

# PEN CITY CURRENT

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Thursday, November 30, 2023 | 7 pages | Volume 7 • Issue 202



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## Christmas Chaos at OFP

**HOLIDAY SHOW:** Playhouse cobbles together holiday production

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - They say the show must go on. Well, the irony abounds. The holiday production for the Old Fort Players, almost didn't go on with several hurdles hindering the production schedule. But after last minute-cobbling of cast, and then canceling, the show will go on Dec. 6-8 and 11-13 at the playhouse in downtown Fort Madison. And the play itself is a theatrical dystopia of sorts with cast members bumbling about lost in the mayhem that would fictionally (and maybe nonfictionally) possibly doom the production. The Royal Shakespeare Company hasn't arrived as promised to perform their stirring rendition of "A Christmas Carol." So an intrepid band of hapless actors and technicians must put together their own production in only seven hours, according to the production's playbill. "What a pity that they are not quite up to the task, even though they give it their all. Have you ever experienced backstage mayhem? Well, you haven't seen anything yet! The play focuses on these poor but dedicated thespians doing their best while

See OFP, page 7



Photo by Melanie Johnson/OFP

Ty Clute plays grumpy scrooge, while Kim Albers, dressed as Santa, plays Brynn, a cast member who took an antihistamine that has made her loopy and she can't remember what play she is in and comes out as all the wrong characters.

### AREA SPORTS

## Hellige hits 20 in win over Danville

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP  
PCC SPORTS

FORT MADISON - Holy Trinity's boys basketball team held just a one-point halftime lead over Danville in Tuesday's SEI Superconference South Division opener at Shottenkirk Gym. The Crusaders, though, looked a little tight, and that was brought up in the locker room. The result was a third-quarter surge that put Holy Trinity in command, and the Crusaders then had to withstand a late Danville run for a 50-43 win. Holy Trinity (2-0 overall, 1-0 division) opened the second half with a 17-3 run for a 39-24 lead, the Crusaders' largest of the night. "We just kind of refocused at halftime," said Holy Trinity coach John Hellige. "We were trying to get really fine with our sets. Then, in the locker room, we had some senior leadership there — Maddox Rung spoke up and said let's get in our sets, but then just improvise off that. Don't be so robotic, just play basketball. "And then we went out there and that third quarter was incredible." "We weren't hitting our shots in the second quarter," said junior Luke Hellige, who scored the first eight points of the third-quarter run and finished with 20. "We really came out strong and hit the shots that we hadn't hit, and I thought that was the difference."

The Bears (0-1, 0-1) had their own run coming. They outscored the Crusaders 14-4 to open the fourth quarter to get within 44-40, and were within 47-43 with 25 seconds left before Luke Hellige hit two free throws and Adam Sobczak one to end it. "That eighth quarter in two days really wore us down," John Hellige said. "They were in a 1-3-1 (defense) and that affected us. We struggled a bit with that, but we were able to grind the game out and get the win." It was the second consecutive night the Crusaders finished a win — they closed Monday's 59-50 win over WACO by scoring the last six points. "We can finish games now," Luke Hellige said. "We couldn't finish games last year — we would always come within a couple of points and then couldn't finish. We're doing that this year."

### BUSINESS NEWS

## Derr completes Edward Jones triple play in Fort Madison

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - With the official ribbon-cutting out of the way, Edward Jones has completed a triple play in Fort Madison. Two office spin offs of the current Edward Jones office formerly owned and operated by Larry Kelch are up and running with three different agents - all off the Kelch tree of money management under the Edward Jones brand.

Kelch's son Corey Kelch has remained in the office on

See DERR, page 7



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### WEATHER

THU 30 Nov ..... Partly sunny & chilly with chance of rain, 43° F/ 29° F  
 FRI 01 Dec ..... Mostly cloudy & cold with chance of rain, 46° F/ 29° F  
 SAT 02 Dec ..... Mostly cloudy & cold, 39° F/ 32° F

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# Obituaries/Iowa News

## OBITUARIES

### MARY G. KELLER

Mary Gwynn Keller, 92, of Donnellson, Iowa, went home to Heaven at 5:13 p.m. on Friday, November 24, 2023, at the Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center in Ft. Madison, Iowa.



KELLER

She was born on March 2, 1931, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the daughter of James and Effie (Cone) Johnson. On January 21, 1949, she married John Ronald Keller in Billings, Montana. He passed away on March 22, 2018.

