## **INSIDE:** More on area seniors missing spring sports • See page 4

# PEN CITY CURRENT It's Black & White and Read all over

Thursday, March 26, 2020 | 5 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 65

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#### www.pencitycurrent.com

And now flooding.

## WATCHING REPORTS: Flood forecasters eyeing changing weather patterns

#### **BY CHUCK VANDENBERG** PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - As emergency and health officials continue to battle the spread of coronavirus, an eye has been turned to the Mississippi and its potential to flood this spring.

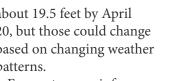
Steve Cirinna, the Lee County Emergency Management Services coordinator told Pen City Current Wednesday that he's been putting out some warnings about flooding so preparations are not forgotten with all attention on the spread of the coronavirus.

"I've already been pushing out there, 'Hey, don't forget that this is looming out there," he said.

"The weather service and the Army Corp are indicating that we have a 25% to 50% higher chance than normal for major flooding again this year. And they're generally pretty good about predicting how high we'll go."

He said current models predict Burlington to peak

FMCH



tion including water already in the system, snow melt and weather patterns to determine flood levels and issue watches and warnings.

"They don't have a clue



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

The Fort Madison riverfront is safe for now from flooding, despite the river rising 15 feet overnight. Officials predict moderate to major flooding into April.

about 19.5 feet by April 20, but those could change based on changing weather patterns.

Forecasters use informa-

what it's going to do because we don't know what kind of rain were going to see. Those numbers are based on information they have now."

According to the National Weather Service out of the Quad Cities, pretty much the entire area south of the Quad Cities along the Mississippi is predicted to have minor to

major flooding.

Cirinna said the numbers have increased with the latest projections.

"We're getting pretty good at knowing what to do and when to start. There are certain trigger points that each community has for certain

See **RIVER**, page 2

# **SPORTS Area seniors** hold hope for spring season

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – With a spring high school sport season still under a delay until at least April 13, some seniors are hoping to get some sort of season in before leaving school.

Both the boys' Iowa High School Athletic Association and the girls' Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union suspended all sports through the state's April 12 school closures, which puts tennis, soccer, golf and track on hold.

Some seniors like Holy Trinity Catholic's Maille Sheerin, who was gearing up for another season as a defender on the Crusader girls soccer team, said she's hearing the season may be cancelled. She

said that would be heartbreaking since it's her final year.



"I've heard quite a few people say we're not going to have spring sports," Sheerin said Wednesday.

SHEERIN

"Those are just rumors and nothing's been sent but honestly, that would really suck."

Sheerin's father, Michael is the head coach of the girls' team, which makes it twice as difficult as she can't even workout with her dad, while other athletes can get coaching and training with parents.

"Not having my dad coach me my



# Hospital updates visitor restrictions, changes

*The following is an update from the Fort* Madison Community Hospital on facility

while keeping our employees and community safe. In addition to the changes announced last week, the following resources have now been activated along with updated restrictions. COVID-19 Call Center 1-800-871-3313 Community members can call 24 hours a day/7 days a week to get answers to their questions about the virus and guidance if they are ill. The toll free number to call is 1-800-871-3313.

Clinic

In an effort to best direct care for our

restrictions printed in its entirety.

FORT MADISON – The leadership team at Fort Madison Community Hospital, in coordination with Great River Health System, has been working diligently to put together a comprehensive plan of attack to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Our goal is to continue to provide the very best care for our patients who need it,

Respiratory Center/MyCare Walk-in

sick patients, FMCH has established a Respiratory Center specific for patients presenting with a fever and a cough and/ or shortness of breath. Patients will be asked some initial screening questions and directed to the correct point of care. Days and hours of care in our clinics for sick patients are as follows:

Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

See HOSPITAL, page 3

#### "

<u>OpenWeatherMap</u>

I'm sitting home watching Netflix and doing homework. I'm eating and napping...and I'm napping because I need to stop eating." -Maille Sheerin, HTC Senior

See **SENIORS**, page 4

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FRI 27 Mar	55.0° F	0
5 <b>AT 28 Mar</b> Moderate Rain, 69.0° F/	47.0° F	*

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## **Obituaries/From the Front**

## Virus could hamper flood control

#### RIVER - Continued from Page 1

levels of protection," he said.

"They say when the river gets to a certain point or is predicted to get to a certain point were going to start putting up flood walls around the waste water treatment plant."

