

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Tuesday, November 14, 2023 | 6 pages | Volume 7 • Issue 192



www.pencitycurrent.com

Keokuk incident ends peacefully

SHOOTING: Suspect unloads rifle around group of people Saturday night

BY PCC STAFF

KEOKUK - On November 11th, 2023, at approximately 10:28 p.m., Keokuk Police Officers were dispatched to 3405 South 7th Street in reference to a subject discharging a firearm towards a group of people. Officers would arrive on scene and learn that a male subject, identified as Martin Alvarez, 37, of Keokuk, had armed himself with a rifle and subsequently fired the rifle multiple times in the air, at windows of his residence at 3405 South 7th Street, towards a wooded area,

towards South 7th Street, and in the general vicinity of a group of individuals on his property. The group of individuals were not on the property unlawfully. Alvarez then went into his residence with the rifle.

The Iowa State Patrol and the Lee County Sheriff's Office arrived on scene to assist the Keokuk Police Department during the incident.

Officers attempted to make contact with Alvarez multiple times with no success.

See **KEOKUK**, page 2



40 years of STEP support impacts local education

BY JENNIFER WOODLEY
Great Prairie Area Education Agency

BURLINGTON - The Secondary Transitional Education Program (STEP) is a vital support system established in 1983 through a collaborative effort between Southeastern Community College, Great Prairie Area Education Agency, and local school districts. The program has a rich history of empowering secondary students who have received special education services during their high school years. STEP was designed to serve as a bridge for these students, ensuring they continue to receive the support necessary for a successful transition into post-secondary life. In partnership with their high schools, STEP plays a crucial role in fulfilling unmet transition needs as outlined in each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The inception of STEP in 1983 marked a significant milestone in the educational landscape. It emerged from a recognition of the unique challenges faced by students with disabilities as they transition from high school to adulthood. The collaborative effort between educational institutions and local school districts was driven by a



Courtesy image

Instructor Wes White works with a student during a STEP program as part of the Great Prairie Area Education Center programming.

shared commitment to empower these students with the skills, resources, and confidence needed to achieve their post-secondary goals.

"Every day looks a little bit different at STEP. We are dealing with students who have unmet needs from their IEP," explained STEP Instructor Wes White. "So a lot of those things that we try to help them with their classes and get them through the day-to-day life of college while at the same time remediating some of those skills and really working towards getting those skill levels up so that they no longer need the STEP program and can be successful on their own."

STEP offers a wide range of services tailored to the diverse needs of its students. These services encompass academic, vocational, social, and life skills development. The program emphasizes

individualized support, recognizing that each student's journey is unique.

One of the most compelling aspects of STEP is its track record of success. Over the years, numerous students have benefited from the program, achieving remarkable life accomplishments. These success stories serve as a testament to the program's effectiveness in nurturing talent, determination, and potential.

Tara Dowd's credits her son Kile's successful transition from high school to college to the STEP program. Kile is a senior at Culver Stockton in Canton, Missouri, remotely interning and doing data analytics for a marketing company out of Chicago, IL. At 18 months, Kile became severely autistic and lost his hearing and speech. At age 4, the doc-

See **STEP**, page 4

LOCAL NEWS

Beautification Foundation selling holiday ornaments

Orders now be accepted at FM Partners' office

FORT MADISON - The Fort Madison Beautification Foundation is partnering with a local artist on a 2023 "There's No Place Like Home" Christmas Ornament fundraiser.

The foundation is taking pre-orders now for the two designs: one with the depiction of the Old Fort and the other with the zip code.

These wooden ornaments are \$16.00 each and created by "Oh I love That, LLC" that measure 3" x 3" with a twine hanger and are laser cut. Funds will be used to continue the mission of helping eliminate blight and make Fort Madison even more beautiful than it already is.

Long-term goals for the Foundation include creating a streetscape design for Avenue G and US Hwy 61 business corridors that include the downtown historic district and old Santa Fe town, banners along US Hwy 61, mitigating tagged blighted properties and turning them into usable spaces to benefit the community, etc.

To place your order contact the FM Partners office either by stopping in during regular business hours to 614 7th Street, calling 319-372-5471, or reaching out to one of our foundation board members

All proceeds benefit Fort Madison Beautification Foundation- a 501c3 organization. If interested in making a contribution to the Fort Madison Beautification Foundation- either as a direct pledge or gift, contact Tim Gobble at the Fort Madison Partners office.



