



# Pen City Current

Sunday, February 26, 2017 | 8 pages | Volume 1 • Issue 58

## Future glows bright for year-old neon sign shop

**BY CHUCK  
VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - It's been here for more than a year, and a lot of people didn't even know it.

Like a chameleon on the west end of town, disguised by neon lights, the drive by what used to be the Nowhere Bar, still looks like....well... the Nowhere Bar with neon lights grabbing peripheral glances. But Michael Stevens' The Neon Shop isn't a bar, but ironically, makes the same lights that adorn most bars.

A step inside the retro-fitted one-story building on the south side of Hwy. 61 shows the remnants of years gone by, not only in the bar still being in place and signs up reflecting the times of not so long ago, but a growing manufacturing business. Twenty-foot tables lined with glass tubes, standing pumps for neon and argon gases, flame torches and tools of the trade.

On Friday, the Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce's Ambassadors paid a visit to Steven's business and got an ad-hoc demonstration on tube stretching and bending and how colors in lights are generated using different combinations of glass, gas and phosphorous.

Neon lights are slowly being replaced by LED lighting in a lot of businesses, but many restaurants and smaller businesses still use the lights and still need repair but Stevens wants his customers to know that he prides



Photos by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

### Business pattern

Above, The Neon Shop owner, Michael Stevens, shows Fort Madison Partners Executive Director Tim Gobble what a sign pattern looks like and how it works Friday morning. Below, Stevens fires up several glass-tube bending torches for a demonstration for Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Club members.

*"We're starting to get a lot more business locally. I've got some north of Burlington and down past Quincy. I get a lot of business by word of mouth. It's picking up a little bit."*

-Michael Stevens,  
The Neon Shop

himself in high caliber workmanship.

There's quality and quantity as in any busi-



ness, Stevens said. "I take more pride in my quality than I do of my quantity. A lot of people don't look at things the same way I do, they just try to get the product out and the money in."

Stevens said a lot of his business comes regionally but his local business is starting to grow.

"We're starting to get a lot more business locally. I've got some north of Burlington and down past Quincy. I get a lot of business word of mouth. It's

picking up a little bit."

He started his career in 1989 with Color-Ad signs in Quincy.

"I did a three-year apprenticeship and then moved to Memphis in 1992. I've been doing it ever since. In 2000 I opened up my first shop down there."

The light creation process starts with a pattern or drawing. Customers give Stevens an idea of what they want either through a picture or drawing or even just a

discussion and Stevens draws up a design. The design gets approved and then Stevens goes to work on heating up and bending the glass to fit the pattern. He bends it to the pattern over a screen so the pattern doesn't catch fire and goes from start to finish.

An average sign would take 3 days if you work 8 hours a day on it. Most signs you can have completely done in a week.

A large FOX sign was in the building at the time on Friday. It is the original sign from the theater in downtown Fort Madison. Stevens said the metal was very thin and they are going to rebuild the sign with new metal and then Steven's can put the neon lighting on the sign.

Stevens said he can

See **NEON**, page 6

### OPINION

## Community journalism is a two-way street

Writing is a complex beast.

Sometimes you can stare at a computer for minutes...hours and nothing comes out. Sometimes you can sit down at a computer while watching television and the words just pour out.

Either way, it's a scary proposition because you never know how many people are going to read

it, so it

better be good. Most of the time it's not. It's extremely audacious

C. VANDENBERG to as-

sume that

something you may want to write is good enough for one person to see, let alone thousands.

I'm gonna take a shot at something here.

I've spent the last 11 weeks getting to know this community again, from a different perspective. On the ground...back in reporter's shoes, but also in editor's shoes..and owner's shoes.

It's a precarious perch because I've been back in this town for more than 15 years now. I've helped raise two great children here. My wife does the raising, I do the raising of the voice.

