

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Monday, March 6, 2023 | 6 pages | Volume 7 • Issue 50



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Teachers' Week at FMHS



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison Music Director Taylor Stoddard gets congratulated by Oliver Santiago and Ethan Huffman as the students' choice for Teacher of the Year at an assembly put together by Santiago and Huffman. The two worked with the FMHS Student Council and Sponsor Zach Russell to put together an entire week for teacher recognition at the high school.

STUDENT COUNCIL: Huffman, Santiago, Russell lead week's tribute to FMHS teachers

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A couple of Fort Madison students brought together the Fort Madison Student Council to spend the week doing good deeds for the teachers at Fort Madison High School last week.

The teachers were recognized throughout the week with activities, snacks, and special recognition from the student body and FMCSB Board of Directors.

The week culminated in an assembly Friday afternoon where teachers were recognized by votes of the student body, were given the opportunity to test their skills against some students, and were even allowed to pie a student of their choice.

"We all know they don't get thanked enough for the all the hard work they do, whether it be outside of school working on grading things and creating homework or things like that,"

See HONORS, page 3

COUNTY NEWS

County to restart Keokuk EMS facility project

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – County officials are poised to start over with a construction project in Keokuk.

The Lee County Board of Supervisors had previously hired AC Contracting

out of Keokuk to be the construction manager for a new EMS ambulance bay near the corner of 16th and Blondeau, but that move could be rescinded Monday.

On the agenda for the Board of Supervisors meeting is discussion and possible action to wipe out the previous

hiring and hire an engineer to design the building.

The county would then solicit bids for the construction of the EMS facility after designs have been prepared.

Supervisor Tom Schulz said the

See COUNTY, page 4



Norris making lasting impact on SE Iowa

Life is tough enough. It's good to have partnerships.

In my other life, I write grants for Lee County and we've had some success saving taxpayer money on the Lee County Health Department with some great assistance from the USDA.

But this week, Congresswoman Marianne Miller-Meeks announced funding for the Community Project Funding Grant program, a congressional appropriation program where each U.S. Representative submits projects for federal funding.



NORRIS

At first blush, I thought the Lee County Health Department project would be a good funding opportunity for Congressional earmarks. After all, Miller-Meeks is a doctor and the Lee County Health Department is one of the top county-run health departments in the state.

That's not just me saying that, even though it is. This health department is relied upon by the state for assistance to many neighboring counties.

When I first presented the project to Congresswoman Miller-Meeks' staff, they told me that it wouldn't be applicable because it's a government-run health care department.

But Mike Norris of Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission stepped into the picture. Not an uncommon occurrence in my experience.

Norris asked if the county was looking into the funding stream. I told him we were, but initially Miller-Meeks' staff said the project wouldn't qualify because of the government control of the facility and some accounts don't allow for health care

See NORRIS, page 2

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WEATHER

OpenWeatherMap

MON 06 Mar Partly sunny and gusty, 59° F/ 33° F
TUE 07 Mar Mostly cloudy and gusty, 48° F/ 32° F
WED 08 Mar Cloudy and breezy, 43° F/ 33° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 03/04..... 2 5 24 32 52, Star Ball: 4 All Star Bonus: 2
LUCKY FOR LIFE 03/04..... 4 7 15 17 30, Lucky Ball: 5
MEGA MILLIONS 03/03..... 8 25 36 39 67, Mega Ball: 11 Megaplier: 4
PICK 3 03/02, 03/03, 03/04 MIDDAY..... 251, 362, 030
PICK 3 03/02, 03/03, 03/04 EVENING..... 227, 551, 718
PICK 4 03/02, 03/03, 03/04 MIDDAY..... 6 719, 0 0 53, 2 764
PICK 4 03/02, 03/03, 03/04 EVENING..... 8 0 30, 3 6 7 8, 6 3 0 8
POWERBALL 03/04..... 10 16 18 40 66, Powerball: 16 Power Play: 3

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Opinion/From the Front

Norris a common thread for many projects

NORRIS - Continued from Page 1

facilities. I don't really get why a health facility would be embargoed from any government grant program. Nothing hits the community more directly than the health of its residents.

