



Pen City Current

Sunday, January 15, 2017 | 4 pages | Volume 1 • Issue 22

This guy just keeps on runnin'

Mohrfeld will pass 40 years in the greenhouse game in February

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - "It's an evolution, not a revolution."

That's a quote from 60-year-old Matt Mohrfeld in response to a basic question about the flower business.

But a twinkle in his eye, and the wide smile he shares with everyone, shows maybe it's more of his mantra on life than a business perspective.

The owner and founder of Matt's Greenhouse will roll over 40 years in business on Feb. 22 and clearly has no plans to step aside. A Chamber Ambassador call has been set for Feb. 24 at his office at the top of 15th Street.

"I may lean into, but I'm not stepping out of it," he said Friday morning in his warehouse office nestled between the white rows of greenhouses where his wholesale bedding plant

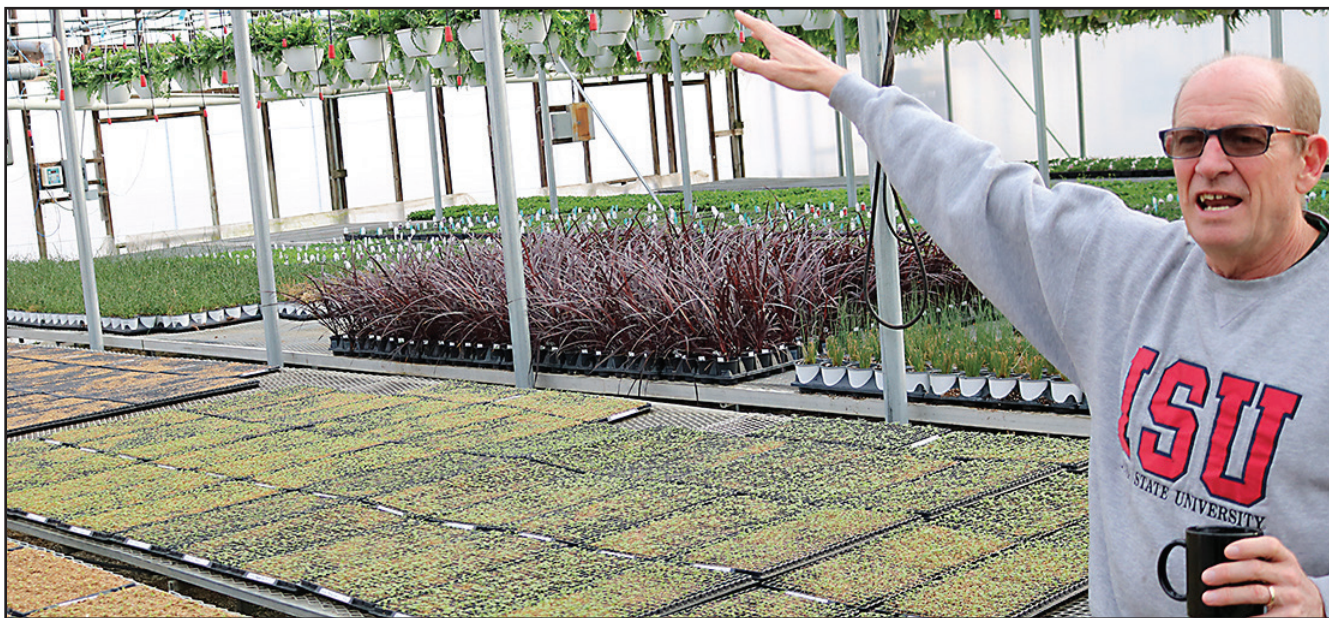


Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Still growing

With his 40th anniversary rolling over in February, Fort Madison' Matt Mohrfeld is still reaching for the stars. At 60, he's about a year away from getting a degree in Agronomy that he started, more than 40 years ago. An avid runner, Mohrfeld said his role is more visionary now than day-to-day, and his plans are simply to stay viable.

business, literally, regrows every year.

As evidence that he has no intention of sliding away from the work he's been doing, Mohrfeld, who left Iowa State University before starting his business, is now just about a year away from a degree in Agronomy. Clearly the degree isn't what positioned Mohrfeld for the success he's had, so going after the degree begged the question, why?

"The mind is like the body and you have to keep working to keep it

strong," Mohrfeld said.

"And I have a 14-year-old son at home there's only one way he's going to learn and that's by somebody doing it."