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WEATHER

TUE 14 Nov.....Sunny & cool, 62° F/ 39° F
 WED 15 Nov.....Sunny & cool, 65° F/ 44° F
 THU 16 Nov.....Partly sunny & breezy, 65° F/ 38° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LUCKY FOR LIFE 11/12.....2 13 27 28 34, Lucky Ball: 18
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Iowa News/From the Front

SEIRMC to host craft fair Tuesday

WEST BURLINGTON – South-east Iowa Regional Medical Center will host an employee and volunteer craft fair on Tuesday, November 14 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The craft fair will be held in the Mercy Plaza lobby on the West Burlington campus. The public is welcome to attend.

Attendees will be able to purchase one-of-a-kind items created by Great River Health employees and

volunteers.

“If you are looking for gift ideas for your upcoming holiday celebrations, this is a wonderful opportunity to purchase some unique, hand-crafted items,” expressed Terra Waggoner, Great River Health, Manager of Volunteer Services.

West Burlington, Iowa, Over twenty individual vendors will be set up with items for sale at this annual event.

Suspect charged with multiple gun-related offenses

KEOKUK - Continued from Page 1

The Keokuk Police Department applied for and received a search warrant for the residence. An armored vehicle was requested from the Iowa State Patrol to be utilized in the service of the search warrant. Once the vehicle arrived on scene, an approach was made to the residence. The officers employed the armored vehicle’s public announcement system to make contact with Alvarez. Alvarez would surrender himself at this time without further incident.

A search of the residence was conducted, and multiple items of evidentiary value were collected.

Alvarez was arrested and charged with Intimidation with a Dangerous Weapon, a class C felony, and Reckless Use of a Firearm, a simple misdemeanor.

There were no physical injuries related to the discharge of the firearm reported.

The Iowa State Patrol, Lee County Sheriffs Office, and the Lee County Consolidated Dispatch assisted the Keokuk Police Department during this investigation.

An arrest is merely an accusation supported by probable cause, all defendants are presumed innocent unless convicted in a court of law.

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Obituaries

OBITUARIES

CAROL B. SCHWAB

Carol Barbara Schwab, 83, of Donnellson, IA died Thursday, November 9, 2023 at Aspire of Donnellson in Donnellson, IA.

She was born October 7, 1940 in Chicago, IL the daughter of Shirl "Holly" and Barbara Soiberg Halloway. Carol graduated from Central Lee High School in Donnellson, IA with the class of 1957 and attended Drake University in Des Moines, IA.

On May 19, 1968 Carol was united in marriage to Richard Albert Schwab. He preceded her in death on Jan 7, 2010.

Carol had been employed as a nurse by Mercy Hospital in Iowa City, IA for many years. She later became the Director of Nursing at several different nursing homes, including one in Iowa City, IA and one in Donnellson, IA.

She was a former member of Bethel Bible Church and attended Montrose and Mt. Pleasant Nazarene Churches.

Carol was a passionate golfer and enjoyed spending time on the golf course. She loved to shop and had a keen eye for fashion. She never left the house without her hair done up and makeup on and she loved wearing fashion glasses to match.

Carol is survived by her daughter, Megan Austin (Jim) of Donnellson, IA, twin granddaughters, Katelyn Rauch of Ft. Madison, IA and Seeley Fry (Kirby) of Farmington, IA and granddaughter, Natalie Cecil of Arizona and two great-grandchildren, Emery Tillman and Kanan Tillman.

Besides her husband, she was preceded in death by her parents and one sister, Betty Groene.

A funeral service will be held at 11 a.m., Saturday, November 18, 2023 at the Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk, IA with Pastor Aaron Hand officiating. Burial will be in the St. Paul Evangelical in Donnellson, IA.

Visitation will be held from 5-7 p.m., Friday, November 17, 2023 at the funeral home with family meeting with friends at that time.

Memorials may be made to the family for final expenses.

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



SCHWAB

OBITUARIES

THOMAS L. MAIN

Thomas L. Main, 68, of Ft. Madison passed away on Saturday, November 11, 2023 at 4:40 AM at his home.

