

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and **Read** all over

Friday, September 2, 2022 | 9 pages | Volume 6 • Issue 152



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Blessing to close BHK



Image courtesy of Blessing Health Systems

Blessing Health Keokuk announced it will close the hospital and Emergency Department by Oct. 1 at the latest in a stunning announcement Thursday morning.

News of closure adds pressure to Lee County Ambulance

COSBY: “It’s going to impact the ambulance service in a major way.”

KEOKUK - Blessing Health in Keokuk informed employees and the community Thursday morning that the facility will not remain open past Oct. 1 in any capacity.

According to a statement from Steve Felde, External and Internal Communications Director the decision was made based on consistent low demand for inpatient and emergency room care.

“The hospital has been in financial crisis for 10 years. During that time, residents of the region have developed new habits and patterns for where they receive their inpatient health care, leading the hospital to average fewer than two inpatients per day and less than one emergency room visit per hour,” the release indicated.

Blessing leaders say the level of inpatient and emergency care demand does not support the investment required to operate a hospital of 49-beds and an emergency room around the clock, seven days a week.

A recent architectural survey by a private company also revealed recently the hospital building required renovation and replacement of infrastructure that could reach into the \$20 million range.

“Based on current and expected patient use of hospital-based services in Keokuk, Blessing leaders say an invest-



COSBY



SEYB

ment that could total millions of dollars cannot be made responsibly,” the release stated.

Blessing Health took over operations of the Keokuk facility in March of 2021.

“We did not want this to happen. This was not our plan,” said Kathy Hull, chief of small rural hospitals for Blessing Health.

“We are disappointed but undaunted. When we reestablished our presence in Keokuk last year, we said Blessing was committed to investing in Keokuk’s health care infrastructure to revitalize the community and the region to benefit everyone. Blessing has made an investment in the community and will continue to do so through outpatient care.”

Hull said Blessing officials have been working with state and federal legislators and regulators looking for a last-minute option to save the hospital, but unfortunately found nothing.

“We’ve made several attempts to find a viable option with regulators and legislators even looking at the possibility of becoming a Critical Access Hospital, which has a different payment modality for a small rural hospital,” Hull said.

“We’ve also attempted to look at Rural Emergency Hospital legislation passed last year at the federal level and tried to speak with legislators about that coming to life in Iowa and it was tabled by them.

See **HOSPITAL**, page 6

FMAAA

Art in Park to highlight September art events

BY LORI ILLNER GREENE
FMAAA DIRECTOR

We are shifting gears from realism painting to hyper realistic pencil work in September with a group exhibition by Ray McKee, Vicky Dovenspike, and Mandy Robertson. Magic in Pencils opens on Friday, Sep 2nd with a Reception from 5pm to 7pm. These three artists all engage in highly detailed renderings yet retain their own recognizable style.

Lunch ala Art and FINALE will both be held on Friday, Sep 30th

All three of these artists are self taught and could not be more amazing in their attention to detail. Ray McKee is a retired investment broker and former Air Force Reserve Lt. Colonel. Because of his color blindness, he sticks with black and white.

Vicky Dovenspike is a poet and an artist. Of her artistic practice she states: “What I feel I

See **EVENTS**, page 3

UNITED WAY

Applications for funding to be out September 12

LEE COUNTY - The United Way of the Great River Region will soon be accepting grant applications for funding in 2023.

The United Way of the Great River Region (UWGRR) partners with not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organizations in Clark County, Missouri, Hancock County, Illinois and Lee County, Iowa. Priority consideration is given to those agencies/organizations that provide programs that improve health, education, and financial stability to individuals in Clark, Hancock and/or Lee counties.

Applications will be available beginning

See **FUNDING**, page 8

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WEATHER

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SAT 03 Sep.....Sunny and warm, 87° F/ 64° F
SUN 04 Sep.....Sunny and warm, 84° F/ 64° F

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LOTTO AMERICA 08/31.....4 22 41 43 52, Star Ball: 4 All Star Bonus: 2
LUCKY FOR LIFE 08/31.....5 23 26 29 36, Lucky Ball: 10
PICK 3 08/31 MIDDAY.....7 5 0
PICK 3 08/31 EVENING.....8 3 5
PICK 4 08/31 MIDDAY.....9 9 6 3
PICK 4 08/31 EVENING.....7 8 7 3
POWERBALL 08/31.....7 8 19 24 28, Powerball: 1 Power Play: 2

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Obituaries

OBITUARIES

WILLIAM K. FOGLE

William Kenneth "Kenny" Fogle, 77, of Keokuk, IA died Saturday, August 27, 2022 at River Hills Village in Keokuk.

