

PEN CITY CURRENT

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

Thursday, December 7, 2023 | 6 pages | Volume 7 • Issue 207



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Marina gets regional award

Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld is joined by Lee County Economic Development President Dennis Fraise, right, and a MidAmerican official in accepting the Placemaking Award at the 2023 Mid-America Competitiveness Conference in Indianapolis.



Courtesy Photo

FMAAA NEWS

December is Member Show month at FMAAA

BY LORI ILLNER GREEN
FMAAA Director

FORT MADISON - It is Member Show month at the FMAAA Art Center, located at 825 Avenue G in Fort Madison. Fort Madison Area Arts Association members are invited to display two pieces of original art in this annual group exhibition. This year, the FMAAA Art Center is hosting 41 artists who have submitted 70 pieces for display in this traditional event. "As the work filters in, it is like a big reveal," says Director Lori Illner Greene. "This area is home to some top-quality artists. We never know what will show up and it is very gratifying to bring so many excellent pieces together into a cohesive display." The exhibition is an amazing cross section of work encompassing a wide variety of painting, photography, drawing, etching, glass, metal work, wood carving, fiber art and pottery. "Still looking for that perfect gift? Many pieces in the show are for sale, or we have other excellent items available in the Member Gallery," says Greene. "The Opening Receptions are open to everyone each month. It's a great time to meet the artists, enjoy some delicious tid bits and enjoy being part of the overall creative mix." The December Member Show is once again generously sponsored by Cambre House and Farm Event and Wedding Venue.

The Opening Reception on Friday, December 5 from 5pm to 7pm will be extra exciting this year. In addition to announcing the artwork that is being selected for best in category and overall Best in Show at 6pm, the Pick '23 Raffle winner will be drawn at 6:45pm. It is not too late to get in on the chance to win \$2,023. Raffle tickets are on sale for \$10 each until just before the drawing. The purpose of the raffle is to bring attention to a need for and to launch an endowment fund for the FMAAA Art Center.

The FMAAA now owns its own building and is introducing many new activities for artists to connect with each other and with the community. The

See MEMBERS, page 3

MID-AMERICA: Regional competitive conference recognizes city's work on marina

BY PCC STAFF

INDIANAPOLIS - Fort Madison proudly took the spotlight as the recipient of the prestigious Placemaking Award at the 2023 Mid-America Competitiveness Conference in Indianapolis. The city's transformative \$11 million Fort Madison Marina Project, initiated in 2020, secured this accolade for revitalizing the marina with resilient infrastructure, a 177-slip facility, and plans for a world-class hospitality center, restaurant, boating convenience store, and a reimagined riverfront park.

Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld, who attended the

conference to accept the award, expressed his gratitude, saying, "This recognition is a testament to the dedication of our community and the success of collaborative efforts. The Fort Madison Marina Project not only rejuvenates our riverfront but serves as a catalyst for broader initiatives that enhance our city's vibrancy."

The award highlights Fort Madison's commitment to thoughtful economic development and placemaking. By transforming underutilized spaces into vibrant community places, the city is setting a precedent for progressive urban planning.

See AWARD, page 3

HEALTH NEWS

Forum focuses on local workplace mental health, well-being

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The stigma of needing help and the bias that exists in the workplace are two of the top concerns for health officials to come out of a two-hour luncheon Wednesday at the Elks Club in Fort Madison.

The University of Iowa's College of Public Health hosted the Community Forum sponsored by Lee County

Health Department, Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce, The Best You Coalition, Great River Health, and Van Buren SAFE Coalition Wednesday morning.

The forum focused discussions around how best to roll out, support, and advocate for mental health services and well-being for employees. About 25 local business members representing health care and the health services field participated.

However, with 1 in 4 jobs in Lee County in the manufacturing sector, none of the major manufacturers in the county were present at the forum.

In a breakout session following the group conversation, one of the questions that came up was how the group would get an audience with the employers that weren't in the room.