Survivors include their six children: Rhonda (Tom) Shouf of Palatine, Illinois, Stanley (Kathleen) Keller of Brookville, Indiana, Mickey (Rebecca Wright) Keller of Ft. Madison, Iowa, James Keller of Council Bluffs, Iowa, Calvin (Kimberly) Keller of Morning Sun, Iowa, and Teddy Ann (Paul) Van Velzer of DuBois, Wyoming; one sister: Sharon Stockton of Owatonna, Minnesota; fifteen grandchildren and forty-seven great grandchildren; 1 great-great grandchild.

She was preceded in death by her husband: Ron; her son: Mark; her daughter-in-law: Cyndi Keller; great granddaughter: Sarah Dane and grandson: Micah Keller. Mary attended Embury United Methodist Church. She enjoyed Bible study and her faith was in the Lord Jesus Christ as her Savior. She enjoyed studying the genealogy of her family. The highlight of her year was being part of the Pioneer Village at the Old Threshers Reunion in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. She especially loved interacting with people as she sat on the log cabin porch playing her dulcimer.

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

A celebration of life will be held at 11:00 a.m. Saturday, December 2, 2023, at Embury Methodist Church, rural Donnellson, Iowa with Pastor Nancy Sinclair officiating.

In lieu of flowers, a memorial has been established in her memory for Backpack Ministries at Embury United Methodist Church.

Schmitz Funeral Home of Donnellson is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences may be made to the family at [www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com](http://www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com).

### ICGA members thank Miller-Meeks for fuel act

JOHNSTON – The Iowa Corn Growers Association (ICGA) applauds the introduction of the Flex Fuels Fairness Act by Representative Miller-Meeks. Once enacted, this legislation would encourage automakers to produce more flex fuel vehicles (FFVs), and levels the playing field for FFVs by properly recognizing the emissions benefits associated with using E85 flex fuels, containing between 51-83 percent ethanol.

“This legislation recognizes the significant emission benefits of using higher blends of ethanol, which ultimately is great for contributing to a low carbon, cleaner and more sustainable transportation sector for all.” said Jolene Riessen, a farmer from Ida Grove, Iowa, and Iowa Corn Growers Association President. “By encouraging automakers to produce more FFVs, it’s a win-win for all of Iowa and consumers nationwide. Consumers have more choices at the pump to fuel up with higher blends of ethanol, specifically E85, which in turn creates increased demand for Iowa corn farmers.”

## OBITUARIES

### MARY ANN E. EID

Mary Ann Elizabeth Eid, 97, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 8:12 a.m. on Saturday, November 25, 2023 at Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center in West Burlington, IA. She was born on August 1, 1926 in Fort Madison, IA to Herman & Catherine Bohnenkamp Menke. She married Merrill E. Eid on July 13, 1946 in Galesburg, IL. He preceded her in death on May 3, 1994. She attended Catholic school when she was young and was of the Catholic Faith. She enjoyed living in the country and playing Bingo at the Moose Lodge and the V.F.W. Her greatest love was her family.

Mary Ann is survived by: 3-daughters: Debra (Michael) Auge of Wever, IA & Linda (Michael) Noll of Wever, IA & Susan Joint of Fort Madison, IA; 1-son: David (Mary) Eid of Wever, IA 5-grandchildren: Tony Eid, Kara Kelley, Kristin Pauley, Jodee Mc-Millen & Matthew Noll; 8-great grandchildren and 1 on the way. She was preceded in death by: her parents, husband, 1-son: Ron Eid, 2-grandchildren: Ryan Bahl & Amy Eid, 2-sisters & 2-brothers.

Cremation has been entrusted to the care of King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory and no services are planned at this time. Online condolences to the Eid family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: [www.kinglynk.com](http://www.kinglynk.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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# Obituaries/Lee County News

## OBITUARIES

### DELORA F. FRAISE

Delora Faye Fraise, 91, of Fort Madison, Iowa, passed away peacefully at 6:40 a.m. Monday, November 27, 2023 at the West Point Care Center in West Point, Iowa.



FRAISE

She was born on August 4, 1932, in Eubank, Kentucky the daughter of Everette and Bertha (Osborne) Pumphrey and moved with her family to the Denmark area when she was three years old. She married her true love, Gene, on December 31, 1949, at St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church in West

Point, Iowa.