He was born November 8, 1944 in Keokuk, IA the son of William "Bill" and Margaret Elder Fogle. Kenny graduated from Keokuk High School with the class of 1963 and attended Southeastern Community College in Keokuk.



FOGLE

Kenny had been employed by Keokuk Savings Bank as a loan officer and later by McFarland Supply as a sales representative, for twenty-six years until his retirement.

He was a member of South Side Boat Club in Keokuk.

Kenny was an avid Iowa Hawkeyes fan and loved Ford Mustangs. He enjoyed socializing with friends at Rascal's Pub for after work drinks. Kenny will be greatly missed and continually loved and remembered by all that knew him.

He is survived by his daughter, Hope Schott of Grinnell, IA and two bonus granddaughters, Danna Marrow (Jake) and Tessa Schott both of Waterloo, IA.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

A Gathering of Remembrance will be held from 4:00-6:00 p.m., Thursday, at Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk, IA with family meeting with friends at that time. Following the service there will be a time of fellowship at Rascal's Pub in Keokuk.

Memorials may be made to Southeastern Community College Women's Basketball.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.

WILLIAM K. BENGTON

William "Billy" Kaine Bengtson, 27, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 5:58 p.m. on Tuesday, August 30, 2022 at the University of Iowa Hospitals in Iowa City, IA.

He was born on August 25, 1995 in Clinton, IA to William A. & Lauren E. Edfors Bengtson. He was an underground driller at a construction company and enjoyed Pokémon. He played baseball when he was younger.



BENGTSON

Billy is survived by: 1-daughter: Elizabeth Bengtson of Fort Madison, IA; his father: Bill Bengtson of Fort Madison, IA; 1-brother: Jon Bengtson of Fort Madison, IA; his maternal grandmother: Deb Edfors of Fulton, IA; 1-aunt & 1-uncle. He was preceded in death by his mother and three of his grandparents.

Cremation has been entrusted to the care of King-Lynk Funeral

Home & Crematory and no services are planned. Online condolences to the Bengtson family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: www.kinglynk.com.

OBITUARIES

RONALD L. BODE

Ronald L. Bode, 80, of Montrose, IA, formerly of Keokuk, IA died Thursday, August 25, 2022 at the Montrose Health Center in Montrose, IA.

He was born June 28, 1942 in Keokuk, IA the son of Merle and Ann Dietrich Bode.



BODE

Ronald graduated from Keokuk High School with the class of 1960 and from South Eastern Community College, where he received his Associates of Arts degree.

Ronald was a veteran of the United States Army and proudly served his country.

On October 2, 1964 Ronald was united in marriage to Sharon Spees. She preceded him in death on May 8, 2020.

Ronald was a former member of the Eagles Club and Elks Lodge.

He had been employed at State Central Bank in Keokuk, and then he worked for the City of Keokuk as the City Planner and City Clerk for over twenty years.

In his younger years, Ronald loved to go out dancing. He was an avid reader of anything he could get his hands on, loved to travel and watch old Westerns on television and spend time with his four legged companions, his dogs. Ronald is survived by one sister, Debbie Symmonds of Hamilton, IL and several nieces and nephews.

Besides his wife, he was also preceded in death by his parents, one son, Brad Bode, one sister, Violet "Vye" Land and five brothers, Jack, Dean, Terry Mick and Charles in infancy and his dogs, Benji and Annie.

A memorial service will be held at 2:00 p.m., Saturday, September 3, 2022 at the Vigen Memorial in Keokuk, IA. Following the service everyone is invited for food and fellowship with the family at the Elk's Lodge, 2200 Lincoln Ave., Keokuk.

Visitation will be held prior to the service from 1:00-2:00 p.m., at the funeral home with family meeting with friends at that time.

Memorials may be made to any animal shelter of the donor's choice.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.



Pen City Current obituary policy

Pen City Current runs obituaries one time at no charge to funeral homes and they run the day they are submitted in most cases. They are also run as submitted by the funeral homes. Reposting of obituaries due to changes can only be requested by the submitting funeral home and will be assessed a \$15 reposting fee.

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Member LION Publishers
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Pen City Current, www.PenCityCurrent.com, and Pen e-Saver are products
of Market Street Publishing, LLC. Pen City Current is published
Monday through Friday mornings by 6AM.