In the ongoing communications with Norris sorting through the grant program, he said he believed the program might qualify, but he would defer to the Congresswoman's office on the determination.

On a second consideration Miller-Meeks' office, in respectable diligence, contacted the USDA office in Des Moines and staff there said the project does seem to fit the USDA Community facility funding account. Obviously, it would need to compete with other projects in the pipeline that the Congresswoman would move forward.

It's up to the county to create a narrative that satisfies the requirements of the program, and a narrative that brings the project to the forefront of the deliberations.

Without Norris, we may not have even gotten out of the starting blocks.

People in southeast Iowa need to look at the value that Norris and his team at Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission bring to the area.

This group's sole responsibility is to help create economic growth in this part of the state. They not only help with grant preparation and navigating partnerships, but Norris is the administrator of the Southeast Iowa Regional Port Authority.

Norris shepherds programming for the port authority that has included a critical boost to the Lee County broadband infrastructure. The PORT authority hand-held an agreement to get America Rescue Plan Act funding from the county to Danville Teleco, to create a new broadband backbone in Lee County. Yes, the project serves as an infrastructure boost to the private company, but it also positions the county stronger strategically for much improved connections in rural areas.

The state just opened up a new window for additional broadband improvements through a request for interest from broadband companies. Norris and SEIRPC are already looking at how they can leverage prior action to improve services in Lee County.

We're not carrying the water for the SEIRPC group, just giving credit where credit is due.

This group helps all organizations in southeast Iowa and is there to help, literally, think outside the box when

it comes to securing funding.

When we started talking about trail systems in Lee County, Norris challenged us to think bigger picture and those conversations are starting to come into focus.

Norris has been instrumental in bringing housing and housing improvements to southeast Iowa. He hooked his truck to the Iowa Prison Industries and is now leading the efforts for offenders building homes in the Homes for Iowa program. His work there has garnered state-wide attention, and when people talk about the effectiveness of the Port Authority, they look to what Norris and that board of directors has accomplished in this area.

The work with Lee County Economic Development Group in securing that group's new facilities and navigating the finances and partnerships critical to that venture has been something of a blueprint for other people around the state.

This is a guy, and a group, that has had a huge impact on southeast Iowa's growth and is well known by those in the know.

But those of you not in the know need to pay attention to what is going on with SEIRPC and the strides being made by them and the Port Authority, all under the direction of Norris. This is one of those great stories unfolding in southeast Iowa that people need to be keeping an eye on. We've been writing about it for awhile. It's groundbreaking work and Mike never makes himself inaccessible. He's always just a phone call away.

That's one of the really great things about him. He takes a call, he slows you down, he sees the whole board, and his leadership is cutting edge.

We have many people in southeast Iowa that step up to produce economic growth - many that help create partnerships in this arena or that. But Norris is one of the few whose reach touches almost every group at one point or another.

Pay attention to what he's doing for the area, and what SEIRPC and the Port Authority are doing to bring groups together, access funding, bring growth and partnership to the area, and always answering a call.

Norris and his organizations are part of the fabric of most groups working to better our communities.

If they aren't on your radar, they should be. That behind the scenes work is immeasurable, and underappreciated... but that's Beside the Point.

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

Fox call is a lesson in small victories

I saw the advertisement for the fox call in an old Outdoor Life magazine. A neighbor gave me all his old Outdoor Life and Field and Stream magazines, and I devoured them like candy. I was 12 years old. The advertisement read: "Drives fox crazy. Guaranteed to bring fox to you, even in over-hunted areas, or your money back." The price was \$12.98. I couldn't resist.

It was early March, and I had a little money left over from chopping thistles and walking beans. I learned

how to write a business letter in school. "To Whom It May Concern:

EMPTY NEST

By Curt Swarm



Concern:

Please send me the Professional Fox Call. Find enclosed my address and a money order for \$12.98. Curtis W. Swarm." I felt important using my middle initial.

