

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Wednesday, September 27, 2023 | 7 pages | Volume 7 • Issue 159



www.pencitycurrent.com

Rolling out the ghouls



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Chad Donaldson works with the software he uses to put up a Halloween themed projection as part of his holiday display at the corner of 18th and Avenue D in Fort Madison

CREATURE FEATURE: FM couple works up Halloween display for fourth year

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Halloween starts in July for Chad and Denise Donaldson.

The Fort Madison couple has taken just four holiday seasons to become one of the most iconic spooky homes in the city. The display at 316 18th Street in Fort Madison, just southeast of the Fort Madison High School Campus, won the Fort Madison Kiwanis award for best Halloween display last year.

But Chad Donaldson, a Lee County Sheriff's detective, is quick to say it's not for the awards.

"We just love to see people driving by, even before Halloween, and staring out the window or kids stretching their heads in the car seats to see what's going on."

And it's not just outside, the inside of the home is overrun with ghouls, skeletons, Hollywood's scariest characters, and even some of its most loveable.

And they play company to the Donaldson family all year long. Some of the mannequins get redressed in St. Patrick's garb or Christmas outfits and provide a unique setting for family dinners.

It's not uncommon to see Chad and Denise out in the

See DISPLAY, page 6

FMCS D to get three new directors

SCHOOL BOARD: Hope pulls petition for third-term after seeing four candidates

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – At least three of the current Fort Madison school board of directors will be replaced at the end of the year.

Current Fort Madison Community School District directors Dianne Hope, Lois DiPrima, Carol Ross, and Josh Wykert all have seats up for election during the Nov. 7 election, but only Wykert, the current board president, has filed papers to hold onto his position.

Hope had filed papers to seek her third four-year term, but at Monday's regular board meeting she informed the board she had rescinded her application after seeing that four candidates had submitted their nomination petition.

"I presented a letter to Dr. Slater that I'm withdrawing my petition for candidacy. We have four good candidates here," Hope said.

"It's been a great eight years, but it's time to take a little bit of a break. It was something I had to think hard about and was concerned that we wouldn't have four candidates, but we've done a lot of good things."

Wykert thanked Hope for her service and her leadership roles, including serving as president and vice president of the board since her election in 2015.

"It was a tough decision and emotional," she said.

She said she is happy to step aside with students in a better place with the facili-



HOPE



WYKERT

See BOARD, page 3

STUDENT SAFETY

Lamb says more staff needed at FMCS D events

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The Fort Madison School board annually gets a sober dose of reality in terms of school safety when officials return from the National School Safety Conference.

This year was no different as Fort Madison High School Principal Pat-

rick Lamb attended the event with several other school officials and brought back some suggestions for the district.

Lamb is also the district's safety director and has attended the conference on multiple occasions.

One of the suggestions is to create a Threat Management Team within the district's Threat Assessment

team, which is a group of school and law enforcement officials that meet regularly to assess the district's safety status.

"I'm going to propose at the first Threat Assessment Team meeting that we create this team," Lamb said.

"It should be a multi-agency team

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WEATHER

WED 27 Sep.....Patchy fog early, then sunny & cool, 74° F/ 58° F
THU 28 Sep.....Mostly sunny & cool, 77° F/ 59° F
FRI 29 Sep.....Sunny & warm, 83° F/ 62° F

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LOTTO AMERICA 09/25.....19 23 31 38 52, Star Ball: 8 All Star Bonus: 2
LUCKY FOR LIFE 09/25.....27 9 11 18, Lucky Ball: 7
PICK 3 MIDDAY 09/25.....2 6 3
PICK 3 EVENING 09/25.....0 2 4
PICK 4 MIDDAY 09/25.....3 5 6 8
PICK 4 EVENING 09/25.....8 6 4 0
POWERBALL 09/25.....10 12 22 36 50, Powerball: 4 Power Play: 2

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Obituaries

OBITUARIES

JUDY K. TADE

Judy Kay Tade, 78, of Farmington, Iowa, passed away at 5:00 a.m. Friday, September 22, 2023 at her home in Farmington.