Founded in 2016
P.O. Box 366 | Fort Madison, IA

Obituaries/From the Front

OBITUARIES

JO ANN SHANNON

Jo Ann Shannon passed away peacefully on August 27, 2022 at the age of 84 surrounded by her family. She was a loving wife, mother, grandma, great-grandma, loyal friend, and thoughtful listener.

Jo was born on March 2, 1938 to Evelyn and Harry Kosnar and raised in Clutier, Iowa before going to Iowa State University to study Child Development. While at Iowa State, she met and married the love of her life, veterinarian Don Shannon, in 1958. They have been married for 64 years. Jo and Don had a devoted partnership, where Jo worked alongside Don running operations for the veterinary clinics, in addition to raising four children: Sherry (Stephen) Boeding, Steve (Jennifer) Shannon, Cindy (Doug) Hagan, and Sue (Eric) Thomas. They also have a foreign exchange daughter, Gea Peute, from the Netherlands. Jo and Don were united in their strong Catholic faith, including attending mass, praying before meals, and praying each night before bed.

After leaving the nest, her children came back often with her 10 grandchildren, and eventually her 4 great-grandchildren. Jo loved nature and our national parks. She shared this love with her family by holding yearly gatherings at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado, for the better part of three decades. As a hobby photographer and world traveler, Jo completed her lifelong goal of traveling to all 50 states. Her camera rolls are filled with flowers, birds, deer, laughter, and smiles. Jo's way of viewing the world can be best exemplified in her favorite song, "What a Wonderful World" by Louis Armstrong. She was a skilled seamstress and made many clothes for herself and her family over the years. Jo even made her wedding dress and then had to make it a second time after the first dress was destroyed in a house fire two weeks before the wedding. In addition to her devotion to her family, Jo loved the community of Houghton. She served on the Houghton Town Council and the St. Paul Daughters of Isabella. Jo coordinated and organized the Southeast Iowa Veterinary Medical Association for many years. She organized the Houghton Bloodmobile for over 40 years. Jo played the organ in St. John's Catholic Church for more Sundays than she could count; her family will continue to fondly remember her playing the organ for the Christmas Eve services. She gifted her organ playing income to youth in her community. Jo volunteered in the Fort Madison Community Hospital Gift Shop for many years. Her family and friends will remember her rosettes and peppermint cookies she made each holiday season.

Jo loved the youth of Iowa, working as a 4-H volunteer leader, serving as a school board member for Marquette High School, and crocheting hundreds of hand-made hats for newborn babies at the Ft. Madison Community Hospital. Jo's lifelong love of learning was demonstrated through her involvement with Book Club, Study Club, Art Club, and taking classes at Apple Stores. She loved sharing knowledge with others by mailing newspaper clippings to family and friends.

In addition to being business partners for over 60 years, Jo and Don spent time watching the Iowa Hawkeyes, playing Bridge, playing nightly games of FreeCell Solitaire, and watching educational programs on the Iowa PBS Network. Jo was preceded in death by her parents, Evelyn and Harry Kosnar, and sister, Jean Miller. Jo is survived by her husband, Don, and their 4 children, 10 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren.

A Funeral Mass will be held at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, September 1, 2022 at St. John's Catholic Church, Houghton, Iowa, with Reverend Dan Dorau as Celebrant. Following Mass, her family will greet friends at a luncheon at the Houghton Knights of Columbus Hall/Rural Life Center, Houghton. Per Jo's wishes, her body has been donated to the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine. Burial will be at St. John's Cemetery at a later date. In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial gift to honor the legacy of Jo to Iowa PBS. This can be done online via the Iowa PBS website (iowapbs.org/support/give/memorial) through the Memorial Gift section or checks can be mailed to: Iowa PBS Foundation, Attn: Memorial Gifts, P.O. Box 6400, Johnston, IA 50131-6400. Barr-Holtkamp Funeral Home is honored to serve the Shannon Family; an online guest book may be found at www.barrholtkamp-funeralhome.com.



SHANNON

Art in Central Park set for Sunday Sept. 18

EVENTS - Continued from Page 1

paint, and draw what I like.

There will always be somebody who does better than me. But this I know - there will never be another me."

Mandy Robertson's primary medium is colored pencil. She states that she, "likes to render what I see as accurately as I can, with the occasional bit of whimsy thrown in. I consider my work 'pencil paintings' because of the layering involved and richness of color achieved. My subjects are varied: portraiture, still lifes, landscapes, florals, etc... I also enjoy working in graphite, pastels, oil pastels, acrylics, and wood burning."

