

Pen City Current

Sunday, January 5, 2020 | 14 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 13

2019 - A Year in Review

May & June

Farmers unite to help plant Faulkner farms

24,426 views, 15,193 engagements - June 12, 2019

BY ETHAN LILLARD
PCC STAFF

DONNELSON- The goal for every generation and every human being should always be to try to make this world a better place than when they came into it.

That's the exact life lesson Chuck Westfall was trying to instill in his godson, Alex Steffensmeier, when he brought him along to help plant hundreds of acres of farm ground for his recently deceased friends.

"We're training him to pay back, too," Westfall said.

An early morning accident Sunday near Donnellson claimed the lives of LaVerne and Michael Faulkner of rural Farmington, after a vehicle driven

by Robert LeRoy Boyd was believed to have crossed the center line and struck the GMC Yukon LaVerne and Michael were riding in nearly head on.

The collision took place at just at about 1:15 a.m. Sunday morning on Hwy. 2 near the intersection of 140th Avenue.

Both were later pronounced dead at an area hospital. According to the police report, Boyd was taken to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics and his condition was unknown Sunday.

A visitation will be held Friday, June 14 at the Schmitz Funeral Home in Donnellson at noon and the family will receive friends from 3:30 to 7 p.m. A graveside service will be held at Hickory Haven Cemetery in rural Farm-



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Alex Steffensmeier was one of about a dozen neighbor farmers that helped plant the crops after LaVerne and Michael Faulkner were tragically killed in a motor vehicle accident in June 2019.

ington at 10:30 a.m. with the processional leaving the funeral home at 10 a.m.

The accident is devastating for both the Faulkner family and the surrounding community. The impact of

both LaVerne and Michael could clearly be seen in the events that followed their deaths shortly after.

Taking it upon themselves, Chuck Westfall and community members

throughout the Donnellson area teamed up to help the Faulkner family finish planting its corn and bean crops on the Faulkner family farm located on the countryside in Donnellson.

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 based on that data.

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 factual, 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.

Bonaparte man takes to sky to find his stolen vehicle

24,205 views, 6,720 engagements - May 4, 2019

BY ETHAN LILLARD
PEN CITY CURRENT

BONAPARTE - Area law enforcement officers have a new friend in the skies.

In what is sure to go down as one of the quirkiest crime stories of the year, a Bonaparte man took matters into his own hands to solve a string of burglaries that resulted in him helping recover more than \$5,000 of his own personal belongings, including a stolen firearm.

Owning three airplanes and knowing what kind of vehicle the suspect was driving, Dave Buford took to the air and

assisted the Lee County Sheriff's department with the arrest of a 16-year-old juvenile suspect Wednesday.

Buford, with a second aerial assist and ground support from friends and family, isolated the suspect and then called in the cavalry to clean it up.

"It was fantastic," Lee County Sheriff's Department Detective Chad Donaldson said.

"I couldn't have asked for better directions. Ultimately, it ended up with us being able to take him into custody without incident (and) without anyone getting hurt. I don't think the suspect had any idea that he was being surveilled from the air by this individual. It definitely helped bring this to a safe conclusion."

DHS files complaints against day care center

19,500 views, 10,581 engagements - June 17, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELSON - Two day care facilities in Donnellson are facing the possible revocation of their state license as a result of complaints filed by state officials last week.

Raisin' Em On Up and Raising Em Up Learning Center located in Donnellson were at the center of 15 complaints filed after visits in April from Iowa Department of Human Services representatives.

Raisin' Em On Up, located at 100 N. Main Street according to the reports, had five complaints filed on Thursday following several unannounced visits by DHS consultants in April. The reports indicated that facility director Sarah Tweedy, who oversees operations at both facilities, had transported more than seven children in center transportation on multiple occasions.

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2019 - A Year in Review: May & June

FMCS D's Slater aired concerns over shared programs

20,667 views, 6,833 engagements - June 14, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A Fort Madison school official has expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the district's shared baseball program with Holy Trinity Catholic High School.

Fort Madison Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater sent an email to the Fort Madison Community School District Board of Directors on Thursday, June 6 indicating Fort Madison players are losing opportunities due to the "heavy presence" of Holy Trinity players on the squad.

The current roster of the Bloodhound baseball team has



SLATER

25 Fort Madison High School players and five players from Holy Trinity.

In the email, Slater said she sees some problems with this latest sharing agreement on the FMCS D side of things. She wrote that she is in disagreement with the philosophy that it doesn't matter which school the student-athletes attend regarding playing time.

A portion of the letter is printed below. Go to www.pencitycurrent.com on June 14th for the complete letter.

"Good Morning,

As you know the district engages in sharing agreements on an annual basis that are approved by you as a board. The latest sharing agreement (baseball) has caused prob-

lems with the heavy presence of HTC players and coaches to the loss of opportunities for Fort Madison athletes.

I wanted you to know that I have shared these concerns as the FMCS D superintendent who is responsible for Fort Madison students- not Holy Trinity students- with (Dr.) Tim (Wondra) as board president. I am making you aware of my concerns and a meeting planned to address these philosophical concerns with HS administration, AD, and coach.