This is highly believable coming from a man who literally at times will run across the state of Iowa with a group of friends, can constantly be seen on Facebook crossing a finish line or barking encouragement to his son, Jacob or another human fish while perched at the end of a swimming pool with a stopwatch.

"I came home from ISU and said, 'Hey, I'd like to run a garden center there'. So that spring I did, and that's how it all started."

-Matt Mohrfeld founder Matt's Greenhouse

Mohrfeld's life seems, and feels, even in a short hour-long conversation, like a race. But not a race to see how much can be done before it ends, but more of race of 'what's next'...a constant drive to...well...evolve.

Matt's Greenhouse started in 1976 when he took over a two-block area at the bottom of the bluff on Avenue B that his brother Rich had just purchased.

"There was a stumbling

See **EVOLUTION**, page 2

Winter weather mixed bag

PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON - Here is the updated weather forecast for Lee County from the National Weather Service.

Sunday

A chance of rain, snow, freezing rain, and sleet before 4pm, then a chance of rain or freezing rain between 4pm and 5pm, then a chance of snow and sleet after 5pm. Cloudy, with a high near 33. Calm wind becoming east around 5 mph in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation is 50%. Little or no ice accumulation expected. Little or no snow and sleet accumulation expected.

Sunday Night

A chance of sleet before 7pm, then a chance of freezing rain and sleet between 7pm and 11pm, then freezing rain likely after 11pm. Cloudy, with a low around 31. East wind around 5 mph. Chance of precipitation is 60%. New ice accumulation of around a 0.1 of an inch possible. Little or no sleet accumulation expected.

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Budding artists exhibiting at FMAAA

BY BRIAN RIGGS
FMAAA Director

The Budding Artist Exhibition is to many FMAAA faithful, their favorite annual of the year.

Something to be said about the intrinsic abandon of young art students. No worries, no teen angst, no distraught on how the work is perceived.....just adventuring fearlessly into the lesson plan of the art educator.

The Fort Madison Area Arts Association feature

gallery is hung from ceiling to floor and is always massively impressive.....

just sayin', over 475 pieces of work from Central Lee, Holy Trinity, Richardson, Lincoln, and Ft. Madison Middle School for this K-8 art stunner. The quality of the work overall may make this one the best yet! Seither & Cherry Company is the sponsor for the exhibition and a reception will occur on Jan. 21st from 2 - 4 p.m. for the artists and fami-

lies. Enjoy reception treats from Hy-Vee with your family members while touring this collective entourage of kid's artistic

excellence.

The next FMAAA Kid's Early Out Art class occurs January 25th with guest artist Anita Lee from

2:30-4:30. That means painting in a strong FASHION....call 372-3996 to register your budding artist on this special feature of the year!

The art works are arranged by grade level. Viewers will gaze upon Folk Art, Mixed Media, Piano Collages, and Native American-themed kindergarten and first-grade lessons. Second grade lends way to Scarecrow Collages, Haring

See **FMAAA**, page 2



From the Front/Local News

Mohrfeld to finish college degree with ISU

EVOLUTION - Continued from Page 1

little greenhouse there, the old Auge Greenhouse," Mohrfeld said. "I came home from ISU and said, hey, I'd like to run a garden center there. So that spring I did and that's how it all started," he said.

About a year later, Mohrfeld acquired a flower shop near Faeth's called the East End Florist.

Shortly after opening that he closed it and incorporated the customer base into his other greenhouse. Then in 1989 he purchased the "Cushman's" building on the highway and moved the retail garden and flower shop there. In 1998 he grabbed the property east of the rodeo arena and started a massive expansion for wholesale bedding plants. In 2000 he married his wife Beth and in 2003 Jacob was born. Jacob attends Holy Trinity and competes in tri-athalons and swims competitively for Burlington High School.

Now, Mohrfeld said he has the fifth largest wholesale greenhouse operation in the state. He credits his start in the wholesale side to Phil Beebe of Wever.

"At that time I had the retail business, I was also doing some work for Phil and I really started to learn the wholesale side of the business. He was starting to grow beyond his capacity and told me to get into the business and even asked me to take

over a route and that sent me off onto this wholesale bedding plant business."

As a result of a self-described "Conservative-aggressive approach to expansion", Mohrfeld partnered with Quincy's Niemann Foods (County Market, Save-A-Lot, Ace Hardware) who is now his largest customer.

