



Pen City Current

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Holy Trinity youth start coding early

Even preschoolers are getting at taste of computer sciences

From left to right Megan Holtkamp, Brooklyn Todd, Kat DiPrima and Lucy Steffensmeier work their way through some MineCraft coding as part of the HTC Elementary's Hour of Code on Friday morning.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Teach them well, and let them lead the way

Sorry to put that song in your head all day now, but is it just me or our children leading the way this holiday season?

You hear all the time all the bad stuff and the fear that exists that our children are becoming too dependent on digital devices and making bad decisions. I was having a conversation with a former Keokuk school teacher who said, as part of the Bridges Out of Poverty orientational meeting on Thursday, that we need to do more for youth. "They're our future leaders," she said.

But in recent months we've seen some children taking the lead and showing us that, "Hey, we're here and not all is lost."

It started several months back when Lexi Miller was watching the news and saw some elderly people who were standing in water that had flooded into their homes as a result of the savage hurricanes that battered the southern United States.

Miller said something to her mother while watching, that she wanted to do something to help. Two months later a semi trailer full of goods was headed to Florida and then to Puerto Rico

See CHARITY, page 2

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

games.

When times tables, and verbs and adjectives, were the curriculum of the day, now students get to participate in coding sessions like Friday's Hour of Code at the Holy Trinity Elementary School's library as part of Computer Science Education week.

Arevalo, along with fellow instructor Corey Hamilton, were helping students navigate a basic coding program from the website www.codes.org, where the students can do

"We do different things with different grades and this age group is working with Codes.org which is really fun and addicting if you ever start trying it out."

-Allison Arevalo, HTC instructor

simulated coding for the popular computer game.

"We're introducing these kids to computer science," Arevalo said.

if you ever start trying it out."

She said the Codes organization is advocating to have coding be part of graduation requirements because almost everything is done with computers now.

The young students were using what Arevalo called blocks-based coding. The coding application is a tutorial that allows the students to determine the path the game

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Tragedy wanes with the spirit of the holidays

December 12th is hard for 62-year old Susie Clark. It's the date her teenage daughter, Lisa, passed away 15 years ago. Memories come flooding back, like the murky water spilling over the dam at Oakland Mills. It can be a Christmas tree ornament, or a note found from

EMPTY NEST

BY Curt Swam

years past, or Christmas music that trigger the memories lying just beneath the surface.

I published Susie Clark's



story in my Empty Nest column a little over a year ago. Simply put, it is THE most tragic story I have ever heard that has hap-

pened to one person.

Susie was married to a wonderful man, Howard, and they had two beautiful children, Danny and Lisa. Both children died in their teenage years, Danny close to Easter and Lisa close to Christmas, several years apart, from an incredibly cruel neurological disorder called

Neimann Pick Disease. To raise two children to their teenage years, only to see them suffer and die, no parent should have to go through.

But Susie still had her husband, and they would get through the suffering together. Eight years after

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Obituaries/Opinion

Dark times getting lighter after woman's tragedies

SWARM - Continued from Page 1

Lisa passed away, Howard died of colon cancer. You can probably imagine the mental anguish that entrapped Susie.

But Susie is a survivor. A lot of people prayed for Susie, as she was and still is a strong church member with an abiding faith. Understandably, she was bitter and at times felt that there was no hope.

She has a house in the country close to her parents and family. She enjoys taking care of her home, making improvements, mowing, and her Sheltie dog, Barney. She also sings with an a cappella group in Mt. Pleasant. Singing brings joy to her and allows her to forget, momentarily, what she had been through.

However, she wasn't going to get involved in another relationship. Everyone and everything she had ever loved had been so cruelly taken away

from her. She couldn't and wouldn't go through that again. Plus, in her words, "There were no good men left."

God had other ideas. I ran into Susie at the supermarket the other day. She was looking bright eyed and, well, radiant. On Facebook, I had noticed there was a man in her life. I asked her about this fellow. They have known each other since third grade. He lives in a town close by, and they have been having "fun" together, and they "laugh a lot." Not just fun. Since both have a farm background, they are contemplating selling their homes and buying 20 - 30 acres together and raising feeder calves. It is something they both enjoy doing. Her Sheltie dog, Barney, gets along fine with his German Shepherds.

Hallelujah! God an-

swers prayers!

Still, there is the old feeling of, "When will the other shoe drop? What bad thing is lurking just around the corner?"