To date, the first large team sharing agreement for the district, which happens to be with baseball, has been implemented with the philosophy that it doesn't matter where kids go to school...HTC or FM. I disagree. Due to this philosophy and implementation coupled with the numbers from HTC has damaged opportunities for FM students.

Dog attack sends three to hospital

15,181 views, 9,979 engagements - June 14, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Three residents on the city's east side have been taken to Fort Madison Community Hospital as a result of a dog attack.

Emergency crews responded to a LeeComm report of a dog attacking a small girl at approximately 10:30 a.m. near a residence just south of Putt-A-Round in the 300 block of 1st Street.

According to Fort Madison Police Chief Tim Sittig, Fort Madison police responded and the animal was engaged in attacking one of the victims and was shot and killed by an officer. Sittig said the dog was 40 to 50lb brown male boxer.

"We think the incident started inside and then spilled out into the yard," Sittig said.

The 5-year old girl had been bitten on the cheek.

Another subject, a 49-year-old white male, suffered multiple bite wounds to his arms and legs, and was transported to Fort Madison Community Hospital.

A third subject, a 33-year-old male also suffered superficial bite wounds, but experienced what Sittig described as possibly a stress-related cardiac emergency requiring CPR and defibrillation efforts.

"Our thinking is that could have been a stress-related cardiac event," Sittig said. "The two men got involved at some point but we're just not sure of all the details at this point."

He said the dog lived at the residence and the girl was a visitor. The dog's owner was also taken to the hospital for observation, but didn't suffer any bites.

The dog was seized and has been taken to Park View Animal Clinic as evidence, and Sittig said officers are currently continuing the investigation and putting the pieces of the incident together to determine what happened.

Sittig steps down as FM police chief

10,396 views, 4,547 engagements - May 5, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison Police Chief Tim Sittig confirmed this morning to the Pen City Current, that he will be retiring as the city's chief of police effective May 31.

Sittig started with the police force in late 2016 and has 33 years in police work in Iowa and Missouri and more than two decades as a chief, assistant chief and instructor.

"I haven't been thinking about it for years, but for the last couple months, I suppose," Sittig said.

"I started police work in 1986, so I've got 33 years plus a couple months in, with 10 years as a chief and 9 or 10 years as an assistant chief. When the door closes behind me, I'm going to spend some time with the granddaughter and then see what comes up."

Sittig also had a stint teaching criminal justice classes at Des Moines Area Community College. He said depending on logistics and how retirement plays out, he may look at going back to teaching.

Sittig said he doesn't know what the city's transition will be.

"I've got to the point where I've got my time set and I'm working through that process and that would be question for David," he said.

City Manager David Varley said the decision was not a complete surprise.



SITTIG

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2019 - A Year in Review: May & June



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

An unidentified FM motorist got stranded in the flooded waters at 20th Street/Ave.O Sunday morning at about 11a.m. BJ's was able to pull the vehicle from the high waters. No injuries were reported.
 17,377 views, 2,332 engagements - May 5, 2019 (Facebook post)

Sheriff releases updated dog attack information

15,691 views, 9,669 engagements - June 1, 2019

Editor's note: Due to some discrepancies in information received on Friday, the Pen City Current is running this release in it entirety without edit out of respect to the family, emergency responders and those close to this tragedy. The following is from Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber:

"On 5-31-2019 at approximately 10:31 AM, the Fort Madison Police Department was summoned to a dog attack at a home near the Old Iowa State Prison, 102 Ave C, in the City of Fort Madison.

Upon arrival, Officers found a large dog attacking a man, lying on his back, in the grass of the front yard. The dog was very aggressive and would not release the man. The Officers on scene did have to discharge a weapon to

dispatch the animal to stop the attack.

After Officers and First Responders rendered first aid to this victim, they encountered a 33-year-old Dallas City man lying in the doorway suffering from the dog attack. This man was identified as Robert Joseph Quick. Mr. Quick requested the Officers help his daughter, age 5, who had been bitten in the face by the dog. Mr. Quick had defended his daughter and undoubtedly saved her life by his actions.

The 5-year-old female was located and first aid was rendered. Unfortunately, her father, Mr. Quick was later pronounced dead at the Fort Madison Hospital ER after tremendous efforts to save his life on scene and by Medical Personnel were unsuccessful.

The Lee County Sheriff's Office would like to extend our deepest condolences to the family of Mr. Quick and all those involved with this tragic incident. The dog did not belong to any of those involved but was being kept by the occupants of the aforementioned address for a family member.

A Go-Fund-Me Page has been established to assist the Quick Family with burial expenses and this can be found on FaceBook.

The Fort Madison Police Department was assisted on scene by Fort Madison Fire Department Personnel, West Point Police and Lee County EMS.

This case is still under investigation pending autopsy results to determine the exact cause of Mr. Quick's death."

Doherty new Hound football coach

9,744 views, 978 engagements - June 6, 2019

BY ETHAN LILLARD
PCC SPORTS

FORT MADISON – Pending school board approval, long-time assistant coach Derek Doherty will be the new head football coach for the Fort Madison High School football team.