The money order cost a dime at the post office. I slipped it into the envelope, along with the business letter, and sent it off. Then came the unbearable wait.

Two weeks later, there was a package waiting for me on the steps to my room. With fevered fingers, I tore it open. The device didn't look anything like I had imagined. There was a black rubber pumping device attached to a wooden whistle or horn. When I pumped it, a squeak or squeal emitted. Something must be wrong. How could this call fox? I considered sending it back and demanding my money.

However, Saturday was fast approaching. I would at least give it a try. I had heard that the best place to call a fox from was up a tree. There were some climbable hawthorn trees on the creek bottom. I would perch myself there, and see what I could call in.

I could hardly sleep the night before, and I was up way before daylight. The temperature was hovering around zero when I started off before sunrise. I

See SWARM, page 6

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From the Front

Stoddard named FMHS students' Favorite Teacher

HONORS - Continued from Page 1

FMHS student Oliver Santiago told the students Friday afternoon.

"All you guys have to do to fix that is if you see a teacher, just thank them for what they do. All you have to say is 'I appreciate you - thank you for all you do.' That could make their day, their week, their whole year."

"Here at Fort Madison, we're so lucky to have such amazing teachers," said student Ethan Huffman.

The students voted throughout the week on awards for the teachers.

At the assembly the Best Teacher Gal Pals went to Ms. Adonica Brunenn and Ms. Carla Sanders, both science teachers at the high school.

Best Male Teacher Bro-mance was awarded to Mr. Randy Sissell and Mr. Mark Bunt, both of the English Department. Bunt was also honored as the students' choice for Best Dressed.

Best School Spirit went to Terri Holterhaus, a teacher associate at the school.

"I wanna thank you guys from bottom of my heart. I always tell you to be good to yourselves and be good to each other," Holterhaus said.

The students and teachers then had a 9-on-9 tug o' war contest.

The teachers won the first tug across the gym, but the students came back for a win in the second tug when junior Cory Arnett stepped in to anchor the student squad.

The teachers then added some beefcake of their own and took the tiebreaker.

Additional awards were given to Math Instructor John McCannon of the math department, before Taylor Stoddard was awarded Most Likely to Become Internet Famous, and then he was voted the students' Favorite Teacher.

Activities Director Jeff Lamb said the whole week was a product of Student Council sponsor Zach Russell, who's also a special education instructor, along with the leadership of Huffman and Santiago.

Lamb told the students it makes a tremendous difference when they acknowledge the work of district teachers.

"I'm loving watching this. I want to send a shout out from the administration to the teachers," Lamb told the students.

"They do a ton of work for you guys. Sometimes you don't see it, but if you can show your appreciation to a teacher on a regular basis, it would make a huge difference."



Photos by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison High School teachers and co-principal Adrian McKay get down to the last three chairs in a game of musical chairs Friday afternoon. Below, Jaden Bowen gets pied and associate Terri Holterhaus does the splits after being named Teacher with the Best School Spirit.



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It's Black & White and Read all over

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From the Front/Classifieds

Supervisors to discuss LCHD project

COUNTY - Continued from Page 1

county may not have properly followed advertising for the work last month and, at the direction of Lee County Attorney Ross Braden, are looking at restarting the process.

Supervisors are hoping to get the new facility built for less than \$1 million. It's the second project aimed at upgrading the EMS properties, the first such upgrades since purchasing the service in 2021.

The county is ready to finalize plans for the new Lee County Health Department, which will likely have a new Fort Madison EMS bay attached to the building. Carl A. Nelson Co. is the general contractor for that project. Discussion on those construction plans is also on the agenda for Monday's meeting.

Schulz said there were some inconsistencies in what he heard from AC Contracting's Wes Ames during the

interview process for the construction manager, what he heard in February, and what he had heard in an update Monday as far as charges associated with the work.

"This is not the same conversation we had two weeks ago," Schulz said Monday.

