

PEN CITY CURRENT

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Tuesday, May 19, 2020 | 6 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 101



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Young shoulders blame for EMS woes

AMBULANCE: Director says service ready to work with county on 12-month deal

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – The head of Lee County’s current ambulance service said the company is willing to go another 12 months, but said the county needs to come up with another option for 2022.

Bill Young, the director for Lee County EMS Ambulance, Inc, told Pen City Current Monday the current proposal submitted to the county for \$900,000 in subsidies would have to be met, but the county should look at making the service a governmental entity.

He said the service just can’t continue to function with reimbursements the way they are, and with private providers being left out of legislation for gap funding.



YOUNG

“We just don’t see that working out financially,” Young said Monday.

“We went up to \$900,000 and even that would be a break-even point. With reimbursements, and the way we feel things would change, the best thing is that it will have to be some kind of government entity. That way other things would open for them.”

Young took total blame for the ambulance services financial woes on himself.

“First of all I want to start out saying that the way things have gone the last couple of months was my part,” he said.

“I have learned a lot and grown a lot from this experience.”

See YOUNG, page 6

GRADUATION 2020

Mayor sets citywide cruise for Sat.

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – As the two city high schools navigate the coronavirus to plan events for graduating seniors, a citywide cruise has been born that may end up being an annual event.

Mayor Matt Mohrfeld, with the help of several area parents, volunteers and Shottenkirk Automotive Group, has

launched a cruise that will start downtown, hit both high schools, the city’s senior living centers, and then finish downtown this Saturday starting at 1 p.m.

Mohrfeld said there was a lot of discussion in April about doing something special for this year’s seniors who’ve been out of school since the governor ordered all state schools closed in March and canceled all school-related activities.

“I started getting feedback and people asking if we could do this or do that and we started looking at timelines and logistics,” Mohrfeld said.

“Anyway, we’re talking about it, and I thought what about a graduation cruise. In talking with Abby Womack, somebody who wanted to do something, she thought it was a great idea. I think it’s pretty cool.”

Then the mayor got a call from Doug Owen, who’s the marketing director for Shottenkirk.

“He called and said Greg (Shottenkirk) would like to do something. So he got involved and helped, and right now it’s just something we’re gonna keep real simple.”

He said the concept is basically one senior, one vehicle.

“Whatever they want to drive. I don’t even care if it’s a side by side if their 18,” Mohrfeld said tongue in cheek.

As an incentive and to make the ride a bit more competitive Mohrfeld offered up a \$500 scholarship to the vehicle

See CRUISE, page 5

Pollmiller to stay closed over holiday

BY PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – Lee County Conservation will not open Pollmiller Beach for Memorial Day Weekend. The staff has not set an opening date for the beach at this time.

“We all know how many people enjoy visiting the beach in the summer, but we are not comfortable opening yet,” said Nathan Unsworth, Lee County Conservation Director.”

Public swimming pools remain closed, so we are following the

See HOLIDAY, page 2



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Hidden Beauty owners Tina Hauck and Davette Jurgenson sanitize the salon Friday morning as Gov. Kim Reynolds reopened the salons across the state. Jurgenson said without some of the state aid programs, they may not have been able to open back up. Hauck said the salon was denied any state small business grants, but unemployment helped during the closure.

CORONAVIRUS

COVID-related inflammatory disease hits Iowa youth

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

JOHNSTON – State officials confirmed Monday that two children in eastern Iowa have been infected with an inflammatory disease that is affecting children who’ve been exposed to

the COVID-19 illness.

Dr. Caitlin Pedati confirmed the cases during Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds daily update from the state’s Emergency Operations Center in Johnston Monday.

Pedati said the disease called Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome

is similar to Kawasaki Disease, and is being monitored by state health officials.

The first cases of the disease were reported in New York City about six weeks ago and now more than 145

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WEATHER

TUE 19 May..... Light Rain, 63.6° F/ 57.9° F
WED 20 May..... Overcast, 64.4° F/ 55.5° F
THU 21 May..... Light Rain, 61.0° F/ 57.1° F

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For the Record/From the Front

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

05/14/20 – 3:49 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 900 block of Avenue F.
 05/14/20 – 9:21 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 3900 block of Bluff Road.
 05/14/20 – 7:25 p.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Bradley Michael Dettmers, Jr., 35, of Fort Madison, in the 2100 block of Avenue N, on a charge of violation of a no contact order and interference with official acts. He was released on a promise to appear.
 05/14/20 – 8:28 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 3400 block of Avenue L.
 05/14/20 – 10:12 p.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Crystal Wolf, 47, of Fort Madison in the 600 block of Avenue E, on a warrant service. She was re-

leased on a promise to appear.
 05/15/20 – 3:51 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 600 block of 8th Street.
 05/15/20 – 8:41 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a stolen vehicle in the 600 block of 4th Street.
 05/15/20 – 9:35 a.m. – Fort Madison Police cited Matthew Sly, 26, of Fort Madison in the 2800 block of Avenue L, on a charge of driving under suspension. He was released.
 05/15/20 – 2:40 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of property damage accident in the 3100 block of Avenue K.
 05/16/20 – 7:46 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of property damage accident in the 2000 block of 303rd Avenue.
 05/17/20 – 8:43 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 800 block of Avenue H.