She was born on May 21, 1945 in Fort Madison, Iowa. Judy was the daughter of Veronica "Babe" (Strabala) and Paul Robert Lowery. On October 14, 1966 she married William "Bill" Tade in Edina, Missouri.



TADE

Survivors include her husband Bill; daughter Angela Tade of West Chester, Ohio; sister Paula Jo "P.J." (Neal) Acklie of Kahoka Missouri; two sisters-in-law: Sheri Lowery of Farmington and Karen (Randy) Kisling of Keosauqua. Also surviving are seven nephews and one niece.

She was preceded in death by her parents and brother Richard Lowery.

Judy worked at Shaffer Pen Company for 43 years. She was a member of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Houghton. She enjoyed her cats and her grand dog. Her daughter Angela was very important to her. Judy Enjoyed sewing and quilting.

A Mass of Christian burial will be held at 10:30 a.m. Friday, September 29, 2023 at St. Johns the Baptist Catholic Church in Houghton with Father Dan Dorau as celebrant.

Burial will be in the Vale Cemetery near Bonaparte.

Memorial have been established in her memory For St. John's Catholic Church or PAW Animal Shelter.

Online condolences may be made to the family at www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com. Schmitz Funeral Home of Farmington is assisting the family with arrangements.

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.

OBITUARIES

TRAVIS BROWN

Travis Brown, 42, of Ft Madison, went home to be with the Lord on Friday, September 15, 2023, in Burlington.

Born May 9, 1981, at Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, NC to Shelia Brown. He was the adopted son of Steven and Vicky Robertson Brown. He married the love of his life Heidi Humphries twice; once on March 17, 2011 and again on February 2, 2023.



BROWN

Travis was always a hard worker. He was a carpenter for New Vision Contracting.

Travis was a member of Joy Baptist Church in Ft. Madison and loved reading his Bible. He especially enjoyed taking walks or watching movies with his wife. He was a lover of music and his favorite band was Blink 182. Travis had a thirst for knowledge and was always learning new things. He had a very strong passion for cooking. Everyday after work he enjoyed caring for his many plants. He was very funny and ornery. He had a very big heart, was a good listener, and was very willing to help anyone who needed help. Most of all, he loved his friends and family.

Survivors include his wife, Heidi Brown of Ft. Madison; parents, Steven and Vicky Brown of Wever; mother, Shelia Brown of Fairfield; three sons, Bailey Schwerin of Traer, IA, Tykel Brown and Tayvias Brown of Burlington; two grandchildren, Zaiden and Vera, plus another on the way; two brothers, Brian (Nikki Clements) Brown of Burlington, and Christopher (Kayla Hills) Brown of Hudson, IA; one niece, Starla Clements and grandparents, Richard Robertson of Wapello and Lela Robertson of West Burlington.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents and one infant child.

Visitation will be from noon until 7:00 PM with the family to receive friends from 5:00 PM until 7:00 PM, Monday, October 2, 2023 at Prugh Funeral Service, 3940 Division Street, Burlington.

The funeral service for Mr. Brown will be 1:00 PM, Tuesday, October 3, 2023 at Prugh Funeral Service, 3940 Division Street, Burlington with Pastor Earl Beal officiating. Burial will be in Claypoole Cemetery, Wever following the service. A time of food and fellowship will be held at the Burlington Eagles Club following the burial.

A memorial has been established.

Prugh Funeral Service is in care of the arrangements.

A photo tribute can be viewed and condolences can be sent to the family by visiting Travis's obituary at www.prughfuneral.com.



Lunch Specials
Sept 25-29
11am - 1pm

Monday, Sept 25

Chicken Strips, Tater Tots, Applesauce

Tuesday, Sept 26

Tenderloins, Cheese Potatoes, Brownie

Wednesday, Sept 27

Burnt Ends, Mac & Cheese, Slaw

Thursday, Sept 28

Fried Chicken Dinners

Friday, September 29

Lunch on the Sidewalk

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It's Black & White and Read all over

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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

MICHEAL P. ARNOLD

Micheal Paul "Mike" Arnold, 68, of West Point, Iowa, passed away at 10:41 a.m. Monday, September 25, 2023, at the Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center in Fort Madison.