Upon reviewing the initial proposal with Braden, Schulz said it became apparent the county didn't advertise the work in enough publications statewide, and didn't score the interview processes. On that realization, it was recommended the board scrap the hire and restart the process to make sure all requirements are met.

In an unrelated issue, the board will also vote to rescind a motion to hire seasonal employees in the Lee County Conservation department due to an error in how the positions were being funded. The board is still planning to hire the staff under a different funding mechanism.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison's Oliver Santiago pulls a guitar solo during the Bloodhound's Swingspan performance Friday at FMHS.

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Classifieds/Public Notices

PEN CITY CURRENT CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE
Lee County, Iowa
Board of Supervisors
Agenda
DATE: Monday,
March 6, 2023
MEETING
CONVENING TIME:
10:00 A.M. (CDT)
LOCATION:
933 Avenue H
Fort Madison, IA

BOS Meeting
 Mon, Mar 6, 2023 10:00 AM -11:00 AM (CST)
 Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.
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If you would like to pose a question to the Board, please use the Chat feature and wait for the Chairman to address you. If you are participating by phone, please wait until everyone is done speaking before addressing the

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Board. Please keep your microphone muted to cut down on background noise. If you are participating by phone, press #6, this will mute your phone.

Pledge of Allegiance
 Approve Agenda
 Public Input
 Review Applications and Approve Filling Vacancy on Conservation Board
 Consider Approval to Rescind Motion and Action Taken Made in Error Regarding Funding Source For Seasonal Employees for Conservation
 Consider Approval to Hire Seasonal Employees for Conservation
 Discussion of County Attorney's Legal Opinion of Action Taken Regarding Hiring of Contract Manager for Keokuk Ambulance Base
 Consider Approval to Rescind Action Taken Regarding Contract Manager for Keokuk Ambulance Base
 Discuss and Consider Approval to Hire Engineering Firm for Design Services For Keokuk Ambulance Base
 Discussion and Possible Action on Construction Options for Health/EMS Building
 Consider Approval of Class C Retail Alcohol License for Sheaffer Memorial Golf Park
 Consider Approval of Class C Retail Alcohol License for Green Bay Bar & Grill
 Consider Approval of Class E Retail Alcohol License for Wever Junction
 Consider Approval of Tax Abatement Resolution
 Consider Approval of Monday, February 27, 2023 Board Minutes
 Consider Approval of Claims for Payment
 Personnel Actions:
 A. Step Increase - Sheriffs Office
 Reports:
 A. Commission of Veteran Affairs Minutes of Meeting
 Commission or Committee Reports
 Adjourn

Possible Workshop to Follow
PUBLIC MEETING
CITIZENS WELCOME

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County Website:
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PUBLIC NOTICE
MEETING NOTICE
FORT MADISON
AIRPORT COMMISSION
MONDAY,
MARCH 6, 2023
6:00 P.M.
Municipal Airport
50 Airport Road,
Fort Madison, IA 52627

AGENDA
 ROLL CALL
 APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING
 BUSINESS:
 1. Closeout of Grants
 2. AWOS Grant/Update
 ADJOURNMENT

PUBLIC NOTICE
TENTATIVE AGENDA
FORT MADISON
CITY COUNCIL
Tuesday, March 7, 2023
5:30 P.M.
City Council Chambers,
City Hall

INVOCATION
 ROLL CALL
 VISITORS AND APPEARANCE REQUESTS:
 At this time persons may address Council on any matters not on the Council agenda. After identifying yourself by name and address, please briefly state your issue.

