**INSIDE:** Democrats push Reynolds on Test Iowa progress • See page 3

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

Wednesday, May 20, 2020 | 8 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 102

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# County may run EMS in 2021

**EXTENSION**: Supervisors extend Lee County EMS contract for one year at \$900K

#### BY CHUCK VANDENBERG PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE – County officials are breathing a little easier today after voting to continue the current ambulance service for an additional year.

The move was made as part of the Lee County Board of Supervisors regular meeting Tuesday. Supervi-



sor Gary Folluo cast the lone vote in opposition to the move that was approved, 4-1. The motion also creates a path to the county

taking ownership of

FEDLER

the service. At times 70 people were logged into the teleconference meeting.

After listening to a detailed presentation from Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren regarding the joint effort from the Keokuk and Fort Madison Fire Departments to provide the service, conversation turned back to current provider Lee



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

The Lee County Board of Supervisors has agreed to a one-year extension with Lee County EMS for a proposed \$900,000 annual subsidy. As part of the agreement, the county will begin talks with the ambulance service to take ownership on July 1, 2021.

County EMS Ambulance, Inc. Bill Young, the director of the ambulance service, said they want to do whatever they can to help the county bridge the gap from July 1, to whenever the county can take over the service. Supervisor Chairman Ron Fedler said he'd been holding conversations with Young and Richard Young, another family member in the company's investor group.

#### See COUNTY, page 8

### CITY COUNCIL City revenues holding up during crisis

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison's revenues through April are a little



## **COVID-19 ISP staffer at home after positive test**

Worker is first positive case recorded at Fort Madison prison

> BY CHUCK VANDENBERG PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A state Department of Corrections official confirmed Tuesday that a staffer at the Iowa State Penitentiary is at home recovering from COVID-19.

The staffer was tested independent of ISP protocols, according to DOC spokesperson Cord Overton.

Overton said the employee had been off work for more than a week before being tested for the coronavirus, and has remained at home recovering.

As of Monday, five inmates had been tested at the prison with no positive results confirmed, according the DOC website. The website does not list the numbers of staff tested, but only numbers of confirmed positives, and those listed as recovered.

On March 20, the department imposed a list of safety measures to prevent introduction of the virus into the state's prison systems, as well as to prevent mitigation, including ramped up personal protective equipment supplies and usage training, screening all new inmates introduced to the system, special quarantines for symptomatic inmates, constant monitoring, and the introduction of "clean teams" that focus on sanitizing and virus protection.

better than anticipated, according to City Manager David Varley.

Varley said during his report at Tuesday's regular meeting of the Fort Madison City Council, that stores like Wal-Mart are up almost 60%, which is helping sales tax revenues. The county is also lean on other national boutique retailers who are suffering through the coronavirus pandemic.

See FUNDS, page 4

### Highway 2 work

Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Construction crews work on several areas of Highway 2 between Fort Madison and Donnellson Tuesday afternoon doing concrete patching. Traffic is being controlled with signals and is reduced to one lane in several places while the work is done. The prison system also canceled all volunteer activities and visitations until further notice.

Across the state, 840 inmates have been tested with 21 confirmed positives. None of those confirmed cases are shown as recovered. Fifteen staff members around the state have been confirmed positive with four listed as recovered.

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### WEATHER

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FRI 22 May	Light Rain, 70.0° E/ 63.3° E	
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### **Obituaries/Iowa News**

### **OBITUARIES**

### ROY E. FLATTEN

Roy Edward Flatten, 78, of Hamilton, IL died Monday, May 18, 2020 at UnityPoint Health in Keokuk, IA.

He was born January 8, 1942, the son of Ed and Ellen Sutten Flatten in Osceola, WI. Roy graduated from New Richmond High School with the class of 1960.



