

# PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Wednesday, January 3, 2024 | 13 pages | Volume 8 • Issue 10



www.pencitycurrent.com

TOP READ STORY JANUARY THROUGH APRIL January 18, 2023

## City debates Old Fort fate



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

In January, city officials had to deal with an Old Fort Facebook post that said the historic museum was being closed and demolished. Eventually the City Council voted to keep the facility running after repairs.

### FACEBOOK RELEASE: City officials deal with Fort's facebook post about closure

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 45,415  
WEBSITE VIEWS: 2,560

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - City officials say news of the closure and demolition of the Old Fort in Fort Madison may be premature.

On Wednesday afternoon, the "Our Old Fort Madison" Facebook page said the Fort staff had been informed they were closed permanently and the Fort would be demolished.

City Manager David Varley said Wednesday afternoon that "someone has spoken out of turn" and that options for the Fort are still on the table.

"We want people to realize that the Old Fort is part of our town's history and no decisions have been made yet. Somebody spoke out of turn. Somebody is posting something that shouldn't be posted," Varley said.

The "Our Old Fort Madison" Facebook page posted the announcement at around 2 p.m. Wednesday. That Facebook page is not run by the city, according to Varley. He said someone associated with the Old Fort must be administering that social media outlet. The post has since been taken down.

Varley said a press release on the status of the Old Fort should be forthcoming.

"This is supposed to follow an orderly path of this, then

this, then we have a plan. Now everyone's getting slapped in the face. This isn't the way it's supposed to go."

That line was reiterated by Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld.

"We were preparing a press release that says we're definitely exploring options. Here's the short answer. After we inspected it, (Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren and Building Director Doug Krogmeier) said this cannot be occupied. It is that far gone," Mohrfeld said.

"But there has been no concrete decision. The City Council has not gotten together. There could be recommendations from staff. But we're taking Joey and Doug's advice serious. It is not in a condition that we can have the public in it."

Mohrfeld said after Tuesday's City Council meeting that options on the table included closing it, but that would have to be a City Council decision and the council hasn't discussed it.

"We haven't even updated the city council officially on some of these reports," Mohrfeld said.

"Is it going to be a tough path forward? Yes, But it's been years of not putting forward a good maintenance plan, and years of mismanagement."

On Thursday of last week, the group toured the facility. Varley said he was surprised at some of the conditions of the 38-year-old Fort.

Mohrfeld said Old Fort Director Dr. Eugene Watkins has been in meetings to discuss the Fort. No one was at the Fort on Wednesday afternoon.

JAN. 14, 2023

## Cresswell's shot ruins Holy Trinity upset bid

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 40,380  
WEBSITE VIEWS: 952

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP  
PCC SPORTS

FORT MADISON - OK, so the play didn't go exactly the way Ryan Wilson drew it.

But the result was perfect.

Hunter Cresswell's basket at the buzzer gave Fort Madison a 52-51 win over city rival Holy Trinity on Saturday night at Shottenkirk Gym.

"It's just how we drew up the game plan," said Wilson, the Bloodhounds' coach, celebratory tongue planted firmly in cheek. "Just how we drew it up."

The Bloodhounds (4-7) got a win they needed. Still simmering after Friday's 63-46 home loss to Burlington, Fort Madison nearly let a 12-point lead at the start of the quarter get away.

APRIL 19, 2023

## Johnson earns letter for Central football

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 37,081  
WEBSITE VIEWS: 113

PELLA - 2022 Fort Madison High School graduate and Bloodhound Tate Johnson was honored for his contributions to the Central College football team this past fall at the squad's recent awards banquet.

The nation's fourth-winningest college football program since 1975, Central finished 7-3 this past fall. The Dutch have not had a losing season since 1960, winning a record 32 conference championships and making 22 NCAA Division III playoff appearances.

Johnson appeared in two varsity games this year with one reception. He was a member of the Class 4A All-State team as a Bloodhound in 2022.

He is the son of Tony and Tara Johnson of Fort Madison.