05/17/20 – 10:50 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a stolen vehicle in the 1100 block of Avenue E.
 05/17/20 – 11:50 p.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Dale Lee Heibredner, Jr., 40, of Fort Madison, in the 4700 block of Avenue O, on a charge of misdemeanor assault. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.
 05/17/20 – 11:59 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 600 block of 34th Street.

Lee County Sheriff's Report

05/14/20 – No arrests/citations/accidents reported
 05/15/20 – 10:25 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Denise Michelle Howell, 45, of Keokuk in the 2400 block of 340th Street on a warrant for failure to appear. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and later released on her recognizance.
 05/15/20 – 6:40 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Joseph Cash Kelly Lancaster, 22, of Revere, Mo., on a warrant for violation of probation. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.
 05/16/20 – 7:45 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Carrie Nichole Morris, 32, of Keokuk, in the 1600

block of Green Bay Road, on a warrant for violation of probation. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.
 05/16/20 -12:27 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies cited Laurence Alexander Hayes, 29, of Fort Madison, on the Hwy. 61 bypass in Keokuk, on a charge of possession of a controlled substance -subsequent offense. He was released.
 05/16/20 – 8:18 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Lexys Christine Jarrell, 20, of Keokuk, in the 300 block of Hwy. 61 in Montrose, on charges of possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia, interference with officials acts-bodily injury, assault with injury on law enforcement officer and speeding. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and later released on her recognizance.
 05/16/20 – 10:02 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies cited Payton Wrage VanPelt Vice, 24, of Fort Madison, no location given, on a charge of driving while barred. She was released.

Hancock County Sheriff's Report

05/12/20 – Heather L Zvirblis, age 39, of Carthage, IL was arrested on a Hancock County Warrant charging her with Petition to Revoke or

Modify Sentence for Probation Violation on original charges of Burglary. Zvirblis remains lodged in the Hancock County Jail in lieu of bail awaiting her next court appearance.
 05/13/20 – William L Walker, age 45, of Montrose, IA was arrested on a Hancock County Warrant charging him with Petition to Revoke or Modify Sentence for Probation on original charges of Unlawful Possession of Methamphetamine. Walker remains lodged in the Hancock County Jail in lieu of bail awaiting his next court appearance.
 05/14/20 – Raymundo T Francisco, age 42, of Carthage, IL was arrested and charged with Driving Under the Influence, No Valid License, and Operating an Uninsured Vehicle. Francisco was released after posting the required bond and given a future court date.
 05/17/20 – Janelle L Pryor, age 19, of Augusta, IL was arrested on a Hancock County Warrant charging her with Failure to Appear on original charges of Criminal Trespass

to Residence. Pryor remains lodged in the Hancock County Jail in lieu of bail awaiting her initial court appearance.
 05/17/20 – Benjamin J Johnson, age 21, of Iowa, was arrested and charged with Possession of Methamphetamine. Johnson was also arrested on a Henry County, IA warrant charging him with Violation of Parole. Johnson remains lodged in the Hancock County Jail in lieu of bail awaiting his next court appearance.
Those listed above are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Fort Madison Fire & Rescue Report

05/15/20 – Fort Madison Firefighters responded to four medical calls,
 05/16/20 – Fort Madison Firefighters responded to two medical calls, one gas odor, and one motor vehicle accident
 05/17/20 – Fort Madison Firefighters responded to one burning complaint and two medical calls.




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Conservation officials moving with caution


HOLIDAY - Continued from Page 1

same guidelines for the time being.”

Lee County Conservation campgrounds will be open for the holiday weekend. However, park restrooms remain closed at Lee County parks. Park staff will be evaluating the facility closures in the next week to determine what facilities can potentially reopen.

“While the beach will be closed, our parks remain open. We hope families will take advantage of other outdoor activities at our parks, like fishing, paddling, and hiking. Of course, we urge all park users to stay home if they are sick and follow social distancing guidelines while at our parks,” Unsworth said.