He was born on July 27, 1955 in Marceline, MO to Leland Leroy and Mabel Dorrell Main.



MAIN

On March 1, 1975 he married Joy Sappington at the Pleasant Grove Church in rural Bucklin, MO. Tom was a conductor for BNSF and retired after thirty nine years of service. He loved to hunt and fish and enjoyed carpentry work and going to breakfast with his friends at Hy-Vee

Survivors include his wife, Joy Main of Ft. Madison; two daughters, Amber (Nathan) Wood of Brookfield, MO and Betsy (Matt) Hayes of Denmark; one son, Travis (Heather) Main of Ft. Madison; four grandchildren, Regan, Garrett, Anissa and Cadie; his father, Leroy Main of Macon, MO and one sister, Debbie (Thomas) Morris of Platte City, MO. Tom was preceded in death by his Mother and grandparents. Per his wishes, cremation has been entrusted to King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory. There will be no formal services at this time. Online condolences may be left at www.kinglynk.com.

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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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For the Record/From the Front

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

11/09/23 - 10:50 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 4600 block of Avenue J.

11/09/23 - 11:00 a.m. - Fort Madison police cited Jennifer Rae Eid, 36, of Fort Madison, at 20th Street and Avenue M, on a charge of driving under suspension.

11/09/23 - 11:31 a.m. - Fort Madison police cited Michael Robert Scott, 44, of Fort Madison, in the 2000 block of Avenue M, on charges of possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of a controlled substance - 1,2,3rd, and possession of a controlled substance - marijuana 1st.

11/09/23 - 4:00 p.m. - Fort Madison police cited Thomas Wayne Davis, 44, of Fort Madison, in the 2800 block of Avenue N, on a charge of city: disorderly conduct.

11/09/23 - 4:00 p.m. - Fort Madison police cited Denise Frances Wilson, 60, of Fort Madison, in the 2800 block of Avenue O, on a charge of city:

disorderly conduct.

11/09/23 - 11:06 p.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Brandon Warron Traman, 36, of Fort Madison, at 19th Street and Avenue L, on a warrant for failure to appear - driving while barred. He was taken to Lee County Jail.

11/10/23 - 8:39 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1400 block of Avenue D.

11/10/23 - 9:05 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a property damage accident at 30th Street and Avenue O.

11/10/23 - 1:07 p.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Jaydiane Maxine Engeman, 25, of Denmark, in the 3400 block of Avenue Q, on a warrant for assault causing injury. She was taken to Lee County Jail.

11/10/23 - 6:44 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of larceny/theft in the 1500 block of Avenue H.

11/10/23 - 11:36 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 2500 block of Avenue H.

11/11/23 - 12:00 a.m. - Fort Madison police arrested James Daniel Reynolds, 57, of Fort Madison, in the 100 block of Florence Drive, on a Des Moines County warrant for probation violation. He was taken to Lee County Jail.

11/11/23 - 12:57 a.m. - Fort Madison police cited Maurice V. Sargent, 49, of Burlington, in the 3400 block of Avenue L, on a charge of driver's license denied/revoked - OWI.

11/11/23 - 5:33 a.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies responded to a two-vehicle accident on Hwy. 61. N. According to the report, a vehicle driven by Dalton Allen Ruble, 23, of Burlington, was traveling southbound on Hwy. 61, when a vehicle driven by Lynn Edward Woods, 63, of Wever, turned into its path. The front driver's side of Ruble's vehicle struck the rear passenger side of Woods' vehicle. No injuries were reported. Ruble's vehicle sustained disabling damages and was towed from the scene; Woods' vehicle sustained no damage. Woods was cited for failing to obey a stop

sign and failing to provide proof of insurance.

11/11/23 - 10:10 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1000 block of Avenue E.

11/11/23 - 3:57 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a property damage accident at 15th Street and Avenue G.

11/12/23 - 9:08 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1000 block of Avenue E.

11/12/23 - 10:40 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of larceny/theft in the 600 block of 8th Street.

Keokuk Police Report

11/09/23 - 10:57 a.m. - Keokuk Police responded to a two-vehicle accident in the 600 block of S. Main Street. According to the report a vehicle driven by Connor Dean Roth, 22, of Keokuk pulled from a parking space east bound and struck a vehicle driven by Randy Allen Carlton, 66, of Hamilton who was traveling east bound on Main Street. Both vehicles

were driven from the scene, no injuries were reported. Roth was cited for unsafe starting of a stopped vehicle.

