# Pen City Current Thursday, January 2, 2020 | 14 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 11

# 2019 – A Year in Review January & February

# Hawkins Auto Service burns Looking

40,750 views, 5,408 engagements - Jan. 21, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A late Monday evening fire that lasted well into Tuesday morning, has left 65-year-old Rick Hawkins contemplating his future.

Hawkins is the owner of Hawkins Auto Service at 1602 Avenue E. The service center was destroyed by fire overnight Monday.

Fire officials said the fire started in the upper ceilings of the structure, but took a while to show itself in cold, crisp air with a wind blowing from the southeast.

Fire Chief Joey Herren said that helped protect property directly behind the building.

"We didn't even have any blistering on the home behind the property," he said.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison firefighters battled a blaze at Hawkins Auto Service in the 1600 block of Avenue E on a cold, blustery night Jan. 21, 2019. The story was the top story for January and February.

burned made fighting the fire difficult.

Captain Eric Kerns, who had command at the scene said the smoke from the fire was so heavy it bogged down the department's chainsaws so accessing the roof was difficult.

wouldn't run. There was a double layer ceiling and we couldn't find where the seed of the fire was. The whole time it was building up above."

Kerns said firefighters went looking around for about the first hour putting out flare ups that kept cropping up around the roof the building.

"We went in kinda looking around and there was a seam over the garage part and we could see an orange glow running front to back and from that point we went into defensive mode. It wasn't even two minutes later when it all went through."

the building and they began fighting the fire from the exterior and above.

"We don't have a cause yet," he said. "We'll be here for a while investigating it."

Herren said the attic was several layers thick and the flames took some time getting through to

# The weather conditions and materials being "The smoke was so tions and materials being heavy the chainsaws heavy the chainsaws heavy the chainsaws heavy the chainsaws has been to the firefighters were out of the surface. The weather conditions and materials with the firefighters were out of the surface.

Chase Gibb brings 11,000 lb anthracite oven to Burlington

32,396 views, 6,204 engagements - Feb. 3, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

FORT MADISON – Not quite a year after bringing his wildly popular Buffalo menu to Fort Madison, Chase Gibb has another iconic restaurant in the works, and is about two months from literally "firing" it up.

Gibb is bringing an 11,000 lb. coal fire oven into the former The Italian restaurant building at 337 N. Roosevelt in Burlington.

Those that follow the Buffalo brand and Gibb on Facebook, may have seen threads of Gibb

playing around with oven-baked pizzas and other foods for a week.

Gibb is bringing that knowledge back to Burlington and will be opening Coal Haus 337 this spring, with former Burlington Golf Club food manager, Carlee McIntyre leading the way.

The oven will be the center-piece of the restaurant and Gibb said it will be something for people to come and experience.

"This thing weighs about 11,000 pounds and is about 10 feet long by nine foot wide. It has to be loaded and off-loaded with crane. And it has to cure so it's about a 12-week production time," Gibb said.

While a lot of the plans for the endeavor are focused on creating unique pizzas with ingre-

dients from around the world, Gibb said it's not a pizza joint.

The coal fire grill will be just the third in operation in restaurants in the state.. The oven burns anthracite, often referred to as hard coal with a submetallic luster. It has the highest carbon content, the fewest impurities, and the highest energy density of all types of coal.

Gibb said it provides culinary opportunities unmatched in this area.

"This won't just be a pizza place and it's not an Italian place,' he said. "We're going to be doing coal fired steaks in these ovens too. You can cook those right on the coals, they're called 'dirty steaks'. If you look into it, it was a favorite of Dwight Eisenhower."

# Looking back on 2019

Editor's Note:

As the year comes to a close, it is customary to look back at the stories that affected us throughout the year. Being an all-digital newspaper with multiple social media channels, we have many avenues to consider when deciding to review the year behind us.

We chose to feature the best read news articles from our website pencitycurrent.com, the top social media posts, and the photos that impressed the most readers from each month.

Each issue of 2019 – A Year in Review will feature two months of these stories & photos as they originally appeared.

These stories touched thousands of lives this year, whether they were heartbreaking or heartwarming, good news or bad.

We hope you enjoy looking back on the year with us as we usher in a new year filled with new stories. You can rest assured Pen City Current will be reporting those stories in a factu al, unbiased way in the manner you've become accustomed to - whether you're reading them on our website, on our mobile app, in our e-Edition, or in any of our social media channels.

We thank you for your patronage and wish you a peaceful new year.

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# **Snow storm prompts** city warning

18,952 views, 3,265 engagements - Jan. 14, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The city of Fort Madison is enacting a snow abatement ordinance in addition to parking restrictions, due to the heavy snowfall over the weekend.

According to city Building Director Doug Krogmeier, the city is publishing the notice of the abatement on Tuesday and residents will have 24 hours to clear all public sidewalks on their property. After the notice has been published for 24 hours, residents will have an additional 24 hours before the city will begin to have contracted providers start clearing sidewalks and property owners will be billed for the service.