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### WEATHER

WED 03 Jan..... Mostly cloudy, 35° F/ 21° F  
THU 04 Jan..... Mostly sunny, 34° F/ 23° F  
FRI 05 Feb..... Mostly cloudy, 36° F/ 26° F

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LOTTO AMERICA 01/01..... 7 9 19 36 45, Star Ball: 10 All Star Bonus: 4  
LUCKY FOR LIFE 01/01..... 6 7 15 31 43, Lucky Ball: 8  
PICK 3 MIDDAY 01/01..... 9 6 6  
PICK 3 EVENING 01/01..... 0 8 3  
PICK 4 MIDDAY 01/01..... 3 5 3 3  
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POWERBALL 01/01..... 12 21 42 44 49, Powerball: 1 Power Play: 3

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## 2023 – A Year in Review: January – April

# We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2023

- |                               |                                |                                 |                               |                                |                               |
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## 2023 – A Year in Review: January – April

# We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2023

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# 2023 – A Year in Review: January – April

**JAN. 24, 2023**

## Kruse closes in on FMHS career scoring record

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 35,187**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 269**

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Senior Camille Kruse was less than seven points from the school scoring record with a quarter to play Tuesday night.

Instead of finding her shots, she continued to look inside for teammates that were open as Clark County tried to find the answer for the Hounds' top scorer.

But the Indians had little in the way of the answer as Kruse went for 28 and the Hounds won 53-31 in a non-conference matchup at the Hound Dome.

"That's just who Camille is. She's our beast. She plays very unselfish basketball," said Head Coach T.J. Sargent.

"We knew she was getting close in the third period and we tried to

get her open looks, but it seemed almost every time she found someone open and gave it up."

Sargent said she believed the single-game scoring mark is 34 and Kruse had all 28 before the fourth period started. She only took one shot in the fourth quarter, but found Dayonna Davis and Hadley Wolfe open late in the period for assists rather than forcing her own agenda.

Kruse started early with a 3-pointer to give Fort Madison a 5-2 advantage. After a Lady Hounds' defensive stop, Kruse would find Hadley again across the lane in transition for 7-2 lead.

Clark County would cut the lead to two at 7-5 but then Fort Madison would tear off 11 straight highlighted by Kruse's 11 points to take an 18-5 first quarter lead.

Aija Jenkins, who fin-

ished with 11 on the night behind Kruse, scored on a putback to open the second quarter, while Clark County missed on their eight shots from the field in the second quarter allowing the Lady Hounds to amass a 30-7 lead with two minutes left in the half.

The Indians would make a small charge to the buzzer, outscoring Fort Madison 6-2 to trail by 17 at the break.

Kruse kept a regular beat with a 3-ball to open the Hound scoring in the third and then hit another after a couple defensive stops. She had five 3-pointers on the night and was 9-of-9 from the free throw line.

Clark County would never get closer than 15 points the rest of the way.

Fort Madison again got solid minutes from freshmen as Halle Menke, Davis, Wolfe, Dynasty Bell, and Mara Smith all got minutes in the win.

**JAN. 4, 2023**

## Ben Bowen following in father Ryan's footsteps

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 25,581**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 388**

**BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP**  
PCC SPORTS

MACOMB - Ben Bowen grew up around the NBA.

It's an opportunity that Bowen, the son of former Fort Madison High School and Iowa standout Ryan Bowen, learned to appreciate.

And it's why Bowen has followed his father's path into NCAA Division I college basketball.

Bowen, a redshirt freshman, plays at Denver University, and he'll be playing close to where his father, and his mother Wendy, grew up when the Pioneers play at Western Illinois on Saturday.

Ryan Bowen is in his eighth season as an assistant coach with the Denver Nuggets, and it's his 12th season as an NBA assistant. That followed a college career in which he was a four-year starter at Iowa and had a 12-year professional career that included 10 years in the NBA.

Being around professional basketball has helped in the growth of Ben's career.