As head coach, Doherty's

goal is to turn his players into coffee beans.

Yes, Coffee beans. Why?

"I tell our guys every morning in the weight room, 'Be a coffee bean,'" Doherty explained. "If you put a carrot in boiling water, it softens the carrot, it's changed by it's environment. If you put an egg in the boiling water, it becomes hard boiled, it's changed by it's environment. But if you put a

coffee bean in there, it's no longer boiling water, it's now coffee. It – changed the environment."

As a science teacher, of course Doherty had to use a chemistry metaphor, but his team needs to take it heart in order to have success in 2019.

"That's one of the biggest things we need to do here is change the environment. We need to change the mentality and we need to change the culture. That's on the forefront, that's what we need to do there," he said.



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 Olive Lorene Thorn
 Stephen Tibbitts
 Harriet Ann Timmerman
 Lisa Kathleen Tolmosoff
 Robert Dean Toops
 Gary Burl Townsley
 Elaine Kay Traman
 Helen M. Turtle
 Larry "Shane" Tuttle
 Daniel "Dan" Tweedy
 Mary Kathleen Ullrich
 Eric "Giz" Vajentic
 Ronald D. Van Niewaal
 Joseph Michael Vaughan
 Patricia L. VerDught
 Donald J. VerKruyse Sr.

Sandra Jean "Sandie" Vest Campbell
 Hunter Anthony Vorwaldt
 James Henry Wagner
 Avis E. Walleit
 David L. Wallingford
 Leroy Joseph Walljasper
 Pamela Ann Waterman
 William "Bill" E. Waterman
 Danne Q. Weiler
 George Bernard Welding
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 Zita M. Wiebler
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Coach, superintendent clash over playing time

15,282 views, 6,703 engagements - June 14, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A current Fort Madison High School coach has shed light on alleged interference from Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater on behalf of her son, who just finished his junior year.

Ryan Wilson, the head basketball coach at Fort Madison High School, confirmed on Monday morning that he was called to a meeting with Slater in January, where the superintendent mandated that her son get 16 minutes of playing time at the junior varsity level, or Wilson would be fired.



WILSON

Pen City Current had referred to varsity sports action in an editorial that ran on Sunday. And although her son has played both varsity baseball and basketball, Wilson confirmed that the issues discussed focused on junior varsity playing time only, and the Current regrets that error.

“The thing that I want to accomplish is just getting this out there. Knowing that this isn’t what Fort Madison is about. And we don’t want to continue to lose great people in our community, staff in the district, community leaders, teachers, coaches, players, whoever,” Wilson said.

Wilson said he was called to a meeting Jan. 5 at Slater’s office in the central office building at 11:30 a.m. The

meeting included Slater, Fort Madison Athletic Director Jeremy Swink, and Wilson.

“At that meeting it came down to there would be a revamping of the athletic department and my job would be posted if playing time expectations weren’t met for her son,” Wilson said.

“I couldn’t believe it happened. I walked out of the meeting shocked and appalled that this meeting just took place. It was a matter of now I gotta figure out a plan to make this happen.”

He said Slater’s expectations equated to half a game in the junior varsity contests.

Pen City Current provided Dr. Slater with Wilson’s comments via email after contacting her for the article, and Slater responded via email Monday night.

Editorial - Board needs to address concerns

14,000 views, 5,169 engagements -
June 6, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

Spring storms have wreaked havoc on communities up and down the river this year, but we think a different kind of storm has been brewing in Fort Madison – and the first crack of lightning hit earlier this week.

Pen City Current reported on an email that showed Fort Madison Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater is unhappy with the playing time Fort Madison athletes are getting in shared programs with Holy Trinity Catholic, specifically, the baseball program.

Another crack of lightning came on Saturday, when a video surfaced showing Slater’s husband, Scott, confronting Fort Madison High School basketball coach Ryan Wilson at a camp in Quincy, Ill.

Apparently, it’s not the first time Scott has been observed being verbally aggressive at Fort Madison

High School events. Dr. Tim Wondra, FMCS D school board president, confirmed last week that Scott was suspended for one game by Slater, for behavior at a baseball game earlier this season that was in violation of team rules.

Scott Slater was also reprimanded by an official for behavior at a basketball game last year between Holy Trinity Catholic and Fort Madison High School played at HTC’s gym.

The sound from Saturday’s video is barely audible, but it’s clear Scott Slater says to Wilson ‘you’re vindictive.’ No one will dispute that there are two sides to every story. At the same time, no one will dispute that conduct is unbecoming, at the very least. With the alleged track record, action needs taken.

The school board needs to also take a hard look at Slater’s comments in her email to the board. Slater has a son who plays on the baseball team and hasn’t seen a lot of varsity action. He also played in a bench role on the varsity basketball team, again with limited playing time.

Superintendent’s family says editorial was ill-informed

16,845 views, 6,962 engagements - June 17, 2019

Response from the Slater Family:

The Slaters were extremely disappointed in your ill-informed opinion piece. Has the Superintendent not earned any respect for her hard work and contributions to the community?