The notice that will be published Tuesday will give property owners until Thursday, Jan. 17 at 6 a.m. to have all snow removed from the sidewalks. If sidewalks aren't cleared and no requests for an appeal or hearing has been made, the city will clear the snow and the costs will be assessed against the property owner and the proper-

Krogmeier said obviously the city doesn't want to bill property owners for the service, but the sidewalks have to be cleared. He said the abatement only applies to public sidewalks and not sidewalks that go from the street to the doors or private driveways, just public walkways.

"I would prefer that everybody does their own, but at some point we have to act and get these cleared," Krogmeier said.

He said the city will charge a minimum \$50 to remove the snow, but heavier jobs can come with higher rates if it takes more than an hour or so to clear the snow.

"I'm going to have several crews working, but with the next round of snow coming, if we don't get to all of it before that hits, and they're projecting just as much if not more this weekend, that bill could get pretty expensive if we have to remove snow from both weekends," Krogmeier said.

Some areas of north Lee County received close to a foot of snow on Saturday and Sunday, and the Fort Madison Police Department enacted a snow emergency to allow city workers to clear the streets. Vehicles are supposed to park on the odd side of the street on even days to allow city crews to clear the sides of streets with even numbered addresses and vice versa on odd numbered days.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

City of Fort Madison crews work at the corner of Avenue F and 7th Street on a Monday morning clearing the snow from city side streets. A snow abatement ordinance was put into effect Jan. 14 that required all public walks to be cleared.

# River Rocks opens in Kingsley Inn building

18,389 views, 5,192 engagements - Feb. 5, 2019

BY CHUCK **VANDENBERG** PCC FDITOR

FORT MADISON - A new eatery will throw open its doors just off the banks of the Mississippi River Wednesday.

River Rocks, the newest occupant of the bar and restaurant at the former Kingsley Inn, will be open starting 11 a.m. Wednesday with a sit down menu with bar food and dinner selections.

Danielle Keefe and Brett Matlick of Keokuk are the owner/operator of the eatery. Keefe said there's an excitement in the air about something new downtown and on the east side of Fort Madison. The two

also operate The Palms restaurant on the west side of town.

Matlick said he came down and saw the view out the window over the Mississippi and was hooked on the idea.

"I didn't want to compete with The Palms so we're not going to do steaks or seafood or anything like that, but I came down and looked out the window and said, 'Oh man, I gotta try it. Look at that view," Matlick said.

He said he came upon the idea after someone from the Fort Madison Lions Club mentioned the space was open.

"That was in December and here we are six weeks later ready to open."

In addition to the bar and food, the two are adding a game room to the north end of the restaurant.

"That's kind of a neat thing we're adding so if parents bring the kids and the parents want to chat for a while the kids can go back there and play."

Keefe said the menu will consist of quicker foods like burgers, chicken sandwiches, and wings but they will have some different items like the "overgrown potatoes" which are a baked potato that can be stuffed with a different variety of toppings.

"We are doing our own take on pho which is a vietnamese soup with rice noodles typically with beef or chicken. Plus it's on

the healthier side like our impossible vegan burger. It's the first time we've tried anything like this," she said.

She said the menu will be changed up frequently.

"We can always add things to it later. It's nothing to change these menus up. I want to do some combos with a soup/salad or other combinations like that for lunch," Keefe said.

Matlick said the east side of the restaurant will be more of a sports bar feel, while the west side will be the sitdown restaurant.

The bar will be fully stocked with six draught beers with four dedicated to local Iowa craft beers. The other three will have regular domestic pilsners.



Our special 2019 Year In Review editions will publish Thursday, January 2 through Wednesday, January 8. Breaking news will continue to be published on our website 24/7.

As we enjoy the holidays with family and friends, we thank you for your support and patronage and wish you all a very Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year!



# **5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST**

TUE 03 Dec



Scattered Clouds High- 48.3° F | Low - 41.6° F

High- 35.8° F | Low - 28.4° F



Overcast

THU 05 Dec



Light Snow High- 31.4° F | Low - 29.8° F

FRI 06 Dec



Sunny and Clear High- 44.4° F | Low - 31.6° F

SAT 07 Dec



Sunny and Clear High- 38.7° F | Low - 26.2° F

<u>OpenWeatherMap</u>

# Juvenile Center melee runs up \$5,000 repair bill

16,928 views, 3,200 engagements - Jan. 29, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE – The South Iowa Area Crime Commission has released information on the melee that took place at the Southern Iowa Juvenile Detention Center in Montrose last week.

According to SIACC director Carrie Folkerts, repairs and cleanup from the facility will cost close to \$5,000 including replacing a window that was damaged in the incident.

Folkerts said some of the equipment that was damaged has been repaired. She said this was an issue of kids just not doing what they were told.