Edith Parker, the Dean of public

See WORKPLACE, page 6

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WEATHER

THU 07 Dec..... Clear skies, 55° F/ 42° F
FRI 08 Dec..... Partly sunny, 56° F/ 41° F
SAT 09 Dec..... Rainy, 47° F/ 26° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LUCKY FOR LIFE 12/05.....11 12 21 22 35, Lucky Ball: 1
MEGA MILLIONS 12/05.....18 35 40 64 67, Mega Ball: 18 Megaplier: 4
PICK 3 MIDDAY 12/05.....9 5 1
PICK 3 EVENING 12/05.....8 5 3
PICK 4 MIDDAY 12/05.....9 4 9 7
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Obituaries/For the Record

OBITUARIES

MICHAEL L. BELTON

Michael "Mike" Lee Belton, 72, of Keokuk, IA died unexpectedly Thursday, November 30, 2023 at his home.

He was born on February 24, 1951 in Carthage, IL, the son of Floyd and Marvelle Mott Belton. He was one of two children to the couple. He graduated from Hamilton High School with the class of 1969. Mike resided in Hamilton until the time of meeting his wife and moved to Keokuk, IA. Mike did not know a stranger while growing up downtown Hamilton and was notorious

for his antics.

Mike was united in marriage to Pamela Boley on December 19, 1981 in Keokuk, IA. She preceded him in death on February 28, 2017.

He is survived by one son Brandon Belton (Beth) of Honolulu, HI, Jenny Carlson of Kahoka, the daughter they did not have, his caretaking nephew, Dion Gregory, nieces and nephews and special great nieces and great

nephews.

Besides his wife, he was also preceded in death by his parents and a sister, Sheila Gregory.

Mike had been employed by Henniges for twenty-two years until his retirement.

Mike enjoyed watching all sports especially baseball and football and an avid St. Louis Cardinals and Kansas City Chiefs fan. He followed all area teams, but especially the Hamilton Cardinals/West Hancock Titans football.

A funeral service will be held at 11:00 a.m., Saturday, December 9, 2023 at the Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk, IA. Burial will be Oakland Cemetery in Keokuk, IA.

Visitation will be held after 3 p.m. Friday, December 8, 2023 at the funeral home with the family meeting with friends from 6 - 8 p.m.

Memorials may be made to the family.

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



BELTON

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

12/05/23 - 12:00 a.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Matthew Jay Wells, 23, of Davenport, in the 700 block of 34th Street, on charges of public intoxication and 2nd degree harassment. He was taken to Lee County Jail.

12/05/23 - 10:30 a.m. - Fort Madison police cited Andres Lee Diaz, 42, of Fort Madison, in the 1800 block of Avenue H, on a charge of 1st offense trespassing.

12/06/23 - 6:20 a.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Michael Douglas McCabe, 41, of Fort Madison, in the 2600 block of Avenue D, on a charge of violation of a domestic no-contact order. He was taken to Lee County Jail.

12/05/23 - 1:53 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to

a report of larceny/theft in the 1500 block of Avenue H.

12/06/23 - 6:20 a.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Amber Renee Rea, 40, of Fort Madison, in the 2600 block of Avenue D, on a charge of violation of a domestic no-contact order. She was taken to Lee County Jail.

Keokuk Police Report

12/05/23 - 11:09 a.m. - Keokuk police cited and released Doris Jean Howard, 76, of Keokuk, in the 300 block of North Park Drive, on a charge of 5th degree theft less than \$300.

12/05/23 - 11:22 a.m. - Keokuk police arrested a 17-year-old male juvenile, hometown not reported, in the 2200 block of Middle Road, on a charge of disorderly conduct - fight/violence. He was released to a parent.

12/05/23 - 11:36 a.m. - Keokuk police arrested a 17-year-old male juvenile, hometown not reported, in the 2200 block of Middle Road, on a charge of disorderly conduct - fight/violence. He was released to a parent.