The other problem Cirinna is concerned about with flooding this year is the recommendations for self-distancing due to the coronavirus.

He said volunteers who would sandbag if the need arises are typically closer than six feet. One person would fill the bag about 3/4 of the way and set it behind them, where another volunteer comes to tie it up and put it on a pallet.

"Those people are working close together and sweating, even if it's cold outside, and I've been running the question up the ranks asking if we are going to able to get a large number of volunteers if self-distancing is still in place," Cirinna said. "That will be very difficult."

The flood stage in Fort Madison is set on elevation and not the typical water depth. Fort Madison's flood stage is slightly over 528 feet, according to <u>www.river-</u> <u>gages.com</u>. The current water level is 528.97 an increase of .15 feet over the past 24 hours.

Burlington's flood stage is 15 feet and was recorded at 16.87 feet at 9 a.m. Wednesday morning, which is considered moderate flooding on that riverfront. Burlington is expected to crest initially at 17 feet on Thursday night before receding slightly. Major flooding there is 18 feet or higher.



Thank you to all our customers who worked to reduce their environmental footprint last year. We look forward to helping you continue your efforts and to educating our communities on more ways to help this year.

### Here are just a few ways you can help:

- Don't put plastic bags in recycling bins
- Rinse & clean all food jars & cans before recycling
- Flatten empty boxes for better storage & volume reduction
- Place all recyclables loose in bins

#### **OBITUARIES**

## CAROL K. HARDIN

Carol K. Hardin, 76, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 9:43 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 at her home. She was



born on January 25, 1944 in Fort Madison, IA to John W. & Catherine M. Krogmeier Murphy. She married Joseph L. Hardin in August of 1977 in Fort Madison, IA. She served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War was a homemaker and wife. She enjoyed reading, arts & crafts, writing poetry, gardening, cooking and her adopted animals from the P.A.W. Animal Shelter.

Carol is survived by: 1-son: Steve (Martha Gilpin) Mc-Cutcheon of Fort Madison, IA; her grandchildren of the heart: Jacob, Arianna, Trevin & Alaina; 3-sisters: Dona (Joseph) Popp of Oregon, IL, Connie (Kent) Ortman of Fairfield Glade, TN & Pat (David V.) Martinez of Fort Madison, IA; 1-brother in law: Jerry (Linda) Hardin of Davenport, IA & 1-sister in law: Cheryl Hardin of Fort Madison, IA. She was preceded in death by: her parents, husband & 1-brother in law: Chuck Hardin.

Cremation has been entrusted to the care of King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory and no services are planned. A memorial has been established for P.A.W. Animal Shelter and may be mailed to: Steve McCutcheon, P.O. Box 56, Fort Madison, IA 52627. Online condolences to Carol's family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: www.kinglynk.com.

## VEARL H. MCCOMBS

Vearl Hatfield McCombs, 99, of Farmington passed away at 11:08 p.m. Tuesday, March 24, 2020 at her daughter Karen Petty's home.

She was born on June 19, 1920, at Downing, Missouri, the daughter of Robert and Bertha (Paris) Hatfield. In August 1937 she married Marvin E. Coop, they later divorced. In May 1969 Vearl married Ernest McCombs, he proceeded her in death January 27, 2000.

Survivors include her two daughters: Karen (David) Mc-Combs Petty of Farmington, Iowa, Judy Coop Grabowski of Farmington, Iowa; a step-son: Fritz McCombs; five grandchildren: Daniel Petty of Janesville, Wisconsin, Emily Petty of Hiawatha, Iowa, Colonel R.L. (Barb) Grabowski of Fort Madison, Iowa; Vickey (Stephen Lee) Grabowski of Kansas City, Missouri; Rox Ann (R.G.) Raisner of Glen Carbon, Illinois; six great grandchildren: Adam Graboswki, Alexandra Grabowski, Joseph Grabowski, Banning (Jamie) Grabowski, Bree Ann Lee, and Gillen Ann Raisner; three great-great grandchildren: Carter Grabowski, Khole Lee, and Karli Lad. Also surviving are her special neighbor and caregiver, Rayma Peterman and Joe Bryant, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husbands; son-inlaw: Harry; brothers: Ray, Gale, Edgar, and Carl; sisters: Blanche, Leota, Maxine, Letha, and Bessie.