"The first year I sold for them, they wrote me a check for \$5,000, and last year they wrote me a check for \$1 million. That should give you some sense of where we're at."

Indeed, Mohrfeld said his customer base ranges from just north of St. Louis, Mo., north to Clinton, Iowa and east to just this side of Champaign, Ill. with limited customers to the west of Fort Madison.

The biggest hurdles he's seen in the past 40 years?

"Probably most of them myself," he said.

"As you grow you have to manage and think and learn. You have to change with the market and the nice thing in my business is it's an evolution and not a revolution."

He also said one of the keys to his success - and a constantly developing part of his business - is attracting, retaining and training employees. His company over the past five years has put \$2.5 million in payroll back into the local economy. He has a regular staff of about 10 full-time em-



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

In his garden

Matt Mohrfeld looks over some of the seedling bedding plants in one of his greenhouses north of Fort Madison. Mohrfeld will be celebrating 40 years in business in February.

"
You have to change with the market and the nice thing in my business is it's an evolution and not a revolution.
"

-Matt Mohrfeld
Matt's Greenhouse

ployees, but expands to 60 during the planting season which runs from the beginning of the year until about June, where he says then production and distribution start to overlap.

"You have to build that staff...team if you will... a family, and then keep working, growing that new customer base. We're just now adding a cus-

tommer development person. We want to use social media this year to tell our story a little better about our team," he said.

A Facebook post this past week showed Mohrfeld moving around a whiteboard in his office in a red hoodie with an old digital scoreboard in the background pointing to attributes he's looking for as he literally broadcasts his new Customer Development opening.

"We had a response to that video in two minutes. Two minutes.. and we've had at least 12 more come in since then. It was incredible. And I never would have done that had I not gone back to work on finishing my degree. I learned that in a leadership training class."

Mohrfeld also said he is passionate about keeping the business as energy friendly as possible. He

had solar panels erected on a north greenhouse and said that's reducing his energy demand and he may look at expanding that in the future as well.

His cessation plans are simple, especially for a man who thinks he may live forever.

"I'm going keep making it an aggressive viable business and surround myself with quality people and see what happens down the road. I have no immediate intentions of retiring, but a very immediate intention of taking on a different role. For the past five years I've taken on more of a visionary role than a day-to-day role and that's going to continue," Mohrfeld said.

"It's a question that everybody asks and I tell everyone, 'Everybody's going to die but me.. but I could be wrong about that.'"

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

01/12/17 - 10:02 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a hit & run in the 2600 block of Avenue I.
01/12/17 - 10:16 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a hit & run in the 2300 block of Avenue I.
01/12/17 - 2:47 p.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Jennifer Gayle Traman, 29, no address given in, the 800 block of Avenue G on a warrant service for probation violation. She was taken to the Lee County Correctional Center and held.

Lee County Sheriff's Report

01/12/17 - 11:15 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Joshua Allan Eaton, 39, of Keokuk, in the 2600 block of Kramer Lane, Keokuk, on a charge of violation of a custodial order. He was taken to the Lee County Correctional Center and jailed. He was later released on bond.
01/12/17 - 3:25 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Justin Warren Bryant, 34, of Keokuk, in Lee County Drug Court on a charge of violation of a no contact order. He was taken to the Lee County Correctional Center and jailed.

It should be noted a criminal charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.

Share your business news with Pen City Current. Contact Chuck Vandenberg, Editor at editor@pencitycurrent.com or call (319)371.1670.

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Local News

PUBLIC NOTICES

AGENDA FORT MADISON CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING
Date: **TUESDAY,**
JANUARY 17, 2017
Time: **7:00 P.M.**

Place: **City Council
Chambers, City Hall**

INVOCATION ROLL CALL

VISITORS AND AP- PEARANCE REQUESTS

At this time individuals may address the City Council on any matters of City business. Please go to the podium and state your name and address for the record. PLEASE NOTE: This is not an opportunity to discuss issues with the Council or to get information. In accordance with Open Meetings law, the Council cannot take action on any complaint or suggestion or respond to any allegations.

AGENDA

1. **MOVED and SEC-
ONDED** to approve the agenda, as written.

CONSENT AGENDA

2. **MOVED and SEC-
ONDED** to approve:

- Minutes of January 3, 2017;

- Mayor's reappointment of Ron Welder to the Planning and Zoning Commission, term expiring March 18, 2022; Mark Lair to the Tourism Commission, term expiring December 31, 2019; Jody Schulte to the Fort Madison Southeast Iowa Regional Riverboat Commission, term expiring December 31, 2019; and Moudy Nabulsi and Jacqueline Lumsden to the Fort Madison Revolving Loan Fund Committee, terms expiring 12/31/2019.