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"Usually if there's an incident like that, we just tell the kids to go to their rooms and, in most cases, they listen. In this case they didn't want to go," Folkerts said.

She said three of the kids were level three offenders which means they have more privileges because they haven't been problem kids in the past.

"They were just bored I guess and decided to see what they could do," she said. "Unfortunately for us, the detention officers have different standards going hands-on with kids as opposed to adult jail. There are restrictions because of their age. But in these recent instances, when law enforcement showed up, the kids stopped and there was no incident after that."

Folkerts said the staff at the center does a great job but sometimes kids just act up and the center is looking at options to help curtail some of the recent activities.

This Monday's incident and another incident in December that sent a staffer to the hospital with a head wound, all involved overflow offenders from Davenport.

"It does seem like they like to incite



Courtesy photo

This is a photograph of the damage caused by four juveniles at the Southern Iowa Juvenile Detention Center on Jan. 29, 2019.

things," she said. "We do try to look at what we're taking and when other areas have overflow, they try to send the best behaved kids out."

Another contributing factor may be the kids are suddenly away from visitors and are acting out. "Maybe some of these kids had a lot of visitors when they were up there and now they don't have that, so it becomes a hardship and could be causing some of the misbehavior. But we're trying to look at all kinds of different factors," Folkerts

# Threat against local banks leads to Fort Madison man's arrest

16,573 views, 5,588 engagements - Jan. 24, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A Fort Madison man, who had sent texts indicating he may want to engage in what is known as 'suicide by cop' by robbing a local bank

and engaging police officers, was taken into custody Thursday night.

According to Fort Madison Police Chief Tim Sittig, police were looking for 30-year-old Adam Huss throughout the day Monday. Sittig said Huss had allegedly been engaging in criminal mischief, including breaking some windows.

But Sittig said a text they came across in the investigation sent police into a higher gear.

"We also learned that he had engaged in some texting and sent a message saying he wanted to end it all and he wanted to do it by holding up a bank and having police kill him," Sittig said Monday night.

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Sittig said they alerted banks and other area law enforcement and, while they were working on that investigation, Huss's vehicle was spotted in town.

Lee County Sheriff's deputies and Fort Madison Police engaged in a heightened search at about 4:25 p.m. and Huss' vehicle was spotted by a deputy in an unmarked car at about 4:45.

Facebook.com/GRRWA



# We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2019

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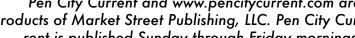
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# We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2019

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# Community rallies to help PAW during cold snap

13,879 views, 1,891 engagements - Feb. 19, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

FORT MADISON – What could have been a tragedy, turned into a triumph for the P.A.W no-kill animal shelter in Fort Madison.

With the wicked winter air that descended on southeast Iowa at the end of January, Sandy Brown, the director of the shelter, started worrying about all the dogs that were penned outside at the shelter.

She said they have had situations with cold before, where the animals were brought inside for warmth. But this was something different.

"We had over 50 dogs that lived outside. Our concern was keeping them warm. We can do that at 20 or 30 degrees but with windchills of -45, we were very concerned about keeping everyone warm," Brown said Tuesday.

So the shelter put a message out to the community asking if anyone would be willing to foster a dog for two weeks. Brown said if they were able to get even 10 people who would take 10 dogs, they could make sheltering work during the arctic blast.

The next day, people were lined up at the door filling out paperwork and waiting for a dog to take home. Brown said the families that came in didn't even get to pick the animal, shelter workers assigned animals based on information provided on the paperwork.

"We had no idea we'd get this type of response. People came in and filled out paperwork. We looked at their paperwork and we picked the dog for them," Brown said. "Everyone was patient and wonderful. It was just amazing how easily it went and how many people stepped forward. They were kind... they were patient...and they were very considerate knowing what kind of crunch we were in."



She said four dogs went to a boarding house in Mt. Pleasant, 3 were held at another rescue, and nine went to Country Pup Boarding near Keokuk.

"A total of 62 dogs left the shelter before those frigid temperatures hit and nobody was left outside," Brown said.

What's even greater, she said, is that 30 of those dogs have found forever homes because of the opportunities brought on by the two-week fosters.

"Thirty were adopted by either the people that fostered them, their friends, or people who saw the animals during the fostering time," Brown said. "These are big dogs. Not the cute 10 or 14 pound dogs. These are big-headed dogs that are almost always outside, that have found their homes."

Only one dog, Ruby, who was featured and followed on Facebook as rescuers tried to locate her, escaped from her foster home and ran loose. But Brown said even that had a happy ending as Ruby found a friend "Moses" in her two-day travels and the two are now both being adopted at the end of the week.

Even businesses like Jay's Auto in West Point and River City Motors Plus in Fort Madison offered their garages as a safe haven for kenneled animals during the cold.