Vearl was an avid quilter and gardener. She enjoyed flowers, fishing, camping, and family gatherings . She especially loved her family and was very proud of her Hatfield Heritage.

Per her wishes body has been entrusted to Schmitz Funeral Home for cremation.

There will be no service. A private burial will be held at a later date at the Croton Cemetery.

Memorials have been established in her memory for the Cro-

- Don't recycle wrapping paper
- Properly dispose of all electronics and household hazardous waste



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ton Cemetery or the Farmington EMT's.

Schmitz Funeral Home of Donnellson is assisting the family with the arrangements. Online condolences may be sent to the family at <u>www.schmitzlfuneralhomes.com</u>.



## **Obituaries/From the Front**

## **FMCH updates service virus** restrictions, changes

#### **HOSPITAL** - Continued from Page 1

Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Sunday, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Facility Entrances -updated We are limiting the access points into the facility. This initiative will help minimize the number of people on the FMCH campus and aid in the screening process for COVID-19. We will screen all people entering the facility for COVID-19; they will then be given a sticker to indicate clearance.

Please note the changes to our entrances: Main Hospital Entrance - CLOSED Main Clinic Entrance - 6:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., M-F; 7:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Saturday; 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Sunday

Emergency Department Patient En-

trance- 24 hour access/ 7 days

MyCare Walk-in Clinic/Pediatric Entrance - CLOSED

Business Center Entrance - CLOSED Outpatient Rehabilitation Services/Orthopedic Entrance- CLOSED

Visitor Restrictions - updated We want to protect our patients, employees and community from potential exposure to COVID-19, therefore, we have implemented stricter visitation guidelines throughout the organization. No visitors under the age of 18 will be allowed unless they are the parent of a minor. All visitors to the FMCH campus will be screened.

No Visitors will be allowed on our Medical/Surgical or Special Care Units (unless end-of-life).

Patients under the age of 18 may have one parent or guardian visit.

FMCH Birthplace patients- only the mother's designated support person is allowed- must be the same identified person for the duration of the stay.

One person can accompany patients with an appointment in the FMCH Clinics, laboratory or radiology areas.



Emergency Room patients may have one person accompany them into the treatment room.

#### **Business Office**

The Business Office will no longer be open for in-person bill payment. Preferred method of payment during this time is United States postal service, online bill pay (www.fmchosp.com/patients-visitors/online-bill-pay/) or by calling 1-877-404-4763, Option 2. Financial assistance applications can be filed using the same methods. Payments will also be taken at all registration points at the facility but this is not encouraged during this time of limiting visitors on campus.

#### **Courtesy Transport Van**

The courtesy transport van service provided by FMCH will be suspended until further notice.

What can you do? FMCH is also asking for the community's

help during this time. The most accurate and up-to-date infor-

mation can be found on the Iowa Department of Public Health, or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention websites. A link can be found on the FMCH home page (www.fmchosp.com)

Please call the healthcare facility in advance of coming to the facility if you are feeling ill. FMCH has trained professionals who will do a quick screening and help direct your care.

The restrictions implemented at FMCH, in the community and at the state and federal level are there to protect you, please adhere to those recommendations.

Wash your hands, stay home if you are sick, cover your cough and sneezes, keep your hands away from your face and stay away from large gatherings of people.

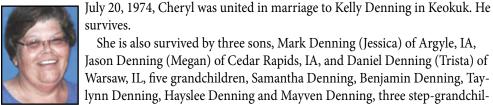


#### **OBITUARIES**

## CHERYL L. DENNING

Cheryl Lynn Denning, 64, of Keokuk, IA, died Tuesday, March 24, 2020 at UnityPoint Health in Keokuk.

She was born on August 10, 1955 in Keokuk, IA the daughter of Bennie Wayne and Mary Jane Gilliland Leffler. Cheryl graduated from Keokuk High School with the Class of 1973. On



survives. She is also survived by three sons, Mark Denning (Jessica) of Argyle, IA, Jason Denning (Megan) of Cedar Rapids, IA, and Daniel Denning (Trista) of Warsaw, IL, five grandchildren, Samantha Denning, Benjamin Denning, Taylynn Denning, Hayslee Denning and Mayven Denning, three step-grandchil-

DENNING

dren, Heather Davis, Laura Davis, and Micheal Davis., two step-great-grandchildren, one brother, Robert Leffler (Linda) of Warsaw, IL, one sister-in-law, Lois Leffler of Keokuk and several nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her

parents and one brother, Danny Wayne Leffler. Cheryl had been employed at Methode in Carthage, IL for twenty-two years.