- Mayor's appointment of Samantha Lang to the Library Board, term expiring July 1, 2022 and Lori Illner

to the Tourism Commission, term expiring December 31, 2019;

- Liquor License Renewal: Hy-Vee Food Store, 2606 Avenue L, effective March 19, 2017 – Class E Liquor, Class C Beer, Class B Wine with Sunday Sales;

- Liquor License Renewal: Pen City Aerie (Eagles), 4821 Avenue O, effective January 31, 2017 – Class C Liquor with Outdoor Service & Sunday Sales (pending dram shop endorsement);

- Liquor License Renewal: Dollar General #2194, 4809 Avenue O, effective March 1, 2017 – Class B Wine, Class C Beer and Sunday Sales;

- Setting public hearing for Tuesday, February 7, 2017, at 7:00 P.M. to amend Title 10, Zoning, Chapter 19-3(A), Additional Parking Regulations;

- December Financial Report; and

- Payment of Claims.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

3. **MOVED and SEC-
ONDED** to approve the third reading of an ordinance amending Title 10, Zoning, Chapters 2, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 31 concerning review of Special Uses by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Meeting Requirements.

4. **MOVED and SEC-
ONDED** to approve the first reading of an ordinance amending Title 1, Administration, Chapter 6, Council, Section 3, Meetings, by changing the meeting time of the City Council from 7:00 P.M. on the first and third Tuesdays of each month to 5:30 P.M. on the first and third Tuesdays of each month and updating the method by which notice of Council meetings is

given to Council members.

5. **MOVED and SEC-
ONDED** to adopt a resolution ordering construction, setting public hearing and bid letting for Public Improvement Project 2017-01, Reconstruct 15th Street from Avenue B to Ridgewood Road.

OTHER

6. **MOVED and SEC-
ONDED** to approve the hiring of a Secretary for the Police Department to fill a vacancy created following a retirement.

7. **MOVED and SEC-
ONDED** to approve proceeding with Phase 1 of the 4th Street Combined Sewer Separation project in the amount of \$115,500. (SEE COUNCIL REPORT NO. 2017-05)

8. **MOVED and SEC-
ONDED** to approve the purchase of a ¾-ton truck and a 1-ton truck from Jim Baier, Inc., of Fort Madison, in the amount of \$52,355. (SEE COUNCIL REPORT NO. 2017-06)

9. **MOVED and SEC-
ONDED** to award WWTP Phase 2 asbestos abatement to Environmental Property Services of Urbandale, Iowa, in the amount of \$26,275. (SEE COUNCIL REPORT NO. 2017-07)

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- None

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS

PRESENTATIONS BY LIAISONS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

ADJOURNMENT

10. **MOVED and SEC-
ONDED** to adjourn until Tuesday, February 7, 2017, at 7:00 P.M.

Art exhibit runs through end of month for students

FMAAA - Continued from Page 1

Dancers, and Dancing Giraffes, sure to give you a chuckle.

Third grade has many participants across the board with Optical Art, Seascape Collages, Streaming Watercolors, and Watercolor Weaves.

Fourth grade rounds the corner with Turkey Baskets, Notes of Design, Ice Floating Penguins, Klee Paintings, and Modigliani Portraits.

Fifth grade emerges with Yarn Tapestry, Abstract Landscapes, Iowa Barns, Reflection Prints, and Landscapes in Perspective.

Sixth grade artists showcase Seed Bracelets, Hokusai Waves, Watercolor Printmaking, Lichtenstein Self-portraits, Tribal Masks in 2-D and 3-D, and Ribbon Self-portraits. These portraits utilize rib-

bon from an old cassette tapes to form a graphic portrait of the artist!

Seventh grade artisans flex visual muscle with Trick Photography, Graphic Design Elements, and Zentangle Flowers. Eighth grade elders finish it off with Monumental Perspective, Photographic Scratch Art, and Kinetic Paintings. The Kinetic Paintings offer three different paintings to see, depending on what angle you view the works!

This show is special due to the educators involved. Thanks always to such a talented crew of regional art educators: Mrs. Kaity Price, Mrs. Diane Mitchell, and Mrs. Amy Hellige for Ft. Madison public schools; Mrs. Ann Canida and Mrs. Jaime Jones for Central Lee; and Mrs. Lois de Prima and Mr.