Considering what she has been through, I can understand this. I have a feeling that time will take care of Susie's fear, and restore her faith that everything works out. Keep praying for Susie Clark.

In the meantime, her a cappella group has a full schedule for the Christmas season. They're even singing at the state prison, and will invite the prisoners to sing along. Music has the power to lift one from his or her prison, real or imagined.

After many years of suffocating sadness, she's found the solace of true happiness.

Merry Christmas to one and all!

Have a good story? Call or text Curt Swarm in Mt. Pleasant at 319-217-0526, email him at curtswarm@yahoo.com, or find him on Facebook. Curt's stories are also read at 106.3 FM in Farmington.



DEATH NOTICE

MARY MARIE COMPNELL

WEST POINT - Mary Marie Compnell, 104, West Point, Iowa died Friday, December 8, 2017 at the West Point Care Center. Services are pending for a later date at Barr-Holtkamp Funeral Home, West Point.

Area seeing more and more youth oriented charitable projects

CHARITY - Continued from Page 1

for much needed relief. This was a teenager.

Then we hear of Lila Shephard who started collecting LEGOs a couple years ago to send with retired Central Lee teacher Ernie Schiller to Nepal for the children there to use for toys and educational purposes. People keep comparing the apropos nature of sending the building toys that can be torn apart and rebuilt to a region ravaged by an earthquake.

That same week a Fort Madison Middle School student, Abbygail Wheeler, revealed that she had donated more than \$200 to an area Toys for Tots program by selling homemade dog pillows that are all the rage at The Madison. Wheeler's family donated the supplies for the pillows and then took the money and bought toys for underprivileged children in the area.

And then Sunday, Samantha and Nicole Pothitakis were tying scarves to trees in Central Park for anyone needing a bit of warmth this winter. The twins are the daughter of Nico and Carrie Pothitakis,



the same family that donates a good portion of the turkeys used in Fort Madison's Community Thanksgiving dinner.

So in just four months Pen City Current has been fortunate enough to write four different stories of children in our area who are giving back to their community for no other reason than it's just the right thing to do.

I spoke with Schiller after he and Lila presented to her classmates at Central Lee. As a teacher for more than three decades, I thought he would have a unique perspective on why we're seeing these efforts from children.

He had an interesting perspective that because the parents, or parent, is so busy in today's society that children have more time to themselves and although some may not do the right things in that time, some are using that time to their advantage to

come up with ideas. There has to be something inherent in wanting to do good deeds. Some of these kids are doing this for a sense of self-worth. And the fact that that's still a priority with kids is a wonderful sign.

Shephard is trying to take her project nationwide by trying to attract the likes of Ellen DeGeneres, Oprah Winfrey, and the Today show. The Pothitakis twins said they are going to monitor the scarves hanging in the park and add more if the supply runs down, Wheeler wants to keep selling her pillows and donate the money to P.A.W. or other animal advocacy groups and Miller fulfilled her goal of sending a semi worth of goods to help those still suffering.

For more information on these projects visit www.pencitycurrent.com and search the kids' names.



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Sunday Sports/Lottery Numbers

Role players lead Hounds to win over Centerville

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Balanced scoring and long-distance accuracy have been the keys to wins for the Fort Madison Bloodhounds boys basketball team this season.

Those keys were in full view Saturday afternoon as the Hounds kept Centerville at bay for most of the game en route to an 80-63 win to move to 3-1 on the season.

Conference play starts Friday when Mt. Pleasant comes to the Hound-Dome. The Hounds have a Tuesday matchup with high-scoring Danville on the road.

Fort Madison found themselves down 0-4 quickly, but long-range specialist Brandon Keester laced a 3-pointer off a Big Reds turnover and junior Logan Rashid hit back-to-back 3-pointers to get the Bloodhounds going with a 9-4 lead as part of a 9-0 run.

Centerville struggled from the field in the opening quarter and only managed two more buckets while Fort Madison kept a fast-paced game going, outscoring Centerville 13-4 the rest of the way through the period, highlighted by Rashid's eight points. Centerville came out in a box-and-1 defense to contain senior Kaleb Cresswell's outside shooting, but switched to man-to-man after the Hounds run and Cresswell got loose inside for a hoop and foul shot.