"I think I've grown up in a way a lot of kids would dream about growing up," Ben said. "I'm very thankful for the experiences I've had. I can't credit my dad enough — he taught me everything I know (about basketball). And being around this Nuggets organization, in particular, has really helped."



"I've appreciated that (Nuggets coach Michael Malone) has let me be around the team. My brother and I have been around on game days, on practice days. You get to see the highest level of basketball played. When you watch it enough, and you're around it enough, you get to pick up on different things. I've been very fortunate, because it's helped me along in my journey."

That kind of education has paid off.

"I don't credit myself as being the fastest guy or the strongest or most athletic guy on a basketball court, but I think I have a pretty good basketball IQ, and I think that's in part being able to grow up around the game," Ben said.

Ben, who graduated from Mountain Vista High School in Colorado, took a redshirt season last year at Wyoming.

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# 2023 – A Year in Review: January – April

**FEB. 25, 2023**

## Gas tank explodes destroying garage on Avenue E

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 21,108**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 2,660**

FORT MADISON - Fort Madison firefighters worked for just over an hour putting out a garage fire Saturday night.

Reports started coming into LeeComm at about 8:30 p.m. Saturday of an explosion of some type in the 1100 block of Avenue E.

According to Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren the fire started when an acetylene tank inside the garage blew up

causing several other tanks to explode destroying the structure.

“We might have some video of this from a patrol car, maybe. But one of the officers said it blew the roof up off the garage.”

Herren said the fire is under investigation and didn't know exactly what caused the tanks to explode. The garage was completely destroyed by the explosion and ensuing blaze.

No one was injured and firefighters cleared the scene right around 10 p.m.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

An acetylene tank in a garage in the 1100 block of Avenue E exploded causing other tanks to ignite in the structure. The fire destroyed the structure on Feb. 25.

**April 5, 2023**

## Accident claims two from VB County at 218 and 103

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 24,789**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 15,653**

LEE COUNTY - Two Van Buren County people were killed Wednesday afternoon in a two-vehicle accident at the intersection of Hwys. 103 and 218.

According to Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber, the two were westbound on Hwy. 103 and were struck by a semi heading northbound on Hwy. 218.

Weber said emergency crews were dis-

patched to the scene at about 3 p.m. and were on scene until about 8:15 p.m.

The Iowa State Patrol is handling the investigation but a preliminary report of the accident is not yet available. Family members of the two victims have been notified.

The driver of the semi was uninjured.

Lee County Sheriff's office was assisted by West Point Fire & Rescue, Donnellson/West Point Police, and Lee County EMS Ambulance.

**JANUARY 3, 2023**

## City officials to meet with developer over building hurdles

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 12,118**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,774**

FORT MADISON - A disgruntled developer from West Burlington got an olive branch of sorts from the Fort Madison City Council.

Sean Rogers, from HappyLand Properties headquartered in West Burlington, has had an issue with some building hurdles put in front of developments he's undertaken within the city.

Rogers again addressed the council during Tuesday's regular meeting, again threatening the council with "some surprises" this year he was bringing to upcoming council meetings.

"I'm not going to harp on what I've been harping on. I kinda gave you a reprieve in December. It was the season of giving and it was my gift to you by not attending the meetings," Rogers told the council.

He said with 2023 upon us he was bringing issues to the council every meeting he's allowed to attend.

Rogers was not allowed to speak at a meeting earlier in the fall, when Mayor Matt Mohrfeld said the public comment section was at his discretion.

Iowa Code says there are no guarantees that anyone be allowed to speak at public meetings or that there be time for public comment.

However, the city's attorney Pat O'Connell from Lynch Dallas out of Cedar Rapids, recommended that the city allow Rogers three minutes to speak when he last appeared in November.

Rogers told the council Tuesday that they had violated his constitutional rights. When pushed on the issue by Councilman Kevin Rink, Rogers said his first amendment rights were violated when he wasn't allowed to speak at the meeting.

**MARCH 21, 2023**

## Swatters shut down area schools

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 14,575**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,001**

FORT MADISON - Area law enforcement were put on high alert as part of what state officials are calling a coordinated "swatting" incident in the state Tuesday morning.