11/09/23 - 2:59 p.m. - Keokuk police arrested Kris Lane Adams, 44, of Keokuk in the 1500 block of Morgan Street on an active warrant. He was taken to Lee County Jail and held.

11/10/23 - 11:14 a.m. - Keokuk Police arrested a 14-year-old juvenile in the 2200 block of Middle Road, on a charge of minor use of a tobacco. The juvenile was released to a parent.

11/10/23 - 8:25 p.m. - Keokuk Police arrested Keaten Mitchell Howell, 22, of Keokuk, in the 1000 block of Exchange Street, on charges of criminal mischief, failure to appear, unlawful possession of prescriptions, and interference with official acts. He was taken to Lee County Jail and held.

11/10/23 - 8:59 p.m. - Keokuk Police cited Reagan Jane Dickens, 24, of Keokuk at the police department on a charge of driving under suspension.

11/11/23 - 8:45 p.m. - Keokuk Police cited Deuante Deshawn Dorsey, 21, of Keokuk, in the 600 block of Johnson Street on a charge of driving while barred.

11/12/23 - 2:50 a.m. - Keokuk Police arrested Martin De

La Cruz Alvarez, 37, of Keokuk in the 3400 block of 7th Street, on charges of intimidation with a dangerous weapon and reckless use of a firearm. He was taken to Lee County Jail and held.

11/12/23 - 3:55 p.m. - Keokuk Police cited Stacy Margaret Rasmussen, 56, of Hamilton, in the 200 block of Washington Street, on a charge of driving under suspension.

Lee County Sheriff Report

11/10/23 - 4:16 p.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies arrested Dustin James Biddenstadt, 29, of Keokuk, on a judgment entry/ mittimus warrant. He was taken to Lee County jail and released after weekend service.

11/11/23 - 12:00 a.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies arrested Matthew Kristian Smith, 26, of Burlington, at the sheriff's office, on a warrant for failure to appear. He was taken to Lee County Jail.

11/11/23 - 12:42 p.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies arrested Raymond Evan Hymes, 30, of Fort Madison, at the sheriff's office, on a judgment entry/ mittimus warrant. He was taken to Lee County Jail.

Those listed above are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

BACK PAIN?

Do You Have Hip Pain? Are You As Stiff As a Board When You Try to Get Up From a Chair? Have You Run Out of Hope?

How 5 Lies About Low BACK PAIN May Keep You Hurting, Frustrated & Exhausted...Forever!

NEW Scientific Breakthroughs Often Make Short Work of Low Back Pain...Just What Big Medical Centers and High Priced Clinics Are PRAYING You Never Figure Out On Your Own!

Hi, I'm Dr. Jason James, and if you've got any kind of back, hip or leg pain, your worries may be over in just a few minutes. Why? Because I'm the owner of James Healthcare & Assoc. clinic, and I've discovered what may be the best healing secrets for "bad backs" - EVER!



Dr. Jason James, D.C.

I'd be stupid to make such a claim if I couldn't back it up. But I am so confident we can help your back, I insist on giving you a 100% SATISFACTION PLEDGE at James Healthcare. I hate empty promises, and I also hate the lies most folks have been told about their backs. That's why it's important I expose these MYTHS about back pain.

MYTH #1: Sciatica (pain down your leg) is always caused by a herniated disc!

No way...even though most doctors will sell you a \$3,000 MRI at the first sign of leg pain. But they don't tell you about a 5-inch muscle in the hip that can squeeze the sciatic nerve. And it feels EXACTLY like you've got the worst slipped disc on earth. It's a major discovery and...

The good news is that it can be easy and inexpensive to correct! How? Just keep reading! But first, here's a picture to show you where the pain comes from:



MYTH #2: Stiffness from Arthritis means you're getting old...and it must be the reason for all your pain and stiffness!

Not true, because thousands of folks with arthritis in their backs have absolutely NO PAIN! Then why do YOU feel like your back will snap if you bend forward or twist too fast? Because the truth is:

Your stiffness may be caused by a hidden, even more dangerous problem than arthritis, and it can lead to a hip replacement!