Steve Rung at Holy Trinity for coming under the umbrella of FMAAA to kick off the New Year with resolution!

The type of resolution that will be successfully carried through, as these creatives pick their path. This exhibition annually amazes the viewer to the quality of young artists in our immediate area.

Always the mutterings of ...you never know when this area will produce the next..... Parents will want to bring cameras for gallery shots with your budding artist, as we can pull works wherever located in the exhibit to garner you that special shot or have your budding artist pose with hand-carved carousel horse. Experience unique from Tuesday-Saturday from 10am-5pm at 825 Avenue G.

Nissa Rung, Sales & Marketing Consultant

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Sports

HTC empties bench in win over WACO

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Holy Trinity Catholic Head Coach John Hellige's game plan on Friday night was to have everyone do just a little more than usual.

Senior Connor Conrad, the team's leading scorer coming into Friday's tilt with WACO was sitting behind the bench for the entire game and his teammates, all of them, went out and dropped the Warriors 50-31 in Southeast Iowa Superconference action.

The win moves the Crusaders over .500 for the first time since Jan. 3 when they fell to 4-4 with a loss to New London.

Conrad didn't sit because the Crusaders were going to take WACO lightly.

"We came in and we wanted to be extremely focused this game," Hellige said. "We definitely did not take them lightly. That is a very well coached team and at times this year we have not played our best."

But at the outset, the Crusaders did play probably their best game, at least on the defensive end holding the Warriors scoreless throughout the first period and racing out to a 19-0 lead.

"They came out of the gate and executed to absolute perfection," Hellige said. "You just can't do much better than 0."

And Senior Cory Hopper was almost unstoppable in the first half scoring 17 of his 24 points including four 3-pointers. With the Crusaders up 27-6 with three minutes to go, Hellige started liberally substituting his bench to get them time with the senior laden team en route to a 32-8 half-time lead.

Freshman Reed Fehseke came into his first varsity match and calmly nailed a 3-pointer from the right side baseline, much to the excitement of the student body. Fehseke then went 0-4 the rest of the way, but he along with other freshmen and players who don't get a lot of playing time were able to work out some of those first varsity game jitters.

WACO outscored HTC in the second half 23-18, but Holy Trinity very seldom had their starting unit in the game as Hellige continued to work in other players and ended up playing 15 Crusaders during the game, completely emptying the bench.

"For me personally its extremely rewarding to get those kids out there in front of their parents and friends," Hellige said. "We've got 10 seniors that play a ton of our minutes and only one junior and it's important to get those freshmen and sophomores out there to see the big show, because next year the lockerroom is kind of empty."

With the game clearly in hand, Connor stayed perched on the bench behind the team. Conrad bumped his knee in the second play Tuesday and was kept on the bench for most of the rest of that game.

"His knee is feeling a lot better, but we just felt that with just three days past the bump we didn't want to press it," Hellige said. "We've got tough games next week. Connor is a stat stuffer. He's gonna get his 18 points..his eight or nine boards so everyone else needs to fill the gaps."

The Crusaders start Homecoming Week next week at Holy Trinity Catholic High School, The Crusaders start the week on the road at Danville.

FMHS Lady Hounds fall to Keokuk; 7th loss in a row

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - FM Head Coach Charlie Knipe knew his team was in for a fight with Keokuk Friday night, but turnovers and injuries made it more of a battle.

Fort Madison fell to visiting Keokuk 57-20 in Southeast Conference girls basketball action.

The Lady Hounds only managed 6 points in the second half, three in each quarter. Fort Madison was playing without leading scorer Amber Dilsaver and Braxton McGhy due to injuries and Mercedes Trimble has

Hounds sweep Chiefs at home

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The Fort Madison Bloodhounds shook off a handy beating at the hands of 6th ranked Mt. Pleasant on Tuesday and found their winning ways Friday.

The Hounds used 19 first half points from junior Kaleb Cresswell to knock visiting Keokuk 64-43 in Southeast Conference action. The win moves Fort Madison to 8-3 on the season and 4-1 in conference play.

The game served as a Coaches v. Cancer night at the Hound Dome with activities planned at halftime of the girls and boys game and between the games.

Wilson said he wanted to capitalize on that to let his team have a little fun before the game.

