

Pen City Current

Thursday, Oct. 31, 2019 | 9 pages | Volume 3 • Issue 228

Forum quizzes candidates on facilities, social media

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – There were plenty of chairs left at the Connection Bank Community Room Tuesday where six candidates for the Fort Madison School Board seats pitched themselves to voters.

Not including media, there were about 15 people on hand to hear from incumbents Dianne Hope, Carol Ross, Lois DiPrima, and Jared Hotop, former board member Joshua Wykert, and newcomer Candice Smrt.

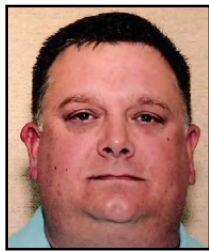
The candidates had been provided a list of



WYKERT

questions from the Fort Madison Education Association, who moderated the forum, and then written questions were taken from the audience.

Provided questions included a look at the district's facilities, which all six candidates said they supported building a new school, but were willing to look at options that may come from an upcoming assessment of all



HOTOP

the district's elementary and middle schools. Other questions included the impact of social media, board time commitments, and bargaining laws.

All six candidates said they felt Chapter 20 laws that stripped bargaining rights from teachers was the wrong way to go, but the relationships between the administration and the staff is strong and the district is ahead of the



ROSS



HOPE

curve. Wykert said the top issue on everyone's mind is the elementary schools. But he said the assessment will be a big part of going forward on the issue.

"I'd like to figure out some way that the voters will approve something. We can't keep doing the same things," he said.

Wykert said he'd also like to look at open



SMRT

enrollment and what dynamic is in play when we have some of the top schools in the area.

"Just need to figure out why. I think it's a perception issue and the school bond doesn't help because it looks like people don't support Fort Madison schools, but when you talk to people that's absolutely not the truth."

Ross said open enrollment is a problem. She's



DIPRIMA

said some students have come back and she thinks that's due to continued progress in trades programs, but she said parents just don't want to send little ones to buildings that are 101 degrees inside when they can send them somewhere else.

She said after four failed bond attempts it's time to do something different.

Hotop said he agreed with both Ross and Wykert. He said we need to either get the new school built, or fix the other ones, but he said finances are also an important issue.

See **FORUM**, page 8

Firefighters save deer from residential pool

Animal released after 30 minute rescue on Avenue A

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – On Friday morning, Fort Madison firefighters put their rescue skills to the test with an unusual victim that decided a fall swim was a good idea.

What appeared to be about an 80 pound doe had somehow leaped into an above ground swimming pool in the 800 block of Avenue A. The pool was covered with a tarp and the deer landed in the water in a way that it didn't get wrapped up in the tarp, but couldn't get enough of a run or leap to get out of the pool.

Firefighters tried to capture the animal at the side of the pool to lift it out, but the animal was pretty good at swimming away from the firefighters.

So they used a red rescue rope held across the pool to move the deer to the side and were able to get the rope around the neck and a leg and were able to get four firefighters on each side to pull the deer out of the pool.

Fire Chief Joey Herren said the shift was on scene for about 30 minutes working to rescue the deer, which he said was set free after it was retrieved from the water.



Courtesy photo

Fort Madison firefighters hoist a deer from a swimming pool in the 800 block of Avenue A on Friday morning.

Budget woes prompt store closure

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Budget woes and lack of sales performance are forcing the closure of the Salvation Army Family Store & Donation Center in Fort Madison.

According to Major Leanna Tuttle, the location at 927 1/2 Avenue G, in the Aldi's building, wasn't generating enough revenue to cover its operating budget forcing the closure of one of only two Salvation Army outlets in Lee County on Nov. 15.

