I have a few liabilities on the bottom, but I need to go hard, keep up pressure and move my feet,” he said.

FM Lady Hounds get first conference title since 1998

Feb. 6, 2021

Pageviews: 237, Facebook views: 4,473

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

WASHINGTON – It’s been almost a quarter of a century since the Fort Madison girls basketball accomplished what it did Friday night.

The Lady Hounds won the Southeast Conference title for the first time since 1998 with a 48-18 win over Washington on the road.

Saturday morning head coach Tony Sargent said he wasn’t 100% sure of the feat, but said from what he’s heard his Lady Hounds had won the conference title in just his second year steering the program.

Fairfield is 6-2 on the year and Fort Madison is 8-1 in conference play. The Hounds have one game left with Burlington on Senior Night at the Hound

Dome next Friday. Fairfield has games left with Keokuk and Mt. Pleasant.

If Fairfield wins out right and the Hounds would stumble against Burlington, the two would be tied at 8-2 with the Hounds winning both conference games with Fairfield giving Fort Madison the tiebreaker.

Fort Madison Activities Director Jeremy Swink said he hasn’t looked at the tiebreaker language in detail, but said he believes the Hounds have the conference title.

Sargent said he told the girls when he took the post in 2019, things were going to change.

“I said to the girls two years ago, ‘You gotta be kidding me – you only have two conference titles since the beginning of time?’ That’s gonna change,” Sargent said. “I don’t think they believed me.”

2021 – A Year in Review: January-April

FM firefighters pull man from partially submerged truck

Feb. 10, 2021

Pageviews: 1,122,

Facebook views: 11,264

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – An area man was pulled from a pickup truck that was partially submerged in a slough in the southwest part of Fort Madison Wednesday night.

Very few details are available but the pickup went into what is known to locals as Wink's Slough about 200 yards southeast of the PAW Animal Shelter on 48th Street.

The truck was submerged in about three feet of icy water and the man was yelling for help before first responders arrived at the scene

Fort Madison firefighters had to take 35th Street behind Pipeline Cleaners and along the railroad tracks about a mile back to just past the railroad bridge and then get out an ice sled and go about 150 yards out to the truck.

Three firefighters tethered to the sled by a rope anchored to a firetruck went over the ice to the victim, loaded him out onto the sled, and then pushed and pulled him to safety over the ice.

Lee County EMS first responders were on hand to tend to the man once he reached the shore and transported him to Fort Madison Community Hospital.

Fort Madison firefighters said there was just the one person in the vehicle. Fort Madison Police were on scene investigating the incident and details haven't been released as to why the man was more than 100 yards from any bank of the water.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison firefighters used an ice sled to pull a man from a slough in southwest Fort Madison in February. The man was taken by ambulance to Fort Madison Community Hospital.

Winter pile-up shuts down Hwy. 218

Feb. 5, 2021

Pageviews: 1,062, Facebook views: 4,401

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – A Thursday afternoon pile up on Hwy. 218/27 sent one man to the hospital with serious injuries, but Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber said quick and committed action of county first responders saved many lives.

The pileup started as a result of near white-out conditions on the stretch of 218 north of Hwy. 2.

More than nine semi trailers jack-knifed on slick roadways where visibility was very low as a winter storm dumped rain on the area in the morning and switched over to sleet and snow as temperatures dropped and the wind started howling from the north at up to 40 mph.

Weber said quick action from a large contingent of first responders including sheriff's deputies, Lee County EMS, Donnellson Fire & Rescue, Iowa State Patrol, West Point/Donnellson Police and Iowa Dept. of Transportation crews helped prevent a more tragic outcome.

"I stopped counting jack-knifed trailers at nine," Weber said. "In 25 years of law enforcement that was one of the worst pileups I've ever seen."

Lee County Deputy Jacob Riley was first on the scene and was rendering aid to a victim of an initial collision. Weber said Riley then witnessed another accident involving a Lincoln Navigator that had struck a vehicle trying to come to a stop, and was then hit from behind by another vehicle.

Weber said Riley went back to his vehicle to grab a first aid kit, when he saw a semi barreling down on his cruiser, which was struck before he could get completely clear.

"He got out of his car bloodied up a bit and ran over to the Lincoln where that man was seriously hurt and began tending to him," Weber said.

Weber said the collision wiped out Riley's radio system so he then began communicating with his cell-phone to other deputies, as Donnellson Fire & Rescue worked toward the scene.

Firefighters then went to work with Jaws of Life to get the man extricated from the vehicle.

"Donnellson rescue did a hell of a job yesterday. I'd be surprised if every one of those guys don't have frostbite right now.

"They were not giving up and there were focused on saving that man. There's no question in my mind that that man is alive today because of those firefighters."