The Superintendent did not affect any varsity playing time for her son. As a junior in 2018-2019, Max was at or near the bottom of minutes played for the varsity basketball team. Check the game records. Max has never played nor pitched one inning for varsity baseball. Check the game records.

Dr. Slater strongly disagrees with the school board on the issue of team sport sharing agreements, especially with HTC. Team athletics

such as baseball, softball, and such are the only sports where varsity playing time is at the sole discretion of the coach. Other sports such as track, tennis, and such allow for individual competition to determine varsity spots. Dr. Slater believes only if FMHS does not have the participation numbers or facilities should sharing agreements for team sports be used. Dr. Slater believes that these athletic opportunities should go to Fort Madison public school student-athletes. Every time an HTC player takes the field, they are taking away opportunities from FMHS student-athletes, most of which don’t have the financial means to attend a private school.

Dr. Slater did nothing wrong. The Superintendent simply advocated for the

FMCS D families she was hired to serve and represent.

As to baseball, you have completely misled your readers. Check the game records. In actual innings played, based upon 8 players (pitching excluded) in the field, HTC players have accounted for an estimated 30-35% of the playing time. Apparently all that matters are wins, not how and at what cost those results are attained.

The Superintendent has been frustrated with the culture and past performance of the FMHS athletic department and tried to make positive changes but has had little support. Dr. Slater even had to weather an attempted “coup” by Ryan Wilson last year when he tried to rally other FMHS coaches into “striking” over perceived slights. Ryan Wilson holds a strong grudge against Dr. Slater.



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2019 - A Year in Review: May & June

Weird accident leads to city manhunt

11,930 views, 6,262 engagements - May 19, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - An accident that happened at about 5 p.m. on Sunday on the south crest of Old Denmark Hill sent local authorities into action looking for a suspect, thought to be armed.

Law enforcement from the Fort Madison Police Department, Lee County Sheriff's Office, and Iowa State Patrol began a search that lasted about 90 minutes in the vicinity of 10th Street to 15th Street in the woods just south of where a motorist rolled a vehicle on Old Denmark Hill.

Fort Madison Police Chief Tim Sittig said at about 5 p.m., maybe slightly before, a



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison Police officer Dustin Fullhart stands by as a vehicle involved in a May accident is pulled from the woods just off the south crest of Old Denmark Hill. The accident triggered a three-agency search for a possibly armed suspect.

report came in about a crash.

"According to witnesses one occupant got out and tried to flee the area, but was either stopped or medical found her in the woods. She's at the hospital now with unknown injuries," he said.

"There was an indication there might have been a second party in the car, which is why we have all the response here and the dog," he said.

He said the woman was confused when questioned and the information the

police have at this time is sketchy. But he said police did pick up another person on warrants from a name the woman gave, but Sittig said he's not sure if the suspect is connected to the incident or not.

Central Lee hires Madsen to lead vocal dept.

10,221 views, 3,008 engagements - June 13, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELSON - Central Lee's school board is holding a special session on Friday at noon, to vote on a contract approval that would install current Fort Madison High School Band director Tracy Madsen as the district's new vocal music director.

The agenda was sent out on Thursday morning announcing the special sessions. There are no other agenda items listed on the notice other than to also accept the resignation of Jason Woodley as the Vocal Music Director/District Social Media Coordinator.

Central Lee Superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier, said the special meeting was set due to the late nature of the hire.

"If this was April we'd wait until the board meeting. But since it's June we

wanted to give him time to resign his current contract and the Fort Madison district time to post the position," Crozier said. "And most teachers won't resign positions until they have a new contract, so because it's already June we moved more quickly."

Madsen was hired as the Fort Madison school's band director in 2009. Several attempts to contact Fort Madison school officials for comment Thursday morning were unsuccessful.

Madsen declined to

comment on the hiring when contacted Thursday morning.

Crozier said the move helps bring some stability to the department at Central Lee.

"We are extremely excited to bring a talented individual like Tracy Madsen to Central Lee," Crozier said.

"We've had three vocal directors in three years and this provides stability in our program and provides us with an extremely talented person. This is a home run hire."

"Lewie" Vincent of Vinnie's Tap dies

10,156 views, 3,152 engagements - May 22, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - He kept music alive in Fort Madison. That's the legacy of Lewis Lee Vincent, who passed away Tuesday at his home in Fort Madison.

According to his daughter Kathleen, Lewie battled epilepsy and died unexpectedly Tuesday morning at his home.

"He was born in the Woodstock generation and him and his friends just listed to music all the time. They were just raised around that type of environment and he kept that alive in this town," Kathleen said.

His nephew Chris, who now owns Vinnie's Longbranch with his wife Tara, said that was Lewis' legacy.

"His love of music is the one thing that stands out," Chris said. "He loved listening to it, watching it and singing to it."

As late as this past Sunday, Kathleen took Lewis to the Chicago Open Air show in Bridgeview Ill. to listen to Tool, an American rock band formed in the 1990s in Los Angeles.