See **CLOSURE**, page 5

Advertiser Index

Business Directory.....Ps.6-7	Merschman Seeds..... P.4
ClassifiedsPs.6-7	Oak Hollow Campground P.3
Dr. Mark C. Pothitakis Family Dentistry..... P.2	Pen City Current.....Ps.2,5-7
Fort Madison Family YMCA..... P.3	Pilot Grove Savings Bank..... P.3
Great River Regional Waste Authority..... P.5	PointsBet SPORTSBOOK at Catfish Bend Casino .. P.8
Lee County Health Department.....Ps.4,9	Tri-State Outdoor Products..... P.4

News Index

Current-Lee P.4
From the front..... Ps.5,8
Letters to the Editor P.2
Local News..... Ps.5,8
Lottery Numbers..... P.2
Opinion..... P.3
Sports.....Ps.7-8
Weather..... P.8

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Letters to the Editor/Lottery Numbers

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mayor endorses candidates for mayor, council

Dear Editor;

Matt Mohrfeld has a vision for Fort Madison. A vision of a community that is structurally sound, that plans for the future without forgetting it's past and isn't afraid to be creative in how to achieve it. One that wants to set itself apart and be unique. One with progressive leadership that looks for ways to retain our youth and partners with the residents and businesses alike so that everyone prospers and is proud to call Fort Madison home!. That type of vision will make Fort Madison stronger. I've known Matt for many years and having worked directly with him on Council, he has proven in a relatively short amount of time that he is ready to step up and take a leading role in Fort Madison's future. The Mayor's position requires first hand

experience and an immediate understanding of government. He must deal effectively with city staff, state and national leaders in order to promote Fort Madison's agenda. He must reach out to the residents, businesses and industry as well as the school system to create a quality of life balance, so the people want to live, work and play in our community. Matt is ready and more than capable. With all due respect to the other candidates, there is just no way inexperience and "last minute" can step into the Mayor's role. Having come so far and with so much at stake involving current projects and the budget, the choice is clear. **Matt Mohrfeld for Mayor.**

Kevin Rink Brings Stability. The City of Fort Madison will be experiencing a lot of changes in our local government with he upcoming election. With

the Mayor's position and two Council seats under new leadership, that makes the at-large race vitally important, and one that needs to stay in Kevin Rink's hands. I have had the pleasure of serving on the Council with Kevin and have always appreciated his independent, thought driven decision making. He approaches things pragmatically while always keeping a positive perspective. His relationship with our community is unmatched and his desire for it to succeed is evident. His stable voice on a new faced Council will ensure the positive and constructive changes that are unfolding in our community will continue. I look forward to Fort Madison's possibilities and am proudly supporting Kevin Rink!

Rebecca Bowker Offers a New Perspective As

a first ward resident, I am excited for the new perspective that Rebecca Bowker brings to City Council. I find her approach to local government refreshing and insightful. I have had many opportunities to work with Rebecca, and I have always found her to have honesty and integrity and be a lead by example consensus builder, and team player. These are must have characteristics when working on behalf of the citizens and representing our community. Rebecca's job with the State has placed her in the mix of a lot of tough decisions from personnel to budgets. Her position has also helped foster a partnership between the City and the Historic Prison. That makes her a great choice for our City Council. Please join me in supporting Rebecca for First Ward Council!

Bradley A. Randolph,
Mayor

Mohrfeld suited for Fort Madison mayor's seat

Dear Editor:

I fully support, Matt Mohrfeld in the mayoral race for Fort Madison.

Matt Mohrfeld has chosen to make Fort Madison home for his family and his very successful and growing business because he believes in our city.

Now he wants to serve as our mayor. I, for one, cannot think of anyone more suited to the job.

In discussion with Matt, he stated that it is important for a mayor to bring cohesiveness to all city departments along with the city council so that the citizens of Fort Madison receive effective services.

The mayor is the face and voice of a community and I believe that Matt with his business experience, time spent as a county supervisor and his knowledge of our town is that person and leader.

I have known Matt for many years and he has become a proponent of health and wellness. He lives his life in that manner and encourages the same mindset in others. I believe that he will carry these same principles into the health, wellness and continued longevity of our city through his look to the future while respecting the past. He has visions of improvement.

Elections are only a few days away, and we deserve a say in who runs our city. Voting for Matt Mohrfeld is a vote for each of us and Fort Madison.

Dianne Hope
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Opinion

Pride in our character is better than trophies on our shelf

We watch sports for various reasons... entertainment, loyalty, certainly vicarious longings of days gone by. Most of us that played high school sports kind of shake and move with the games – be it football, basketball, wrestling, volleyball... what have you.