ARNOLD

He was born on November 8, 1954, the son of Don "Bud" and Opal Jean "Nikki" (Nichols) Arnold. On June 28, 2003, he married Carol Ann Plassmeyer at St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church in West Point.

Survivors include his wife: Carol; step-daughter: Holly (Jonathan) Thompson and their children: Chase, Noah, Zac and Quinn of Santa Barbara, California; step-grandson Bryant Steffensmeier; sister: Carol (Richard) Gentili of Buckeye, Arizona; brother-in-law: Mark (Alisa) Plassmeyer of Blue Springs, Missouri; nieces and nephews: Suzy (Mike) Finigan; Ronnie Gentili, Craig Plassmeyer, Kyle (Nikki) Plassmeyer and Bri (Matt) Skiles. Also surviving are several cousins.

He was preceded in death by his parents; father and mother-in-law: Billy and June Plassmeyer and step-son: Adam Steffensmeier.

Mike was a 1972 graduate of Fort Madison High School. He worked as a mechanic at Silgan Containers for thirty-eight years before retiring in 2016. He was a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church in West Point. Mike was an avid St. Louis Cardinals, Minnesota Vikings and NASCAR fan. With his superb mechanical skills, Mike could fix anything. He was known as "Arnie" to his co-workers and "Ol' Mike" to his family.

A visitation will be held from 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, September 27, 2023, at Schmitz Funeral Home in West Point.

The family will receive friends from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Thursday, September 28, 2023, at St. Mary's Catholic Church in West Point.

A Mass of Christian burial will be held at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, September 28, 2023, at St. Mary's Catholic Church in West Point with Father Dan Dorau as Celebrant.

Burial will be at Calvary Cemetery in West Point.

In lieu of flowers, memorials have been established in his memory to PAW Animal Shelter or the Monsignor J.A. Wagner Building Fund.

Schmitz Funeral Home of West Point is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences may be made to the family at www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com.

JOANN BOULWARE

JoAnn "Jo" Boulware, 82, of Donnellson, Iowa, passed away at 9:20 p.m. Sunday, September 24, 2023, at the Montrose Health Center in Montrose, Iowa.

She was born on May 30, 1941, in Creston, Iowa, the daughter of Bernard W. and Christine (Pedrick) Bosley. She married Felton Boulware in Dallas, Texas. He preceded her in death.

JoAnn is survived by her two sons: Jeff Boulware and Bart Boulware; sister: Marty Miller and brother: John Bosley. Also surviving are several cousins.

She was preceded in death by her parents and husband: Felton.

Jo worked for Texas Instruments in Dallas, Texas for thirty-five years.

Her body has been entrusted to the crematory of Schmitz Funeral Home for cremation.

Per her wishes, no services will be held.

A memorial has been established in her memory and can be mailed to the family at: Schmitz Funeral Home, P.O. Box 56, Donnellson, Iowa 52625.

Schmitz Funeral Home of Donnellson is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences may be made to the family at www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com.

New gender ID policy OK'd

BOARD - Continued from Page 1

ties improvements that are underway.

Hope helped usher the district through COVID-19, free breakfast for all students, and free admittance for students to extracurricular activities.

She said the Professional Learning Communities that Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater brought to the district have helped increase the focus on the student as an individual. Hope said those enhancements are starting to produce results.

"We are on our way to being nationally accredited in professional learning."

Slater also thanked Hope for her support over the years.

According to the Lee County Auditor's office, in addition to Wykert, Amy Thacher, Keith Hehr, and Kelly Nelton have all turned in papers for the board. All positions on the board are at-large, and since there no other candidates filed and neither Ross, DiPrima, or Hope are seeking re-election, Wykert

and the three new candidates would, in all-likelihood, be seated in January unless a successful write-in campaign yielded more votes than one of the four on the ballot.

In other action, the board:

- approved a new policy that requires licensed employees of the school to notify administration of any student wishing to be identified by a gender, pronoun, or name that is inconsistent with information provided at registration. The superintendent is then required to notify the parents and give them an opportunity to amend the information provided at registration. The new policy is following Iowa legislation that was passed in the spring.

- approved change orders for construction at the high school in the amount of approximately \$250,000 to improve the east parking lot.