She said music was always a part of his life and he fought hard to hang onto that passion, and then bring it along as part of the business when he took over Vinnie's tap from his grandfather Earl, the original "Vinnie".

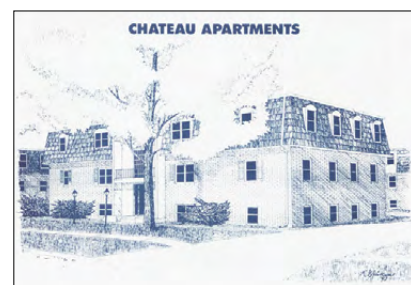
Kathleen said Vinnie's has been in the family since her grandfather opened the Glass Bar in 1946 on the same strip in what is now the Santa Fe Village in the 2600 and 2700 block of Avenue L.

She said the bar's been in four locations since it was opened in 1946 and Lewie was always a part of that scene since his childhood.

When he was a young teenager, Kathleen said Lewis wanted to go out to Woodstock and Earl, a navy veteran and businessman wouldn't let his son go, so he ran off with a friend to Colorado. The vehicle they used broke down and they had to pick strawberries for money to find a way home.

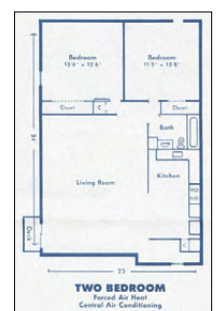
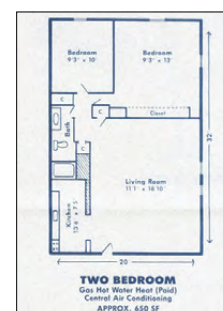
"That's how passionate he was about music," she said. "My grandpa was in the military in the Navy and was a businessman and family man, and he didn't understand the music scene back then."

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2019 - A Year in Review: May & June

Fertilizer plant shut down for four-week maintenance

9,596 views, 3,074 engagements - June 28, 2019

BY PCC STAFF

WEVER – Nearly two years ago, Iowa Fertilizer Company (IFCo) officially began production at its manufacturing facility in southeast Iowa. In that time, the company has met and in many cases exceeded production expectations to provide U.S. farmers with a domestic and stable source of nitrogen fertilizer products. As part of IFCo’s normal business practices, the plant will undergo a planned shut down in order to complete routine cleaning and maintenance. This shut down period will run from July 6, 2019 until early August.

This routine maintenance period, which is called a “Turnaround,” allows for the inspection of the plant’s equipment and necessary repairs as part of the company’s longstanding commitment to the safety of the facility, employees, and the community at large, including the protection of the surround-

ing environment. Turnarounds also ensure reliable and efficient production at or above required capacities through the next several years of continuous operation.

“At Iowa Fertilizer Company, safety is the foundation of our business,” said IFCO’s Managing Director Darrell Allman. “As part IFCo’s normal business operations, our planned shutdown in July through early August will allow us to continue meeting production goals and to do so safely and in an environmentally friendly manner. During this timeframe, the company will invest tens of millions of dollars locally that will continue to drive economic growth throughout our community.”

The planned shutdown at IFCo will include up to 600 new temporary workers onsite and a total investment of approximately \$30 million, which will help support a wide range of local businesses throughout Lee and Des Moines counties. During the Turnaround, the community will likely see increased activity at the plant and additional traffic in the area.

HTC holds to summer building completion date

8,926 views, 987 engagements - May 3, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

WEST POINT – The roof is on, the walls are up and construction continues to plug away as Holy Trinity Catholic closes in on a July 4 deadline to have it’s \$6 million new elementary school completed.

HTC Principal Michael Sheerin said the project is right on budget even with a couple change orders to better serve students.

Construction crews crawled around the facility Thursday afternoon, installing ceiling tiles and sealing dry wall joints as the two floors begin to show the shape of what is to come this summer.

“There are still estimating the end of May for the building construction, however the flooring and the furnishings will be in place by the end of June,” Sheerin said.

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Holtkamp Floors Decor & Furniture in Fort Madison will be finishing the project as far as floors and most of the furnishings.

One of the main focuses of the classroom set up has been an open and collaborative structure. Sheerin said most of the classrooms are expandable to accommodate large group learning, while still being able to provide more focused individual learning.

The panels that separate classroom space are equipped with white boards, so when the panels are closed it provides additional learning equipment.

The rooms will also have 1 of 15 70” Smart panel monitors that are completely integrated with each other. Sheerin said it adds the technology required of today’s teaching, while allowing an additional safety measure by permitting emergency messaging to all classrooms.

He said the school will also go to 1 gigabyte bandwidth between the systems schools.

June crash on Hwy. 2 kills two from Farmington

9,235 views, 4,784 engagements - June 9, 2019

BY PCC STAFF

DONNELLSON – An early morning accident near Donnellson has claimed the lives of two area men and left another hospitalized.