12/05/23 - 11:41 p.m. - Keokuk police arrested Desiree Kristina Stinson, 31, of Keokuk, in the 1000 block of Palean Street, on charges of possession of drug paraphernalia and driving while barred. She was taken to Lee County Jail.

Lee County Sheriff Report

12/05/23 - 5:10 a.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies responded to a single-vehicle accident in the 2500 block of Hwy. 61 North. According to the report, a vehicle driven by Susan Lynn Durham, 52, of Montrose, was traveling northbound on Hwy. 61 when the vehicle lost control due to slick road conditions and struck the bridge support and guard rail. No injuries or citations were reported. Durham's vehicle sustained functional damages and was driven from the scene.

12/05/23 - 2:04 p.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies arrested a 15-year-old male juvenile, of Washington, at the sheriff's office, on a charge of simple assault. He was referred to juvenile court.

12/05/23 - 3:16 p.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies responded to a report of a single-vehicle accident in the 2800 block of Hwy. 16 East. According to the report, a vehicle driven by Lillian Sue Sereda, 67, of Burlington, was traveling eastbound on Hwy. 16 when the driver lost control, went into the northbound ditch, overturned, and landed on its wheels facing southwest. No injuries or citations were reported. The vehicle sustained disabling damages and was towed from the scene.

12/05/23 - 7:42 p.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies arrested Randy Ray Wagner, 46, of Burlington, at the sheriff's office, on a warrant for failure to appear/contempt of court. He was taken to Lee County Jail and later released on bond.

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

DIAGNOSED WITH NEUROPATHY?

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Obituaries/From the Front

OBITUARIES

JAMES A. SETTLES

James A. "Jimbo" Settles, 77, of Fort Madison, Iowa, passed away at 5:40 a.m. Wednesday, December 6, 2023, at the Clark County Nursing Home in Kahoka, Missouri.



SETTLES

He was born on November 26, 1946, in Fort Madison, Iowa, the son of Samuel Dewey and Etta Mae (Case) Settles. On May 10, 1969, he married Phyllis Hammer at St. Peter's United Church of Christ in Franklin.

Survivors include his wife: Phyllis; sons: Sean (Lindsay) Settles of Fort Madison, Pete (Chrissy) Settles of West Point, Iowa and Jon (Emily) Settles of Columbus Junction; grandchildren: Katlynn (Cody) Mason, Rodric (Elizabeth) Settles, Danen, Jarrett, Tanner, Tauren, Tate, Paul and Eve Settles; great grandchildren: Brooke, Luke, Kane, Dakota and Beckham; step-great grandchildren: Bristol and Berkley; sister: Carol (Terry) Durbin of Bella Vista, Arkansas. Also surviving are several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; two half sisters and one half brother.

James was a 1965 graduate of Fort Madison High School. He attended Burlington Junior College and the University of Hawaii. He served in the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War. James worked as a millwright at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant. He was a member of the Burlington Eagles Club, Burlington Disabled American Veterans and the Fort Madison Vietnam Veterans of America. He enjoyed tinkering on cars, racing and watching westerns.

A visitation will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Saturday, December 9, 2023, at Schmitz Funeral Home in West Point.

A private family graveside service will be held at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, December 9, 2023, at St. Peter's Cemetery in rural Franklin with full military rites presented by the Fort Madison Veteran's Honor Guard.

Burial will be at St. Peter's Cemetery, rural Franklin.

A memorial has been established in his memory for the West Point Fire and Rescue.

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

Marina project stands out regionally

AWARD - Continued from Page 1

This accolade, featured in the January issue of Site Selection magazine, reinforces Fort Madison's position as a regional leader in economic development.

The MidAmerica Economic Development Council (Mid-America EDC) is a professional association representing thirteen states that collectively contributes significantly to the national economy. The Mid-America EDC region includes Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Collectively, the Mid-America EDC region represents 20 percent of the nation's population,

20 percent of the nation's total business establishments and 21.7 percent of the nation's total workforce.