She is survived by three sons: Mike (Abby) Fraise of Wever, Iowa, Ron (Kim) Fraise of Fort Madison, Iowa, Larry (Dawn) Fraise of Wever, Iowa; one son-in-law: Paul (Betty) Mohrfeld of Fort Madison, Iowa; fourteen grandkids: Tim (Tammy) Mohrfeld, Jason (Mindy) Mohrfeld, Amy (Mark) Kellerman, Brian (Sara) Mohrfeld, Jerry (Stephanie) Mohrfeld, Julie (Darin) Astor, Todd (Erin) Fraise, Nick (Maria Scott) Fraise, Heather Fraise, Stacey (Jason) Dixon, Evan (Ashley) Fraise, Adam Fraise, Nathan Fraise, Brent (Trent) Fraise; thirty-two great grandchildren; five great-great grandchildren; two sisters-in-law: Shirley Martin of West Point, Iowa, Faye Fraise of West Point, Iowa; one brother-in-law: Marvin (Marcia) Fraise of West Burlington, Iowa. Also surviving are several nieces and nephews.

Faye was preceded in death by her parents; husband; daughter: Rita Mohrfeld; granddaughter-in-law: Laurie Mohrfeld; brother: Jess (Karlene) Pumphrey, two sisters: Vola (Junior) Weisinger and Ethel (Marvin) Junkins, sister-in-law: Topsy; brothers-in-law: Albert "Sonny" Fraise, Andrew Fraise, Keith Fraise, and Wayne Martin.

Faye grew up with her three siblings and went to school in the Denmark area. In high school, she caught Gene's eye at the roller rink and as they say, "that's all

she wrote." After a whirlwind courtship, they married and eventually established roots in the West Point area to farm and raise a family. They had four children of which she was immensely proud. She was relentlessly by Gene's side. She drove tractors when in the fields and propped up the babies in a car seat in the barn when Gene was milking cows just to spend time with him. She was unyielding in her support of Gene's political career and clerked for him in the Iowa Senate for several years.

Faye hosted many holiday gatherings for her family. She made a killer cherry delight and the BEST ham balls. One of her favorite past-times was dotting on her grandkids. But she also loved playing cards and gambling at the casino (penny slots!) with Lucy and all her Red Hat friends. She did have an ornery side and could be a little feisty, especially at coffee (If that coffee pot could talk!). She had a particularly special relationship with her niece, Vicki, with whom she shared many laughs and a few tears.

She is mostly remembered for her capacity to love her husband and family. She was an amazing wife, mother, and grandmother and friend. Her beautiful smile will be greatly missed.

A visitation will begin at 12:00 noon, Thursday, November 30, 2023, at Schmitz Funeral Home in West Point, where the family will receive friends from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. A parish rosary will be recited at 3:30 p.m. at the funeral home.

A Mass of Christian burial will be held at 10:00 a.m. Friday, December 1, 2023, at St. Mary's Catholic Church in West Point with Father Dan Dorau as celebrant.

Burial will be Fairview Cemetery, rural Fort Madison, Iowa.

Schmitz Funeral Home of West Point is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences may be made to the family at [www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com](http://www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com).

## OBITUARIES

### E. REGINA ROWE

E. Regina Rowe, 72, of Sandusky, passed away on Monday, November 27, 2023, at her home.

Regina was born on August 6, 1951, in Carthage, Illinois, the daughter of Winfred Lee and Edra (Coffman) Lee Cossey. She graduated from Hamilton High School in 1969, and on August 10, 1972, she was united in marriage to Robert Rowe in Hamilton. He survives.



ROWE

Regina was employed in area restaurants for many years and managed Family Discount Furniture. She was a member of the Keokuk Yacht Club, and enjoyed doing yardwork at her house, solving puzzle books, playing Farkle and flowers. Regina loved people, especially her grandchildren.

Regina is survived by her husband Robert Rowe of Sandusky; two sons: Michael (Torri) Rowe of Keokuk and Robert (Heather) Rowe, Jr., of Highland Park, Illinois; five grandchildren: Julia, Anna, Madison, Lydia and Wyatt; five siblings: Jim (Lee) Shearer, Steve (Stacy) Lee, Sandy Lucas, Christina (Donnie) Mack and Tammy (Kevin) Hardy; and several nieces, nephews and cousins.

Regina is preceded in death by her parents and two brothers: Richard and Tom Shearer.

A celebration of her life will be held at noon on Saturday, December 9, 2023, at First Christian Church DOC, 701 Wabash Ave, Carthage, Illinois. A meal will be provided.

Memorials may be directed to the family for her grandchildren.

Tributes and condolences may be left at [www.dejongsfuneralhome.com](http://www.dejongsfuneralhome.com).

DeJong-Greaves-Printy Funeral Home of Keokuk is in charge of arrangements.