Fort Madison police, along with Lee County Sheriff's deputies, were dispatched to Fort Madison High School at around 10 a.m Tuesday morning on a report of a gunman inside the school.

Law enforcement on the scene couldn't comment on the situation, but said precautionary measures were taking place and students were still sheltered in place at about 10:25.

Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber confirmed at the scene the incident was part of a "swatting" coordination across the state and law enforcement were monitoring the situation.

Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff said the FBI is now involved in the investigation into the coordinated effort.

"Shortly after 10:00 AM this morning, our department responded to a call of an active shooter at the Fort Madison High School. A lock down occurred, and officers conducted a systematic search of the building. It was learned that nothing unusual was observed on the premises prior

to the report. As time progressed, it became known that other school districts in southeast Iowa, including Central Lee and Keokuk, received similar calls. Working with district officials, protocols were followed to insure there was no risk to students before resuming daily activities.

The department's school resource officer will remain posted at the high school throughout the day," Rohloff said.

"The Fort Madison Community School District will issue a joint press release of the incident. Because of the magnitude of multiple false calls prompting law enforcement action state-wide, specific details are being withheld pending investigation by the FBI.

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# 2023 – A Year in Review: January – April

**MARCH 15, 2023**

## FM board says shared agreements with HTC, Central Lee ending

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 13,449**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 2,331**

FORT MADISON – Officials at Fort Madison High School have announced the sharing program with Holy Trinity Catholic, specific to the Bloodhound football team, will not be renewed for the upcoming 2023 football season.

A statement released Wednesday afternoon indicated that only football will be impacted at this point.

The Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) engaged in a reclassification process for all statewide football programs as it does every two years. The organization finalized those plans on Monday and it was determined the Fort Madison football program would be classified as a 3A program without including the nonpublic enrollment numbers of HTC.

“If the enrollment numbers of HTC were to be included in the classification, the Fort Madison football program would be forced into a 4A classification. As a result, FMCS will not be renewing the sharing agreement with HTC for the football program beginning the 2023-2024 school year,” the statement from the district indicated.

Head Bloodhound Football Coach Derek Doherty said the move would impact about five players but only a couple would impact

things immediately. He said for the health of the program, it’s probably the best move.

“It does suck, because I love those guys,” Doherty said.

“I found out earlier today that that was going to happen. It’s definitely a double edged sword, We’re happy to be playing 3A football because that’s where we sit. When you look at BEDs that’s where it would have been, so the activities office based that decision on whether to be 3A or 4A.

“But there are really good football teams all the way through. If you look at size of schools, though, we’re a 3A.”

Doherty said Fort Madison was only getting one or two per year, but last year that number grew and he was seeing more in the Athletic Enhancement program.

“We were only getting one to two a year. Last year we ended up getting six. Adam Sobczak is a big loss, he’s been fantastic, and Conner Gehling was just giving football a shot. Hope that benefitted him in basketball.”

Doherty said the shared programs have gone back and forth with different coaches.

“I totally understand what happened. HTC has done that in the past with Coach (Michael) Sheerin because they didn’t want the Fort Madison girls on the HTC team, which turned out to be a blessing because Coach (Sebastian) Seifert was able to put our team back together at FMHS and have success.

**FEBRUARY 17, 2023**

## Thacher secures spot on podium at 2023 state wrestling

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 18,672**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 3,331**

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

DES MOINES – Ike Thacher is about as humble as they come.

The emotion he showed after knocking off Evan Franke of Muscatine in the Class 3A 195 lb. bracket at the IHSAA State Wrestling Tournament was more than you normally get from the Bloodhound.

Thacher and Franke squared off in 5th-round consolation wrestleback action Friday night at Wells Fargo Arena with the winner finishing, at worst, in 6th place.

The Hounds went a dismal 0-7 in Thursday wrestling with Thacher getting bumped from the championship bracket by Fort Dodge’s DreShaun Ross in an 11-4 decision. Ross moved to the title match Saturday night and will be the favorite according to his No. 3 seed.