"This community really stepped up and now we have a great story to tell," Brown said.

She's calling the event the "Freezer to Foster Care Forever" movement and said fostering is something that the shelter is going to take a closer look at in the future.

She said the shelter is licensed to have a fostering program that augments the adoption, but with the large number of animals and what that entails on a daily basis, there hasn't been extra time to get the program up and running.

Despite the outpouring of support and the high number of adoptions that took place, there are still 110 dogs and 56 cats at the shelter.

"I don't want anyone to think we don't have dogs waiting for homes, but a lot of big headed dogs got to go home. At home, they are so much better than at the shelter. They know...they just curl up with you and are so much happier."

Typically fostering requires the families to provide fully for the animal including food and any medical requirements, but during this fostering to get the animals out of the life-threatening cold, the shelter offered food and even kennels if the families needed them.

# Shelter asks for help finding lost German Shepherd

15,107 views, 1,436 engagements - Jan. 18, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

FORT MADISON – Local animal officials and authorities are trying to catch a large German Shepherd that escaped from the PAW Animal Shelter this

week, and are asking for residents help.
PAW Director Sandy Brown said the animal is from a puppy mill and has not had much interaction with people, so it is frightened.

"He's harmless. He's afraid of people and will run if you try to approach him. What were asking is that people continue to call the shelter or contact us through Facebook with his whereabouts."

Reports of the animal have come in from the areas of Aztec Trailer Park, AutoZone and as far west as the bypass at Hwy. 2.

Brown said trying to catch the animal will cause him to run and that could expand the area of search, so she's asking people to keep letting PAW know of any sightings.

"I've had people text me at 3 a.m. and that's fine. Keeping contacting us," she said.

Brown said if the dog did come up to someone and allow them to pet him, and they're comfortable attempting to corral the animal, they should, but she asked that they not give chase as that can expand the area. She said he won't attack pets or livestock, he's just scared and lost.

"We had someone call and say they saw him out by Highway 2. That scares me because I'm afraid he's going to get hit on the highway. He hasn't been around traffic and won't know how to behave," she said.

The PAW Facebook page is <a href="https://www.face-book.com/PAW-Fort-Madison-Animal-Shel-ter-179648212052707/">https://www.face-book.com/PAW-Fort-Madison-Animal-Shel-ter-179648212052707/</a>. The phone number for the shelter 372-2274. People can also report sightings to local authorities who have also been trying to find the animal.

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# board after 43 years

**12,947 views, 2,335 engagements** man, asked Smith to help bring back - Jan. 27, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

FORT MADISON - He started hocking food in 1975 at the Rodeo as a way to get his face out in the public after he and his wife purchased an eye care business in Fort Madison.

Forty-three years later, Larry Smith, one of the most renowned and relied upon names in Fort Madison, is ending his "rodeo career" with Tri-State Rodeo.

Smith announced at the board's meeting in January, that he was stepping off the Tri-State Rodeo Board of Directors in

Growing up in southwest Iowa near Creston, Smith considers himself an Iowa "farmboy". He graduated high school near Creston, at what is now the CAM Community School District. He studied at Iowa State University in a pre-optometry program before finishing his degree at the University of Indiana.

In 1975 he moved to Fort Madison with his wife Carolyn, whom he had met while they were both pursuing optometry doctorals in Bloomington, Ind., to start a business they acquired here.

Smith started working in the Rodeo food tents as part of the Fort Madison Jaycees, who used to handle the vending at the Rodeo prior to the Fort Madison Aguinas and Holy Trinity Catholic taking over food and beverage services.

He continued to work with the Jaycees for several years and then began to take on more community roles including being a part of the Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce. As the Chamber President in 1983, Smith had a seat on the Rodeo Operating Committee and in 1984, Larry Roberts, the operating committee chairPre-Rodeo Days.

"One of the first things we did was book Sawyer Brown, who had just won Ed McMahon's Star Search and we had them in on a Wednesday at the arena to kick things off that year," Smith said.

Another event that set up was Kids & Clowns Day at Victory Park. Smith said the committee underestimated the attendance and things got out of hand as legendary Rodeo clowns including Leon Coffey were on hand to sign autographs for the kids.

"There were way more people there than we planned and we had to keep sending volunteers to the stores for hot dogs and stuff. Then the winds were like 30 mph that day and we were chasing hot dog wrappers all over the park. That could have been my last year with the Rodeo," he laughed.

Other events brought back included the Chili Supper, which was originally held in the Elks Parking lot.

Over the next decade Smith worked his way through the Operating Committee overseeing programs such as buttons and sales, program sales, advertising, entertainment, and working his way up to General Chairman in 1992 and 1993.

In 1989, during Carl Saunders' term as General Chairman, the operating committee was restructured and Smith didn't have a seat on the committee that year.

Now the board has two members from the Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce, but they don't share board members.