But people don't know me as a reporter. They know me as the guy who

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| <b>Stephen M. Cannaday,</b><br><b>72, Fort Madison</b> |       |

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**2BR • 1BA • 1 car garage**  
1,224 sq. ft.  
7,250 sq. ft. lot  
A house with character! Wrap-around porch, original hardwood in formal dining room/living room combo, main floor laundry, nice size eat-in kitchen including appliances, dining room has original fireplace, basement and 1 car garage.  
**Listing #20162543 • \$53,000**



**5BR • 1.75BA • 1 car garage**  
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Great family home on large corner lot in the middle of Ft. Madison. Large living / dining area with original craftsman woodwork and built-ins, 14 x 22 garage on the alley with 2 additional storage sheds. Nice front porch, rear deck, and a great sunroom on the East.  
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Reasonably priced home has had new doors installed, new bathroom fixtures, and freshly painted. With it's vinyl siding and fenced rear yard, its ready for your family!!  
**Listing #20162025 • \$25,500**



**4BR • 3BA • 2 car garage**  
1,349 sq. ft.  
9,160 sq. ft. lot  
From the inviting entrance to the serene back yard, you will enjoy it ALL and everything in between!!!! This very well maintained 4 bedroom, 3 bath home has everything your family will need to call this Home. There is a beautiful screened porch and a deck off the back of the house, all overlooking a meticulously landscaped large yard. Call today on this amazing home situated on a quiet, safe cul de sac!!!  
**Listing #20163339 • \$164,900**



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1,119 sq. ft. • 0.17 acres  
Brick rancher on Ave E close to Old Settlers Park, has full basement mostly finished, picket fence, newer windows, roof, etc.  
**Listing #20162502 • \$88,900**



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# For the Record/Obituaries

## For the Record

### Fort Madison Police Report

02/21/17 - 9:15 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 800 block of Avenue E.  
 02/21/17 - 9:45 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 800 block of Avenue F.  
 02/21/17 - 10:27 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 800 block of Avenue D.  
 02/21/17 - 3:22 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of property damage accident in the 2000 block of Avenue B.  
 02/21/17 - 4:41 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 700 block of Avenue F.  
 02/21/17 - 7:05 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of theft of gasoline in the 5000 block of Avenue O.  
 02/21/17 - 7:05 p.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Johnette Sue Williams, 39, of Fort Madison on a charge of identity theft. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.  
 02/22/17 - 11:13 p.m. - Fort Madison police arrested William Jay McNamee, 29, of Fort Madison; Tanya Lynn Hagerman, 36, of Burlington; and Melissa Cook, 34, of Fort Madison in the 2600 block of Avenue L. McNamee was arrested on a charge of possession of a controlled substance and was taken the Lee County Jail and held. Hagerman was arrested

on a charge of possession of drug paraphernalia and was taken the Lee County Jail and held. Cook was cited and released on charges of no driver's license and no insurance.  
 02/22/17 - 11:45 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of larceny/theft in the 1100 block of Avenue E.  
 02/22/17 - 1 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a burglary in the 1600 block of 20th Street.  
 02/22/17 - 1:55 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a property damage accident at the intersection of 14th Street and Avenue E.  
 02/22/17 - 3:14 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of larceny/theft in the 600 block of 23rd Street.  
 02/22/17 - 3:17 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 800 block of Avenue D.  
 02/22/17 - 8:41 p.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Aaron Michael Rash, 38, of Keokuk, on a charge of driving while suspended. He was cited and released.  
 02/22/17 - 11:16 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of burglary in the 2700 block of Avenue M.  
 02/23/17 - 12:51 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a burglary on Storms Court.  
 02/23/17 - 8:28 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a burglary in the 700 block of 22nd Street.

02/23/17 - 8:48 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a burglary in the 2800 block of Avenue H.  
 02/23/17 - 12:14 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 2600 block of Avenue L.  
 02/23/17 - 8:18 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a burglary in the 1100 block of 48th Street.  
 02/23/17 - 10:45 p.m. - Fort Madison police arrested James Allen Moore, 33, of Fort Madison on a warrant for failure to appear on a driving while barred charge. He was taken to Lee County Jail and held.  
 02/23/17 - 10:52 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a burglary in the 1700 block of Avenue H.