"I talked about it before the game, that we needed energy. Even Tuesday our warmup was lackadaisic and didn't have a lot of energy. They're focused, but there isn't a lot energy and enthusiasm," Wilson said. "I told them tonight to come out and have fun in the warmups and show some emotion and get into it. And we got out to a pretty good start."

Cresswell hit four



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Off-balance

FMHS junior Kaleb Cresswell gets interrupted in flight as he attempts a jump shot Friday at the Hound Dome. Cresswell had 19 first half points and was held scoreless in the second half as the Hounds downed Keokuk 64-43.

3-pointers in the first half and converted 5-of-7 free throws to lead the crimson and black to a 33-18 first half lead. Keokuk switched up their defense to take Cresswell out of his rhythm, but then the rest of the Hounds stepped up and spread out the scoring as Cresswell was able to dish off of double teams to open players. The Hounds converted eight 3-pointers in the game.

At one point during the first half the Hounds held the Chiefs scoreless for five minutes at 7 points and outscored Keokuk 16-6 in the second quarter.

It was more of the same in a more physical second half as the Hounds wouldn't let the Chiefs get closer than 15 after a 33-22 lead with just two minutes gone in the third quarter.

Landon Bentley chipped in with 9 points and three other Hounds had eight including Logan Rashid, CJ Richardson and Treavor Kokjohn. Shance Redd-Donald had five points all in the second half off the bench to help put the game away in the fourth quarter.

"Shance Redd Donald stepped up tonight and scored 5 points. He got some easy buckets and

he's a kid that has to be aggressive. We need that team basketball," Wilson said.

"But it was a great win. It's always good to beat Keokuk and this is the first time we've swept them in a long time."

Rounding out the scoring for the Hounds was Austin Rose with 4, Sheymouhr Redd-Donald with 2 and Lorenzo Riles with 1.

Keokuk was paced by Damon Wolter with 17 and Isaac Dunlap with 12. The Chiefs are winless at 0-11. The Hounds travel to Burlington Tuesday for girls/boys varsity double-header starting at 6 p.m.

Lady Crusaders alternating wins and losses

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - No one's going to call the Holy Trinity girls varsity basketball team streaky.

On Friday the Lady Crusaders came out on top with a 45-31 win over visiting WACO in Southeast Iowa Superconference action sweeping the conference meetings with the win. HTC won 46-25 back on Dec. 2.

The win is the third win in the last six games alternating wins and losses through the stretch. Prior to that, the HTC girls had won two in a row and then lost two in a row.

Friday night, Head Coach Tony Johnson's squad held WACO scoreless in the 2nd period and rushed to a 21-12 lead at halftime with seven players getting in on the scoring in the first half. A balance he'd been hoping for

from the ladies in blue.

"We just slowed down and played a better brand of basketball tonight," Johnson said. "We had very balanced scoring and we need that to keep winning."

Emily Box led Holy Trinity in scoring for the first time this year with 11 points, eight in the second half, followed by Ali Randolph with 8, Brett Schneider with 7 points all in the second half. Taylor Boeding is starting to warm up from her perch along the 3-point line with two for a total of 6 points. Ashlyn Haas and Madison Mohrfeld each had four and Avery Hopper got in on the scoring with two points.

Homecoming week starts on Monday with a road game at Danville and that is followed up by another road game at West Burlington on Tuesday.

All games begin at 4:30 with jayvee action kicking off the nights.

been suffering from lower back pain.

The Lady Chiefs, who were rated in the top 10 in Class 3A in the state up until losing three in a row before Christmas, pressured the Hounds full court most of the game. The first eight points of the game were scored by Keokuk before the Hounds got the ball under their own basket.

"We just didn't deal well with their pressure," Head Coach Charlie Knipe said. "We had lots of turnovers and we had two girls hurt. Amber Dilsaver didn't play because she was hurt and Braxton McGygyhy didn't play."

Trimble led the Lady Hounds with 10 points and

the only Fort Madison player in double figures. Anna Kester had a 3-pointer for her three points on the night and Emily Mitchell, Taylor Shannan and Brittney Harris each had two for Fort Madison.

"We got beat up on the offensive boards a little bit," Knipe said. "Coach (Michael) Davis has a quick aggressive, relentless team and we just didn't deal with it. We were hoping to contain them and survive and we didn't get it done."

The Lady Hounds, who fall to 3-9 on the season play host to Monmouth Roseville in a jayvee/varsity girls matchup Saturday starting at 5 p.m.