Thacher said he put Thursday out of his mind.

“There’s nothing I could do about yesterday. I gave it my all and I lost,” he said.

“I just knew I had to do the best I could today and try to come back.”

He said having the whole team go winless on Thursday was a sore spot, but it wouldn’t derail him.

“I felt bad for us. It sucks, but it’s in the past.”

That’s been Thacher’s approach to the season. Move forward. Something that wasn’t lost on Head Coach Ryan Smith



Fort Madison junior Ike Thacher gets his hand raised after winning a match that guaranteed him a spot in the top 8 of the IHSAA State Wrestling Tournament.

after Thacher’s second win Friday night.

“I don’t know that (Thursday) was extra motivation for him. That’s what makes him successful. He just goes out and takes care of his own business,” Smith said.

“He doesn’t get too high or too low. That’s probably the most emotion we’ve seen out of him.”

Against Franke, the junior Muskie had a hold of Thacher’s leg on a shot early off the whistle, but Thacher was able to spin around on the mat and finally get out of the hold. It was the second time that day that Thacher was able to get out of a leg hold and earn control points.

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*Thursday, January 4*

*Fried Chicken Dinners*

*Friday, January 5*

*Carved Ham, Cheese Potatoes, Corn*



# 2023 – A Year in Review: January – April

**JANUARY 24, 2023**

## Bendlage sets new HTC single-game scoring mark

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 16,764**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,003**

**BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP**  
PCC SPORTS

BURLINGTON — Mary Kate Bendlage set a new school scoring record and nearly completed Holy Trinity's attempt at a comeback in Tuesday's 77-68 loss at Notre Dame.

Bendlage, a junior, scored 41 points, including 19 in the fourth quarter as



**BENDLAGE**

the Crusaders (8-8 overall, 5-7 SEI Super-conference South Division) took a big slice out

of the Nikes' 25-point lead before finally falling.

"I know my role," Bendlage said. "I'm confident in my shot and I'm confident my team knows I can do it. If the shots aren't going in, I'll look for someone else. But tonight they just happened to be falling in every time."

Bendlage has scored 92 points over her last three games.

"The game has really slowed down for her the last three games," Holy Trinity coach Tony Johnson said. "She's a big-time player, and in big-time moments that's when those kind of players step up."

"In practice I've been keying in on not just (scor-

ing) inside, but outside as well," Bendlage said. "Because if you can do both, you're a really hard player to stop."

The Nikes (14-4, 11-1), ranked 11th in Class 1A, led 72-47 with seven minutes to play when Bendlage took over. She had all but two of the Crusaders' points in a 21-2 run over the next five minutes that got Holy Trinity within 74-68.

Bendlage's last chance to get points came with 37 seconds left and the Crusaders down 76-68, when she drove the baseline for a layup but was called for an offensive foul. She fouled out on Notre Dame's next possession, and Notre Dame's Taryn Stephens made the first of two free throws for the final margin.

Bendlage said the late rally was something the Crusaders can use for momentum.

"I think we can honestly beat anyone moving forward," she said. "If we wouldn't have dug such a big hole for ourselves in the beginning, we could have easily won that by 10, 15 points."

"I was happy to see that, when we got down 20, whatever it was, we rolled right back and didn't give up on each other," Johnson said. "That was impressive to me."

**FEBRUARY 8, 2023**

## WP Mayor Walker dead at 79

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 14,074**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,877**

WEST POINT — It's a sad day for the City of West Point as an icon that helped shape the city's past, present, and future died early Wednesday morning after battling lung cancer.

West Point Mayor Paul Dean Walker, 79, of West Point, Iowa, died at 2:32 a.m. Wednesday, at the West Point Care Center in West Point, Iowa.

He leaves behind his wife: Mary Beth; one son: Jay D. (Amy L.) Walker; grandchildren: Margaret E. Walker and Mason T. Walker; step-grandsons: Jordan L. Brown and Aden R. Alfred; sisters-in-law: Kate (Dennis) Menke, Rosemary Klemmt, and Dorothy (Tom) Peters. Also surviving are several nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Mr. Walker's obituary appears in tomorrow's e-edition and on our website now.