"Before then, the two boards had so many things in common it made sense to have a Chamber board member on the rodeo operating committee," he said.

As general chairman, Smith helped lead the transition from a Friday thru Sunday rodeo, to a Thursday-Saturday rodeo.

# Smith retires from Rodeo Chapman makes cameo at **FMHS Show Choir**

12,884 views, 1,746 engagements - Feb. 23, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

FORT MADISON - A familiar face graced the ever-buzzing rooms of the Fort Madison High School Music Department Thursday night.

With the 30th edition of the FMHS Show Choir Invitational this Saturday, Taylor Stoddard, head of the FMHS vocal music department, reached out to the man that started it all in 1989.

Allen Chapman, who started teaching vocal music at FMHS in 1978 and built what became "SwingSpan", the competition side of the program, stepped back into the room of risers at the request of Stoddard.

"It's kind of registered with people this is the 30th year. Taylor wanted Ann, my daughter, and I to be here for their competition and I think they might take a moment during those shows and recognize this is the 30th year and pat us on the head."

"Taylor called and said he had a couple competitions coming up and asked if I could come in, watch the kids, and give them a couple pointers and do a little cheerleading session with them," Chapman

In the 80s, Chapman, with his wife Sandy, who taught vocal music at the junior high level, started building a program that could compete with any program in the state....and quite possibly the nation. Sandy died seven years ago.

"I had an ace in a hole... my wife Sandy was brilliant. She was really great getting



the 7th and 8th grade kids to look at this and give it a whirl. She was the daughter of a football coach and had grown up around football and baseball practices," he said, frequently gazing through Stoddard's office window to the students rehearsing just

"She could speak the jock language really well."

Chapman, an Ottumwa native, graduated from Ottumwa High School in 1967 and received his music degree in 1971 from Iowa Wesleyan. He stretched that to a master's degree in voice from Truman State University in 1985.

After leaving Fort Madison in 2003, Chapman worked in different capacities, mostly part-time in the area Catholic system including the former Marquette High School and then Holy Trinity Catholic. He also did stints with Southeastern Community College and Western Illinois University.



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# Board reacts to Gayla Young's death

11,349 views, 5,569 engagements - Jan. 1, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON –
Fort Madison School District Superintendent Dr.
Erin Slater has confirmed this morning that current school board member Gayla Young died this morning at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics



The cause of Young's death has not been released by the family, but Slater issued a

statement on behalf of the district at around 4 p.m. Monday night. District staff was notified via email this morning.

"The Fort Madison Community School District is deeply saddened by the loss of school board Vice-President Gayla Young, who passed away earlier today. Gayla was a strong advocate and supporter of the students and staff of the Fort Madison Community School District. Her passion for education, her countless volunteering efforts, and her love of learning will be deeply missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family at this time," Slater wrote in an email Monday.

Fort Madison School Board President Dr. Tim Wondra said Young's impact will be missed throughout southeast Iowa.

"It's a great loss for Fort Madison and everything she was a part of on the board, but it's also a loss for Danville where she taught, and it's a tremendous loss for Denmark with all that she was involved in in that community," Wondra said.

"Gayla was a great person, quick to help, would also be there for anyone, anytime and she was so smart. I am truly a better

person for having known and served with her."

Young, a teacher in the Danville school system, was re-elected to the Fort Madison board in September 2017 after serving her first four-year term winning her seat in 2013. She was the current vice-president of the school board.

Other school board members also shared in the grief of Young's passing.

Lois DiPrima worked at Denmark Elementary School during the 1980s with Young, when Young was a cook with the district and decided she wanted to do more.

"She wanted to be more of a part of her children's education and other people's education. The day she went back to school, she was so excited. She wanted to make a difference in people's lives and teaching was the way to do it. I remember her saying those exact words to me," DiPrima said.

"In the last four years

on the board I have seen a family grow. This is losing a part of that family."

Board member Dianne Hope said didn't know Young before serving on the board with her, but said she didn't just lose a fellow board member, but a friend.

"Gayle was a dedicated board member and brought a classroom educator's view to the table. She also followed legislative issues and what was going on in Des Moines. She will be missed as a board member and as a friend."

Jared Hotop said Young was a big advocate for education and the students of Fort Madison.

"She always had the district's best interests at heart," he said.

Fellow board member Carol Ross said Young gave education everything she had.

"Gayla was a great person. She was passionate about education and gave 110% in everything she did," Ross said.

# Morning fire takes unoccupied home

11,970 views, 2,069 engagements - Jan. 7, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

FORT MADISON – An early morning fire has destroyed an unoccupied house in the 1400 block of Avenue I.

City firefighters were called to 1418 Avenue I at about 5:15 a.m. Monday to find the house fully engulfed in flames. LeeComm dispatch put out an "all-call" for the department at about 5:25 a.m. No one was in the home at the time of the fire.