## KAC showcases Henson

KEOKUK - The Keokuk Art Center is sure to make spirits bright throughout the month of December when Ginny Henson showcases her amazing art exhibit "Imagine" at the Keokuk Round Room Galleries located at 510 N 5th Street in Keokuk. Ginny Henson was born in Macomb, IL and has called the Tri-State area home for most of her life. She opened The Lost Canvas in 2014 where she serves coffee, baked goods, and displays and sells her own work as well as the work of other local artists. Ginny also teaches guided art classes out of The Lost Canvas Studio, just two doors down from the coffee shop.

Ginny draws inspiration for her art from all around her. Some of her pieces are representations of her own life (for example, five humanoid cats representing the different personalities of Ginny and her four sisters) and the local wildlife and nature in the Keokuk area (for example, lily pads inspired by her kayaking trips along the Mississippi, or eagles in flight). Her favorite medium is acrylic paint on canvas, but she also likes experimenting with texture using mixed media.

A personal reception for the artist will be held on December 8th from 5:00 to 7:00 P.M. Everyone is invited to attend.

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# Classifieds/Public Notices

## PUBLIC NOTICES

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**Minutes for the Lee County Conservation Board Meeting**  
**October 10, 2023**  
**Lee County Conservation Center**  
**2652 Hwy61**  
**Montrose, IA 52639**

Called to order at 4:00 p.m.

Roll call: Alton\_X\_Pollpeter\_Moore\_X\_Patrick\_X\_Benjamin\_X

Staff Present: Huebner, Veihl, Oldfield, Pawling, Risser, Jacobs, Davis, Steele Supervisor: Holmes

1. Approval of Agenda Motion by Benjamin to approve the meeting agenda

2nd: Patrick Motion Carried

2. Approval of Minutes from September 12, 2023 Motion by Alton to approve the minutes

2nd: Patrick Motion Carried

3. Public Input No public input

4. Approval of Bills Huebner stated that reimbursements from the City of West Point and the Land & Water Conservation Fund would be coming in soon for the Pollmiller Trail.

Moore asked what needed to be repaired on the brush cutter. Pawling responded that the PTO shaft had to be replaced.

Motion by Benjamin to approve of the bills

2nd: Alton Motion Carried

5. Approval of Financial Report

Motion by Patrick to approve the financial report

2nd: Benjamin Motion Carried

6. Consider Approval on 10 Year Strategic Plan

Huebner reminded the Board that the strategic plan would be a living document that will be reviewed yearly.

Alton stated that the plan would be a roadmap for the Board that allows for flexibility and that the plan is very comprehensive because it includes all 30 on LCCB's areas.

Benjamin stated that the plan will be a great reference when seeking projects for grant funding.

Motion by Benjamin to adopt the 10 Year Strategic Plan

2nd: Alton Motion Carried

7. Staff and Director Reports

Steele gave the EE report, highlighting making over 1,000 contacts

during field trip season, the Hike-a-Park series in conjunction with Des Moines County Conservation and Van Buren County Conservation, and the success of the Halloween Hoot the past weekend.

Oldfield gave the parks report, highlighting 752 camping nights, 40 cabin rental nights, 5 shelter reservations, and 5,081 beach admissions in the month of September.

He commended Jones Contracting for their work on the Pollmiller Trail and mentioned Ranger Davis' assistance with a Veterans Affairs outreach event at Wilson Lake Park.

Huebner gave her director report, highlighting continuing planning on the Wilson Pond and Pollmiller Concession/ Shower House Projects, a successful ribbon cutting for the Pollmiller Trail and groundbreaking for the Outdoor Classroom, working with the Farm-

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If you have any questions, please contact Lee County Engineer Office at (319) 372-2541 or email them at [engineer@leecounty.org](mailto:engineer@leecounty.org).

ington American Legion on transferring the Croton canon to them, and past and upcoming events.

8. Board Member Comments

None

9. Adjournment

Motion by Benjamin to adjourn the meeting at 4:24 p.m.

2nd: Alton

Motion Carried

The Board met in a workshop following the meeting.

James Patrick, LCCB Vice-President

Caroline Veihl, LCCB Secretary

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**HOUNDS BASKETBALL**

# Hounds show resilience in win over Davis County

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC SPORTS

FORT MADISON – Things were about as physical as they could get in a basketball game as the Fort Madison Lady Hounds opened their home season with a win Tuesday night over Davis County.