City Administrator Randy Welding said no one was more proud of West Point than Walker.

"He would stand in my office and if he saw someone out at the rock or the Statue of Liberty he would go out and talk with them and give them his card," Welding said.

"That's all he talked about was the city, its parks, South

Park, the people. It's a very big loss for the City of West Point."

Welding said Mayor Pro Tem Joseph Loving is set to be appointed as Mayor to fill Walker's seat. Former City Councilman Bruce Wellman is slated to be appointed to fill Loving's seat through the end of the year.

Welding said Walker's lung cancer came back after being in remission for years.

"Two weeks ago, he told me he got bad news. I got to see him Thursday and we carried on a good conversation. I guess over the weekend it got pretty bad.

Welding said he's been friends with Walker for years and when the mayor needed something, he just only need ask.

"I got to know him when he first asked me to serve on the chicken committee with him many, many years ago. Everytime he needed somebody, he just had to come and ask. He's the only Mayor I've ever worked with."

Walker was a 1961 graduate of Dow City High School and 1967 graduate of Northwest Missouri State. He served in the United States Army from 1967 to 1969 in Korea during the Vietnam War. He worked as a driver's education teacher and coached football, basketball, and track for the Fort Madison Community School System.



**WALKER**

**FEBRUARY 8, 2023**

## Griffin earns Dalziel Entrepreneur Award

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 13,902**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,332**

FORT MADISON — After close to a quarter century of fixing people's cars, a Fort Madison woman has been given the 2023 Deb Dalziel Entrepreneur of the Year award.

The award is Iowa's Small Business Development Center's award honoring the top entrepreneur in the state.

Nannette Griffin, owner of Griffin Muffler and Brake, was honored Tuesday in Des Moines by the state and she got to spend about 30 minutes with Gov. Kim Reynolds talking about small business in the

state.

Griffin is the third Fort Madison woman to win the award. Martha Wolf and Sue Saunders won the award jointly for the Ivy Bake Shoppe in 1999, the first year the awards were handed out.

In 2008, Sally Nichols of Burlington won the award for Burlington in Bloom. In 2018, Doreen Roy of Burlington won for her business Wholesome Basket.

This award honors a woman entrepreneur who has significantly changed or improved her life and the lives of others. The award is presented in memory of Deb Dalziel, a devoted small business advocate who was director of the Small Business Development Center at Southeastern Community College. Deb passed away from cancer in 1999 at the age of 44.

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# 2023 – A Year in Review: January – April

**APRIL 23, 2023**

## FMHS alum starts own company

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 10,974**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,051**

FORT MADISON – A former Fort Madison student has gone on the attack against past personal issues and is getting ‘revenge’ of sorts.

Brady Reynolds, a 2016 graduate of Fort Madison High School, has launched a clothing line that he hopes speaks to other individuals with difficult pasts.

Buried Revenge.

What started as a personal and online training and nutrition coaching business, has expanded to include a line of men’s and women’s clothing that can be shopped at [www.buriedrevenge.com](http://www.buriedrevenge.com).

After graduation from FMHS, Reynolds played baseball for Morton College near Chicago, but after the first fall semester, Reynolds moved back to Fort Madison and played two years for Justin Schulte at Southeastern Community College.

From there he’s migrated to the University of Iowa where he is now two weeks from graduating with a double major in sports management and marketing. He also has the website up and running with clothing, training, and nutrition coaching and support.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

FMHS grad Brady Reynolds poses for a marketing photographer in the Fort Madison High School weight room.

But now he’s on a frontal assault against life struggles and how to move forward.

“I had Reynolds Fitness at first and that was a personal training company, but I wanted to rebrand that. I had a lot of personal stuff going on and a lot of anxiety,” Reynolds said Monday sitting in the Fort Madison High School where he was doing some local photography to support the brand.