She was a member of the New Testament Christian Church in Keokuk.

Cheryl enjoyed watching T.V. and had several favorite shows she watched faithfully, including "The Young and The Restless, and the Wednesday night line-up of "Chicago Fire, Med and P.D." She also enjoyed talking to her friends and family on her phone. But most of all she loved spending time with her grandchildren, they were her pride and joy.

Due to the current COVID-19 situation and the restriction for public gatherings there will be no public services or visitation at this time. A Celebration of Cheryl's life for family and friends will be held at a later date. The Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk is assisting the family with arrangements.

On-line condolences may be sent to the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.

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#### Charles Vandenberg, Editor

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## From the Front/Classifieds

# Seniors open to summer play as option to cancelling season

#### SENIORS - Continued from Page 1

senior year would be really hard," Sheerin said. "I was part of the school musical and that got cancelled and losing that and soccer would be tough."

Sheerin said she would be happy just getting a start at any point in the season and get some games in, as she understands the seriousness of the spread of the coronavirus.

Fort Madison's Matt Hellige, who has qualified for the Iowa High School Track and Field Championships in distance runs the past two years, is continuing his regular workouts while training with his dad. He finished 12th in the 1600 meter run in 2019.

"You can't workout with your team and that's really the only hindrance right now. Aside from that, I've been doing my normal workouts."



But Hellige said he's pretty upset with the state of the season because he was looking forward to improving his time and possibly medaling at the state meet. That meet is still on the unified schedule to begin Thursday, May 14. "That, and improving your skills is

SCHNEIDER

what sports are all about," he said. "I'd

be really disappointed. Not only is this my last chance to qualify, but last sport for me in qualify in in high school with cross country done."

Hellige will run track and cross country at Mt. Mercy College in Cedar Rapids upon graduation. He said it's been business as usual as far as keeping up with workouts.

Fellow senior Quentin Schneider, who took 7th at last years state meet in the 400 hurdles said track is his favorite season and he hopes the season can start at some point.

"Honestly, I'd like to see it start after this four-weeks is up. I don't really want to go back to school, but I'd like to put the season back and run," Schneider said.

"I saw a petition on Facebook where they were asking to have the spring sports rolled in with the summer sports and I wouldn't mind that, but I'd rather just start in April."

Schneider said he's been working on his endurance

during the suspension after straining a quad in an indoor meet in Cedar Falls before the virus hit Iowa. He said losing that final year as a senior would be hurt.

"It would hurt because it's my last year," he said. "I was looking forward to track which is one of my favorite sports because it's only me for the most part. So if I messed up it I only have myself to blame.

Schneider said he's planning on running sprints and the 400 hurdles at Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge next year.

Dalton Westercamp, a senior at Central Lee said he'd like to get a season in, but said going to deep into the summer could hurt is workouts for football. Westercamp signed to run track and play football at Coe College next year.

"Honestly I haven't thought about it too much. I mean I want to do it and I guess I'm alright with half a season or something like that, but I don't want it to go to deep in the summer as I have to start getting ready for football," he said.

Westercamp said the disappointment comes with missing the camaraderie of the season with his friends and teammates.

"Its really disappointing to be honest. This has slowed everything down for everybody. "Track is about pushing your friends and teammates to the limit and pushing times," he said.

"Either way, I'm going to move past it. It hasn't been really emotional for me. I signed for track and football and I need to keep working for that. This track season was work for college, but I should still be on par with others because we're all in the same boat."

Sam Pothitakis, the senior goalkeeper for the Crusaders, said the year was looking to be an exciting one because numbers were up.

Pothitakis has one of her best years as junior last year and was hoping to build on that her senior year.

The Crusaders got in a few open gyms before the season was suspended, but Pothitakis said she hopes a full season resumes even if it runs into the summer.

"I'd definitely rather play into the summer since it's



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison senior Matt Hellige, gets in a workout with his dad, John, on Wednesday afternoon along Avenue E in Fort Madison. Hellige is hoping for some sort of spring track season in his final year on the team.

my last harrah."

Sheerin may have summed it up best when she said the delay... is just boring.

"It's so boring," she said. "I'm sitting home watching Netflix and doing homework. I'm eating and napping... and I'm napping because I need to stop eating."



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