### Lee County Sheriff's Department

02/21/17 - 4:14 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Jason Lee Dodson, 35 of Danville, at the sheriff's office on a warrant for a judgment entry. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.  
 02/21/17 - 9:14 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Darla Jane VanGinkel, 48, of Fort Madison in the 1400 block of Avenue G on warrant for failure to appear. She posted bond and was released.  
 02/22/17 - 7:19 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Austin Dean Greer, 36 of Kahoka, Mo., at the

sheriff's office on a warrant for a judgment entry. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.  
 02/22/17 - 5:24 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Timothy Douglas Cable, 29, of Burlington at the sheriff's office, on a warrant for contempt-non-payment. H was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.  
 02/23/17 - 1:31 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Dustin Michael Spear, 27 of Iowa Falls at the Hardin County Jail in Eldora, on a warrant for parole violation. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.  
 02/23/17 - 10:01 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Nathan Roger Cadwell, 22, of Keokuk in the 700 block of Concert Street for contempt of court-non payment. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.  
***It should be noted a criminal charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.***

### Fort Madison Fire Department

02/22/17 - Fort Madison firefighters responded to a burn complaint and a fire alarm for burnt popcorn.  
 02/23/17 - Fort Madison firefighters responded to three medical calls.  
 02/24/17 - Fort Madison firefighters responded to one medical calls.

## OBITUARIES

# STEPHEN M. CANNADAY



Stephen M. Cannaday, 72, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 10:04 a.m. on Thursday, February 23, 2017 at The Madison. He was born on September 4, 1944 in Fort Madison, IA to William & Rilla Dye Cannaday. He married Barbara A. Bohnenkamp on November 16, 1973 in Hamilton, IL. He worked for 30 years at Climax in Fort Madison and served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. He was a member of the N.R.A. and enjoyed hunting, fishing and spending time with his grandchildren.



CANNADAY

Steve is survived by: his wife: Barbara Cannaday of Fort Madison, IA; 2-daughters: Christi Cannaday of Fort Madison, IA & Kelly (Ben) Spencer of Johnston, IA; 5-grandchildren: Kenzie Wellman, Maxwell Spencer, Raegan Wellman, Finlay Spencer & Wilcoe Spencer; 1-brother: Phil Cannaday of Braintree, MA. He was preceded in death by his parents.

The family will receive friends from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. on Monday, February 27, 2017 with the funeral service to immediately follow at 11:00 a.m. all at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory with Rev. Pete Haggund officiating. Burial with military rites performed by the Fort Madison Veterans Honor Guard will be held at Hillcrest Memorial Park Cemetery. A memorial has been established in Steve's name. Online condolences to Steve's family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: [www.kinglynk.com](http://www.kinglynk.com).

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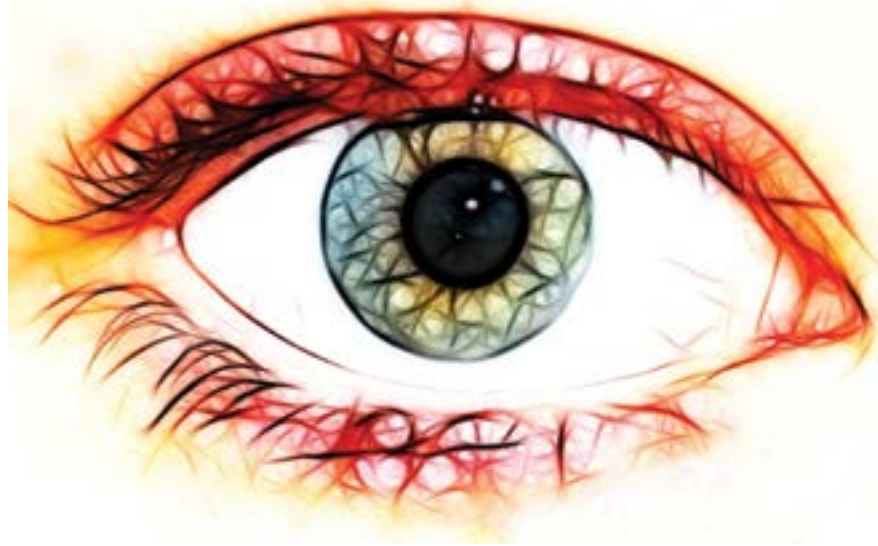
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## Journalists have always carried flashlights

