



Pen City Current

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Bigler brings message of courage, legacies

BY CHUCK
VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Unimaginable. A message of legacy that has been distributed to more than 25,000 students in the past four years, was brought to Fort Madison High School Tuesday morning. And the deliverer of the message was one of Fort Madison's own.

Former FMHS head basketball coach Mark Bigler spoke with the entire student body and staff about the tragedy of a drunk driving accident that took the life of his grandson.

But without anger, resentment, or hate, Bigler spread a message of legacy and courage in the face of something that even four years later carries a weight that is palpable throughout a gymnasium that is usually a mecca of cele-

“*It takes courage to be the leader. You probably will be made fun of as a leader in that situation. It's called leadership...It's called respect.*”

-Mark Bigler, former FMHS coach

bration and excitement. On July 28, 2012 Dana Allen Schoen, then 38, plowed his pick-up truck into the SUV that was carrying Mark's son Brad, his daughter-in-law Heather, her grandmother and five month old Drake Bigler, Mark's grandson. They were traveling on a county road in Minnesota. Brad and Heather have two other children who were



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Will you have the courage?

Former FMHS Head Basketball coach Mark Bigler meets with students following his presentation on Tuesday about the tragedy that struck his family at the hands of a drunk driver.

riding in a different vehicle. One of the first times, according to Bigler, that that happened because they always wanted to ride with their parents. Schoen's blood alcohol level was .351 which is four times the legal limit

in Minnesota. The accident took the life of Drake, and severely injured Brad, and Heather's grandmother Sharon Shuler. Heather escaped injury as the driver. Schoen's pickup sheared off the passenger side of

the vehicle and left it on the side of the road. A reality that typically results in rage and contempt, and one would be naive to think those emotions didn't seep into

See **BIGLER**, page 5

Supervisors pass 2nd reading of wage proposal

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE - The Lee County Board of Supervisors took one more step to increase the minimum wage in Lee County on Tuesday morning.

The board passed 4-1, the second reading of an ordinance pushing the minimum wage to \$8.20 effective May 1. The ordinance still requires one more reading and the supervisors will be meeting next Tuesday at the Newberry Center in Fort Madison, 728 Avenue G at 9 a.m. and then again at the Heritage Senior Center at 508 Main Street at 1 p.m. where the final reading will take place.

To date no one has attended the meeting in opposition to the move.

Supervisor Ron Fedler, again, cast the

lone dissenting vote saying his constituency on the north side of Lee County has told him they are against increasing the wage. However, Fedler said Tuesday that he's not against the wage as a whole.

“The minimum wage is too minimum...it's too low,” Fedler said. “The objection I have is as a county we can't force them to participate and if they choose to opt out they can. I just see a lot of issues with this, and I've said this should be a state issue because they can mandate everyone participates. At the forum last week they said this should be a state issue then we won't have squabbles between the counties and the cities.”

Supervisor Matt Pflug spoke emphatically about the bump.

“People don't know what's going on

See **WAGE**, page 3

Randolph, chamber issue survey of Fort Madison businesses

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - A minimum wage survey was put in play this week from the Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce at the request of the Fort Madison Mayor Brad Randolph.

The survey, which went out via email to area businesses and business people Monday afternoon asked five questions: How many minimum wage employees does your business employ? Do you start your employees at the minimum wage of \$7.25? Do you foresee the proposed increase in minimum wage hurting your business? The proposed minimum

See **MAYOR**, page 8

Body found in car in DM River

BY CHUCK
VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

Editor's Note: A video interview with Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber is available on our website at www.pencitycurrent.com

KEOKUK - County Emergency crews pulled a vehicle from the Redwing River access off Valley Road south of Keokuk Tuesday afternoon.

Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber confirmed there was a body in the vehicle

and he doesn't expect foul play in the incident. Emergency



WEBER

crews were notified around 1:30 p.m. of a vehicle floating in the river.

“It's my understanding someone reported seeing a part of a vehicle floating in the water,” Weber said. “We're in the middle of trying to do an identification and notification to any family members, so we won't be disclosing the type of vehicle or the sex of the person found or who we think it might be, at this time.”

Weber also said the Lee County Medical Examiner will be investigating the body.

“Anytime we have a body we ask the medical investigator to come in.”

He said he didn't know

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From the Front/Local News

Pflug: watching people struggle is "just dead wrong"

WAGE - Continued from Page 1

up there (in Des Moines). Maybe we need to take the responsibility here at home because if you rely on those folks, it's gonna be a long wait," Pflug said.

"\$8.20 per hour...that's not a livable wage. But we're moving in the right direction. To me... it's a very easy decision for me. I don't care what wage you're making you see people struggling every day and that's wrong. That should not be happening in Lee County," Pflug said. "Unfortunately you have those folks out there, and I don't care what you say, you see those people out there suffering and it's wrong."

Supervisor Gary Folluo said elections will be on the minds of those serving in the cities.

"I don't worry about cities opting out of this, because you've heard the saying 'elections have consequences' and so if some-



PFLUG

Supervisor Gary Folluo said.