The award comes on the heels of a Burlington Northern Santa Fe's designation of a certified site designation of property in Fort Madison.

The Fort Madison Industrial Site is a 128-acre site with 116 contiguous acres available for development. It is conveniently located off 4-lane US Highway 61 and is identified as a future economic development growth area for industry in the community's strategic plan. The site is also certified by the Iowa Economic Development Authority.

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OBITUARIES

JOY A. HAYES

Joy Ann Hayes, 84, loving mother, grandmother and GG, left this world to be with her heavenly father and family on Tuesday, December 5, 2023. Joy was born on March 9, 1939, as Joy Ann Perkins, daughter of John "Perk" Perkins, and Erma Wright. In 1956



HAYES

she married James L. Reynolds, and together they had four children, Debra, Donna, James and Darin. They later divorced and Joy was blessed to have found love with William H. Hayes, who she married in 1973 and shared 47 years of marriage before Bill passed away in March of 2020.

Bill and Joy, together with other family members, founded the Family Worship Center in Keokuk, Iowa, where they would pastor for many years. Joy had a great love for God and for her church and dedicated her life to her church community. Joy was also an amazing mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great grandmother. She loved her family with all her heart and enjoyed many family vacations and holidays, especially Christmas. Joy loved the holiday season and Christmas shopping. She also enjoyed yard-sale trips with her daughters and sisters; resale shops; and her favorite - Von Maur shopping; playing games with her family; and watching the grandchildren swim in her pool. She shared fond memories of her youth of square dancing with her father, and softball games with her friends. During her lifetime, because of her incredible work ethic, Joy worked at different factories, drove semi-trucks, and eventually retired from Dial Corporation.

Joy is survived by her children, Debra Saunders, James (Chandra) Reynolds, and Darin (Andrea) Reynolds; her stepdaughter, Brenda (Greg) Morgan, her nine grandchildren, Ross (Sarah) Braden, Jill (Adrian) McKay, Ashly Sholl, Amanda (Joe) Nelson, Jimmy Reynolds, Jordan Reynolds, Jacob Reynolds, Ryan Reynolds and Luke Reynolds. She leaves a legacy of 15 great-grandchildren and 4 great-great grandchildren. She also is survived by her loyal dog, Ruby. She was preceded in death by her husband, Bill, her daughter, Donna, her parents and two sisters.

Cremation has been entrusted to the care of King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory. A memorial service will be held Friday, December 8, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. at Family Worship Center, 2439 Belknap Blvd Keokuk, IA 52632 with Reverend John Happs officiating. A dinner and fellowship will follow the ceremony. Burial will be held at a later date in Gethsemane Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made to Family Worship Center. Online condolences to the Hayes family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: www.kinglynk.com.

Foot traffic improving at FM art center

MEMBERS - Continued from Page 1

Art Center is funded annually by a variety income streams - commissions on art sales and membership investments (aka membership dues) which make up just a small portion of that income. Additional revenue is generated through class fees, grants, event fees, the annual art auction, and by the generosity of donors and sponsors. An endowment smooths out all of the possible hiccups -- a disproportionate amount of revenue rides on the success of the annual FMAAA Expressions Art Auction, successful grant applications and the generosity of donors. But none of those larger chunks of revenue are guaranteed. A base level of funds to count on from an endowment will smooth out the Art Center's annual budget. The FMAAA is grateful to have the ongoing support of the community. The Art Center is really humming with all of the events and activities going on. Foot traffic continues to improve and new artists have joined the membership rolls along with increasing volunteer involvement. The Art Center now also has high school students who volunteer regularly.

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Sports

Nikes smokin' from floor in rout of Central Lee

HOT SHOOTING: Delaney leads all scorers with 26 as Notre Dame rolls to 83-48 SEISC South win

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELLSON – Central Lee's newfound one-two punch of Brayden Wyrick and Will Hayes has brought a new sense of life to the Hawks' basketball team.