At one point, referee Jason Marlow had to jump in between Taylor Johnson and the Mustangs' Laynee Moore who scuffled in the lane off a rebound.

But that intensity pushed the Hounds to a 47-37 non-conference win. It also resulted in both Johnson and Moore riding the bench for a few minutes.

Fort Madison Head Coach Landon Bentley said he appreciated the intensity, but then the Hounds got down to business.

"We bring intensity. I'm a defensive guy and my big thing is bring the intensity every possession. And when something doesn't go our way, we move on," he said after the game.

"We're not going to dwell on that. It's not us. We're going to play hard. We'll battle with ya, but we're not going to be malicious - we'll stay composed."

Another hurdle the Hounds seem to have cleared is how well senior Irelynd Sargent would react to the reconstructed ligaments in her knee. Sargent blew out her knee last year diving for a ball headed out of bounds and had surgery to repair the damage. Wearing a knee brace, Sargent led the Hounds with 12 points and went to the free throw line 10 times slashing through the Mustangs' physical man defense.

"I rehabbed the knee for about nine months, but I had no pain. I just haven't been active forever. I don't think it's going to be a problem. Sometimes I cramp up a bit, but it's just getting back in shape," Sargent said.

In addition to the dozen points from the floor, Sargent also had several nifty assists off drives around the lane, including a nice bounce pass down low to Halle Menke who converted inside for a 33-22 lead with about four minutes left in the third period.

"I would much rather hit an open teammate than just throw something up there," she said.

Menke finished with nine points, just one off a double-double, including a nice left-handed jumper from about 17 feet off the left key. Working mostly inside for the last two years, the jumper isn't normally a shot Bentley wants out of the offense.

The shot came out of an offense the Hounds ran last year, after the first half saw a more inside/outside game working Johnson and Menke in the middle, while Aija Jenkins and Dayonna Davis worked the perimeter with Sargent.

"This was the first team we've run our new offense, but we have some things to work on in practice tomorrow. We had to put the old offense back in and that got us through the second half and worked well," Bentley said.

Davis County would put a small 5-2 run together to open the fourth quarter, down 37-28, to cut the lead to six at 39-33. But Menke would score again inside and then Sargent got the dagger with a steal and layup with 2:59 left to put the game away for Fort Madison.

Jenkins had 10 points for Fort Madison while Johnson had eight and Davis finished with five.

The Hounds (2-0, 0-0) host Fairfield on Friday night in a boys/girls doubleheader at the Hound Dome with a 6 p.m. tip-off.



Photos by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Senior Aija Jenkins works the perimeter against a Davis County defender in the first quarter of Tuesday's win over the Mustangs. Below, Fort Madison's Hadley Wolfe gets bumped driving the lane.



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## Sports/From the Front

# OFP holiday show starts Dec. 6

**OFP** - Continued from Page 1

chaos is all around them - two kids fighting over who gets to play Tiny Tim; a confused actor who thinks she's in another show; a haughty lead actor; one actor playing both Bob and Mrs. Cratchit; an out-of-control director; thrown together props and costumes; ridiculous scenery, and tons of flubs and confusion."

Most of the actors in the show play multiple roles in this extremely fast-paced and physical comedy. Even the light and sound board operators are characters in the show! The play is a hilarious backstage comedy that pokes fun at the classic novel and everything that can go wrong with a theatrical production.

Cast members include:

- Scrooge/Gregory - Ty Clute
- Nan, Fred, Christmas Future - Jennifer Pranger
- Pamela, Musician, Young Scrooge, Boy - Richar Abel
- Robert, Serious 3, Peter, Businessman 2, Husband - Veronica Pranger
- Linda, Serious 1, Marley, Bob & Mrs. Cratchit-Codee James
- Donovan, Director - Nolen Carle (Friday - 12/1 only)
- Donovan, Director - Crystal Doil
- Lyssa, Stage Manager - Jenna Gound

- Martha, Writer, Narrator- Cortnee LeMoyne
  - Brynn, Announcer - Kim Albers
  - Marina, Tiny Tim 1- Sunshine Zionist
  - Ryan, Singer, Tiny Tim 2 - Berkeley Carter
  - Duane, Musician, Bob Cratchit, Fan, Belle - RaCayla Adams
  - Sara, Serious 2, Christmas Past & Present, Businessman 1- Jordan Gound
  - Amy Jo, Serious 3, Charity Lady, Mary - Jordan Gound
  - Johanna, Light Board Operator - Angela Sanford
  - Megan, Sound Board Operator - Melanie Johnson
- And in this chaotic production, the audience can actually vote for their favorite cast member and is befitting the chaos, take points away from cast members. Canisters will be set up for each cast member and the canister with the most points per donation will win the favorite cast member honor.
- Anything 25 cents and over is a corresponding amount of points. Dimes, nickels and pennies reduce the points of the cannister, so sandbagging is allowed.
- Shows are Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. at the playhouse at 725 Avenue G in Fort Madison. Tickets are available at the playhouse or at <https://oldfortplayers.com>.