You see, most folks believe that something mysterious (like maybe an "arthritis fairy") waved a wand over them, and they're cursed... doomed to suffer forever.

But did you know that many arthritis problems are CAUSED by a combination of unseen imbalances in the spine and surrounding muscles? It's the most common cause of hip replacements but not that hard to correct if we catch it in time. It's like the tires on your car...

If the alignment is off just a teeny-weeny bit, at first you don't notice, but over a few thousand miles you start to see signs of wear...that is, if you're lucky enough to catch it before a flat on the freeway ruins your day. In your spine, you're lucky if you catch untreated imbalances before they ruin your spine! How to fix them? Just look at Myth #3.

MYTH #3: Your Back is "Out"!

Sure, that's exactly how it feels. But guess what, we found that's usually not the case. It sounds good, but we now know better. You see, there are 7 different reasons for that painful, locked-up and stuck feeling that causes so much misery:

- low-grade spasm
- pelvis torque and tension
- imbalance of hips

- fallen or dropped arches
- stiff vertebra joint
- adhesions in leg muscle
- pinched nerve

It's NOT just your spine, and it's NOT just your muscles. As a matter of fact, if one of the major muscles that stabilize the spine is partly spasmed, a "2nd stringer" will have to carry the load. But this is a serious problem...

It's like having your plumber doing all the dangerous electrical work!

Sure, he may get it done, and it may work at first, but how long until there's a fire? Or your back locks up? Which leads me to our next myth:

MYTH #4: "It's Only a Muscle!"

Boy, it's scary how many people think muscle problems are no big deal. Unfortunately, tight, bound-up, and spasmed or tight muscles can wear out joints faster than you can say, "Charley Horse"!

That's why it's important to examine the spine AT THE SAME TIME as the muscles that control it. It's also why we've had such outrageous success with even the worst backs at James Healthcare. Because we deal with BOTH the spine and muscles at the same time. We have spine doctors (chiropractors), pain doctors (nurse practitioners) and muscle professionals (therapists) and together they deliver an outstanding way to help "bad backs". This ties in to Myth #5 and the diagram:



MYTH #5: "Muscle Relaxants" will help your muscles heal! Good grief, NO!

Your muscles tighten up for a reason, and muscle relaxants are like turning back the clock on a time bomb...you know it's still going to blow up! Sure, you may feel better now, but you'll pay later...and pay "in spades"! So don't fall for these lies about your low back. They'll keep you hurting, frustrated and exhausted forever!

WOULDN'T YOU RATHER:

Turn over in bed without pain waking you up?

Get up in the morning without being as stiff as a board?

Be able to stand for as long as you want without sitting down for relief?

Lean forward over the sink without that "stabbing" in your back or leg?

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- Tension...always tight across the beltline
- Bent...crooked off to one side and can't stand up straight if your life depended on it
- Trigger Point...zinging pain to butt-cheek
- Stiff as a board...creek and groan when you first get out of bed in the morning
- Traitor...can't trust your back and what it's going to do—or when!
- Vice-like...constantly locked down tight!
- Shooting...vicious but short-lived
- Lumbago...hard to pin it down—just seems to hurt all the time, but it's hard to say where
- One-sided...right at that "bone" on one side
- Jack hammer...pounding off and on like a heartbeat or a toothache in your back
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- Chronic pain for over 5 years

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"I broke my back when I was 41 years old and have had problems from then on, until June 2017. Dr. James gave me my life back! I have very few back problems now. It is great to be able to do my everyday duties without back problems..."—Roger Kirchner

STEP stands to help students with disabilities

STEP - Continued from Page 1

tor told her that he would never talk or be able to go to school. "To be here is a miracle," she continues, "Kile was in the program right out of high school, and it worked out really well - just a great transition for him." Through the STEP program, he was able to meet other students, get assistance with online classes, and reach his goal to graduate with a 3.98 GPA. "He did really well and excelled in his academics and if it weren't for the STEP program it would have been hard for him to make the transition."

Kile exited the STEP program when he was recruited to be an athlete. He is trying to reach for the national championship in the marathon and is currently ranked #22 in the country. "He is still reaching goals, but it definitely started with the STEP program."