PLEASE NOTE: This is not an opportunity to discuss issues with Council or to get information. In accordance with Open Meetings law, Council may not deliberate upon, nor take action on any complaint or suggestion or respond to any allegations which are not part of the published agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA
 1. (Blank) MOVED and (blank) SECONDED to approve the consent agenda:
 • Minutes of February 14 and 21, 2023;
 • Liquor License Renewals: Under the Sun, 733 Avenue G, effective March 1, 2023 – Special Class B Retail Native Wine, LULAC Council #304, 1424 – 36th Street, effective April 18, 2023 – Class C Retail Alcohol License; Chuong Garden, 712- 9th Street, effective March 2, 2023 – Class C Retail Alcohol License;
 • Claims dated March 2, 2023, February Manuals and Financial Report; and
 • Payroll of February 24, 2023.
COMMUNITY REPORT: Fiesta Committee

– Angela Salazar
 Discussion and Possible Action: Contribution to Fiesta Committee

PUBLIC HEARINGS
 Concerning An Amended and Substituted Lease Agreement with the Tri-State Rodeo
 2. (Blank) MOVED and (blank) SECONDED to adopt resolution approving the Mayor's signature on an Amended and Substituted Lease Agreement with the Tri-State Rodeo.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS
 3. (Blank) MOVED and (blank) SECONDED to adopt resolution approving garbage collection fees. (SEE COUNCIL REPORT NO. 2023-07)
 4. (Blank) MOVED and (blank) SECONDED to adopt a resolution approving the Mayor's signature on a professional services agreement with SCS Engineers Environmental Consultants and Contractors for engineering services and sampling at the closed landfill. (SEE COUNCIL REPORT NO. 2023-08)

5. (Blank) MOVED and (blank) SECONDED to adopt resolution approving the Mayor's signature on a Crossing Safety Improvement Agreement with the Iowa Department of Transportation for the 53rd Street railroad crossing (K-Line). (SEE COUNCIL REPORT NO. 2023-09)

6. (Blank) MOVED and (blank) SECONDED to adopt a resolution approving an application for a Three-Year Urban Revitalization Tax Exemption for: Patricia Sexton, 2201 Avenue H (garage).

7. (Blank) MOVED and (blank) SECONDED to adopt a resolution setting public hearing at 5:30 P.M. on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, on the sale of City property located at 1713-1715 Avenue H.

OTHER
 8. (Blank) MOVED and (blank) SECONDED to approve the bid of 3E of Burlington, Iowa, in the amount of \$115,270 for lights for the Riverview Park Marina Project.

9. Update/Discussion and Possible Action: Old Fort Madison
DEPARTMENT REPORTS AND CITY MANAGER'S FINANCIAL REPORT
COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS/MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS
ADJOURNMENT - The

City Council next regular meeting will be 5:30 P.M. on Tuesday, March 21, 2023.

PUBLIC NOTICE
MEETING NOTICE
MONTROSE CITY
COUNCIL MEETING
MARCH 8, 2023
4:30 P.M.
REGULAR MEETING
MONTROSE CITY HALL
AGENDA

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC: The Mayor and City Council welcome comments from the public during discussion. If you wish to speak, please step up to the Council table, state your name and address for the record and limit the time used to present your remarks to five minutes in order that others may be given the opportunity to speak. The normal process on any particular agenda item is that the motion is placed on the floor, input is received from the audience, the Council is given an opportunity to comment on the issue or respond to the audience concerns, and the vote is taken. On ordinances, there is time provided for public input at the time of the first reading. In consideration of all, if you have a cell phone, please turn it off or put it on silent ring.
CALL TO ORDER.
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.
CONSENT AGENDA:
 All items listed under the Consent Agenda will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a request is made prior to the time the Council members vote on the motion.
 1. Approve Agenda as written.
 2. Approve February 8, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes.
 3. Approve February 2023 Treasurer's Report as presented.
 4. Approve Payment of Claims as presented.
PUBLIC FORUM:
 This is a time set aside for comments from the public on topics of City business other than those listed on this agenda. Please understand that the Council is not likely to take any action on your comments at this meeting due to requirements of the Open Meetings Law, but may do so at a future meetings. The Mayor and City Council welcome comments from

the public; however, at no time is it appropriate to use profane, obscene, or slanderous language. The Mayor may limit each speaker to five minutes.

EMPLOYEE COMMENTS:
COMMITTEE REPORTS:
 Public Safety Chief Shields submitted his police report, General Government & Enterprise, Culture & Recreation, Public Works, and Economic & Community Development.