Witnesses said the home was abandoned, had no utilities connected, and may have had squatters living it. The 2-story structure had a taxable building value of \$10,557 and is listed as being owned by Janet Krogmeier

No cause of the fire was available Monday morning.











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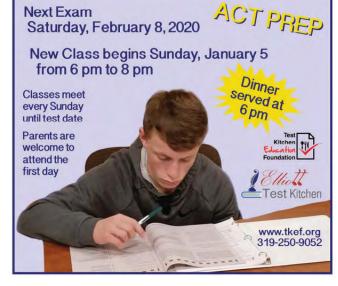
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# Riverfest continues to build on past festival successes

10,220 views, 1,140 engagements - Jan. 13, 2019

BY CHUCK **VANDENBERG** PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - In just four years, it's become one of the biggest parties in southeast Iowa. The four-day event that's anchored with some of the best live enter-



**CRAFT** 

tainment around, is gearing up for another go-round on the shores of the Mis-

sissippi River at Fort Madison.

RiverFest 2019 is already taking shape for the first full weekend in August, which this year is Aug. 1-4.

Chairman Charles Craft and the RiverFest

committee is once again going outside the box to bring innovative entertainment to Fort Madison's Riverview Park.

In addition to the traditional carnival, vendors, dozens of food options, and a schedule that fills more than a half week, this year he's adding even more attractions.

Fans crowd the stage as FireHouse took the stage as the featured act Saturday night at RiverFest 2018. Photo by Aniah Ross/PCC Intern

What normally isn't found in the muddy waters of the Mississippi this far north, will make an appearance this year....alligators.

Craft is bringing an American bushman, Kachunga, to RiverFest this year with daily shows and he said got the idea from touring state fairs and festivals.

The shows will be free to the festival goers who will see an up-close, fun, and educational presentation as part of an edgeof-your-seat experience.

"I had an idea on the drawing board from the first year. It just wasn't in the budget the first year. They'll do up to three shows a day and they'll be free," Craft said. "A lot of people that have been to the State Fair will have seen this act before. "

He said the show isn't the typical alligator wrestling show you might see traveling in the southeastern part of the country. Craft said he wanted to bring something genuine that was informative and exciting.

Ad Lack of eye contact is a sign of autism **AUTISM SPEAKS** 

# Burners back to furniture biz in FM

10,745 views, 2,310 engagements - Feb. 1, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - After being in the family business for close to three decades, Tommy Burner has opened his own furniture outlet on Avenue G.

His family has been in the furniture business with outlets in Fort Madison and Burlington for almost 35 years. Burner's new location at 734 Avenue G, is the third location the Burner's have had in Fort Madison.

A fire destroyed the family's first business at 15th and G, and then they moved operations downtown until they moved it to the current facility at the corner of Main and Harrison in Burlington.

The new location at 734 Avenue G, opened just before the end of the year and is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and by appointment.

Burner said this is the first time he's been the owner of the business and things have been moving quickly.

"We opened up the third week of December," he said. "We signed the papers on Tuesday and by the next

Tuesday we had four trucks of furniture in the store."

He said his family's history in the furniture business has been an asset moving forward.

"Dad is really helping me out a lot. I wouldn't be able to do this without their help. They're focusing on just new furniture now and the moving service. But we really missed being in Fort Madison," Burner said.

After the fire, Burner said he managed the one at 717 Avenue G for about 2.5 years where his father Tom, was providing the inventory,.

"My whole life I've been involved with the business. As a boy, I used to do my homework at the auction. It was common to see me at the auctions Corey Fraise used to do out on Ortho Road, with a book. I'd do my homework there and then help load trucks for dad and Francis Holmes," Burner said

Burner said all the inventory at the new location is used furniture with the exception of new bed mattresses and box springs.

The used furniture has been repaired in some cases and cleaned up and sold at

rates competitive to some of the furniture kits you can get at box stores.

"There's a lot of people realizing that this furniture is better than the pressed wood products," he said. "The majority of our business is people who come in here and say, 'well, this is the same price as some of the pressed wood stuff', and it's solid wood and will hold up for generations."

He said owning the business is a lot different that being on the delivery crew or managing the operations for someone else.

"This is a bit more overwhelming being in charge of buying and selling. I have to watch my spending a whole lot more, but if you want to run a successful business you have to take the bad with the good," Burner said.

He said he thinks business is going well in the downtown area, but he said he would like to have a store front eventually that has more parking. Everything that comes or leaves the store has to go out the front because he has no alley access.