On June 5, 1965, Roy was united in marriage to Susan Shern in New Richmond, WI. She survives. He is also survived by a daughter, Christine Reynolds (Chris Kirkman) of Chimacum, WA, a son, Gregory Edward Flatten (Keri) of Denison, TX, seven grandchildren, Nick Reynolds, Wesley Flatten, Gage Flatten, McKenna Flatten, Olin Reynolds, Grant Flatten and Alexis Flatten, three great grandchildren, Mason Flatten, Tucker Flatten and Phoenix Flatten, one sister, Linda Rogers (Mike Miller)

FLATTEN

of Woodlands, TX his step-father, Glen Beestman of New Richmond, WI and one sister-in-law, Max Flatten.

He was preceded in death by his father, Ed Flatten, his mother Ellen Beestman and two brothers, Curtis Flatten and Kenny Flatten.

He was employed at Armour Dial as a waste treatment operator for over forty years retiring in 2000. He enjoyed golfing, bowling, dancing, listening to all types of music and motorcycle riding. Roy's family was the most important

aspect of his life. His favorite pastime was playing poker, cribbage, 500 or

euchre and he was quite a passionate player. He also enjoyed traveling to Texas where he and his wife Susan spent winters at Tip O' Texas.

A visitation will be held on Friday from 1 – 7 p.m. at the Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions on mass gatherings there will be a limit of ten people in the funeral home at one time with social distancing guidelines in effect. Those who attend are encouraged to wear a mask if possible. Be prepared to wait outside or in your cars if there are ten people in the funeral home when you arrive. Burial will be at a later date in New Richmond Cemetery in New Richmond, WI.

Memorials may be made to the Shriners Hospitals for Children, www.shrinershospitalsforchildren. org.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.



### **BOYD FOSTER** J.D.

J.D. Boyd Foster, 38, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 11:22 p.m. on Friday, May 15, 2020 at Fort Madison Community Hospital. He was born on January 27, 1982 in Iowa City, IA to Clinton & Vanessa Hill Foster. He was a soldier in the U.S. Army and served two tours



of duty in Iraq. He had a big heart and would take the time to help anybody in need. He enjoyed working on cars with his dad and animals, especially cats. He loved all his military brothers & sisters and his lifelong high school friends, especially Aaron & Charles.

FOSTER

Fort Madison, IA; his father & step mother: Danny (Julie) Foster of Burlington, IA; his girlfriend: Brittany Scott of Fort Madison, IA; 1-son: Ashton Heidbreder of Fort Madison, IA; 1-daughter: Gracie Heidbreder of Fort

J.D. is survived by: his mother & step father: Vanessa (Bill) McFarland of

Madison, IA; 1-grandson: Preston Heidbreder of Fort Madison, IA; 2-sisters: Stacia Shirey of Burlington, IA & Heather (Christopher Brooks) Shirey of St. Paul, MN; nieces & nephews & his paternal grandparents: Carl Foster of West Point, IA & Marjorie Foster of Burlington, IA. He was preceded in



death by 1-sister: Jessica Wiegard & his maternal grandparents. A private family graveside service will be held at Fairview Cemetery in rural Fort Madison with military rites. Instead of a memorial fund,

the family asks that whenever you see the V.F.W. selling red poppies, please buy one in J.D.'s memory. Online condolences to J.D.'s family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: www.kinglynk.com.

King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory is assisting the family.

#### Pen City Current obituary policy

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



### **Great River Regional Waste Authority** encourages you to wear gloves when moving bins for residential trash pick-up.

Those workers can touch

over 2000 bins a day

before even touching your bin.

*Don't forget to wash your hands* 

PELLA, Iowa - The Pella Police Department and the DCI have identified the victim and arrested a suspect in Monday evening's homicide. After responding to a report of an argument at 101 Glenwood Street, #4, Pella police officers found 46-year-old Tracy Mondabough of Ottumwa injured

Pella woman

charged with

murder

inside a vehicle. Officers performed lifesaving measures on Ms. Mondabough, but she was pronounced dead at the scene.