Fedler said he had to listen to the people who are talking to him, just as Pflug had a responsibility to his constituents. Pflug quickly responded this issue is about the people of Lee County,

"If I think something's right, I'm going to step out and do what's right," Pflug said. "I don't care if that means I don't get elected so be it, but if you're talking about people in Lee County struggling, that's just dead wrong," Pflug said looking at Fedler.

Supervisor Don Hunold wanted to remind everyone that the board was

one wants to opt out of this they are letting their people know what they think of them,"

talking about a minimum wage, not a living wage.

"We are not talking about a living wage here. We're talking about a minimum wage. If you want to talk a living wage we sure aren't talking about \$8/hour.

Mike Bennett, who has been a part of the Raise the Wage committee, said according to state indexes, a living wage would be about \$16.75/hour.

In an unrelated matter, during the board's workshop session, the board directed County Auditor Denise Fraise to have County Attorney Ross Braden draw up a letter to Dakota Access Pipeline to seek reimbursement for more than \$4,000 in overtime charges the Lee County Sheriff's Department incurred providing security to the pipeline as it was being constructed and keeping protesters off the property.

Folluo said the agreement with the pipeline company was that the expenses would be neutral and the county shouldn't be out any money when the pipeline requested security.

In other action, the board,

- tabled action on a new company to provide body and vehicle cameras for the sheriff's department. Sheriff Stacy Weber said after investigating the issue further, another company has been located that can provide additional service such as geo-mapping, links to video footage which would eliminate the need for the department to burn disks and other technological advantages over the company originally recommended. The board will revisit the issue when a separate recommendation and public hearing can be held.

FMCH welcomes Holtkamp

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison Community Hospital is pleased to welcome Susan Holtkamp, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, to the FMP&S Pediatric Clinic. Holtkamp joins the medical team of Dr. Curt McClellan, Dr. Kolleen Burnett, and Pediatric Nurse Practitioners Heather Elmore, and Ashley Kramer.



HOLTkamp

Holtkamp hails from the University of Missouri where she received her Masters of Science degree as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. Holtkamp comes to Fort Madison Community Hospital with sixteen years of experience caring for children and as a Nurse Practitioner in pediatric primary care, pediatric emergency medicine, pediatric ENT and inpatient care as a pediatric hospitalist.

"I am excited to become a part of the FMCH team. The hospital and pediatric service have an outstanding reputation providing services that are so deeply engrained in the heart of the community. There is something special about being given the opportunity to invest myself and practice in the same hospital where my husband was born. It is an honor and privilege to care for the children and families of the community and to be welcomed as a part of the FMCH family," expressed Holtkamp.

"I look forward to becoming reacquainted with my past patients as well as establishing new patient relationships."

You can make an appointment with Susan Holtkamp by calling FMP&S Pediatric Clinic, 319-372-KIDS (5437) or by going online to the MyHealth patient portal at www.fmchosp.com.

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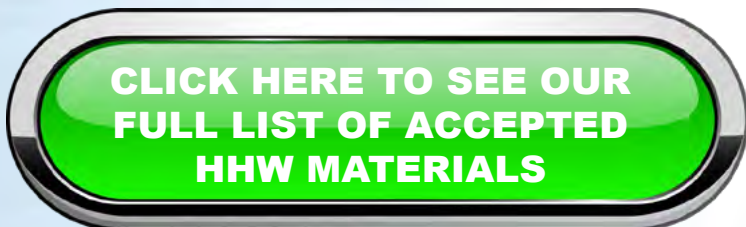
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Area News/From the Front



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Photo courtesy of Lee County Sheriff's Dept.

Say Hello to Alex

Lee County Sheriff's Department received good news Tuesday in their efforts to fund a K-9 unit in Lee County. Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber said an anonymous donor has stepped forward with a \$25,000 donation to the Lee County K-9 effort. Weber has indicated that eventually he'd like to have two dogs in the program and this may enable him to do that after speaking with the board at a future date.

More information on accident to come from Keokuk PD

ACCIDENT - Continued from Page 1

at this time how the vehicle got in the water. "Right now we're trying to treat this with respect." Keokuk Emergency

Volunteer Corps, Jackson Township Fire and Rescue, Keokuk Police Department, Lee County EMS Ambulance, Lee

County Sheriff's Office, Iowa State Patrol, and Rairden's Towing, rtment assisted at the scene.

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From the Front

Biglers using tragedy to bring about change

BIGLER - Continued from Page 1

the minds of the Bigler family, is now met with hope and direction.

Bigler told the students that courage and legacy need to be a part of their lives going forward.

"You have to have the courage to take someone's keys... the courage to be the one not drinking... the courage to plan something else that's the center of the fun," Bigler said. "It takes courage to be the leader. You probably will be made fun of as a leader in that situation. It's called leadership... It's called respect."

Bigler said his family's tragedy has become a national message for courage and leadership. ESPN's primetime magazine E:60 did a segment on Brad's family and their path through heartbreak and tragedy.

Included in the piece were the details surround-

ing Brad's mother's death in a kayaking accident in Minnesota. Brad was kayaking with her when she hit some rapids and capsized. Brad tried to rescue her but she was trapped under a nest of tree limbs.