**JANUARY 25, 2023**

## Walker ends 4-year term with Hound baseball team

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 14,231**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,766**

FORT MADISON - The four-year run of Fort Madison Head Baseball coach Ron Walker has come to an end.

Walker submitted his resignation effective immediately to Fort Madison Athletic Director Jeff Lamb on Wednesday.

Lamb said the move wasn’t a surprise, but the timing wasn’t expected.

“We were surprised by his resignation today. Ron’s done a great job and has been very good for this program over the past four years,” Lamb said.

“We we’re kind of expecting it, though, when he took the job in Ottumwa. We would have loved to have kept him, but he has to make the best decision for him and his family.”

Walker, a master plumber by trade, became part of a new plumbing upstart in Ot-

tumwa, and said the decision has been an emotional one for him.

“I’ll never say it didn’t make sense to do both, but I would only be cheating the program, my new job, and my family - by trying to do all,” he said.

“I can’t be selfish and do what I want to do. I have to consider others here.”

Walker racked up a 71-40 overall record and a 42-24 Southeast Conference record. He took over the program in 2019 from Ken Steeples and immediately took the Hounds to a winning 16-15 record in 2019 after the Hounds had just five wins in 2018.

“This has been a very emotional afternoon,” he said. “I want Fort Madison to know that this has nothing against the community or the program I just didn’t want to cheat them and it be more than I could give.”

# 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?**

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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”!

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**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!

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- Stiff as a board...creak 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!
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- 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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# 2023 – A Year in Review: January – April

**JANUARY 10, 2023**

## Banks resigns as Central Lee head football coach

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 11,517**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,311**



DONNELSON - Central Lee Head Coach Chuck Banks is out after three years leading the Hawks program.

Banks compiled a 3-22 record and suffered through a winless first two years that were complicated by the COVID pandemic.

“The district wanted to go in a different direction and I understand that,” Banks said.

“I love Central Lee and these kids and wish the best for that program going forward.”

Banks is also a teacher in the district and will stay in that position.

The Hawks qualified for the 2A playoffs in 2022, which was one of Banks goals. He made the playoffs as an assistant coach with the Hawks and the Centerville Reds program.

Superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier said Banks has helped position the program for the future.

“Coach Banks took over this program at a really challenging time. He and his staff have worked hard to rebuild this program and put it in a

Central Lee Head Coach Chuck Banks resigned as the school's football coach after three years with the program.

position for future success,” Crozier said.

“I appreciate his hard work and leadership these past three years.

Banks said he's not done coaching and will be looking to be on the sidelines somewhere in the area next year.

**APRIL 14, 2023**

## Board members speak out on shared programs

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 10,127**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 950**

FORT MADISON – A Fort Madison School board member is speaking up about the recent decision to end shared athletic programs with other area schools.

The Fort Madison Community School District board of Directors issued a statement earlier this week saying it had decided to let all shared athletic agreements expire at the end of the 2022-23 school year athletic calendar.

That decision, which was never voted on by the board, is a decision board member Carol Ross said she was unaware of until the statement came out.

Ross said on Thursday that she had

reached out to Fort Madison Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater about the issue earlier this week and didn't hear back from her until Friday. Slater's response was for Ross to talk with Board president Josh Wykert.

Ross said she emailed Wykert Wednesday to have the issue put on the agenda and received a reply that it would not be placed on the agenda.

“I asked the superintendent when this board “decision” was made a few days ago since I wasn't aware of a decision,” Ross wrote in a text to Pen City Current.

“I think it makes us look petty. I also don't think vouchers and sharing sports should have anything to do with each other. I still feel it should be discussed and voted on by the board in a meeting.

**MARCH 23, 2023**

## County townships squabble over fire equipment

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 9,389**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 887**

LEE COUNTY - A township showing match of sorts spilled into the board room of the Lee County Supervisors' Monday morning.

Green Bay Township officials approached supervisors for bond funds to sustain an injunction over Denmark Township to maintain possession of fire trucks and equipment currently housed at the Wever Fire Station.