On Monday night, Pella resident, 55-year-old Michelle Boat, was arrested and charged with a Violation of No-Contact Order. Ms. Boat was transported to the Marion County Jail. Today, the charges against Ms. Boat were amended to include one count of Murder in the First Degree (Class A Felony). Ms. Boat remains in the Marion County Jail on a \$2 million bond. The Pella Police Department, the Marion County Sheriff's Office, the Marion County Attorney's Office and the DCI are continuing the investigation. Anyone with information is asked to contact the Pella Police Department at 641.628.4921. An autopsy to determine the cause and manner of death will be conducted by the Office of the State Medical Examiner.

after bringing in your bin!!

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### **Obituaries/Lee County News**

### **OBITUARIES**

### RICHARD L. BALLEW

Richard Lee Ballew, 75, of Donnellson Iowa passed away after a long battle of cancer May 18th at River Hills Village in Keokuk.

Richard was born April 4th, 1945 in Downing, Missouri to Edward and Inez (Broadwell) Ballew. He attended Keokuk High School and graduated in the Class of 1963. His first date with the love of his life, Nancy Christina Wood, was at the Montrose Watermelon Festival and they were married in Farmington at the Saint Boniface Catholic Church on November 2, 1966. Richard served 4 years in the United States Navy as Yeoman upon Destroyer USS John R. Craig (DD-885). During his service, he received the following awards: National Defense Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal (3 Stars), Combat Action Ribbon and Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Korea). Upon discharge from the Navy, he worked nights at Foote-Mineral and attended Parson College in Fairfield where he received his Bachelor Degree in Business Administration with a Minor in History and Teaching Certification. Mr Ballew was a well-respected teacher and coach for 43 years of which 38 he dedicated to Central Lee High School. He was also a recent member of the Saint Boniface Catholic Church.

Richard was quite the entrepreneur and was always wheeling and dealing. He owned a trailer court, the old Donnellson School, several rentals, and flipped houses/cars to make extra money. Mr. Ballew truly cherished his career teaching students and always looked forward to attending Prom to dance with all of them. He enjoyed karaoke, bike riding, dancing, collecting antiques and hustling a game of pool. Richard simply loved people and entertaining them but his biggest joy in life was spending his time with family.

He is survived by his wife Nancy Ballew of Donnellson. Two daughters, Jennifer (Jim) Dawson of Argyle, Iowa and Heather Ballew (Chris McCormick) of Montrose, Iowa. Four Grandchildren, Christopher (Sarah) Berg of Fallon, Nevada, Elizabeth (Jamie) Runge of Donnellson, Iowa, Chloe (Darren) Cassiday of Fairfield, Iowa and Emily Dawson of Donnellson, Iowa. Three Great Grandchildren, Dean Cassiday, Dallas Cassiday and Dawson Runge. One sister, Barbara Ballew, of Prophetstown, Illinois. He was preceded in death by his parents.

A private family service will be held on Thursday, May 21, 2020 at Schmitz Funeral Home in Donnellson with Father Dennis Hoffman officiating.

Burial will be in Greenglade Cemetery, Farmington, Iowa with full military rites by the Farmington American Legion Post 231.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Central Lee Foundation for Post Prom or Saint Boniface Catholic Church.

### LCHD reveals 20th COVID case

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Lee County Health Department have identified one additional case of COVID-19 in the county, one adult who is currently in isolation. This makes 20 confirmed cases in Lee County to date. LCHD is also reporting a total of 17 cases as recovered.

We encourage interested residents to access



the Iowa Coronavirus website at <u>https://</u> <u>coronavirus.iowa.gov</u> if interested in county testing data, confirmed case counts, and other useful information.

Lee County Health Department website, <u>www.leecountyhd.org</u>, and their Facebook page, will continue to be updated with information as well.

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## Iowa Dems push Reynolds on Test Iowa progress

DES MOINES, IA – Today, Rep. Dave Loebsack (IA-02), Rep. Cindy Axne (IA-03) and Rep. Abby Finkenauer (IA-01) wrote to Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds to express concerns over the capability and expansion plans of the Test Iowa coronavirus (COVID-19) testing program.