This exhibition will be on display from Sep 2 - Oct 1 in the Main Gallery. We thank month's sponsor Great River Health Systems for their generous sponsorship which helps to make these exhibitions possible for our community.

Art in Central Park -- Sunday Sep 18 10am-4pm

Join us under the beautiful trees in Central Park for this year's Art in Central Park. We have a terrific lineup of entertainment planned, a Kidzone, artist and artisan wares, and Fat Jimmy's will be on hand with delicious BBQ! Please spread the word among your family and friends and make plans to attend.

11am Music at SCC featuring the STEM Lounge Ensemble

Noon Joe Abandola

1pm Blame Not the Bard

3pm Tommy Caruso

We could not put on this popular event every year without the generous support of our sponsors!! We thank Dana Bushong Jewelry for sponsorship of Music at SCC featuring the STEM Lounge Ensemble kicking off the day at 11am, Jim Baier for the noon performance of Joe Abandola who is also providing sound equipment for this event. We are very pleased to be able to provide Blame Not the Bard as our headlining act this year sponsored by MidWest One Bank.

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Happy LABOR Day

Pen City Current will not publish an e-Edition Monday & Tuesday, September 5 & 6 due to the Labor Day holiday

Breaking news will continue to be published to our website www.PenCityCurrent.com and through our social media channels as it happens.

The e-Edition will resume publication on Wednesday, September 7.

Please celebrate safely.

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Classifieds/Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICES

**PUBLIC NOTICE
MT. PLEASANT
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
Mount Pleasant, Iowa,
July 27, 2022**

The Mount Pleasant City Council met in regular session on Wednesday, July 27, 2022, at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall, 307 East Monroe Street, second-floor meeting room. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Pro Tem and the roll being called there were present Steve Engberg in the Chair and the following named Councilmembers-

Present: Engberg, Crull, McWilliams, White, Griffith, Batty

Absent:

It was moved by Councilmember McWilliams and seconded by Councilmember White that the Council approves the following consent agenda items with one roll call motion vote: the minutes of the July 13, 2022, City Council meeting;

the payment of bills totaling \$358,778.79;

the renewal of a Class B Permit, Outdoor Service & Sunday Sales for Tap This Concessions at 403 E. Thresher Road,

the request from the Optimist Club to block off Monroe Street for their event on September 11,

the request from Relay for Life to block off parking spots on Monroe Street for event on August 19,

the outdoor sound permit for Relay for Life event on August 19 at Central Park from 5-9 p.m.,

the renewal of a Class C Liquor License for the Topsy Traveler's LLC at 219 W. Monroe Street.

Report of officers including the following receipts for June: \$328,738.67 General Fund; \$133,579.04 RUT Fund; \$31,215.00 Housing -Rehab Fund; \$93,464.47 Local Option Sales Tax Fund; \$7,532.40 TIF Fund; \$395,998.29 Debt Service Fund; \$31,141.20 Capital Projects Fund; \$4,976.00 Trust & Agency Fund; \$155,701.04 Sewer Revenue Fund; \$42,068.94 Solid Waste Fund; \$432.94 Library Fund; \$39,518.20 Library Gift Fund. And the following disbursements for June: \$352,207.85 General Fund; \$80,734.93 RUT Fund; (\$270.00) Housing Rehab Fund; \$570.00 Debt Service; \$35,072.41 Sewer Plant Improvement; \$396,828.98 Capital Projects Fund; \$4,052.27 Trust & Agen-

cy; \$64,400.72 Sewer Operation & Maint Fund; (\$4586.40) FEMA Fund; \$24,812.00 ARP Fund; \$34,168.92 Solid Waste Fund; \$31,620.15 Library General Fund; \$2,879.37 Library Gift Fund. And including Transfer Resolution No. 2022-59 with the following transfers for the month of June - \$3,143.07 from Local Option Sales Tax to Capital Projects to close Trail Phase VI; \$75,000 from Sewer Revenue Fund to Sewer Operating & Maint. Fund to reimburse the operating fund for current month expenses; \$94,573.68 from Sewer Revenue Fund to Sewer Sinking Fund 1/12th of FYE22 annual Sewer Revenue Bonds/SRF Loan interest & principal payments; \$17,517.20 from Capital Projects Fund to Local Option Sales Tax to correct Saunders Park Road Transfer in December; \$8,793.66 from Local Option Sales Tax to Capital Projects Fund sidewalk reimbursement program; \$1,400 from Local Option Sales Tax to Capital Projects to complete Saunders Park street patch; \$6,000 from Road Use Tax to Road Use Tax 4X 4 Escrow-annual allocation; \$15,000 from Road Use Tax to Road Use Tax Dump Truck Escrow-annual allocation; \$5,000 from Road Use Tax to Road Use Tax End Loader Escrow-annual allocation; \$55,850 from Road Use Tax Fund to Debt Service Fund for GO Bond Street Sweeper payment; \$17,928.47 from General Fund to General Fund Police Department Grants, Forfeitures, Donation Escrow;

\$8,926.40 from General Fund Balance to General Fund Park Escrow for 2022 parks, winter storage, log cabin and shelter rentals.