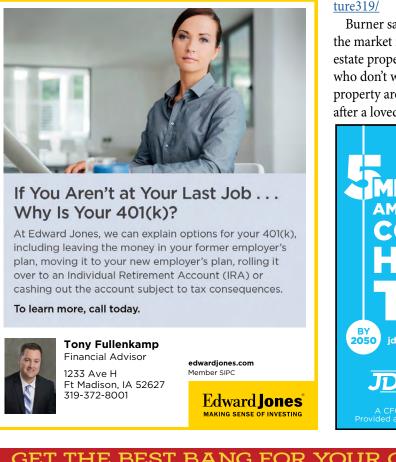
The store can be reached at 319-372-7313 and by Facebook at the following link: https://www.facebook. com/FortMadisonFurniture319/

Burner said he also is in the market for bidding on estate property for people who don't want to haul property around the area after a loved one passes.





https://cyberhounds.org





# Editorial - Formula for city sales tax perplexing

10,245 views, 1,919 engagements - Feb. 26, 2019

The Fort Madison city budget has hit the skids.

Despite an increase in county valuations of almost 23%, the city is staring at a loss of almost \$330,000 in sales tax in this current year alone. That's \$4.7 million dollars on sales that didn't take place in Fort Madison this year...that did last year.

What the hell, people? You took your shopping elsewhere to the tune of \$4.7 million? Or did you just buy it online?

If you bought it online, you're paying the tax now, but will that help the city find "greener" pastures?

It's yet to be determined. The State of Iowa eerily keeps sales tax disbursements close to the vest. City Manager David Varley and City Finance Director Peggy Steffensmeier have both said, and I've confirmed, that the state won't break those figures down.

Time to make some calls.

How that isn't public information is beyond me. The only argument we can fathom is that it may be proprietary and give competitors an advantage from one retail outlet to the next. But I don't buy it, everyone knows it's 1 percent. They know that 1 percent of that respective purchase should go to the city. Well, actually it would appear that it doesn't work that way.

The disbursements aren't even based on sales. The state collects the 1 percent tax and then distributes it based on this formula – copied from the Iowa Department of Revenues Q&A on Local Option Sales Tax.

"Each county's account is distributed on the basis of population (75 percent) and property tax levies (25 percent). The population factor is based on the most recent certified federal census. The property tax factor is the sum of property tax dollars levied by boards of supervisors or city councils for the three years from July 1, 1982 through June 30, 1985. business advocacy groups could target marketing efforts and campaigns.

# Shooting, standoff results in arrest of Keokuk man

8,457 views, 1,927 engagements - Feb. 5, 2019

PCC STAFF

KEOKUK – A Keokuk man is back in custody after firing a shot in a home and holding law enforcement officers in a standoff that lasted from about 11 p.m. Monday into the early morning hours Tuesday in the 100 block of South 19th Street.

According to a release from the Keokuk Police Department this morning, 31-year-old, Joseph Daniel Cass, of Keokuk was taken was taken into custody at approximately 5 a.m. on a Lee County warrant for Voluntary Absence from custody and a charge of domestic abuse assault while displaying a dangerous weapon, an aggravated misdemeanor.

On February 4th, at approximately 10:57 pm, officers were called to the home of Cass for a domestic situation with a shot fired within the house. Upon officer's arrival, Cass and the female victim were found outside the home.

As officers approached Cass, he ran into his house and refused to come out. Negotiators with the Iowa State Patrol were called to assist. After several hours of talks, Cass turned himself over to law enforcement without incident. A search warrant was served at the house and a firearm was recovered. This investigation remains open.

The Keokuk Police Department was assisted by the Tactical Response Unit, Lee County Sheriff's Office, Iowa State Patrol and Lee County Attorney's Office.

Cass is considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

# Riverfest park rental bumped by city board

8,077 views, 1,453 engagements - Feb. 20, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Under a new proposed lease with the city, RiverFest organizer Charles Craft will pay 1,500% more to use Riverview Park for the burgeoning summer festival.

The 1,500% amounts to just \$375 for the year. Craft was paying \$25 to the city for the rental of the park for the four-day event for the past three years. Under the new contract, Craft will pay \$400 for the park.

The city and Craft have been working on a lease agreement for use of the park. City Manager David Varley told the Fort Madison Parks Board at its meeting on Wednesday night, that the proposed agreement is a one-year deal.

"We're asking you to approve this as a one-year agreement with the intent that in 2020 the parties would enter into a multi-year agreement," Varley said.

The board approved the agreement with a 4-0 vote.

Craft said Wednesday he didn't have a problem with the increased fee, but said he would have liked to have seen the lease before the park board approved it.

"I've been asking (Varley) for a lease agreement since October. I've stopped in to see it several times and they tell me it's not ready or it's close to being ready. Then, almost overnight, it shows up in front of the board," Craft said.

"It's not the dollar amount in the lease, I think that's a fair amount to pay. It's the precedent that it sets. Are we encouraging people to do things in the community or discouraging them."