As the Test Iowa initiative nears the end of its first month, the Iowa lawmakers pushed for new information on the current daily capacity of testing, what tests are being prioritized for processing at state labs, how much contact tracing is currently under way, and which areas of Iowa would be chosen next for Test Iowa sites.

"We are concerned that Test Iowa still has not yielded 3,000 tests per day several weeks after its launch nor are there Test Iowa locations in 'hotspot' areas," the members wrote. "As our economy has begun to reopen, we know that Iowans will feel safer if they can access a test quickly and within in their communities. We need to ensure that essential workers, nursing homes, and those who believe they have been exposed can get tests right away."

The letter also cites the need for regions experiencing new outbreaks, like the Council Bluffs metropolitan area, to get a dedicated test site to avoid hours of travel to an alternate testing site or unnecessary state border crossings.

See DEMOCRATS, page 8

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#### Lee K. Vandenberg, Sales Manager

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Founded in 2016 P.O. Box 366 | Fort Madison, IA y F Þ Ø

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### From the Front

## **Councilwoman calls county decision irresponsible**

#### FUNDS - Continued from Page 1

"Revenues are, so far year-to-date through April, a little better than we expected," Varley said.

"For the year we're up about 11% which is interesting. We may actually not be hurt as much as other cities around the country because of the nature of Lee County."

Varley said the city's share of the road tax is taking a hit because of reduced travel during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He told the council that the next round of stimulus money could help the city because that money will be targeted to "shovel ready" projects, which could ease general fund pressures.

"They haven't come out with any guidelines yet, but we have two or three projects that could be ready to go so we would jump on that and hopefully be ready for that program."

Councilwoman Rebecca Bowker pressed Varley on whether the city has made any inroads with the state for supplemental funding related to the pandemic

Varley said there were funds available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) but the city has to hit a threshold of \$3,500.

"We're keeping track of some expenses we have," Varley



In an unrelated issue, Fire Chief Joey Herren said he would recommend the city continue look at providing ambulance service now that the county has accepted a one-year extension of the current contract with Lee County EMS Ambulance.

Herren said the move by the county is a temporary fix and now the city has a bit more time to plan for the service in the event something would happen during the 12-month contract, or the county looks to the city at the end of the agreement.

Bowker said she thought the county's move was irresponsible because the money that may be spent to buy the ambulance service next year, could have been spent with the cities to get the services up and running now.

Mayor Matt Mohrfeld said he felt the county made the best move they could in the situation they were in.

"In the short term this was the right thing to do for the county. Supervisors now want to shift gears to the fix, either get into the business, contract with the cities, or bring in a new partner."

Mohrfeld said he's been talking with State Rep. Jeff Kurtz to look at possible grants to help offset some of the start up costs.

"It's a little bleak, but we're gonna to move forward," he said.

Supervisors are leaning toward taking over the service July 1, 2021, but haven't taken any action.

The council tabled a move to rezone property behind the Fort Madison Fire Department for up to 12 months. The property was going to be rezoned as a business district to allow a warehouse to be constructed for Holtkamp Floors, Decor and More. Holtkamp was going to construct the warehouse and lease space to the city for the ambulance bays and storage.

"He called me last week and said he had changed his plans and if we did not do the ambulance service that he would put his money other places. So he did not want to build the warehouse," Herren said.

Bowker asked why the council should table it when the language of the rezoning didn't reflect a need for the ambulance service, but to construct a business warehouse.

Building Director Doug Krogmeier said he's had some comments from neighbors about the rezoning.

"There was enough concern that if the fire department doesn't need it, I would just as soon see it turned down," he said.

Heren said with the uncertainty of the ambulance service it's best to table because if something breaks down in that agreement or the operation continues to struggle financially, the city will be better equipped to move forward.

"Say in six months this blows up with the ambulance service, then we have to go back and restart the proceedings," Herren said.