But Tuesday night's shooting clinic put on by Notre Dame at Central Lee High School cooled off the Hawks' two-game winning streak.

The Nikes shot 62% from the field en route to an 83-48 SEI Superconference South Division win in a game that was moved to Central Lee after a CO2 leak was discovered at Father Minnett Gymnasium earlier in the day.

Notre Dame was 34 of 55 from the floor and controlled the pace of the game, keeping Head Coach Kritter Hayes' Hawks from getting into their half court as much as they wanted.

"They shot a high percentage and it's hard to get into an offensive rhythm when we pressure ourselves when we fall that far behind early on."

Notre Dame led from the tip when senior Dylan Kipp converted inside off a pass from the jump. The Nikes would hit their first four shots including two from three-point range.

Wyrick answered with a couple slashing moves in the lane for a 10-4 early deficit, but Notre Dame would stretch that to a 26-9 first quarter lead shooting 10 of 14 in the period with five different players getting points in the run.

The Hawks would miss their first five shots of the second period while the Nikes stayed proficient going five of eight and pushing the lead to an insurmountable 38-9.

Hayes would try to turn things around getting back-to-back three-point plays at the 4:08 mark but the Hawks wouldn't score again until Wyrick's dunk at the halftime horn giving Notre Dame a 44-19 lead at the break.

Hayes and Wyrick combined for 17 of the Hawks' 19 points in the half, with Aiden Ross scoring on a couple freethrows.

"It's been a positive for us, for sure. They both are scoring threats," Hayes said of his posts. "But tip your hat to Notre Dame. They did a great job of digging down on both of them when they caught the ball in the post. We've got to learn to swing it and be strong with the ball. We weren't strong with the ball and we didn't face up and see the rim. Those are adjustments those guys can make and still have a positive impact



Photos by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Central Lee's Will Hayes tries to block a shot inside in the first quarter of the Hawks' loss to Notre Dame Tuesday night in Donnellson. The Hawks fell 83-48 coming off back-to-back wins last week. Below, Aden Ross pushes the ball up the floor.



for our team."

Central Lee would make some adjustments at the half to cool off the

Nikes' shooting holding them to just 1 of 6 to start the second half. Cory Jones nailed a couple

3-balls during the cold spot for Notre Dame and Wyrick and Hayes both were able to step out and

hit 3-pointers, cutting the lead to 17 at 48-31 with about six minutes left.

The Nikes' Gedi Boal broke the cold streak with a bucket in transition and then Notre Dame hit the next 7 of 9 to push the lead to 64-37 after three quarters.

The fourth quarter was much of the same as both teams went to their benches to get their twos and threes some playing time.

Kritter Hayes said the Hawks had to play better defense and control the game better.

"We didn't play very good defense and had a lot of turnovers. We were trying to keep those to 10 and we were probably at about 20 tonight. I just told them to think and reflect on the things we can control. Come back to work tomorrow and bring lots of energy to practice."

Hayes finished with 14 for the Hawks. Wyrick had 13 and Ross finished with 11. Liam Delaney led all scorers with 26 points. Boal had 15 from his point guard spot.

Central Lee falls to 2-2 overall and 1-2 in the SEISC. Notre Dame is 2-1 (2-1). The Hawks host Van Buren in a girls/boys quad on Friday night.

The January 16th game between the Hawks and Nikes originally slated for Donnellson will now be played at Notre Dame.

In the junior varsity boys' game, the Hawks won 54-52 with Brody Moeller pouring in 16 and Carson Morrison adding 12.