**REPORTING** - Continued from Page 1

ran the local KFC. A guy who got to have his dream job for all of 11 months and then got plopped down in the parking lot with a box of stuff. The good thing is that it was only one box. I wasn't there that long.

But being a reporter is in my blood. It always has been. I don't talk about awards usually. Ask Lee the next time you see her. I can't take curtain calls because my face gets extremely red. But you can't see my face. So here's where it gets really precarious for me because it goes against the grain.

I want you to know me as a reporter because I'm working very hard to give this community a different type of journalism.

I've won Associated Press Awards for breaking news at a beef plant that shut down because of the largest e.coli contamination in the country's history at that time. I've said this

before, inter-murder who the gave evidence er case sheriff investi- That I've won

Analyze **DISCUSS** Thought **Opinion** **PUBLIC RESPECT** **ARTICULATE**

to groups but I viewed suspects during interview damning in another the local was gating. was fun. awards

for human interest...a guy who actually still used - carrier pigeons.

I've won awards for photography catching a young girl who was exposed to chlorine gas at a family water park in triage. I take decent pictures, but anyone can with a good Canon and some anticipation. The real creativity comes from thinking outside the box.

I've won for an opinion piece when some boy had the audacity to hold my oldest daughter's hand in line at school. He was all of five and really a courageous young man...with no job or future plans...hands off.

I'm not what you're used to here in Fort Madison. I will write what needs to be written all the while balancing a much needed revenue stream. But I believe that integrity creates readership, readership attracts advertisers and supporters, and I'll take that road 99% of the time. Not 100% because no one can predict the future and I won't box myself in.

I'm a huge sports fan and I'm a big fan of watching kids grow and become adults. I can write sports. I will say it's more difficult to write for digital because I'm supposed to cut it shorter. People's attention spans are shorter especially reading on mobile devices. The toughest thing about the Pen City Current isn't running all over the place trying not to miss anything. It's not seeking out revenues and advertisers...it's writing shorter stories. That's tough.

So there it is. My "trophy case". You know me. I will shake the bushes, and I do that. I'm sitting right now on about three stories that need to be written, but I won't write them until sources confirm and we're both as comfortable as we can be given the specifics. Comfort comes with relationship building and trust between source and reporter. I have that with many, some I'm still building, and some will never bear fruit. But here's the deal...

Relationships are two-way streets and journalists and sources cultivate relationships. We both earn capital as we move through our relationships. Capital is meant to be spent. Sources spend capital when you know something and they ask you to sit on it. Reporters spend capital when we come for information. The hope on both sides is that you keep enough capital to maintain the relationship, because when you're out of capital someone is usually done.

But never think for a second that I don't think this community deserves to know what is going on in whatever arena - politics, education, business, etc. In the restaurant business, you keep bugs out of your place by shining bright lights in the kitchen. Journalism, if done properly, is that bright light. It keeps the place cleaner and safer. But we carry the flashlight. We've always carried the flashlight.

But that's Beside the Point.

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**5BR • 3BA  
3,119 sq. ft.  
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From the period wrought iron fencing to the amazing stained oak staircase...from the impressive arches to the large wrap porch, this beautiful turn of the century (20th) home offers all the beauty and elegance of that era. This is a beautifully appointed home with all the modern conveniences. There is an extra large lot for your family to enjoy!!