Cresswell was held to just nine points, his lowest output of the year. Averaging just over 12 points per game, Cresswell did find some open looks in the 2nd half but couldn't convert. Cresswell and Parker Denning hit buckets to open the 2nd quarter with Centerville down 26-8, but the Hounds shooting would cool off. Aside from Lorenzo Riles converting on just the front end of a one-and-one, the

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Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Sheymouhr Redd-Donald drives the right side of the lane in the first half of the Hounds' win Saturday afternoon.



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Sports/Weather

HTC's Hour of Code brings computer coding to all students

CODING - Continued from Page 1

takes by moving blocks into places and then seeing their code result in an action.

While some students like Lucy Steffensmeier, a third grader who was working on the Minecraft tutorial, said this is their first experience with that application, most had been exposed to some type of computer sciences since kindergarten.

"You have to get this one person to the correct object," she said as she swipes at the screen of her iPad. Steffensmeier's screen appeared to freeze up as she swiped and swiped quickly across a screen that didn't seem to want to go as fast as she wanted.

"Ok, so right here it says I'm supposed to build a bridge. So you come over here and you pick up from here and then put it all together over here," Steffensmeier explained.

Then she encounters a problem where the block won't go to the right place so she backs the screen up and starts over with a different block.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Lucy Steffensmeier follows on-screen instructions as part of the Hour of Code study session at HTC Elementary School on Friday afternoon.

"So now it went back so I'm probably not going to build this bridge anymore. This is like a different adventure so, umm, you just try to reach this sheep," she said working through the screens.

Steffensmeier says she wants to be a veterinarian but she enjoys working with the computer and thinks that veterinarians could use computers, too, when she gets a job.

Other students also encountered problems in the programming of the game, but each one went back and started over or backed the program up to take a different course of action.

"This is stupid," said Kat DiPrima who got stuck on a screen. DiPrima was sitting in a group with Steffensmeier, Megan Holtkamp, and Brooklyn Todd.

When asked how she was going to get out of "being stuck" she said she could go back and pick a different model.

"I got stuck at a park, where this dude was supposed to destroy the block, it just turned and didn't do it, so I'm going to find something else now," DiPrima said.

Arevalo said the students get exposure to beginning coding that involves sequencing and problem solving which is a main skill being developed as they work at creating action on the game.

"They are just trying things out," she said. "They'll write the program and if it won't work they'll go back and fix it or try something else, so there's problem solving and critical thinking as well. We know some of them will never do anything with computer science, but it still has their select skills that are important."

She said the process of coding and programming is being started as early as kindergarten but in some cases even preschool children have been exposed to tiny robots with push button guidance.

She said she holds Hour of Code at all levels K-12 and different grades obviously get different levels and programming material. She said high schoolers worked Skype with an artist who doesn't do programming but does work with video game programmers on video games.

The school administrators are also fully behind the program, providing all students in K-8th grade with iPads that are encased in heavy plastic protectors complete with carrying handles. The upper level students all have MacBooks.

At the high school we do Hour of Code but we do something different," Arevalo said. "This year we Skyped with an artist that creates characters in video games. He wasn't a programmer but he worked with them. So we