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Classifieds/Public Notices

PEN CITY CURRENT CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC NOTICES

**PUBLIC NOTICE
West Burlington
Special City Council
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday,
November 15, 2023**

The West Burlington City Council met in Special Session on Wednesday, November 15, 2023, at 5:15 p.m. at West Burlington City Hall, 122 Broadway Street, West Burlington, Iowa, with Mayor Ron Teater presiding.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kathy Newberry, Andy Crowner, John Johnson, Melanie Young, and Therese Lees

MEMBERS ABSENT: ALSO PRESENT:

Mayor Ron Teater, Police Chief Jesse Logan, Fire Chief/Building Inspector Shaun Ryan, Public Works Director Mike Brissey, City Clerk Kelly Fry, and City Administrator Gregg Mandsager

ROLL CALL
CALL TO ORDER
CLOSED SESSION
Closed Session in accordance with Iowa Code Section 21.5(1)(i) to evaluate the professional competency of an individual whose appointment, hiring, performance, or discharge is being considered when necessary to prevent needless and irreparable injury to that individual's reputation and that individual requests a closed session.

Moved by Young, seconded by Lees, to go into Closed Session at 5:15 p.m. in accordance with Iowa Code Section 21.5(1)(i). Motion carried by the following votes:

Ayes: Newberry, Crowner, Johnson, Young, and Lees

Moved by Lees, seconded by Young, to come out of Closed Session at 5:56 p.m. Motion carried by the following votes:

Ayes: Newberry, Crowner, Johnson, Young, and Lees

Consider formal action following the Closed Session.

Moved by Lees, seconded by Crowner, to approve a 3% merit increase to City Administrator Mandsager's base wage effective 11/15/2023. Motion carried by the following votes:

Ayes: Newberry, Crowner, Johnson, Young, and Lees

ADJOURN
There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Approved
Ron Teater, Mayor
Kelly D. Fry, City Clerk

PUBLIC NOTICE
Subject to change as finalized by the City Clerk. For a final official copy, contact the City Clerk's office at (319) 753-8124.

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE BURLINGTON, IOWA CITY COUNCIL Meeting No. 42 September 18, 2023

The Burlington City Council met in regular session at 5:30 p.m. in the Thomas J. Smith Council Chambers, City Hall, 400 Washington Street, with Mayor Billups, Council Members Critser, Graham-Murray, Maupin and Wilson present.

BURLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE: None.

CONSENT AGENDA: To the Public:

All matters listed under Item I., Consent Agenda, having been discussed were considered to be routine by the City Council and were enacted by one motion. There was no separate discussion of these items. If discussion was desired, that item was removed from the Consent Agenda and was considered separately.

Introduced By: Graham-Murray Seconded By: Critser

MOTION: To approve all items listed under Item I., Consent Agenda.

DISCUSSION: Mayor Billups reviewed the items listed on the consent agenda to the viewing audience. All present had opportunity to speak and

nothing additional was filed in the office of the City Clerk.

(VOTE: 5 - "AYES")

CARRIED HEARING:

1. Statement: Consideration of Sale of Property Locally Known as 1006 Spruce Street, City of Burlington, Iowa, with Conditions

COMMENTS: Chad Bird, City Manager, stated that the City acquired the abandoned property

at 1006 Spruce Street in 2017. He stated that the neighboring property owner has offered to acquire this property to increase their lot size. He stated that due to the size of the lot it is not conducive to sell the property for improvements such as a single family residence. He stated that the City has received one bid for the property from Jesse Dickey in the amount of \$100.00. All present had

opportunity to speak and nothing additional was filed in the office of the City Clerk.

Introduced By: Critser Seconded By: Graham-Murray Motion to Close CARRIED

Introduced By: Critser Seconded By: Maupin Resolution Approving Sale of Property Locally Known as 1006 Spruce Street, City of Burlington, Iowa, with Conditions

DISCUSSION: None. (VOTE: 5 - "AYES")

ADOPTED

Adjournment: 5:44 p.m.

Approved: October 2, 2023

Katie Music, CMC, City Clerk
Jon D. Billups, Mayor
(See recording on file in the office of the City Clerk for complete discussion and documentation.)

BUSINESS DIRECTORY



Patrick Profeta
General Manager

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From the Front

Industries a no-show at workplace health forum

WORKPLACE - Continued from Page 1

health college, said the focus of the university's efforts was to provide a mechanism for community and business leaders to come together and share best practices around mental health and well-being at the community level.