Following sports at Fort Madison has been a difficult chore in the past three years. Our teams typically finish middle of the pack with the obvious exceptions. Nothing was more fun for me than chasing the Holy Trinity Catholic girls volleyball team to the Class 1A State runner-up in 2018, or watching a totally zoned-in Harlan Steffensmeier knock off Cayd Lara 5-4 to win the state 152 lb. wrestling title the same year.

It was just as fun watching Ryan Wilson's 2018 Bloodhound boys basketball team give 3rd ranked Mt. Pleasant everything they could handle in the post season that year.

But we take those wins and losses mostly in stride, and Fort Madison's loss to Keokuk on Friday night was as tough as any to watch. Aside from the first four minutes of that game, we've got a different situation. But... you have to play all the minutes.

After the game, seniors hugged and cried and coaches hugged and gave messages of thanks. Each coach waited until each and every player that wanted an embrace got one. Before speaking with the media I might add.

It was my pleasure to wait.

One of the things that never falls short for me here, as Athletic Director Jeremy Swink and the respective coaching staffs continue to shift gears in the department, is the priority in place for creating responsible men and women as part of the process.

It happens inside the learning environment with people like FMHS's Greg Smith and Pat Lamb who seem to put character on even keel with scholastic goals. With the trades programs in Fort Madison taking on celebrity status, kids are graduating with a skills set that generates income. Character plays a part in getting interviews and landing jobs.

On our livestream product, The O'Hara & Bohnenkamp Show, Swink has talked several times about the focus on the quality of the person in uniform and not just the ability of the person in the uniform.

I think that spills over, really, to all the high school sports programs in Fort Madison. And that's the case,



Beside The Point

Chuck Vandenberg,
Pen City Current - Editor

I'm sure, at the preponderance of schools in the state.

But as we watch our sports programs continually improve i.e, Ron Walker's baseball team, the football team just missing a winning season for the first time in nine years, HTC's volleyball's regular reload, the boys cross country team, Fort Madison's perennial wrestling success, the Central Lee baseball team to name a few, we're also seeing an improvement in the quality of people. And we put that squarely on the programming in place

with our athletic departments, both private and public.

Last year Ryan Smith earned the IHSA's Character Counts award and he talks about character of the athletes as a parallel of sorts to the wins. Character is kind of the light that surrounds a champion.

We're gonna have champions – that will come. But I think with the groups at Holy Trinity Catholic, FMHS, and Central Lee the character may come quicker.

And that's just as fun to watch.

Speaking of HTC girls volleyball, in case you missed it, their match was moved to 6 p.m. at Van Buren High School on Thursday – but that's Beside the Point.

Chuck Vandenberg is editor and co-owner of the Pen City Current and can be reached at editor@pencitycurrent.com.

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Current-Lee/Lee County News

CURRENT-LEE

The following is a list of current events and happenings in Fort Madison and north Lee County as submitted to the Pen City Current.

YMCA Daddy Daughter Dance

The annual dance will be held Nov. 8th at the Fort Madison Elks Lodge from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Cost is \$20 per couple for YMCA members, \$30 per couple for non-members. \$5 for additional children. Registration deadline is Nov. 1.

Weekly Book Sale

Friends of the Fort Madison Public Library is holding a weekly book sales from 11 a.m to 1 p.m. on Thursday's at the Public Library.

Brakes for Breasts

Griffin Brake & Muffler Center will be holding a Brakes for Breasts where the center will be giving away free quality brake pads and shoes and will donate 10% of labor and other necessary parts to the Cleveland Clinic Breast Cancer Vaccine Fund during the Month of October.

Citywide Trick or Treating

The Fort Madison citywide Trick or Treating will take place Thursday night from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. throughout the city. Special other activities are listed below.

19th Street Trick or Treat

Kempker's True Value & Rental and Fareway Grocery are teaming up once again for their annual 19th Street Trick or Treat on Fort Madison's Beggars Night, Thursday, October 31st from 5 p.m. -7 p.m. Hall's Ice Cream, New Dimensions, Griffin Muffler and Brake Center, Salvador's Emporium, American Family Insurance - Agent Lydia Atterberg, Your Heat and Air Guy, and Holtkamp's Floors, Decor and Furniture are also part of the spooktacular event and will be there handing out treats and goodies. Kempker's and Fareway will be offering Hot Dogs, Chips, and a Drink to all the kids in costume.