According to Iowa State Patrol reports, at about 1:17 a.m. Sunday morning a 2000 Ford pickup driven by Robert LeRoy Boyd, 28, of Kahoka failed to negoti-

ate a curve in the road on Highway 2 at 140th Avenue west of Donnellson.

Investigators believe that Boyd overcorrected crossed the center line and struck a 2005 GMC Yukon driven by Laverne Mark Faulkner, 63 of Farmington nearly head-on.

Faulkner, and a passenger in the vehicle, Michael Paul Faulkner, 39, also of

Farmington, were transported to area hospitals by Lee County EMS where they were pronounced dead.

Boyd was taken to University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics by Lee County EMS and his condition is unknown.

According to the ISP crash investigation report, none of the three were wearing their seatbelts at the time of the accident.

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1/3
37 41 42 53 63
Mega Ball: 16
Megaplier: 2



1/3 MID-DAY
5 8 0
1/3 EVENING
9 0 0



1/3 MID-DAY
2 4 2 3
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9 2 2 0

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2019 - A Year in Review: May & June

5-day search through county nets three arrests

7,398 views, 2,561 engagements - May 15, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – In a large-scale coordinated effort local law enforcement agencies have captured a fugitive they had been looking for since Thursday.

Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber said Wednesday Skylar Stark, 32 of Montrose, was taken into custody without incident Tuesday afternoon in West Point after authorities were tipped off to his location.

Stark was wanted after allegedly swiping a white Oldsmobile from a rural Lee County residence last week, in addition to several warrants out of Keokuk for robbery and 1st-degree burglary and was considered dangerous.

“The public can stand down and we want to thank everyone who helped us bring this man into custody,” Weber said this morning.



STARK MCGEE HAGMEIER

“We want to reiterate that we are continuing to investigate this case and anyone who has assisted, aided or abetted Mr. Stark in anyway will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

Others arrested in connection with Stark’s apprehension to this point are Jarrod Hagmeier, no age listed, and Jesse Winslow McGee, Jr., 40. Both are facing charges of aiding and abetting.

Weber wouldn’t go into detail on how authorities learned of Stark’s Tuesday whereabouts, but said if the case goes to trial it should come out at that point.

“We don’t want to give out too much in the way of investigations as it can give the people we were looking for a heads up,” Weber said.

Stark is currently in the Lee County Jail on two bonds, one of which is a \$55,000 cash only and the other is a \$13,000 surety contempt bond.

Weber said the investigation was a joint effort with the assistance 16 different Iowa, Illinois and Missouri law enforcement agencies including: Keokuk Police Department, Lee County Narcotics Task Force, Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement, Iowa State Patrol, Montrose Police Department, West Point Police Department, Donnellson Police Department, the Lee County Attorney’s Office, Washington County Sheriff’s Office, Missouri State Highway Patrol, Clark County, Mo., Sheriff’s Department, Cedar Rapids Police Department, Burlington Police Department, Lewis County Mo., Sheriff’s Department, Quincy Police Department and Hannibal Police Department.

It should be noted that all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Woman arrested in connection with May crash

6,685 views, 2,949 engagements - May 20, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A Burlington woman has been charged with 2nd degree theft in connection with a bizarre incident Sunday that had area law enforcement looking for an armed suspect.

Fort Madison Police Chief Tim Sittig said Monday afternoon that 24-year old Karissa Coughenour, of Burlington has been charged with theft and is currently in the Lee County Jail. The theft is a Class D felony under Iowa law.

The charge stems from a theft of the vehicle from a Fort Madison residence Sunday. At 4:52 p.m. Fort Madison Police were called to a scene on the crest of Old Denmark Hill where Coughenour allegedly lost control of the vehicle and sent it vaulting into the woods southbound.

Coughenour was discovered by emergency crews in the woods after she was able to get free of the vehicle, but couldn’t give police additional information on any other people associated with accident or the theft.

The woman was

taken to Fort Madison Community Hospital after being tended to by emergency responders and questioned by Fort Madison Police. After being treated for minor injuries she was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

“She was playing the game pretty good with officers,” Sittig said.

Several reports from witnesses in the area said they heard what sounded like gun shots just prior to the incident, but Sittig said police have no information connecting those with the incident.

“At this point, we don’t think they are connected at all. There’s the possibility someone was tar-

get shooting in the area at that time,” he said.

After the accident, based on information allegedly given by Coughenour, police, Lee County Sheriff’s on and off-duty personnel, and Iowa State Patrol officers began a search of the wooded areas between 10th and 15 streets and north of Avenue B for an armed subject.

Sittig said Monday that information may have been inaccurate, but police did arrest a suspect in the area who was wanted on several warrants. That individual’s name has not been released by the police as the full report has not been completed.

Hancock County searches for missing woman in May

8,255 views, 2,502 engagements - May 23, 2019

BY PCC STAFF

CARTHAGE – Hancock County Sheriff’s Office and the family of Patricia McDowell, requests the public’s assistance in searching for Patricia. Patricia was last seen Wednesday, May 22, 2019 at about 6:30am. Patricia is 74 years old. Patricia is 5’4” tall and about 140 pounds.