She said the most impressive thing she's seen in the multiple forums the University has hosted has been the ideas shared by those participating in the forums. The University is doing research on how best to reach communities with mental health and workforce wellness now being one of the top concerns for state employers.

She said there are also grants for communities that support innovative health improvement projects in communities across the state. The grants are funded by Iowa Farm Bureau.

"The projects led by local businesses and organizations are tackling community challenges such as food insecurity for children and the elderly, obesity, substance abuse prevention, and healthy activities for youth," Parker said.

She said Lee County Health Department has been one of the most successful grant recipients. LCHD has been awarded several grants for senior health screenings and senior nutrition.

Breanna Kramer-Riesberg, the community outreach and development project coordinator at LCHD, and a graduate of the University's College of Public Health, said a lot of her time has been spent on child care issues including abuse, neglect and day care slots for workers.

"The underlying issue is poverty," she said.

She said she's been working with community advocacy groups in Washington D.C. to take an inventory of the issues facing families.

"We have an issue right now. There are jobs out there and people aren't taking them," Kramer-Riesberg said. "What can we do as a health department partnering with other people in our community to get more people into those positions and lift our children, specifically, out of poverty?"

She said there are a lot of resources in the area including IowaWorks and StaffingSolutions, but people aren't accessing those services and officials want to dig into the why.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

A group breakout session was part of Wednesday's public health forum at the Elks Lodge in downtown Fort Madison. The forum was hosted by the University of Iowa's College of Public Health and looked at ways to help create a healthier workforce and make local jobs more attractive to families.

Kramer-Riesberg said expanding child care workforce is essential, and that includes getting to a substantive wage so providers can staff facilities. They are also looking at access to resources locally and getting people connected through the Mobile Connection Center at LCHD, which can help match people to resources in the community.

LCHD is also working at retooling workplace policies to help create more family-friendly policies to attract more workers, while addressing the needs of employees with regard to their health and the health of their families.

Debra Payne, Manager of Employee Health at Great River Health Systems, said mental health is the top issue that employees come to her about. Payne has been in her position for five years and said the challenges have taken a toll on the health facilities employee point system.

"That's our number one anxiety. You hear it all the time in the news about post-covid and the health care system not having enough staff and getting the right people in those jobs."

She said a lot of employees have PTSD issues and dealing with patients who are lashing out or angry or emotional trigger the staff's PTSD symptoms which is problematic for retention and the health of the staff.

Payne said the aging workforce, as well as the aging parents of the workforce, is also adding pressure to staff and has created challenges for health care staffing.

GRHS does have employee assistance programs, but she said they are very underutilized and the challenge is getting people to see the value of the programs.

The group also heard from Kris Rankin, the Coali-

tion Director of Lee County Best You Coalition and Van Buren Safe Coalition. Rankin is a certified prevention specialist and began working with Lee County in 2018. The Best You Coalition is funded by a drug-free communities grant. She said a coalition is now being formed in Fort Madison as well.

She said ADDs or Alcohol and Drug Dependency Services of Southeast Iowa has programming for drug-free workplaces. The Best You Coalition focuses on substance abuse in the county or community.

Rankin said qualitative and quantitative data gathering including drug testing is a vital component of the drug-free workplace.

The conversation also focused on healthy eating and providing resources and information to employees on how to eat healthier foods.

Parker pointed out that Iowa State Extension has many tools online that as part of their Spend Smart, Eat Smart program that directs people to healthier options out there that don't put extreme pressure on family budgets.

She said that a new grant window is open from the college for a Business Leadership Network Community Grant Program for non-profits, and local governments to foster collaboration around the issues in small communities.

The grants are for up to \$3,000 and require a minimum of 1:1 matching funds and the funds cannot come from the applying organization. Funds are for local programming and activities that address a locally identified community health or public need. Proposals must be submitted to tara-mckee@uiowa.edu by Jan. 12 at 5 p.m.

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