For more information about Lee County Conservation’s parks and facilities, please call the Conservation Office at 319-463-7673. All camping reservations are made online at www.mycountyparks.com. For all future updates, please follow Lee County Conservation on Facebook.



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From the Front

Governor reviewing expiring parts of latest order

PEDATI - Continued from Page 1

children in the city have been sickened. Reports are also popping up in about half of the nation's states according to the Centers for Disease Control.

The CDC has confirmed the link to COVID-19 and New York City mayor Bill de Blasio has reported that 90% of the children sickened tested positive for the coronavirus, or antibodies indicating they had contracted the virus.

"Friday afternoon the Iowa Department of Public Health did have two reports of this syndrome," Pedati said Monday.

She said the children were from eastern Iowa are currently stable.

"We are working with local health and clinical providers to gather more information. What we know now is there is fever and signs of inflammation, you might have heard this compared to another rare infectious disease called Kawaski disease," Pedati said.

"We're following it very closely to learn more about it. So far, thankfully, reports of children getting sick are very rare."

Symptoms in addition to the fever include: irritability or sluggishness, abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting, rash, conjunctivitis, enlarged lymph node on one side of the neck, red cracked lips or red tongue, and swollen hands and feet.

Pedati said reports of any diagnoses of the disease in the state must be reported to the IDPH.

Reynolds said she is still considering additional measures to reopen the state further, citing increased testing capacity and encouraging numbers.

She said it's been more than 18 days since the state's highest single daily new positive case data.

"The time is right to move into the recovery phase and start reopening Iowa's economy," she said.

"We're at a point where we can and must strike a balance between managing the virus for the long term, and getting

the economy up and running once again. The long-term consequences of keeping Iowa's business closed are far reaching."

On Monday, the Lee County Health Department announced a 19th positive case in the county. The case involves a middle aged man who is in isolation. Sixteen of the county's cases are listed as recovered.

Reynolds also announced new updated reporting standards for the state's coronavirus website at coronavirus.iowa.gov. She said now people will be able to see real-time case count information, so daily updates won't be required.

Iowa was just honored as one of the nation's top 10 states in data reporting since the outbreak, the governor said.

She also said a new dedicated Test Iowa call center is now up and running but didn't provide a number for the center. The center is staffed with nurses to answer questions about the assessment and results. The Test Iowa website didn't list a call center number Monday evening.

The governor's current emergency order is set to expire next week and Reynolds said state officials are looking into extending some of the order, while rescinding other parts.

She said the moratorium on utility shutoff and evictions may be extended, as well as talks about further grant opportunities for landlords.

"We're looking at that, in conjunction with Iowa Economic Development Authority, and to put in some other grants that would apply to apartment owners," Reynolds said.

"We're looking at different scenarios to make sure we're not removing that too soon, and we're working with Iowan's as we open the economy. While we haven't made a decision yet, we're looking at all aspects of the order that will expire next week."

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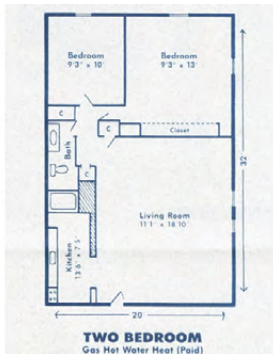
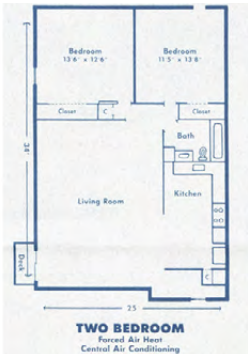
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FMHS, HTC try to finalize plans for 2020 seniors

CRUISE - Continued from Page 1

showing the most creativity.

“We’ll judge it at Holy Trinity Catholic. It’s going to be on creativity. They can decorate the car, decorate themselves, and the theme will have a lot of latitude.”

He said the scholarship will be to the winner’s post secondary institution.

“We will cruise Avenue G down to 4th Street, go up to Avenue E, drive up to FMHS and along Bluff Road to HTC, along Bluff Road to Sunnybrook, down 48th Street and the highway to The Madison, The Kensington, and back downtown,” Womack wrote in a release Friday.

Mohrfeld said it was his intention to make it annual ride.

“That’s where I’m going with it. I think it’s a cool idea and it’s been really well received by the elderly living sites.”

There is no registration or sign up required and Mohrfeld said juniors who want to follow the cruise and have licenses can follow in behind the seniors if they want.

He’s also encouraging parents, the public and businesses to line the streets congratulating the seniors. The event is not in lieu of anything the school districts are doing.

“It’s just a Fort Madison ‘showin’ the love thing.”

Those looking for more information or to get involved can call Mohrfeld at 319-470-0937 or Womack at 470-7363.