Roll call vote 6-0. Motion carried.

Councilmember Griffith moved and Councilmember McWilliams seconded that the Council approve the agenda as printed.

Roll call vote 6-0. Motion carried.

It was moved by Councilmember Crull and seconded by Councilmember Batty that the Council read for the second time the following proposed ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY CODE AND THE ZONING ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA, TO REGULATE DEVELOPMENT IN FLOODPLAINS BY AMENDING CHAPTER 19.14 ENTITLED "ESTABLISHMENT OF DISTRICTS, BOUNDARIES AND OFFICIAL MAP", BY ADDING CHAPTER 19.15A ENTITLED "FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT (OVERLAY) DISTRICT", AND BY AMENDING CHAPTER 25 OF THE CITY CODE OF MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA, ENTITLED "MUNICIPAL FEES AND CHARGES" TO ESTABLISH A FLOODPLAIN DEVELOPMENT PERMIT FEE:

Roll call vote 6-0. Motion carried.

It was moved by Councilmember Batty and seconded by Councilmember Crull that the Council adopt the following entitled Resolution No. 2022-60:

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CITY

OFFICIALS TO APPLY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM AND EXPRESSING INTENT TO ADMINISTER A FLOOD MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Roll call vote 6-0. Resolution adopted, signed by the Mayor, and hereby made a portion of these minutes.

It was moved by Councilmember McWilliams and seconded by Councilmember Crull that the Council adopt the following entitled Resolution No. 2022-61:

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND APPROVING ASSIGNMENT AND ASSUMPTION AGREEMENT

Roll call vote 6-0. Resolution adopted, signed by the Mayor, and hereby made a portion of these minutes.

It was moved by Councilmember Griffith and seconded by Councilmember White that the Council adopt the following entitled Resolution No. 2022-62:

A RESOLUTION SCHEDULING PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSAL TO ABANDON REVERSION RIGHTS AND TO OBTAIN RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL RIGHTS IN LIEU THEREOF REGARDING PROPERTY LOCATED AT 200 NORTH MAIN STREET, MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA

Roll call vote 6-0. Resolution adopted, signed by the Mayor, and hereby made a portion of these minutes.

It was moved by Councilmember Crull and sec-

onded by Councilmember Batty that the Council approve the first reading, waiving the second and third readings and adopt, and assign ordinance #1397:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY CODE OF MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA, CHAPTER 25, SECTION 25-13 ENTITLED "SOLID WASTE CHARGES" BY CHANGING THE AMOUNT BILLED FOR RESIDENTIAL RECYCLING FEES:

Roll call vote 6-0. Motion carried.

Councilmember McWilliams moved and Councilmember Batty seconded that the Council approve the purchase of a new vehicle for the Police Department from Stivers Ford- Waukee, IA for \$35,891.00 Motion approved, 6-0.

It was moved by Councilmember Batty and seconded by Councilmember McWilliams that the Council adopt the following entitled Resolution No. 2022-63:

A RESOLUTION OF

THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA APPROVING THE HIRING OF DALTON BASS FOR THE POSITION OF POLICE OFFICER

Roll call vote 6-0. Resolution adopted, signed by the Mayor, and hereby made a portion of these minutes.

It was moved by Councilmember Crull and seconded by Councilmember White that the Council adjourn. Motion carried. Adjourned at 5:40 p.m. to meet in regular session, Wednesday, August 10, 2022.

Steven K Brimhall, Mayor

ATTEST: Lori Davis, City Clerk

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Executive Director (ED)

For more information please go to
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The FMHA ED serves as the primary source of housing expertise for the FMHA and reports directly to the Board of Commissioners.

Candidates for this position must possess strong leadership qualities, strong communication and collaboration skills, program management experience, and excellent planning and organizational ability. In addition, aptitude with both financial management and community relations is must as the FMHA ED must effectively and efficiently direct operational budgets, improve revenue, develop and implement the FMHA strategic plan as well as enhance relations with the community, internal stakeholders and vendors.