Photo by Melanie Johnson/OFP

Veronica Ranger and Richar Abel are excited to see that scrooge (Ty Clute) has changed his grumpy ways in dress rehearsal for A Christmas Chaos.

## After 17 years, Derr steps out on her own

**DERR** - Continued from Page 1

Avenue H providing financial advising services in the building his father built in 2007. Kelch retired in 2021 and divided the portfolio among Corey, Tony Fullenkamp, who came on under Kelch's leadership about six years ago and has his own location in the former Chamber offices on 9th Street, and former office manager Melissa Derr

On Wednesday, Derr broke the ribbon on her own office with Fort Madison Chamber Ambassadors and clients, and celebrated with an open house.

Derr started with Edward Jones almost 17 years ago, 13 of those with Larry Kelch.

"I decided when he went to retire to go ahead and become a financial advisor myself, so that's what we're doing today," Derr said.

She said the space and freedom that allows her to do what's best for clients is what she likes about having her own space.

"Larry was with Jones for more than 30 years and when he went to retire Jones works with other advisors and splits the office among them. Tony got some, Corey got some and I got some and we wanted to take over and continue his legacy," Derr said.

"A big part of that for me was that I already knew almost all of the clients, but the hard part was seeing clients that weren't going to be mine anymore."

Derr's new office is in the former space of Brockman Chiropractic at 2311 Avenue L, Suite 3. Margaret Waters is Derr's Office Manager.

### HTC GIRLS

## Lady Crusaders survive in SEISC win

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP  
PCC SPORTS

FORT MADISON - The first few games of the season provide plenty of lessons, and Holy Trinity's girls basketball team learned on Tuesday night how to win games that become a jumbled mess.

The Crusaders' 48-42 victory over Danville at Shotenkirk Gym was what coach Tony Johnson expected. "They're aggressive," Johnson said of the Bears.

"They're always in your face, they never let you catch your breath or gather yourself"

But the Crusaders (2-0 overall, 1-0 SEI Superconference South Division) showed composure in the final minutes as Danville (0-3, 0-1) cut Holy Trinity's 12-point lead to three with 2:20 to play. The Crusaders, though, made enough plays to finish off the win, with Adalyn Kruse's shot with eight seconds left finally sealing the win.

"It was a really sloppy game with a lot of turnovers," said Holy Trinity senior Mary Kate Bendlage, who led the Crusaders with 27 points. "We probably missed 10 easy shots there in the second half, and that's 20 points that could have helped us really pull away there. It's our second game, though, so there are things we can fix."

"We probably missed 25 shots within three feet of the basket," Johnson said. "If we make half of those it's different."

Holy Trinity seemed to have the game under control when Teagan Snaadt hit a jumper with 3:45 left that put the Crusaders up 44-32. But Danville went on a

9-0 run with two 3-pointers from Macie Wagner and one from Alaina Gourley.

Bendlage got her last points of the night with a 15-foot jumper with 1:40 left that ended the Bears' run. Danville had two chances to cut into the lead again, but could only make 1-of-4 free throws in the span of 13 seconds.

The Crusaders led 24-11 at halftime, then kept the pressure on the Bears behind Bendlage, who had 10 of Holy Trinity's 12 third-quarter points.

Bendlage said Holy Trinity's offense is more balanced this season with the return of senior Natalie Randolph, who had 19 points in Monday's win at WACO and followed that with a nine-point game in this one.

"It just makes it easier with Natalie," Bendlage said. "We're really balanced, and that's tough for teams to defend."

All of Holy Trinity's rotation was part of the volleyball team that finished second in the Class 1A state tournament. There was no break for the Crusaders, with the first day of girls basketball practice coming four days after the end of the volleyball season.

"A lot of teams had open gyms and conditioning, and we didn't have that," Bendlage said. "But I think that volleyball run really shows our athleticism, and it's carrying over to the basketball court."

"These kids know how to win," Johnson said. "Everything they do is about winning, and they know how to finish. I thought they handled the pressure well tonight, and to get two wins to open the season is a good start."

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