OLD BUSINESS:
 1. Approve waiving the second reading of the Ordinance raising City of Montrose resident trash collection fees of \$17.25 per month for each dwelling. **ROLL CALL VOTE**

2. Approve the third reading of the Ordinance raising City of Montrose resident trash collection fees of \$17.25 per month for each dwelling. **ROLL CALL VOTE**

3. Schedule FY24 Final Budget Public Hearing for April 12th at 4:30pm.

4. Schedule Special Meeting for March 20th at 4:30 pm to discuss updated taxable values to complete the FY24 budget process.

NEW BUSINESS:
 1. Approve scheduling city wide clean-up for April 19, 2023.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS.

ADJOURNMENT:
 *Please note that this agenda may be changed up to 24 hours before the meeting time as provided by Section 21,4(2). Code of Iowa.



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Scene Around Town/Opinion

Don't give up on life's debts

SWARM- Continued from Page 3

debated whether to take my single shot .22 or the double barrel .410. I settled on the double barrel .410. Two shots were better than one, although I didn't want to damage a hide with shotgun pellets.

There was a foot or so of snow on the ground, and it crunched and gave way with each step. I had on two pair of socks, and was wearing my father's insulated boots, which were about three sizes too big. Making my way to the hawthorn thicket was hard work and noisy. Every critter in the area had to have heard me. I was sweating profusely before I even got to The Tree.

Climbing the hawthorn tree was tricky, with all the clothing, and trying to hang on to a shotgun. I kept snagging on the three-inch long thorns and having to unhook myself. The thorns were supposed to be poisonous.

I perched myself in the crook of the tree, and gave a honk on the fox call. It sounded stupid. I felt stupid. I waited and waited. It was extremely uncomfortable in the tree, and I had to keep repositioning myself. I gave another honk. Even though I had been sweating when got to the tree, my feet were now froze, along with my fingers. I wouldn't be able to shoot the .410 even if I did see something. I gave one last honk. Discouraged, and so cold I could hardly move, I jumped down. I would finish the morning by rabbit hunting.

Off to my side something jumped. It was a fox! Up and over the hill it tore before I could even bring the gun to my shoulder.

I had called in a fox and hadn't even known it.

It seems life often plays similar tricks—we're very close to something we've been working long and hard for but give up without knowing victory was close at hand. You may have noticed the planets Jupiter and Venus in the western sky just after dark, perhaps portending important future events. The Ides of March, March 15th, is close at hand. March 15th was known as Debt Collection Day in Ancient Greece. What major life debt are you looking to collect on? Don't give up. The wily fox is every present.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison High School's Swingspan puts on one of their routines Friday afternoon as part of an assembly honoring Fort Madison High School teachers. The annual Bloodhound Invitational took place Saturday at the high school.

Ag risk coverage program up and running

DES MOINES – Agricultural producers who have not yet enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for the 2023 crop year have until March 15, 2023, to elect and enroll a contract. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers these two safety net programs to provide vital income support to farmers experiencing substantial declines in crop prices or revenues.

"The Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs provide critical financial protections to many American farmers. As producers across the country deal with unexpected market volatility and natural disasters, these programs offer much-needed support and stability," said Matt Russell, State Executive Director for FSA in Iowa. "I am encouraging producers to reach out to their county offices to learn about program eligibility and election options today, so that they can begin the enrollment process as soon as possible."

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County or PLC, which are both commodity-by-commodity, or ARC-Individual, which covers the entire farm. Although election changes for 2023 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Additionally, if a producer has a multi-year contract on their farm and makes an election change for 2023, they will need to sign a new contract.

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Lunch Specials
March 3 - 10
11am - 1pm

Monday, March 6

Chicken & Noodles, Mashed Potatoes

Tuesday, March 7

Chicken Fajitas, Brownies

Wednesday, March 8

Minit Steak, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans

Thursday, March 9

Fried Chicken Dinners

Friday, March 10

Fish & Shrimp Dinners