The move to table was approved 6-0



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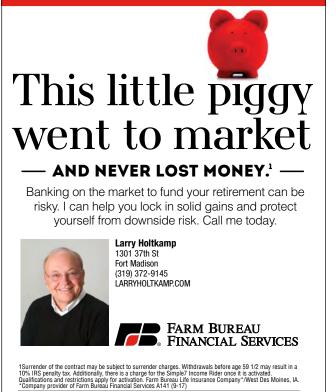
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### **Classifieds/Education News**

## Schneider, Harter win Lee County Bank awards

FORT MADISON – Each year, Lee County Bank awards the J. Patrick Koellner Scholarship to two graduating seniors. One graduating from Fort Madison Community School District and one from Holy Trinity Catholic School. The scholarship is in the amount of \$1,000 each. Students qualifying for this scholarship must display characteristics such as: taking an active role in various school sponsored activities, display good character and leadership abilities, as well as maintaining an average or above average GPA.

This year, the Fort Madison Community School District recipient that was selected is Nathaniel Harter. Nathaniel is the son of Kevin Harter and Carol Ross. Nathaniel actively participated in extracurricular activities such as Marching

Band, Concert Band, Student Government, NHS, Key Club, DECA, Robotics FTC, Robotics FRC, and GSA. He plans to attend Iowa State University in the fall and pursue a career in Cyber Security Engineering.

Quentin Schneider is the recipient from Holy Trinity Catholic School. Quentin is the son of Mike and Carrie Schneider. He actively participated in extracurricular activities such as NHS, Football, Basketball, and Track. He lettered in all three sports all four years of participation, as well as serving as captain in all three sports. Quentin plans to attend Iowa Central College for Fire Science in the fall.

Lee County Bank would like to wish both recipients, as well as all local graduating seniors, the very best of luck on all of their future endeavors.



**Schneider** 



Harter

# PEN CITY CURRENT CLASS

**PUBLIC NOTICES** 

#### **PUBLIC NOTICE** Lee County Board of **Supervisors Special** Meeting Wed., May 20, 2020 **Meeting Convening** Time: 9:00 A.M.

Lee County Board of **Supervisors** Wed, May 20, 2020 9:00 AM -10:00 AM

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Lee County Iowa Sheriff's Office Law Enforcement Testing Saturday, July 11, 2020 9 AM – 12 PM Lee County Iowa Sheriff's Office 2530 255th Street, Montrose, Iowa 52639

Applications are available at the Lee County Sheriff's

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# **HELP WANTED**



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Application to test must be returned to the Lee County Sheriff's office by Thursday, July 2, 2020 at 3:30 PM.

> Lee County Sheriff's Office C/O Detective Sgt. Clint Wray 2530 255th Street Montrose, IA 52639 (319) 372-1152





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### From the Front

### Fire chief says county couldn't see past start up costs

#### **COUNTY** - Continued from Page 1

Fedler said the Youngs told him they were ready to continue the service, but they would need the \$900,000 subsidy included in their proposal. But after the contract for another year was signed, Lee County EMS would begin to work with the county to transition ownership to the taxpayers.

Richard Young is also part of the ownership group that runs the Washington County EMS service, and that relationship is also transitioning to the county to take over operations, Bill Young said Tuesday.

"If we do a one-year contract, during that one year immediately starting when that contract's approved, discussions would begin about the county taking over the service and that would be a long-term solution and we won't have to worry about another contract with anybody," Fedler said.

Young said the county would stay on and help as long as it takes for the county to get into position to take the service over.

Supervisor Gary Folluo pressed Young on financial statements the county didn't receive last week.

Young said there was misunderstanding as to the requirements going forward as the county met with other providers, but he would provide those documents again going forward.

Supervisor Matt Pflug asked if the ambulance service was willing to help even if the county went with the city's option for service.

"We're not going to put the citizens in harm over something that's been created by nobody's fault. It has to change and we're willing to work with that," Young said.

Fedler said the board

should also create a formal advisory board to oversee not only the Lee County EMS service for the next year, but also help with the transition.

Folluo asked Fedler if the county was now officially entering the ambulance business without knowing what the costs look like.