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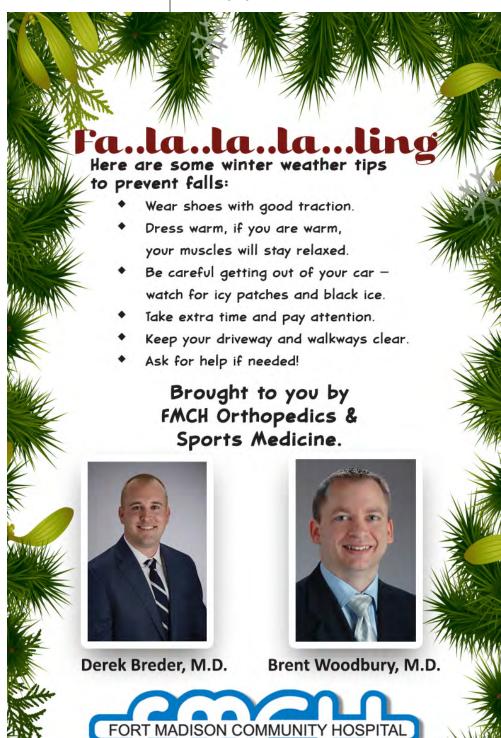


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# IFC restarts after Jan. 9 power outage

6,954 views, 603 engagements - Jan. 13, 2019 BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

WEVER – Officials at the Iowa Fertilizer Company said a power outage on Wednesday will cause a restart and the plant will have high flaming and noise levels over the next few days as the facility restarts.

Company officials released a statement from Managing Director Darrell Allman outlining the situation and what can be expected at the facility as the restart occurs.

"Late morning yesterday, Iowa Fertilizer experienced an unplanned interruption due to a loss of electrical power to our production and the plant will begin the restart process immediately," Allman said. "Over the next few days, members of the community will see higher than normal flaring, accompanied by higher than normal noise levels due to the flaring and other steam venting. Flaring is the flame that is occasionally visible above our facility. The flaring during startups is, by design, safe and is harmless to the environment and the surrounding community. The flaring will change in color and intensity as we advance through the different states of the startup process. Intensity at night could be amplified by the particular timing of a startup stage or due to low cloud cover. Iowa Fertilizer continues to meet and exceed all air quality permits and regulations regarding these flares."

Allman said the plant start up will be completed as quickly as practical and they hope to be back into full production in the next few days.

"As always, Iowa Fertilizer Company will maintain our commitment and focus on safety, the environment, and the well being of our surrounding community during these startup activities," the statement read. "At Iowa Fertilizer, we take safety very seriously and work diligently to always be a good neighbor. Those with questions or concerns can feel free to contact us at 515-422-9296."

# Preservation group upset with home's razing

5,955 views, 1,435 engagements - Feb. 20, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The demolition of a house at 1301 Avenue I has the ire of the city's Historic Preservation Commission.

The property was demolished sometime during the three-day holiday weekend and Andy Andrews, president of the North Lee County Historical Society, told the Fort Madison City Council the move was a slap in the face of the commission. Andrews also serves as the chairman of the HPC.

"It was a real slap into the face of the HPC yesterday when they came in on a holiday and tore



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

A bulldozer sits atop the lot where a home used to stand after city officials decided to demolish the home in February, a move that was met with disapproval by the city's Historic Preservation Commission.

down an 1836 brick house at 1301 Avenue I. There was no knowledge to the preservation commission," Andrews told the council Tuesday night.

Andrews spent some time outlining the history of the building and said there was some hardware the commission would have like to have saved.

"Unknown to us, this was being torn down and we kept this all secret from the Historic Preservation Commission."

He presented a list of homes built before 1960 and said those homes should have a demolition permit.

"Of course, the city's going to tell me they don't have to get demolition permits, but that's really not designated. The commission is here to preserve our historic structures," Andrews said.

# Fort Madison man charged in stabbing death

6,203 views, 1,645 engagements - Feb. 6, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG PCC EDITOR

KEOKUK – A Keokuk man is in custody this morning and is being charged with first-degree murder in the slaying of a Keokuk woman.

Twenty-four year old Adam Golden McCain was arrested late Monday and booked into the Lee County Jail on a charge of first-degree murder, a Class A Felony. If found guilty of the charge, McCain faces life in a state correctional facility.

According to a release issued on this morning at 9:41 a.m. On February 5th, 2019 at approximately 10:27 pm, Keokuk Police Department Officers responded to the 300 block of Main Street

in the River City Mall parking lot for a female who had been stabbed.

The victim, Calove Sackman, of Keokuk, was transported by ambulance to Unity Point Hospital in Keokuk, where she succumbed to her injuries.



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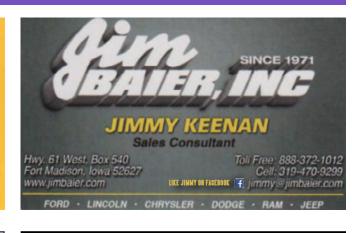
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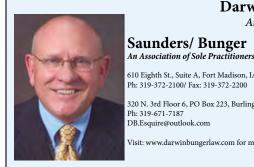




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