- approved the 7th and 8th grade 2025 Splash into Science trip.

- approved participation for the FFA in the National Convention in Indianapolis.

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From the Front/Classifieds

District to look at more security at extra-curriculars

STAFFING - Continued from Page 1

and a dedicated team, a smaller team.”

He said the conference also focused on Emergency Event Management which looks at the safety of after-school events, which would fall under the responsibility of FMHS Activities Director Jeff Lamb.

“Obviously, the most preventative measure in reducing school violence is a positive relationship with the families of our community,” Lamb said.

He said 94% of school shooters share indicators in social media so the policy of see something, hear something, say something is a critical component of school safety.

“They are giving indication at some point in time that they are going to do something drastic and those things are just not shared,” Lamb said.

He said that is called negligent retention which is not notifying appropriate authorities for whatever reason. Aside from the obvious continuous safety of students, Lamb said school districts are now being held liable when unfortunate tragedies occur.

The district was a victim of swatting earlier this year when a fake call of an active shooter came in to the Fort Madison PD and the school was put on lockdown. Lamb said his review of the incident and the district’s reactions, showed that the hallways were cleared within 20 seconds according to surveillance cameras and the district handled the situation well.

“I think our incident in March proved to us that we were ready for that event. That was at an inconvenient time and our hallways were cleared in 20 seconds. But we should take a hard look at what we’re doing,” Lamb said.

“The first and last line of defense is always a highly alert school staff and student body,” Lamb said. “And that has a correlation to our security drills.”

One of the other issues pressing in the district is not having enough staff at extracurricular activities.

Lamb said the district has enough coverage for the smaller school events, but basketball games and football games in particular, need to have more staff on hand for the safety of everyone.

He said, at some point, the district is going to have to incentivize that to attract school staff to events.

“We are never fully staffed. We have minimal staff for events. Jeff puts out email after email after email. We just don’t get people to come to events to supervise. We may have staff there to watch, but they don’t want to supervise, they want to be with their families, which is completely understandable,” Lamb said.

“But this is something we will have to problem solve and, depending on the conversations, may have to come back to the larger group, because inconvenience is not an excuse for negligence.

“We’re going to have to figure out a way to be appropriately staffed at school events, especially given after-school events are on the rise.”

He said that’s the most important thing he could bring to the board out of the conference.

“We have a terrific staff who have terrific relationships with our kids and, right now, it’s a fine line. A lot of teachers are leaving the profession because they are overtaxed. We’re asking them to do too much, so we have to be creative in how we handle that.

He also said ensuring a single-point entry to the buildings is critical and new construction has been focused on that security issue. The number of incidents of people coming in unauthorized doors has been reduced with additional signage at those doors.

PEN CITY CURRENT CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC NOTICES

**PUBLIC NOTICE
MEETING NOTICE
MOUNT PLEASANT
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 27, 2023
AT CITY HALL,
307 E. MONROSE
STREET, 2ND FLOOR
MEETING ROOM AT
5:30 P.M.**

The Mount Pleasant City Council will meet in Regular Session Wednesday, September 27, 2023, at City Hall, 307 E. Monroe Street, second-floor meeting room at 5:30 p.m.

1. Roll Call.
2. Consent Agenda: To the Public -All items with an asterisk (*) are routine by the City Council and will be enacted by one motion and a roll call of the Councilmembers. There will be no sepa-

rate discussion of items unless the Mayor, a Councilmember or citizen so request, in which event the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and will be considered in its normal sequence on the Agenda.

3. Receive & file communications - Zoning application for 10 acres NW corner W Washington Street & Hickory Avenue - Proclamation-Domestic Violence Awareness Month
4. Approve agenda.

*5. Approve minutes of previous meetings.

*6. Approve payment of bills.

*7. Receive report of Officers.

8. Old Business- a) Resolution setting Public Hearing to amend accessory building and shipping container ordi-

nance.

9. New Business a) Approve hire of Kinney & Sons Excavating to fix spot sanitary sewer repairs on McCoy and Henry Street Projects.

b) Approve Change Order# 2 for NE Lagoon Forcemain (Schedule 2) Project.

c) Approve Cigarette Permit for Steam Demons at 217 W Washington Street.

d) Approve Mayoral appointment to the Mount Pleasant Utility Board.