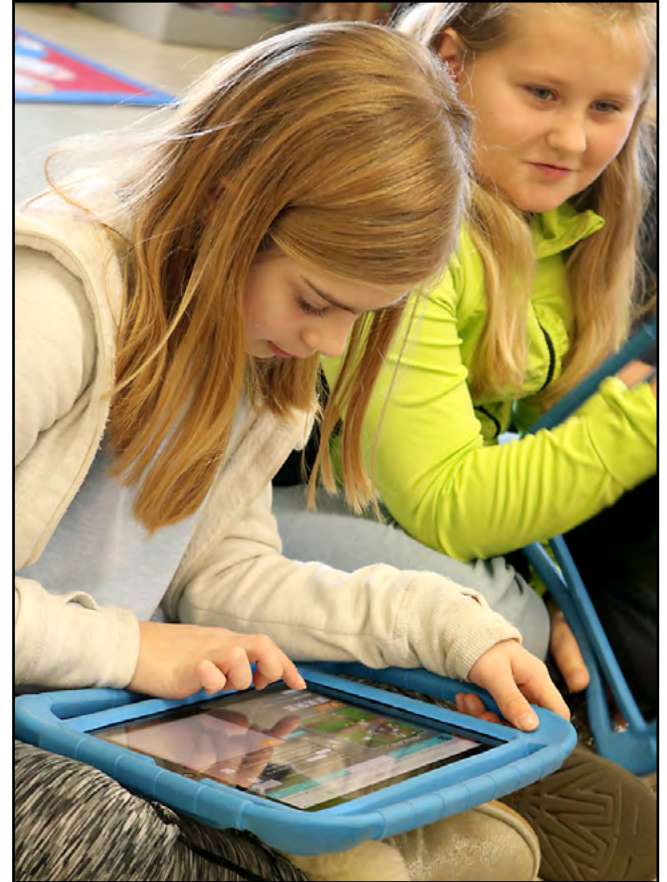


Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Megan Holtkamp, a third-grader at HTC elementary, follows on-screen instructions to coding for the MineCraft game on Friday during Hour of Code, while Brooklyn Todd, right, looks on.

try to do something different with the grade levels.

"You did a really nice job for your Hour of Code. You can continue programming with your parents' permission at home. If you have free time or if a teacher asks what you'd like to do with spare time you could ask your teacher if you could go to Codes.org and do some programming," she told the class in a wrap up before the session ended.

Hamilton told the group he and Arevalo will talk to teachers about putting some of the apps on the iPads to help keep continuing the coding, but he reminded the students they still have other learning to do as well.

"We will maybe talk with your teachers and put a few apps on there, but this is learning and you have other learning to do as well, so don't forget that," Hamilton said.

"I know this is fun and exciting and you are using this skill and when you grow up you may think you want to do something like programming, but you may also want to become a nurse or a mechanic. I tell the older kids you can be a nurse or a mechanic or a carpenter or a pilot, but I'd also like you to learn how to code."

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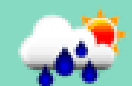
TUE 12 Dec



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High - 26.4° F | Low - 23.3° F

WED 13 Dec



Light Rain

High - 39.0° F | Low - 38.1° F

THU 14 Dec



Clear Skies

High - 32.2° F | Low - 25.9° F

FRI 15 Dec



Clear Skies

High - 28.4° F | Low - 25.9° F

OpenWeatherMap

Saturday Sports

Lady Hounds spunky in loss to Notre Dame

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - With two seniors out with injuries and one senior leaving the team, the Fort Madison Bloodhounds came up short against Burlington Notre Dame 35-40 in girls high school basketball action Saturday.

Senior guard Kamryn Bailey is still out with symptoms of a concussion and senior guard Taylor Shannon didn't play the second half for the second straight game as the Hounds try to keep backfilling positions and stay competitive.

Senior forward and 2016 2nd team All Conference post player Amber Dilsaver left the team this week.

Head Coach Charlie Knipe said his team had energy and focus and was pleased with the way they played, despite experimenting with the lineup to see where personnel performed the best.

The Hounds found themselves down 0-6 before Sarah Bernhardt the front end of a one-and-one. A pesky 1/2 court trap press caused the Bloodhounds to commit three turnovers on their first three possessions. Bernhardt scored Fort Madison's first seven points in the first quarter eventually putting Fort Madison up 8-6 at the 4:42 mark on a couple of free throws.

Sophomore Dalyn Wondra scored inside with just



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison Sarah Bernhardt goes up for a shot in the lane surrounded by Nike defenders Saturday night. Bernhardt had 13 points for the Bloodhounds.

over a minute left and then Bernhardt converted a 3-point play when she was fouled on a move inside to tie the game at 13. The Nikes adjusted to the Hounds' game plan of feeding Bernhardt and started sagging defensively to deny her inside.

Fort Madison took its first lead of the game in the opening moments of the second quarter on a bucket by newcomer Brandy Walker in the post and the Hounds had a three-point lead with 5:30 left in the period. Notre Dame, which is playing with basically a junior varsity squad with only one senior in Hailey Blythe and one junior in Abby Dowell, tied the game on a Blythe 3-pointer at 20-20.

Bernhardt hit another free throw to put the Hounds up, but then the Nikes went on a 6-0 run with four points from sophomore Taylor Ackerman to take a 26-21 at halftime.

The two teams would both struggle from the field in the second half, missing shots and trying to find the handle on the ball and learning their respective offenses. Nike sophomore Riley Todd got loose on the perimeter for a 3 to push the Nikes' lead to 29-21. Hounds' junior Braxtyn McGhghy scored from the right side to get the Hounds back within six. Blythe converted a bucket at 2:58 to push it back to eight.