Louisiana fugitive rumored to be in area

March 15, 2021

Pageviews: 1,086, Facebook views: 3,763

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A fugitive being sought on charges out of Louisiana isn't believed to be in the area at this time.

Fort Madison Police have been dealing with a transient who is similar in description to a Preston Higgs, who is being sought by U.S. Marshals on a murder charge out of Louisiana.

According to FMPD Detective David Doyle, a transient has been reported multiple times in and around Fort Madison in the last few days trying to find shelter in the evenings. But the man is not the fugitive that authorities are on the lookout for.

Van Buren County Sheriff's Department, which is working with the U.S. Marshals office, put out a notice on social media Sunday that confirmed Higgs was in the area early last week as property of his was recovered, but the same post said that Higgs isn't believed to be in southeast Iowa any longer.

Doyle said Fort Madison police have received numerous reports in the last three days with people on high alert for Higgs.

"There is a transient from California who is similar in nature and build to the suspect they've been looking for," Doyle said. "People are being overly vigilant with this and we've had several calls."

Doyle said the first came in on March 12th and was actually from the transient looking for a place to stay. Then another call came in from the public on the 13th, but police didn't find anyone after a search of the area. Doyle said he believes from the information it was the same man.

On Sunday night another call came in from the area of 18th Street to Hwy. 103 just outside Fort Madison city limits from someone who claimed to have spotted someone fitting the description of Higgs.

"Our units and county (deputies) went through this area and thoroughly searched the wooded area and could not come up with anybody. We believe this to be the same person we've been dealing with."

Doyle said then on Monday morning, one of the car dealerships on the west side of town called in with someone who had gotten in the back of a box van to sleep.

"They startled him when they found him and he took off running and he was found about an hour later. We made the connection that he was the transient and they gave him a ride to Burlington because that's where he wanted to go," Doyle said.

Court orders contempt hearing in Humphrey case

Jan. 13, 2021

Pageviews: 1,021, Facebook views: 3,763

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A court hearing has been set for Feb. 19 on a contempt charge against Bryan Humphrey for lack of action on his building in downtown Fort Madison.

According to Fort Madison Building Director Doug Krogmeier the hearing was set due to Humphrey's alleged failures to comply with a court order from September.

Krogmeier said Humphrey has failed to meet any deadlines or do any work ordered by District Judge Michael Schilling. The order had a deadline of Dec. 15, or Humphrey could be ordered to vacate the property.

Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld said it's been a slow process and the holidays added some time, but the city has to move forward.

"The ultimate answer here is making that a safe viable building," Mohrfeld said Wednesday.

"From there, if that involves Bryan Humphrey – let's make it happen. If it doesn't, we want him to get the building to someone that can make that happen."

"It's naive to think it's that simple, but every time he misses things he gets further under water."

On Sept. 25, Schilling signed an order that listed out improvement Humphrey was to make on the building in coordination with city officials and the city's engineer.

Mohrfeld said to his knowledge none of the things laid out in the order have been done, including any communication with the city from Humphrey.

Schilling's order also set a deadline of Dec. 15 if Humphrey had either obtain proper permitting to demolish the building or make all necessary repairs outline by the city's engineer, he was required to vacate the premises no later than Dec. 15.

Mohrfeld said he has no information that Humphrey has left the premises and is frustrated with the situation.

According to Lee County records, in 2020 the building at 732 Avenue G was valued at \$149,000 and taxes haven't been paid since March of 2019 totaling \$8,800 in back taxes owed.

"His actions are telegraphing he isn't doing anything. He's not current on property taxes. My desire would be to set down with him and come to some practical resolve. Ultimately with the court order, since nothing's been done. It can be marked as a dangerous structure and at that point the city can go in and mitigate it."

2021 – A Year in Review: January-April

PAW raises needed funds with help of Jordan's Way

March 9, 2021

Pageviews: 788,

Facebook views: 5,327

PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – PAW Director Sandy Brown literally lost all her hair trying to raise money for the Fort Madison animal shelter Tuesday morning.

Just over a week ago, Brown didn't even know there was chance of pulling off the fundraiser with a charity called Jordan's Way.

The charity, founded by Kris Rotonda, is making a name for itself on social media by livestreaming four-hour hyped up fundraising efforts to help clear animal shelters around the country. Rotonda lost his dog "Jordan" recently and set about helping raising funds for shelters.

Brown said someone from the charity reached out to her last Tuesday and said there was one spot left open for Iowa and asked if she wanted it.