Old Settlers Trick or Treat

4th Annual "Trick or Treat" in Old Settler's Park will be held on Thursday Oct. 31, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. A light supper will be provided by Fraise Auction & Real Estate.

Halloween Historic Jail Tour

Volunteers with the North Lee County Historical Society will be opening the historic 1869 Lee County Jail during citywide Trick or Treat hours from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Oct. 31. The tradition of giving out "Tootsie" rolls in honor of former Lee County Sheriff Harold R. "Toots" Delahoyde.

FMAAA 4-Course Thai Meal

Carol Mapes will be the featured chef for a 4-course Thai Meal on Friday, Nov. 1 at 6 p.m. at the FMAAA center. Tickets are \$25 per person. Call the center at 372-3996 for additional information or tickets.

Central Lee Comedy Night

On Friday November 1st at 9 p.m. the Central Lee High School Science Club will be sponsoring a Comedy Night at Fat Jimmy's Smokehouse in Montrose. This event has been established as a fundraiser for the CLHS Science Club to help sponsor student developed research projects, science events and our science club trip to Alaska this June. To purchase an advanced ticket please contact a science club member or Alicia Schiller aschiller@centrallee.org

Flashlight Maze Nights

Each Saturday, weather permitting, the Harvestville Farm Corn Maze will be open from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. with last entry at 9:30 p.m. Bring your own flashlight. For more information call 319-470-1558.

Lighted Parade Float Work Nights

Float work nights for the annual holiday lighted parade are held every Monday starting Sept. 30 from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at 1200 Avenue I. Entrance is through the back. Call the Chamber at 319-372-5471 for more information.

SCC Vendor Blender

A vendor blender will be held on Nov. 9 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with proceeds benefiting SCC student club activities. \$3 admission and lunch will be available in the SCC cafeteria from 11:30 to 1 p.m.

Kensington events

The Kensington is offering Senior's Only Community Bingo on the second Wednesday of every month at 2 p.m. The event is free for seniors and cash prizes are awarded. Caregivers Connection is held the 4th Tuesday of every month at noon. Call 319-372-4233 to reserve your seat.

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Nov. 5 Polling locations

Polling Place Locations
 FM1-Fort Madison City Hall 811 Ave E, Fort Madison
 FM2-McAleer Hall 415 11th Street, Fort Madison
 FM3-Ft Madison Public Library 1920 Avenue E, Fort Madison
 FM4A/B-Roling Hall 2210 Avenue I, Fort Madison
 FM5/MD-Hillview Village 1102 48th Street, Fort Madison

KE1-South Lee County Courthouse 25 N 7th Street, Keokuk
 KE2A/B-Heritage Center 508 Main St, Keokuk
 KE3-Keokuk Public Library 210 N 5th St, Keokuk
 KE4-Evangelical Free Church 2315 S 7th St, Keokuk
 KE5-Learning Center 500 N 20th St, Keokuk
 KE6-First Christian Church 3476 Main St,

Keokuk
 KE7-Keokuk Nazarene Church 3116 Plank Rd, Keokuk
 Cedar, Marion, Franklin, Harrison Townships/Cities of Houghton, St Paul and Donnellson-Pilot Grove Savings Bank Community Room 521 N Main St, Donnellson
 Charleston, Des Moines and Van Buren Townships-Central Lee District Office 2642 Hwy 218, Donnellson
 Green Bay and Washington Townships-Grace Bible Church 3526 175th Street, Wever
 Jackson Township-Jackson Township Fire Station 3640 Argyle Road, Keokuk
 Jefferson Township-Lee County Conservation Center 2652 Hwy 61, Montrose
 Montrose Township and City of Montrose-Ivor Fowler Community Center 710 Main St, Montrose
 Denmark, Pleasant Ridge and West Point Townships and City of West Point-West Point Library 317 5th St, West Point

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Scene Around Town/From the Front

Salvation Army also loses Kettle location at Shopko

CLOSURE - Continued from Page 1

The other store is located at 31 S. 30th Street in Keokuk and is open Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"It's due to budget cuts and not bringing in the funds it needs," Tuttle said Wednesday morning.