She has brown hair and blue eyes. Patricia has recently experienced memory loss and confusion and depression. She may be near a 2012 Buick LaCrosse with Illinois license plate ZV36508.

If Patricia is located please call 911 immediately or if any person has information that would help locate Patricia please call Hancock County Sheriffs office at 217-357-2115.

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Pen City Current will not publish an e-Edition Tuesday, December 24 through Wednesday, January 1. 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,
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5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

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|------------|--|--|
| SUN 05 Jan | | Clear High– 44.7° F Low – 31.1° F |
| MON 06 Jan | | Overcast High– 40.1° F Low – 33.0° F |
| TUE 07 Jan | | Clear High– 40.7° F Low – 23.0° F |
| WED 08 Jan | | Clear High– 34.7° F Low – 29.6° F |
| THU 09 Jan | | Moderate Rain High– 45.6° F Low – 41.2° F |

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2019 - A Year in Review: May & June

Council votes to take kink out of Avenue L

8,459 views, 2,023 engagements - June 18, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison will have two projects going on at the same time on the former Hwy. 61 this fall.

As part of the funds received from the state of Iowa when it turned over the stretch of Old Highway 61 to the city, crews will begin working on straightening Avenue L at the “S” curve.

Public Works Director Larry Driscoll said that stretch of road was determined, along with the intersection of Avenue L and 27th Street, to be one of most dangerous in the city with the highest accident ratings.

“We did finish 27th Street a couple years ago and I thought that intersection was greatly improved. Some people disagree and that’s fine. But on the ‘S’ curve the plan was to straighten this out and we came to the city council about a year ago and talked about this,” Driscoll said.

The cost of the project will be around \$550,000, similar to the cost of the Avenue L/27th Street project.

The city plans to take some of the northwest curve out of the stretch of roadway and make the road curve to the southwest and then straighten out before bending back west after 36th Street.

The money to be used comes from city funds in the Old Hwy. 61 fund. The project was originally scheduled for 2022, as rebuilding the entire highway through Fort Madison was planned with the money from the state.

At the same time, the city will begin work on the stretch of Old Hwy. 61 from 2nd Street to 6th Street. That project has been delayed for a year.

“We started that project in 2018 and had some delays through the state,” Driscoll said.

He said, answering questions from Councilman Chris Greenwald to explain the delay, the state history and archeological officials got involved and wanted to make sure dig sites were done to help protect any potential history in the ground.

“We initiated the startup for construction and designs in the spring and we just now finished all the documentation they wanted last month, so we will bid that section of road in July,” Driscoll said.

He said the city made a compromise with the state historical society to regulate how the city will proceed with digging on the highway, at an additional cost of \$100,000.

“This has slowed us down to the tune of about 12 months,” Driscoll said.

Greenwald then asked how many blocks of overlay on Avenue F the city could get for \$100,000 to which Driscoll replied five.

“That’s putting a price on history,” Councilman Rusty Andrews said to Greenwald with a chuckle.

“I find that comment out of line,” Greenwald replied.

The detour will use 34th Street and Avenue M for motorists to get around the construction as Driscoll said the city will completely shut down that stretch of road, after talking with business owners in the area. The shut down will take 30 days off the construction time.

The council approved a resolution ordering the construction, setting public hearing and bid letting for the project, 6-0. Councilman Chad Cangas was absent.

In a related issue, the council moved forward with having Driscoll get designs to reconstruct the lower parking lot in Riverview Park to allow access to the depot museum during high waters. The city will also redo the parking lot at Avenue F and 8th Street. The cost is at about \$880,000 and will come from the reimbursement of interest paid on the waste water treatment loans.

FMHS trades team attends national competition

8,471 views, 643 engagements - June 24, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LOUISVILLE, Ken. – Four of Fort Madison High School’s finest are in Louisville right now getting ready to represent Fort Madison and the state of Iowa in US Skills competition against 51 other teams from around the country.

It’s the first time a team from Fort Madison has qualified for the national competition. The Bloodhounds qualified after winning the state competition back in April. That team consisted of seniors Elton Kruse and AJ Nolting, and juniors Parker Denning and Brandon Reichelt. Reichelt was unable to make the trip to Louisville, so junior Danen Settles, who went to the state competition in April as an alternate will step in.

FMHS building trades instructor Clint Kobelt said after a walk-through Monday that the arena and competition set up has been pretty intimidating for the Bloodhounds.

“When we were walking through the venue, you could see the scope of the national competition was a little overwhelming,” Kobelt said this afternoon. “The conversation we had was don’t let the geography get to you. Carpentry is the same in this setting as it is in Iowa, as it is at our shop, and as it is on the job site. The expectations are the same.”

Senior Elton Kruse said the venue is a little more than they expected, but he’s welcoming the challenge.

“It is, but I’m excited to see where we stack up and I think it’s a good thing and I’m glad to be competing with more people,” Kruse said.

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2019 - A Year in Review: May & June

School board tables superintendent contract extension approval

8,191 views, 3,101 engagements - June 19, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater’s contract approval was tabled by the Fort Madison Community School District Board of Directors at Wednesday’s June board meeting.