"When we talked to the guy, we weren't even on the list. They had one spot open last Tuesday night and they called and asked if we would like to do it," Brown said

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W-2319024 11/18

FMHS's Smith launches courtyard project

March 29, 2021

Pageviews: 1,027, Facebook views: 4,401

BY GREG SMITH

Fort Madison High School Principal

FORT MADISON – In 1959 when the "new high school" opened my mom moved to this location to finish high school. I remember, years later, her memories of the really cool new building and especially the great open air courtyard area for students and staff to study, converse or relax.

Twenty years after she graduated, I graduated from FMHS and have wonderful memories myself of my time in the courtyard.

Unfortunately, in 2004, due to new construction, the courtyard was lost to a building expansion. Today, in my 11th year as Principal of FMHS, I have had the pleasure of providing tours for many former graduates and their families.

I have yet to direct one of these tours when someone didn't say what a shame it is that the high school lost its courtyard. Many people still talk about their memories of the Courtyard. It has been a vision of mine for several years to bring back that Courtyard for my students and our community.

In 2016 we began a project to repurpose our library into a 21st century media center. In 2017, we added a Maker Space adjacent to that center. Students, staff and the community have made use of these spaces for a variety of gatherings. Thanks to all of you who supported



these projects.

Interestingly enough, building construction over the years has completely enclosed a 6,000 square foot, open air space that is adjacent to the Maker Space. This space is in the center of the high school. Last year, we made the decision to bring back the FMHS courtyard in this space. We cleared the space and our building trades' students poured concrete to begin the Courtyard project.

Then came COVID and everything stopped.

This summer, we will complete our courtyard project with the support of our students, faculty and our wonderful community partners. But the cost to finish this space is much more than our budget can supply. I am currently writing a grant that will help us reach our goal, but it will only cover a small portion of the cost.

I will be personally reaching out to our community partners to ask for help in restoring this piece of history for our students, staff and the Fort Madison community.

LCEDG to buy KL Megla facility

April 27, 2021

Pageviews: 788, Facebook views: 3,927

MONTROSE – The Lee County Economic Development Group is moving forward with plans for the former KL Megla building in Montrose.

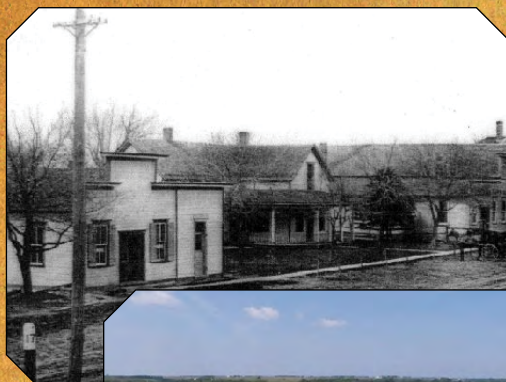
The building was the focal point of Joint Education Center for Lee County before the Central Lee School District tapped the brakes on plans citing a lack of communication.

LCEDG met again Tuesday with officials from Fort Madison, Central Lee, and Keokuk school districts, a new potential Lee County manufacturer, local businesses and industries, the Southeast Iowa Regional & Economic Port Authority, and Southeastern Community College officials.

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2021 – A Year in Review: January-April

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<i>Brad's Pad Pizza</i>	<i>Arts Association</i>	<i>Karen Hope</i>	<i>Michael Avery</i>	<i>Church of Christ</i>
<i>Brockman</i>	<i>Fort Madison Chamber</i>	<i>Kempker's True Value</i>	<i>Miriam Johnson</i>	<i>Church of Christ</i>
<i>Chiropractic</i>	<i>of Commerce</i>	<i>Rental</i>	<i>Mobile Nursing</i>	<i>Stanbrough Realty</i>
<i>Bruce Huddleson</i>	<i>Fort Madison</i>	<i>Keokuk Auto Credit</i>	<i>Services, LTD.</i>	<i>Stewart Automotive</i>
<i>Carrie Schneider</i>	<i>Community Hospital</i>	<i>Keokuk First</i>	<i>Mohrfeld Electric</i>	<i>SubArena</i>
<i>Catfish Bend Casinos</i>	<i>Fort Madison Family</i>	<i>Christian Church</i>	<i>Montrose Health</i>	<i>Tammy Turner</i>
<i>Charles Scoville</i>	<i>YMCA</i>	<i>Kimberly Engle</i>	<i>Center</i>	<i>Team Staffing</i>
<i>Cindy Schiedel</i>	<i>Fort Madison Police</i>	<i>King-Lynk Funeral</i>	<i>Montrose Watermelon</i>	<i>Solutions, Inc.</i>
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<i>City of West Point</i>	<i>Fort Madison Public</i>	<i>KLM Realty</i>	<i>Nancy Sanders</i>	<i>Education Foundation</i>
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