"Hopefully that will be temporary. We're looking at different options and some reorganization, but I can't give you a timeline or anything like that."

She said the budget woes aren't just a regional thing, although the Keokuk location is struggling as well. Tuttle said other parts of the nation are experience similar issues and facing or executing closures.

"Keokuk is staying open at this time. But it's pretty tight there and they have to get things turned around as well," she said.

The store closure will not have any impact on the Salvation Army's Weekend Meal program for K-5th grade students. Tuttle said that's an entirely different budget and that program is well-funded and will continue.

Tuttle said finding another location for the store and donation center could possibly help to get the facility reopened, but she said the thrift stores are tough to manage because of utilities, changing economies, and even theft.

"Thrift stores are kind of hard when you have people stealing from us - and it happens at a lot of thrift stores. People think it was just donated to us anyway, so it's free for the taking," she said.

"It's hard to make a thrift store run."

The group also took a hit when Shopko closed because it was a place for the Red Kettle Campaign that volunteers could ring inside where it was warmer. Tuttle said it's harder to get volunteers to ring outside. Last year bell ringers were at Shopko, Fort Madison Hy-Vee, and Fareway Meat & Grocery.

This year ringers will only be at the two grocery chains.

Tuttle said the money raised during the Kettle Drive doesn't just help people during Christmas, but assists with expenses throughout the year.

"The more we raise during that campaign, the more good we can do throughout the year," she said.

The group is also taking applications for toys for Christmas, but said they coordinate with Christmas for Kids in Fort Madison, so people don't need to apply to both groups.



FMFD Muscular Dystrophy donation

Photo courtesy of FMFD

Pictured from left to right, Alex Meierotto, Chris Eastin, Clint Harland, Justin Cain, Daniel Johnson, Jon Lange, and Jay Blanchard from the Fort Madison Fire Department and Local 607 show a check to the MDA for \$4,910 in funds raised from the annual "Fill the Boot" campaign and the first annual kickball tournament held at Baxter Sports Complex on Aug. 17.

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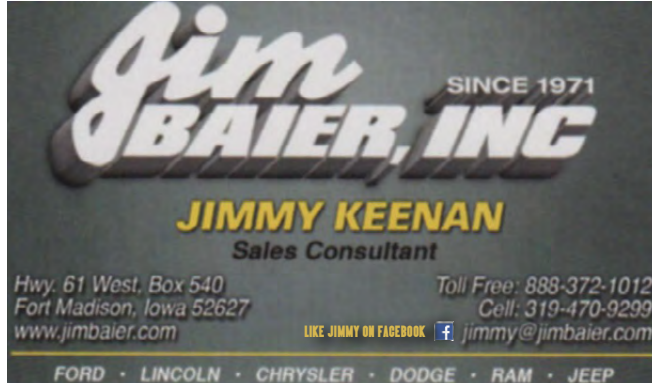
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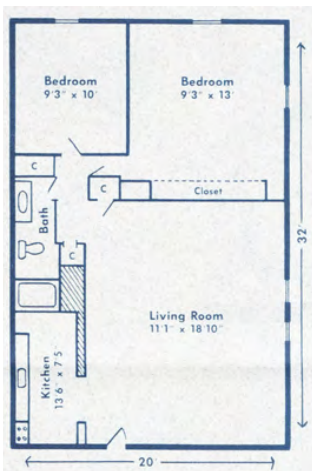
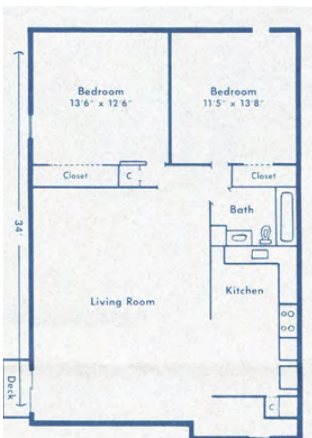


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From the Front/Weather

Candidates have mixed views on social media impact

FORUM - Continued from Page 1

“A serious issue with all school boards is funding from the state and how to nickle and dime every penny to make sure we can get our kids the best education we possibly can,” he said.

Hotop said he'd like to see the trades programs expanded to help fill some of the shortages of skilled workers.