Todd hit again to make it a nine-point game before sophomore Anna Kester hit a 3-pointer from the right side to again make the lead six. The Hounds weren't able to get much closer despite back-to-back 12 footers from Kylie Cashman again from the right side. Bernhardt scored at the buzzer in the fourth quarter for Fort Madison's final points.

Knipe said with both teams as inexperienced as they were, it was a fun game to watch. But he said Fort Madison will have to learn to play without a dominant post and things are going to change.

"We're gonna go to a full court press and we're gonna deny, deny. I think we were falling asleep at times today," he said. "But we're excited. It'll be new for us because we've never not had a post player. So we're gonna focus on denying the ball, playing tough man-to-man defense and play a lot of girls, and we're gonna take our lumps," he said.

He said he hopes to have Bailey back for practice on



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Brandy Walker, playing in her first varsity game for the Hounds, learns what it's like to play in the paint as she gets fouled here in the first half.

Monday and Shannon will probably be sidelined with a groin injury she's been nursing since the end of soccer season.

"I was going to sit her today, too, but she talked me into it," Knipe said.

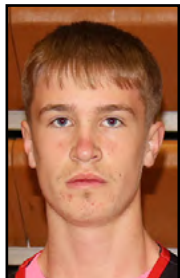
Our girls are going to have to realize that if we are going to play this way we're going to have to focus on different things, but this is a good experience for them and it's going to be fun. It's gonna be tough but when we get through that phase we're gonna be in pretty good shape."

The Hounds fall to 0-4 on the season and play host to West Hancock on Tuesday.

Hounds have three in double figures in win

WIN - Continued from Page 3

Hounds wouldn't score until about 3:30 left in the quarter when Treavor James-Kokjohn hit a bucket inside to make it 29-17. The Big Reds' Daniel Hargrave countered with a bucket inside and converted a foul shot on the play.



KEESTER

"They came out in a box-and-1 or some kind of defense to slow Kaleb down,"

Wilson said. "But it didn't do anything, our other players stepped up and that's what you need."

The Hounds went back inside to James-Kokjohn again to make it 31-20. Centerville would continue to cut into the lead getting as close as 31-24 when sophomore Quinton Koestner converted from about 12 feet on

the left side with :25 seconds left in the half. James-Kokjohn would add another bucket inside and then Cresswell would hit one in from the right baseline at the buzzer to give Fort Madison an 11-point half time lead 35-26.

Fort Madison completely smothered Centerville, not allowing a single point in the 3rd quarter, until there was 3:10 left when Hargrave converted in transition off a Hounds turnover, but Centerville was down 20, 51-28. Then the Hounds started getting a little grabby, committing five personal fouls and a couple turnovers. Centerville senior Logan Stickler converted on a foul on Keester and made the freebie to cut the lead to 14, 55-41.

Denning scored inside on a pretty interior pass from Cresswell to put the Hounds back up 16 at the

end of the third quarter.

But Centerville didn't get the message the game was getting out of hand and was able to chip away at the lead and got it down to 10 when Hargrave converted his third straight bucket to open the final period. Hargrave put in 8 points before James-Kokjohn converted a three pointer to kill the Big Red momentum.

The Hounds then pushed the lead back to 19, capped by back-to-back 3-pointers by Keester and Centerville would never get closer than 15 the rest of the game.

Head Coach Ryan Wilson said role players were a big part of the win.

"You're gonna have your scorers, but you have to have your role players step up, too, and Brandon banged in some shots, but Sheymouhr (Redd-Donald), I have to give him credit. They

really weren't guarding him and he attacked the basket," Wilson said. "Then the others would help or he would dish back out or try and finish and that really opened up some things for us. If he continues to play that way it could be a very successful season for us."

Wilson said he was a little disappointed in the amount of points the Hounds allowed.

"I like us to be in the 50 point area and if we can stay there, we can do some good things. There were a couple of different spurts tonight where we got away from our brand of basketball - not playing aggressively on offense and pretty lackadaisical defensively," he said.

The Hounds take the junior varsity and varsity boys squad to Danville Tuesday with a 6 p.m. tipoff for the junior varsity.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

FMHS sophomore Parker Denning tries to score inside for FMHS Saturday night in the Hounds 80-63 win over the Centerville Big Red.