Other events planned for Holy Trinity Catholic include the following:

- HTC Seniors’ Awards via Zoom, Tuesday, May 19th
- Graduation ceremony is rescheduled for Sunday, Aug. 2nd at 2:00 p.m.
- Baccalaureate Mass is Sunday, Aug. 2 at 8:00 a.m. at St. Mary’s in West Point At Fort Madison High School:

• A Bloodhound Senior Cruise throughout the city will be on Friday May 29, with seniors starting in the high school parking lot at 7:15 p.m. and finishing in the high school parking lot around 8:20 p.m., where lights will be turned on at the football, baseball and softball fields for 20 minutes in honor of the Class of 2020.

• Prom is rescheduled for June 13 pending allowance by state and federal officials.

• Graduation is rescheduled for June 27, pending allowance by the state.

• A virtual graduation video that will feature each senior walking across the stage, along with senior and administration speeches is set to take place the first week of June. Time schedules are listed on the district’s website.

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Lee County News/From the Front

Ambulance official says service needs to be government entity

YOUNG - Continued from Page 1

rience and I regret that we had to ask the county for extra funds. But it was a provision in our contract that allowed us to do that. So that's what we did.

"We've been honored to provide service to the county for the past 25 years and we're willing to continue over the next 12 months until the county can come up with the best alternative."

If that alternative does become a county-, or even city-run ambulance service, it could hinge on a bill hung up in the Iowa Legislature due to the dismissal for the coronavirus.

That bill, House Study Bill 631, would give county boards the right to assess a tax to cover the shortfall in revenues that Young says is not only plaguing Lee County, but the nation's ambulance services.

"My biggest hope is that the state follows through and the legislation is passed to make EMS an essential service," he said. "If that happens the county would be able to tax and levy for that service and that would generate some income to cover shortfalls."

According to Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, legislators are planning to return to the state capital on June 1.

Another Medicaid reimbursement that is not available to private services is the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation program, which provides federal funding through state Departments of Human Services. That reimbursement requires a couple years of billing history to set rate structures, but it something else the

county could plan on.

Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren said that program is part of how he thinks the cities can offer ambulance services with comparable subsidies to Lee County EMS in the future.

Herren and Keokuk Fire Chief Gabe Rose will be presenting a proposal to the Lee County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, along with Lee County EMS staff.

Young said the investor group of Lee County EMS, which includes three family members and fifth investor, has cut the service as deep as it can, and rate increases could be taken in addition to the county's \$900,000 if approved for one more year. He said those are things that would need to be hashed out with the county board.

"It's something we could work on together. We would have to be able to sit at the table and discuss things and maybe try to find other cuts, but, we've pretty much cut every where we can cut," he said.

"We have to be able to provide a service that people expect and that comes with a cost."

Young said Lee County EMS did find itself in trouble with the IRS and was facing liens.

"I will just say that was true, and those are things that I'm not proud of. I didn't ask for help when I needed to ask for help in this position and I put other people here in a bad spot. I realize that and apologize for that. I screwed up and I wanna move forward and get it fixed so the county has a reliable ambulance ser-

vice going forward," he said.

Young said EMS service is his passion and if allowed he would like to continue to be a part of the service going forward.

"I'm willing to stay on as long as anyone will allow me to. This is my passion and EMS is where I feel I belong," he said.

"I feel bad because of what I did, but I can't keep living on that and I want to look to the future. If asked to do that, by all means I would be willing to do that."

Young said Washington County is currently moving toward a county-run ambulance service and he said he believes Henry County's hospital-based EMS service could move in that direction as well.

Young said he wasn't surprised when American Medical Response pulled their offer to provide service Wednesday.

"People are saying it was things the board said, but my from my standpoint (their proposal) didn't have the right demographics and numbers of Lee County and our payor mix," Young said. "They did their homework, but I question that, knowing the numbers we have here - it would have been a tough sell."

The investor group was eerily quiet during public committee and board of supervisors meetings over the past three weeks, declining to make any comments during the meetings, nor responding to requests for interviews.

"We were never trying to hide anything. We just were trying to get ourselves together," he said.

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Absentee mail-in deadline June 2

LEE COUNTY - Lee County Auditor Denise Fraise announced that the deadline for pre-registration and mailing absentee ballots for the June 2, 2020 Primary Election is Friday, May 22, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Voters may obtain a Voter Registration Form by logging onto the Iowa Secretary of State's website www.sos.iowa.gov or you can register online at the same web address.

Absentee Ballot Request Forms may also be obtained on the Secretary of State's website or by contacting the Auditor's Office at 319-372-3705. You must declare a Political Party on the request form for this election.

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