**Listing #20162159 • \$164,000**



**PENDING**

**2BR • 1.50BA • 2 car garage  
1,366 sq. ft. • 3,300 sq. ft. lot**  
Immaculate, well-kept ranch has family room with fireplace on the main floor, finished Rec Room, 2nd laundry room, 1/2 bath, and storage room with shelving all in the basement. All windows are vinyl replacement.

**Listing #20162507 • \$109,900**



**2BR • 1BA • 2 car garage  
868 sq. ft. • 7,000 sq. ft. lot**  
**PRICE REDUCED!** Rare opportunity to own a renovated home at a great price!! Large, shaded yard and a 2 car garage. Located in a nice neighborhood on a corner lot. Seller is motivated and offering a 1 year AHS Home Warranty!

**Listing #20163035 • \$52,000**



**3BR • 1BA • 1 car garage  
928 sq. ft. • 1,087 sq. ft. lot**  
Very nice maintenancefree home by Lincoln School with a 75 X 145 fenced yard, nice patio, fire pit and child's play set! Some very nice built-ins, some original hardwood flooring, full basement including laundry area. Also find extra parking, garage and carport area on the paved alley.

**Listing #20164148 • \$72,500**



**SOLD**

**2BR • 1BA • 2 car garage  
1,330 sq. ft.  
7,250 sq. ft. lot**

**REDUCED BY \$13,100!** Affordable with lots of potential!!! Nice size kitchen with breakfast bar plus dining area, spacious living room w/fireplace. Sits on a corner lot.

**Listing #20160368 • \$59,900**



**REDUCED**

**2BR • 1BA  
1,144 sq. ft.  
3,625 sq. ft. lot**

Move-in ready with many updates including kitchen WITH appliances, fresh paint, newer electrical (100 AMP breaker), new water lines at street and more! The home is clean as a whistle and ready to move in!

**Listing #20161431 • \$42,500**



**REDUCED**

**3BR • 3BA  
2,754 sq. ft.  
3,550 sq. ft. lot**

Gorgeous, turn-key home with large patio minimum maintenance. **UPDATES GALORE!!!** Practically perfect in every way, this 1841 home includes the latest improvements while keeping its Victorian charm.

**Listing #23006122 • \$99,999**



**3BR • 3.50BA • 3 car garage  
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**Listing #20160805 • \$460,000**



**2BR • 1.75BA • 2 car garage  
679 sq. ft. • 6,500 sq. ft. lot**  
Nice, small home. Seller has purchased and remodeled. Excellent condition.

**Listing #20164161 • \$62,500**



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## From the Front/Local News

# Neon isn't a lost art for FM native

**NEON** - Continued from Page 1

combining the gases and then glass. "You can make just about any other color with neon, black, brown and gray are the ones you really can't make with neon," he said.

Your classic colors sometimes have the glass itself colored. Stevens pulled out a three foot section of a classic color that the glass had been dipped into paint. But he said when that is done the paint has a tendency to chip over time and then whatever color is behind the painted glass comes through.

"When I do a repair on the beer sign, I will replace the glass itself that has the color in it so we don't have to worry about



Photos by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

### It's not a bar

What was once a bar is now a business making bar signs..and quite a few other neon products. But the bar was left in place so patrons could come in and watch the neon signs being constructed said owner, Michael Stevens. Below, FM Chamber Ambassadors pose with Stevens.

the chipping."

Stevens said he left the original bar in the building so people could come

in and see him work.

"We left that so people could come in, have a seat and watch the work being

done," he said.

For more information on the business contact Stevens at 319-669-9436.



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 Chuck Roast, Arm Roast, Ribeye Steak, Brisket & Ground Beef

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**PENDING**

**3BR • 3BA • 3 car garage**  
**1,635 sq. ft. • 4.3 acres**

Amazing cedar log sided home in a quiet and private setting, a well-appointed guest house, and 26x32 metal building. The main home offers beautiful hardwood flooring with a awesome open floor plan. Enjoy summer evenings on the nice walk-out patio area. This is a dream home!!!