The Secondary Transitional Education Program (STEP) stands as a beacon of hope and empowerment for secondary students with disabilities. Since its establishment in 1983, STEP has continued to evolve, adapting to the changing needs of its students and the educational landscape. Through personalized support, comprehensive services, and a commitment to fulfilling the transition needs of each student, STEP plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of those it serves. As it continues to empower students to overcome challenges and reach their goals, STEP remains a shining example of the transformative power of education.

Join us in celebrating the extraordinary work of GPAA's STEP Program. Stay tuned for more inspiring stories and insights as we shine a spotlight on the remarkable individuals at GPAA who are making a profound impact in our community.

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Opinion/Sports

VOLLEYBALL ROUND-UP

Bendlage, Randolph named 1st-Team All-State

PCC Staff

FORT MADISON - Holy Trinity's Mary Kate Bendlage, Natalie Randolph and Presley Myers were honored on the Iowa Girls Coaches Association Class 1A volleyball All-State teams.

Bendlage and Randolph were first-team selections, while Myers was a second-team selection.

The three players helped the Crusaders to a runner-up finish at the 1A state tournament in Coralville.

Bendlage had 322 kills, 437 digs and 35 blocks in her senior season. Randolph had 207 kills and a team-high 483 assists in her senior season, coming back from a knee injury that sidelined her all of the 2022 season. Randolph was a 97.2 percent server with 59 aces, while Bendlage was a 95.6 percent server with 20 aces.

Myers led the Crusaders with 334 kills and 126 blocks in her sophomore season. Myers also had 121 digs, and was a 93.9 percent server with 47 aces.

Bendlage, Myers, Randolph, Anna Bendlage and Teagan Snaadt were Class 1A Southeast All-District selections. Holy Trinity's Melissa Freesmeier was the district's coach of the year.

Taylor Jones of Central Lee was a Class 3A Southeast All-District selection.

Bendlage was also named co-SEI Superconference Player of the Year in the South Division along with Carli Cline of West Burlington.

Maureen Heath was named SEI South Coach of the Year.

Myers was also named to the first team SEISC as a hitter. Junior Anna Bendlage and Teagan Snaadt were also first team selections. Snaadt as a defensive specialist and Bendlage as a setter.

Randolph was named first team Utility. Taegan Denning was 2nd team all-conference as a utility player.

Adalyn Kruse received honorable mention as a freshman hitter.

Author now 34 years clean, sober

Unlike years past, I/we didn't do any major celebrating on my sobriety birthday, Nov. 3. In fact, we forgot about it. I spent the day doing honey-dos: cleaning out the gutters, rounding up all the old "punkins" and throwing them out, and mouse proofing the garage and barn. It was Frrrrrrrryday at the Veterans Hall in Mt. Pleasant, and Ginnie and I went there for supper, since they have fish, chicken and shrimp. I turned in an application for membership to the American Legion. I figured it was high time.

On the way to the Veterans Hall, we drove by the movie theater in Mt. Pleasant, and Ginnie noticed on the marquee that Taylor Swift's "Eras" was playing. "I'd like to see that," she said.

I asked what an "Eras" was, pronouncing it, "E-Ras." "Era," Ginnie said. "It's Taylor Swift's tour, doing all the songs of her career."

"Oh," I said. "I don't usually see 'era' as plural. It's usually just 'era.'"

Ginnie gave one of her patent sighs. "Curt, the English major."

The only thing I knew about Taylor Swift is that she's been showing up at Kansas City Chief's football games because she and Travis Kelce are an item. But I got to thinking about "E-Ras" while eating shrimp. "What the heck?" I thought. "It's Friday night Date Night. We could work in a movie after supper, if I don't eat too much. If Ginnie wants to see Taylor Swift, I can accommodate."

That was before I found out the tickets were \$18 each and the show lasted three hours. But I managed to suffer through, and rather enjoyed the performance, which was quite spectacular, I had to admit. The stage turning into a snake was something else. I could hardly understand a word Taylor Swift was singing, but the dancing and theatrics were over-the-top. I don't know how anyone's voice can hold up for three solid hours of singing. I noticed Ginnie was singing along to Taylor Swift's songs, as were the scrum of teeny-bopper girls

EMPTY NEST

By Curt Swarm



sitting in front of us, along with their parent chaperons. Ginnie was obviously

enjoying herself, which made it worthwhile.