The NCAA and the NFL have also had Brad speak to different groups and Mark has been speaking with students in Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. Brad, a former FMHS athletic standout, is the head basketball coach at Southwest Minnesota State University.

"Well I think of all groups, I've never had a bad audience," Mark said. "Most of these students can identify with a personal experience with a family member, but then it comes to the alcohol, and we're not naive here, but if we can impact one person. That's worth it."

Mark told the students that he didn't harbor resentment for Schoen.

"I feel sorry for him, I don't wish him bad. He made a huge tragic mistake. But it was the third time...the first time he killed someone, the third time he was arrested."

"What will your legacy be as a leader. What difference can you make," he asked the Bloodhounds sitting quietly, but fully engaged. "Do you have the courage, not just for Drake, but for someone you love, your friends, your family."

He told the students they are going to face these very situations very soon and as adults. He said social drinking isn't a bad thing but it the decisions you make afterwards. It effects lives...it effects your health.

"Are you gonna be like Dana - one that drinks



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Back at FMHS

Former FMHS coach and Mark Bigler speaks to the student body at the high school Tuesday on courage and legacies. Two videos of Bigler's presentation to the high school students and staff are available on the Pen City Current website at www.pencitycurrent.com.

too much - or the others who didn't take the keys because they didn't want to start a fight. It's about courage," he said.

One high school student asked Mark after the presentation if Schoen was still in prison. Bigler said he got a 4.5 years prison sentence and was out after a year and a half. "But we're not looking

for punishment like that," Bigler said.

Another student, Cason Barker approached Bigler after the presentation and said the message struck very close to him because his mother was taken the same way.

"I can actually relate to this situation, my mom passed away in 2012..." Barker said and then had

trouble finishing as emotions overtook him. Bigler stepped in and embraced him and told him that his mother would want him to be successful and want him to live a happy life.

Barker said his mother was taken when a drunk driver collided with the vehicle he was in traveling to his grandmother's home in Missouri.

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From the Front

Fort Madison officials want more information on city wages

MAYOR- Continued from Page 1

wage increase could make the following impacts to my business with a list of five options; and If the wage increase passes, in what other ways do you believe it will impact your business?



RANDOLPH

Randolph said he asked the chamber to put out the survey because he didn't feel he had enough information for the city to make a good decision.

"Nobody's ever approached me from the Raise the Wage committee or anywhere else," Randolph said. "There was a letter in the paper saying some mayors were opposed to it and there was some buy in from business leaders and public officials, but they didn't say who. What I'm trying to find out is what type of impact there is to the side it effects. I'm all for people making more money, but I also want to know if I'm going to be telling people they need to raise the wages they pay, what is the downside and impact to them.

The minimum wage ordinance is one reading away from being passed by the Lee County Board of Supervisors. The board passed by a 4-1 vote Tuesday the second reading of an ordinance moving

the minimum wage to \$8.20/hour in the county. Other local governments have the right to opt out of the increase by a majority vote of their respective boards. The final reading will take place Tuesday at Heritage Senior Center in Keokuk with the meeting starting at 1 p.m.

Randolph said he personally had a problem with counties adopting their own wages on several fronts including it could potentially pit cities within a county against each other for labor.

"The last minimum wage increase was in 2009 and we are due. I think it should come from the federal or state level. Home rule's ok because it gives counties and cities autonomy but you get into this and everyone's doing their own thing."

A current bill in front of the Iowa Senate, House File 295, is in front of the State Government Committee as of March 13. A subcommittee of that group recommended passage of the bill Monday.

Randolph said he thinks that bill will be passed, but he wants to make sure he has ample consideration if the city has to make a move in the interim.

"I've asked a lot of people. It could be a moot point," Randolph said. "That legislation has passed out of committee

and the Republicans have enough votes to pass it, but will they? The prevailing winds say so. So that's why the Supervisors pushed that date out to May 1."

When asked if he believed the city would opt out or vote in favor of the minimum wage if it comes to that, Randolph...abstained.

"I'd like to have a little bit more information before I answer that," he said. "I might have the Chamber update the survey, get that information and then make a decision. I'm pretty comfortable saying that Keokuk is for it. But does that pit Keokuk against Fort Madison? I want people to have a better income, I do, but then you have to look at living wage versus a minimum wage and then you get into that whole discussion."

He said in the update to the survey he may look at trying to catch the gap of employees between the current minimum wage and the proposed minimum wage to more effectively gauge the number of employees who would stand to be affected.

"Honestly, other than the committee, I haven't heard a ton either way. A lot of people say they don't pay the minimum so it doesn't effect them. But are there are a lot of people in the gap that might

“

...I think it should come from the federal or state level. Home rule is ok because it gives counties and cities autonomy, but you get into this and everyone's doing their own thing.”

-Brad Randolph,
FM Mayor

be effected. I'm hoping the survey gives me more added facts that helps me make a better decision."

Several city councilman interviewed previously on the minimum wage issue had basically the same stance. Councilmen Kevin Rink and Rusty Andrews said the issue deserved a lot of thought and shouldn't be rushed because of the complexities but both agreed the minimum wage is too low.

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