**Listing #20161863 • \$299,000**



**PENDING**

**3BR • 2.50 BA**  
**2 car garage • 2,400 sq. ft.**  
**10,150 sq. ft. lot**

Lovely tri-level home on a quiet cul de sac offering numerous upgrades. There are 3 bedrooms and 2 1/2 baths, a large living room, dining room and open kitchen with newer stainless steel appliances and a breakfast bar. Newer windows, HVAC, new floor coverings on main and lower level and freshly painted throughout. The large backyard is completely fenced and has a 24 x 16 patterned concrete patio. Don't miss out on this wonderful family home.

**Listing #20163404 • \$167,500**



**3BR • 1.75BA • 1 car garage**  
**888 sq. ft. • 9,450 sq. ft. lot**  
**RARE RANCH** with large fenced back yard and attached garage! Updated windows and kitchen, newer HVAC and water heater. Family Room in the basement. Just waiting for your own personal touch!

**Listing #20163423 • \$74,900**



**REDUCED**

**4 BR • 1.75 BA**  
**3 car garage • 2,052 sq. ft.**  
**8,700 sq. ft. lot**

Beautiful 4 bedroom home with large rooms, recently redecorated and ready to move into. This home features stainless steel appliances, main floor laundry, eat in kitchen and formal dining room, main floor office or bedroom, open staircase, large living room and big bedrooms. Newer roof, siding and gutters on house. 24' X 36' insulated garage and workshop, plus carport. Large wrap porch great location near Old Settlers Park.

**Listing #20163776 • \$129,500**



**PENDING**

**Multi-family Duplex**  
**2,672 sq. ft.**  
**7,250 sq. ft. lot**

Income property. Potential for \$875/month income or more. Side-by-side duplex with 2 - 2 bedroom, 1 bath apartments. West side has a long term renter and east side is vacant.

**Listing #20162154 • \$49,500**



**3 BR • 1 BA • 1 car garage**  
**1,248 sq. ft. • 0.37 acres**

Well-kept ranch on a beautiful, large corner lot in West Point, IA. New wooden privacy fence surrounding the entire back yard. There is also an attached garage and storage shed. A large wooden deck leads to the front door where you can sit and enjoy those beautiful Iowa summer sunsets! PLUS a covered deck in the back for those rainy days. This house is a rare find.

**Listing #20164234 • \$119,900**



**2 car garage • 2,527 sq. ft.**  
**UNIQUELY** beautiful 9.38 river bluff acreage. This home boasts many updates including complete master suite, heat and A/C, Septic system, deck, roof & gutters, flooring, and the list goes on. This private property includes fenced in barn area for animal lovers, mature fruit trees plus trees have been dropped for a beautiful panoramic river view that will last for years! Owner also plans to leave a John Deer mower and new snow blower!!

**Listing #20162733 • \$269,000**



**NEW**

**4BR • 2.50BA • 1 car garage**  
**2,056 sq. ft.**

**39,640 sq. ft. lot**

Beautiful 2 story home located just off Highway 61 north of Fort Madison. Formal living and dining room, nice kitchen with breakfast room all open to a main floor family room, relaxing, private screened porch that opens onto the large deck that spans the back of the home. Basement boasts recently finished family room and tons of storage.

**Listing #20164530 • \$175,000**



**Land**  
**50.82 acres**  
**2,213,719 sq. ft.**

Ideal 50 acre m/l parcel to develop. Close to new 4-8 Middle School and Baxter Rec Plex. **TREMENDOUS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY.**

**Listing #20162779 • \$559,020**



**Land**  
**14.65 acres • 638,514 sq. ft.**

Just outside city limits, perfect for housing development or small farm for horses or small livestock, over half tillable. City water is available. 30' X 60' building is totally insulated, heated and air conditioned with 200 amp service.

**Listing #20162574 • \$249,000**



**(319) 372-4040**

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