What I'm trying to say is that after 34 years of sobriety, it's not all about me. I can actually put other people first. So, in a way, WE were celebrating my 34-year anniversary of being clean and sober. Love is in the giving.

Looking back on the journey of sobriety, alcohol may have been doing me a favor, in a way. There were some pretty tough times I was going through, and alcohol was a diversion which deadened my mind to what was going on. When it just about killed me, well, that was a wake-up call. A treatment program helped me face my issues and rearrange my priorities. I'm one of the lucky ones. I lived through it and came out the other side clean, sober and wiser.

I've been going through some health issues lately, which is not surprising given my age—75. I'm not sure where the future is headed, which is a good thing, for it keeps me focused on where my trust should be. God. There's a Big Guy running things, and I'm not Him.

I don't think much about drinking or using anymore. And the "drinking/using dreams" have subsided over the years. However, Ginnie and I were at a restaurant the other night and I noticed "Swarm Ale" on the menu. Really? Talk about a drink with my name on it! Ginnie got me home safely.

The Quilts of Valor Foundation, (Iowa Patriotic Stitchers of Henry County), presented me with a Quilt of Valor that I really didn't deserve, but was honored to accept. Sobriety has rewards that far exceed not using and abusing.

State's three-year recidivism rate drops again

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Corrections (IDOC) reports that the three-year recidivism rate for FY2023 is 34.3%; or 2.7% lower than the recidivism rate observed in FY2022. These numbers show three consecutive years of reduction in the systems overall recidivism rate.

Recidivism can be defined in a multitude of ways. Generally, recidivism is defined as the likelihood that an individual "relapse[s] into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention from a previous crime." [1] The IDOC defines

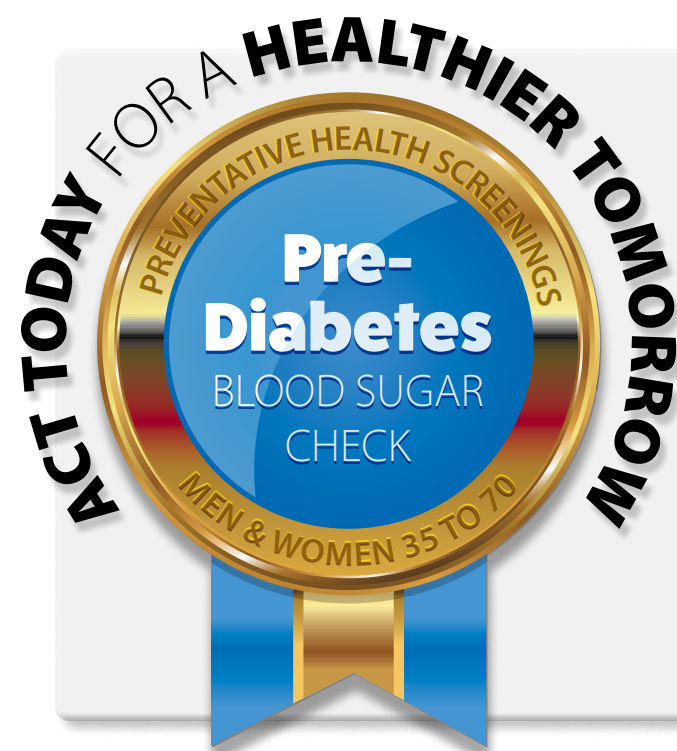
recidivism as an individual leaving an Iowa prison who is then re-incarcerated within three years for any reason.

"Three consecutive years of reducing Iowa's recidivism rate is a clear indicator that what we're doing in our correctional system is working," said Gov. Kim Reynolds. "And now that community based corrections have been placed under the purview of the IDOC, I'm confident our alignment efforts will produce even greater results. I'd like to thank IDOC staff for all they do to keep Iowa safe and I have no doubt they will continue to meet

their mission of creating opportunities for safer communities."

"Our state's recidivism rate is a key indicator in determining if what we're doing is having the intended impact," IDOC Director Beth Skinner said. "Not only have we lowered our recidivism rate for three consecutive years, in FY23 we saw our biggest reduction yet. This is a department-wide effort and these efforts are producing outcomes that positively impact public safety. I couldn't be more proud of the hard work and dedication of our staff in keeping Iowa communities safe."

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