Education or Work Experience Requirements: Bachelor's degree, Associate's Degree and two years experience, or four years of related work experience.

To Apply: The Fort Madison Housing Authority is an equal opportunity employer. Interested candidates must submit a writing sample and have the ability to discuss relevant experience during an interview. To submit resume and relevant writing sample, please email Rebecca Bowker, Chair Fort Madison Board of Commissioners, at Rejobo74@gmail.com.

Keokuk Hospital Closure

County may have to add two more ambulances

HOSPITAL - Continued from Page 1

"That would include an ER with a few observation rooms. We had hoped that might be an option for us, but that did not go forward."

Hull said legislators told her even if Iowa did put that legislation back up it would be next fall before it would hit the books and that's just too far away for the Blessing to stay operational.

Hull said Blessing reached out to State Sen. Jeff Reichman and State Rep. Martin Graber about the upcoming announcement and didn't get a response until Thursday.

"We've also been in contact with the Governor's office on several occasions in an attempt to find anyway we could not do this. We just unfortunately didn't come up with anything," Hull said.

She said Blessing would be open to conversations with Lee County around its ambulance service and how they could help with the increased demand that's on the horizon.

"We have thought of that, but we have not pursued it at this point in time. We have notified them of the closure and we do understand it will be a hardship for them. They are already hardpressed for staffing," she said, adding that Blessing would initiate conversations with Lee County EMS immediately.

Hull also said no one has come forward to talk about taking over the operations.

"There have been many failed partnerships before and getting another partner to come at this point would be incredibly difficult," she said.

The hospital property will be put up for sale, according to Blessing officials.

Effective with the closure of the facility, residents requiring emergency care will have to call 911 for Lee County EMS services and transportation.

Dennis Cosby, the director of the Lee County EMS said he still hasn't fully got

his head around the news.

"It's going to impact the ambulance service in a major way and I just can't tell you all those ways yet. Cosby said. "We're still in the process of figuring out what were going to need to do."

Cosby said when the county was notified of the closure, they were informed that the hospital may not even remain open til Oct. 1 if they can't staff the facility. He said the county is currently trying to determine what they'll need to do to facilitate transports to the closest hospitals.

The closest hospital to Keokuk is now Carthage and Cosby said most insurance carriers require transport to the closest hospital.

"We generally try to follow people's wishes but a lot has to do with the patient's condition, and insurance usually pays to closest facility. Carthage would actually be closest."

That determination would end up costing the

county even more due to the distance back into the county from Carthage, where as a transport to Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center in Fort Madison would have less cost in restaging the ambulance.

"We'll have to put on a second truck in Keokuk. Not only will it increase costs, but we won't have a place to put it," he said.

Blessing was also one of Lee County EMS pharmacy replenishment facilities and Cosby said now that will have to change as well.

"This will be a huge change to our operation and we're going to have to immediately add staff. I'm going to need a couple days for sure to get my head wrapped around it," Cosby said.

Lee County Supervisor Garry Seyb, who sits on the Lee County EMS Advisory Board, said this is a huge challenge now for the county.

"This is definitely going to drive discussion for the ambulance. It almost surely will require expansion of the number of ambu-

lances on any given shift. The only hospital left in the county for emergency is Fort Madison. This will result in more travel time on the road which keeps them out longer," he said.

Keokuk Mayor Kathie Mahoney said the decision will have far reaching implications.

"This decision is not only a blow to Keokuk, but to rural communities everywhere. Residents will either have to travel for care or wait for local urgent care facilities to open. Even then, quality in patient care will only come from facilities 20-60 minutes away. This also is a loss of quality jobs that will significantly impact families and the community," she said.

In response to the announcement, Mahoney said Keokuk officials have reached out to other providers to begin discussions on ways to provide 24-hour care in Keokuk. Additionally, officials will be reaching out to state and federal officials to determine what assistance is available or what legis-

lation is necessary to assist rural communities in maintaining quality health care for their citizens.

Since it reopened in May 2021, Blessing Health Keokuk Clinic has expanded services with the addition of primary care, occupational medicine and other specialty services including orthopedics. These services will continue - as well as the Blessing Be Well at Work program used by area employers - and Hull says more services could be added at the clinic if demand for outpatient care continues to grow.

Blessing Health Keokuk's 147 employees will be retained until November 4 in a combination of either on-site work or on administrative leave and those interested and qualified to transfer within the system will be given assistance as well in the coming weeks.