The school board held a closed session evaluation of Slater’s performance for an hour prior to the regular board meeting. The board then reconvened the closed session after a 3-hour regular board meeting.

Slater is at the front of some controversy surrounding comments made public by Fort Madison Head Basketball coach Ryan Wilson this week. Wilson told Pen City Current Monday that Slater demanded playing time for her son or he would be fired.

Slater also called into question the philosophy of shared athletic programs. She said the “heavy presence” of Holy Trinity Catholic student-athletes playing for the Bloodhound baseball team was taking playing time from Fort Madison athletes. Her son also plays on the baseball team.

According to Iowa Code, Slater had to request the meeting be closed, which is common in public employee evaluations.

The Iowa code that governs the closed sessions is 21.5

(1)(i) which reads:

“To evaluate the professional competency of an individual whose appointment, hiring, performance, or discharge is being considered when necessary to prevent needless and irreparable injury to that individual’s reputation and that individual requests a closed session.”

Before going back into the closed session, Board President Dr. Tim Wondra said the board has a lot of information to go through.

“We’re just scratching the surface and trying to figure out where we’re going to go and how this is going to progress,” Wondra said “As you can see tonight, we brought down the district’s attorney to guide us through this process.”

The board received a letter via email on Sunday from an email address that appears to be a Slater family email account, but was unsigned. The email came from an ‘S.S.’ Her husband’s name is Scott Slater.

The letter was in response to a Pen City Current editorial questioning Dr. Slater’s opinion of the shared programs with area schools. The editorial also pointed to behavior of her husband caught on video Saturday at a basketball camp in Quincy, where Mr. Slater was seen confronting Wilson and calling him “vindictive”. The rest of the video is slightly audible.

The letter indicated that Dr. Slater would not be extending her contract, but Wondra said the validity of the letter is up in the air.

Noll wants Pool 19 listed as federal refuge area

8,623 views, 1,091 engagements - June 26, 2019

BY COLIN MAGNESON
RadioKeokuk News Director

MONTROSE – At a special meeting of the Lee County Conservation Board Tuesday afternoon, the board approved of a resolution supporting exploration of a possible conservation improvement project to enhance the Mississippi River Pool 19.

The board requested local wildlife advocate Jim Noll give a small presentation regarding his goal of turning Pool 19 into a wildlife refuge to improve the basin above the pool, both economically and ecologically.

Noll told the board the 155 miles of the Des Moines River has been designated as a whitewater theme park. According to Noll, no brick and mortar was used in the project as it consisted of tenderizing the bottom of the river by moving some large boulders around. He said as a result of the work the area has become a haven for recreation.

Noll then moved to comparing that project to what is going on at Pool 19 downriver from Fort Madison where he says the 1913 introduction of Lock and Dam 19 has damaged the river both ecologically and recreationally.

“The U.S. Coast Guard has designated this area of the Mississippi as a ‘Danger High Wind Area.’ That’s how dangerous the river is at Pool 19. One of the reasons that is a flat mud plane is that when they dammed up the river this area filled up and cut off 34 species of fish, plants, and fauna from returning from south of the dam.”

Noll said the waters that filled in the pool removed some important land structures.

“They also flooded out the majority of the islands and what islands remained were removed by wind. With no islands for protection, the prevailing winds out the west run parallel with the river for a stretch and its both dangerous and destructive. The siltation and clarity of the water suffer which results in the loss of wildlife.”

Noll said he has hopes of getting both the Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife to designate the area a federal wildlife refuge like they have in places above several lock and dams on the border of northeastern Iowa. According to Noll, the Corps has been reconstructing islands where they had previously been flooded out and as a result fishing, hunting, and recreation have boomed.

Keokuk officials identify victim of May fire

7,975 views, 2,366 engagements - May 1, 2019

BY STAFF

KEOKUK – The Keokuk Police Department reports that the body recovered from the house fire, at 317 Concert, on April 28th has been identified. The University of Iowa Decedent Care Unit, has identified the deceased as, 26-year-old J.R. Roberts of Hamilton, Illinois. The cause of death is pending toxicology tests.

According to RadioKeokuk, the Keokuk Fire Department received the call of a fire at 317 Concert Street at 8:50 pm Saturday night after smoke was reported coming from the building. Upon arrival the KFD observed flames shooting from the roof of the building. Crews attempted to reach the attic after being told there was a person possibly trapped inside, but could not gain access due the intense heat.

The investigation into the structure fire is ongoing and further information will be released when available.

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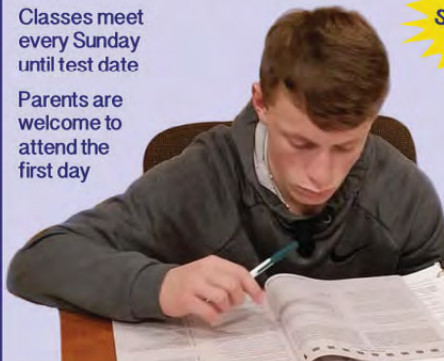
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