Fedler said the county couldn't honor the request of the cities to provide service, and would have to bond for the \$1.8 million the cities were asking for in start up costs. Those numbers could drop to \$1.4 million, Herren said, if the county issued bonds to pay for ambulances.

As it stands, the county will have to come up with an additional \$400,000 over what they originally committed for the next fiscal year's subsidy.

County Budget Director Cindy Renstrom said she wouldn't advise dipping into the reserves to pay for the city's proposal. She said that could leave the county with a fund balance of \$112,000. on whether the own-

ership would hit the

county up for more

the proposal.

your saying."

increase.

money at a six-month

review that's built into

"You did say there

would be a review in six

months. So you could

say all of a sudden we

need \$500,000 more in

six months - that's what

Young said that was

"Anything is possible,

Young said. "We would

try our hardest for that

Pflug also asked how

the reason Lee Coun-

ty EMS asked for the

but that's not likely,"

much it would save

moving dispatch op-

Young said roughly

erations to LeeComm.

\$125,000, but he said he

didn't want to be held

to that number, and

the current proposal

includes keeping the

dispatch operations

with the ambulance

Young said calls

for service are slowly

coming back up after

increases he said that

could help the ambu-

a 30% decline in April.

With some possible rate

service.

not to happen."

"At this point, I don't think we can even think about Fort Madison and Keokuk's offer," she said. "That would eat into our fund balance. If we paid that and we don't get taxes until end of August, our fund balance would be about \$112,000 and I don't want it to get that low."

Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber said as hard as the COVID virus has been on operations, it has reduced budgeted expenses with most travel and training eliminated. The number of calls were also reduced at the department in the wake of the outbreak.

'We still have two months left in this budget and COVID-19 has hit us hard, but it's also been a blessing to the budget," he said. "Revenues at the sheriff's department are on track with estimations."

Pflug pressed Young

AMILY EXERCISE VIDEOS ON-DEMAND FITNESS AT HOME BAREND FITNESS AT HOME lance service's financial picture.

Fedler said his conversations with Richard Young indicated that if the ambulance service did better financially in the year they may not need to ask for the full \$900,000.

Herren said he's going to recommend that the city continue to look at providing the service now that they have a year to do more planning.

"With what happened today, now that we have a year to ease into it, I'm going to recommend that we continue to look at it," Herren said.

"The county is going to look at doing something, but we don't know that for sure. I think this is a temporary fix with that year extension."

Herren said he doesn't think county officials have been able to get passed the large initial funding needed.

"That big number worries the heck out 'em. It worries the heck out of us, too. But I just don't think they understand that it will go down," he said

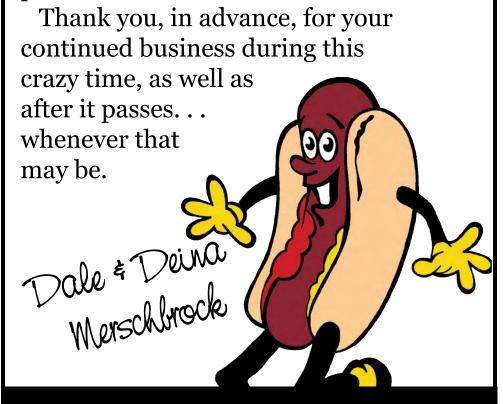
### Group asks for answers in two days

#### DEMOCRATS - Cont'd. from Page 3

"Pottawattamie County has experienced a 418% increase with 33 cases on April 30 to 171 cases on May 18...yet, there is no testing site to serve this large metropolitan area where cases are rising the lawmakers wrote. "Without access, these health care workers, first responders, essential workers, and individuals are traveling into other states or spending hours traveling to the closest location in Iowa where they can receive a test." In the letter, the lawmakers request a reply from the Governor within 48 hours. The Test Iowa program is funded in part by federal block grant dollars allocated by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which passed the House unanimously in March.



The Sonny's staff sends a heartfelt Thank You to our friends, old and new, who have supported us during the COVID-19 situation. As always, we work hard to stay stocked while providing personal service to our customers.



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