Patients of Blessing Health Keokuk who need their medical records transferred can go to [blessinghealth.org/medicalrecords](https://www.blessinghealth.org/medicalrecords), or call 217-223-8400, ext. 6600.

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Sports

Hawks sweep VB at home

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELSON - A couple big leads to start the first two sets pushed Central Lee to a three-game sweep of Van Buren County Thursday night.

The Hawks downed Van Buren 25-22, 25-12, 25-13 in a SEI Superconference South matchup at Central Lee.

Freshman Kenna Sandoval opened the night serving seven straight including three aces to get Central Lee a 7-0 lead. But a kill by Van Buren's Ivy Davison stopped the rally and then the Warriors reeled off a run of their own to cut the lead to 7-4.

Back-to-back kills by Mya Lampe gave the Hawks a sideout and a point to make it 9-4, until Van Buren tied it up at 9 when a the Hawks had a defensive let down.

The two teams would trade points for a while until Central Lee pulled ahead 20-16 on a Bailey Schwartz ace. The Hawks would extend the lead to 24-19 on an attack error by sophomore Tessa Sayer.

Central Lee would have trouble finding the final point with three consecutive offensive errors to get the Warriors within two points forcing Central Lee Head Coach Amy Cook to call a time out. The Hawks got the game winner on the next service from Van Buren for the win in game one.

"Yeah, those good starts are beneficial for us, but that's one of the things we need to work on when we get those big runs. We kind of relaxed," Cook said.

Central Lee jumped out to another big lead in the second set going up 9-0. Van Buren wouldn't really get back in that game as the Hawks didn't relax and pushed leads of 14-4 and 21-6 before slamming the door at 25-12 on another Van Buren attack error.

Sandoval who had two blocks on the night got them both at 5-0 and 8-0 in the Hawks' early run.

Central Lee had to work a little at the beginning of the third game but at 3-2 behind consecutive aces from Schwartz, the Hawks got things turned around and raced out to 10-6 lead on a kill from Makayla Morrison to mid court.

Van Buren would cut the lead to three at 11-8 but Central Lee would then outscore the Warriors 9-2 for a 20-10 advantage. A big double block at the net from the Hawks' front line made it 23-13 forcing a Van Buren timeout.

Central Lee would get the next two points on Van Buren errors to wrap up the match.

Cook said the girls showed an increase in on-court intensity compared to the tournament play that started the season last week, including Central Lee's own tournament last weekend.

"Compared to how we've been playing in the past tournaments, they're talking and intensity was a lot better. I think they see that now. Hopefully practices will remain like that and future games as well," Cook said.

The tournament play has helped the Hawks going into the main part of the season,' she said.

"There were some really good teams here and at Wapello. I've said this a lot, but it only makes you better to play those teams. Wilton and HTC are tough teams and it's good for our girls to play those types of teams."

Morrison had 10 kills to lead the Hawks on offense and was 10/10 serving with two aces. Sandoval had 13 assists. Alix Congdon had 10 digs and was 10/12 serving with two aces. Halle Lampe had four blocks for the Hawks.

Central Lee moves to 4-4 on the year and 1-0 on the Superconference. They travel to Mediapolis on Tuesday.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Central Lee's Bailey Schwartz powers an attack at the net Thursday night in the Hawks' 25-22, 25-12, 25-13 win over Van Buren in Donnellson..

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Sports

HTC struggles to finish as No. 12 New London sweeps

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP
PCC SPORTS

FORT MADISON - Holy Trinity had game point in the first game of Thursday's SEI Superconference South Division match against New London, and couldn't finish.

That's been the story of the season for the No. 8 (Class 1A) Crusaders, who fell 27-25, 25-17, 25-22 to the 15th-ranked Tigers.

Holy Trinity (6-5 overall, 0-1 division) had plenty of moments to gain momentum against New London (2-0, 1-0), but couldn't keep the energy going.

And as the schedule heads deeper into division play, it's something that coach Melissa Freesmeier said has to change.

"We've been struggling since we started this year at finishing," Freesmeier said. "You can talk and talk and talk about it, but you've got to get it done."

That was especially evident in the first game, which set the tone for the rest of the match.

Holy Trinity, which led 19-14 and 20-15 in the game, allowed New London to rally, then fought off game point with a kill from Mary Kate Bendlage. A hitting error by the Tigers tied the game at 24, then Bendlage's ace put the Crusaders one point from victory.

But New London would score the next three points, the last coming from a tip from Camryn Lair, and the Tigers were in command.

"Absolutely it was big momentum there," Freesmeier said.