“A huge shortage out there and a lot of these companies are offering \$90-\$100,000 dollars for kids fresh out of high school – because they're such a huge demand.”

DiPrima said she too agreed with the need to do something with the schools and continuing to build the trades program, but she said social media conduct is also a high priority for the district.

“Sometimes people will put things on social media thinking it won't cause a stir and it does and I really feel at times that's a real detriment to our schools,” she said. “At some point down the road we need to address that.”

DiPrima said anyone who thinks the schools are in workable condition should spend a day with any teacher at Richardson or Lincoln.

Hope said facilities are the number one issue and she said partnerships in the community need to be developed. She said that neither of the elementary schools should become a detriment to the community.

“Perhaps that's beyond the roles of administrators who serve in the Chamber of Commerce and economic development, but we as board members need to take a look at partnerships including City Council,” Hope said.

“Sometimes we need to be in support of what they're

doing and they need to support what we're doing. We're all in this together.”

Smrt said she is 100% behind fixing the elementary school issues, but she said busing is also a big issue that needs addressed.

“I've heard a couple people say if they have to drive their kids to school, they're driving them to Central Lee. I think that's part of the open enrollment issue, too,” Smrt said.

“I'm not quite sure how to fix that and I know we need more drivers...but I also know to get more drivers you need more students,” Smrt said.

A question from the audience asked the incumbents about attendance on the board and how that reflects commitment, which was a question aimed at incumbent Jared Hotop who for his term has made just over 50% of meetings and workshops. This year he's made all four board meetings to date.

“I'll be flat out honest, I don't make every meeting. I have a unique job. I make the ones I am home for. I make five trips for the railroad every two weeks and when I have to take off work that's a fifth of my family's pay,” he said.

“If I can make it, I'm here. I've taken vacations and some trips off for important board meetings. I try to make everything I can without shutting off the lights and everything in my own home.”

Hope said serving on the board is more than just board meetings and is a large commitment.

“It's attending IASB conventions and workshops. It's reading what's sent to you. It's opening agendas and going over the agenda, being prepared and asking

questions ahead of time,” she said.

“It's a commitment. A commitment to the students, and a commitment to the staff.”

The final question was to what extent a school board member, a teacher or staff interaction on social media was acceptable.

Hotop said it can be beneficial if kept professional.

“A lot of kids these days, if they have problems at home or with parents or parents aren't understanding, they look for recommendations from teachers. I think a teacher, counselor, principal should have the professionalism to steer them and give them advice without crossing that border,” he said.

DiPrima said when she was teaching there was an unwritten rule that you didn't get on Facebook. She said some things need to be checked twice before being posted.

“And I'm not just talking about kids, I'm talking about faculty, I'm talking about administrators, I'm talking about school board,” she said.

“If we're going to work through this problem there needs to be guidelines for educators and board members.”

Hope said it was a slippery slope. She said talking in any format as a board member has to be taken as an individual.

“I have to be very cognizant of the fact that it could be misconstrued that I'm speaking for the board and I'm not,” she said. “The board has to speak for itself as a group and be cohesive. It's so easy sometimes to get that keyboard flu, if you will, and go out there.”

Smrt said she was Facebook junkie, but said she doesn't post personal stuff on Facebook.

“Social media is how everybody is communicating now and seeing things. But it's a very fine line of what you should and shouldn't post. If it's not something I want my mom to see it doesn't go and that should go for the public, too.”

Wykert said on a basic level he likes the communication that Facebook provides.

“But then you go introduce humans to it and they can ruin everything,” Wykert said.

“Teachers and students need to be cognizant of the line and, at the end of the day, they're a teacher and in a position of authority and they need to act and communicate in a way that shows that.”

Ross said social media can be okay with social things like wishing birthdays and staying in contact, but she said misinformation on social media has created problems.

5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

THU 31 Oct



Snow

High- 32.0° F | Low - 24.1° F

FRI 01 Nov



Overcast

High- 35.9° F | Low - 35.1° F

SAT 02 Nov



Partly Sunny

High- 38.9° F | Low - 30.9° F

SUN 03 Nov



Overcast

High- 44.2° F | Low - 39.0° F

MON 04 Nov



Overcast

High- 49.7° F | Low - 48.7° F

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