10. Public Forum.

11. Adjourn to meet in regular session on Wednesday, October 11, 2023, at 5:30 p.m.

**PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE OF
PUBLIC HEARING**

Notice is hereby given that the City Council of

the City of Fort Madison, Iowa, will meet in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 811 Avenue E, Fort Madison, Iowa, at 5:30 PM on October 3, 2023, at which time and place, a hearing will be conducted concerning the sale of City property located at 215 Avenue G, legally described as follows:

Lot Numbered 360 in the City of Fort Madison, Lee County, Iowa

You may appear at the hearing to express your views concerning the above. Written statements may be submitted to the Fort Madison City Clerk, P.O. Box 240, 811 Avenue E, Fort Madison, Iowa, 52627 or mblind@fort-madison-ia.com, no later than 4:30 PM on October 3, 2023 or delivered before the hearing is closed.

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From the Front

Donaldsons roll out this year's Halloween display

DISPLAY - Continued from Page 1

yard after the end of the Tri-State Rodeo starting to put up the display. Many of the monsters in the yard are all-weather and are anchored with heavy bases and stakes with seasonal lighting.

Almost all are animatronic. Chad said it's also not unheard of for him to dress up and stand with the display unbeknownst to evildoers.

"I dressed up in one of the outfits after the Burlington/Fort Madison football game last year thinking the Burlington kids might want to cause a little mischief," he said.

"There were a couple adults that came by and were curious, but then we did have a few teens come by and started talking tough to the display not knowing I was there. After a bit of me listening, I think I stepped forward and said, 'What are you boys up to tonight,' and they went screaming out of the yard and down the street," Donaldson said.

But this isn't your crazy uncle Tim's Halloween display with a bunch of big box purchased displays. Many of these displays are homemade.

The very first, Big Bootie Judy, was made with a human model - Denise.

Chad wrapped Denise in plastic and duct tape, who got a little claustrophobic before being cut out. Then the shape created by the duct tape is filled with expanding liquid foam, a trick Chad learned from Do-It-Yourself videos. That way they don't have to keep buying displays, but can actually keep recreating their own.

And as the couple dresses up each year for Halloween, the costumes eventually find their way onto new homemade displays and put in the yard.

Creepy crawly skeletons are climbing all over the Donaldson's home and lighting brings the whole thing to life once the evil of the night sets in.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Chad and Denise Donaldson stand under the gargoye in their yard that is part of their Halloween display at 18th and Avenue D.

One skeleton suffered at the hands of a 12-foot wolf who growls from the bowels at every passing potential victim. And that ghoul is dwarfed by a 16-foot skeleton with a skull and thoracic cavity that fire up.

Spiders are hung from the porch, as are several unfortunate victims. And an animated skeleton waves from the entrenchment of a coffin next to gargoyles and other scattered monsters.

This year's display, which is only in its fourth year, will also feature some video enhancements with a Stranger Things theme.

When asked how much the couple has spent on the

display over the past 14 years, Donaldson said quickly.

"We don't talk about that. Other people go on vacations, we -," he said with a laugh.

Halloween parties the weekend before the 31st are the soft open of sorts for the display.

"That way we can get out with some friends and turn everything on and make sure everything is working correctly," Donaldson said.

But people from all around are already driving by the display at night to get a sneak peak at what the corner of Avenue D and 18th Street will look like this year.

Denise said the display is created for all-ages.

"We don't want it to scare anyone, but we want them to enjoy it. Last year we had a girl with Down's Syndrome come through and she was nervous about going through. So we turned everything off but the lights and let her go through. As she went, she started to smile and when she got through, she wanted to go again. But she said, 'Turn it back on.'"

She said she hopes the display encourages other people to do similar things.


"We're already starting to see other people put displays up early," she said.

Chad said he's not sure how big the display will grow, but he says it's not meant to be terrifying, just crazy enough to make everyone happy. And he and Denise will keep building while people keep enjoying.

"Anything worth doing, is worth overdoing," he said.

For more information, see the couple's Facebook page at Fear in Fort Madison.




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