New London led the entire second game, opening with a 9-2 run. Holy Trinity got to within 12-10, but the Tigers would pull away.

The Crusaders led for most of the third game, but with an 18-14 lead allowed the Tigers to score the next six points. Holy Trinity got to within 23-22 when Presley Myers had a kill and then a block, but the Tigers would score the final two points to finish the match.

Holy Trinity is without junior Natalie Randolph, an emotional leader of the team who is out with a knee injury.

"These kids, they know they have the talent," Freesmeier said. "Natalie's an emotional leader, she is. I'm not here to make excuses, because this team can win ball-games. Yeah, we've been struggling, but we've got to find a way. We've got leaders, so we should be able to get it done."

The Crusaders struggled with hitting errors and mental mistakes — they gave up a point down 20-19 in the third game on a red card because of a substitution infraction.

"I thought we had some kids step up," Freesmeier said. "But we had some hitting errors here and there that you can't do. Our conference is going to be a dogfight, and it's never going to be an easy night. We've got to get it together."

Bendlage led the Crusaders with 14 kills. Myers had eight kills. Kayla Box had three, Brooke Mueller had two and Taegan Denning had one.

Anna Bendlage had 26 assists and was 14-of-16 serving with two aces. Mary Kate Bendlage was 14-of-14 serving with two aces. Denning was 10-of-10 with an ace. Mueller was 8-of-9 and Alexa Dingman was 8-of-9. Laura Mehmert was 4-of-6.

Mueller had 23 digs. Teagan Snaadt had 18 digs. Anna Bendlage had 17 digs. Mary Kate Bendlage had 14. Denning had eight. Myers had three blocks and Mueller had one.



Photos by John Lovretta/Special to PCC

Above, Holy Trinity High School High School's Anna Bendlage (24) and Presley Myers (17) go up to block a shot by Tysann Gipple (10) during the second game of their match against New London High School, Thursday, September 1, 2022 in Fort Madison.

At right, Presley Myers (17) and Anna Bendlage (24) celebrate a point during the first game.



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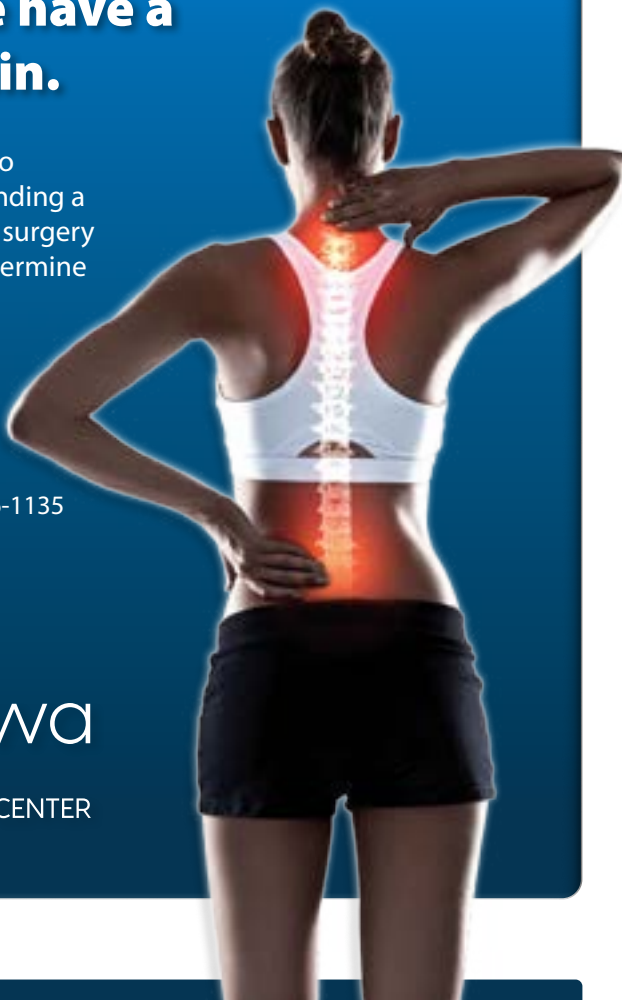
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FUNDING - Continued from Page 1

Monday, September 12, 2022. Please contact Karen Siefken, Executive Director at director@unitedwaygrr.org or at 319-524-4504 or any current UWGRR Board member to receive a grant application packet. No packets will be distributed prior to Monday, September 12, 2022.

Applications and all required paperwork are due to the United Way of the Great River Region office in Keokuk, IA or must be post marked no later than Monday, October 17, 2022 at 4:00 pm.

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