The issue stems from the expiration of a 28E agreement between Green Bay Township and Denmark Fire Association. The 10-year agreement expired on Oct. 3 of 2021 and, since that time, court action has taken place over fire protection for Green Bay Township and how to mitigate property being held at the Wever Fire station.

The trucks and equipment belong to Denmark Fire Association by title, but the injunction has been awarded to Green Bay Township to keep the equipment in Wever. However District 8B Judge John Wright imposed a \$137,500 cash bond on Green Bay Township to trigger the injunction.

County Auditor Denise Fraise said townships typically don't carry that kind of cash reserve so the county

would have to borrow the money to pay the bond.

The two entities entered into the agreement in October of 2011 along with Washington Township and Pleasant Ridge Township. Pleasant Ridge was the only non-contributing entity in the partnership. On Oct. 3 2021, the 28E expired and a legal scuffle has been underway since that time.

Tom Gregg, with the Green Bay Township district, said the Denmark Fire Association Board was originally comprised of one representative from Green Bay Township, one from Washington Township, one from Pleasant Ridge Township, and three from Denmark Township.

Green Bay sought equal representation to continue the 28E, but Denmark Township rejected that request.

In the interim, Green Bay Township formed their own fire association, Wever Fire Association, Inc, which currently now receives the funds levied for fire protection in the township. But they continue to use fire equipment housed at the Wever Fire Station.

Now a lawsuit has been working its way through the court system to resolve the issue. Trial has been initially set for October of this year.

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# 2023 – A Year in Review: January – April

**JANUARY 15, 2023**

## Lozano joins Settles, Doherty in Shrine Bowl

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 9,675**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,113**

PCC Staff

FORT MADISON - Another Fort Madison Bloodhound has been selected to play in the Iowa Shrine Bowl game in July.

Senior Mateo Lozano received a letter of invitation last week and will play on the South's offensive squad.

Lozano joins Tanner Settles who will play on the defensive side of the ball for the South team. Fort Madison Head Coach Derek Doherty was selected as the South's running backs' and receivers' coach.

Lozano anchored the Bloodhounds offensive line that racked up more than 2,500 yards of total offense helping the Bloodhounds qualify for state from his center position.

The Bloodhounds finished the regular season with a 7-2 record and fell to Waverly-Shell Rock in the 4A playoffs.

Lozano joins Settles who was also selected to play in the senior state All-Star game that is slated for July 23rd at University of Northern Iowa.

The senior linebacker recorded 58.5 tackles this season.

The week-long event starts Sunday, July 16 with training camps and the game played on the following Saturday. The players and staff stay on campus for the week building up to the game with the South Squad taking on the North squad.

**APRIL 12, 2023**

## Rumps lead Hounds at Lamb Relays

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 10,358**  
**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,229**

FORT MADISON – Avery and Addison Rump have picked up where they left off last fall after they both qualified for the IGH-SAU Cross Country meet.

Avery Rump, who finished 8th last year at the cross country meet, took two first places in the 1500- and 3000-meter runs at the annual Timm Lamb Pen City Relays Tuesday in Fort Madison.

Rump's two first-place finishes and Addison's 3rd-place in the 3000 helped the Lady Hounds to a 4th-place finish overall in the first home meet of the year.

Mt. Pleasant won the Class A division with 159 points followed by Washington and Oskaloosa. Fort Madison had 106 points.

Avery Rump also anchored the Hounds' Distance Medley relay squad that took third. Rump was joined by Aija Jenkins, Dayonna Davis, and Mara Smith in the



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

FMHS' Avery Rump leads the way in the 800-meter relay at the 2023 Timm Lamb Relays in Fort Madison.

event.

Central Lee wound up tied for sixth in Class B with 46 points.

The Lady Hawks were paced by Karlie Pohren with her 28.53 time in the 200-meter dash, good enough for 2nd place. Fort Madison's Aija Jenkins took

second in the high jump with a leap of 5-0.

Other top local finishes included Central Lee's 3rd-place finish in the 4x400 with Gabby Maynes, MaKayla Howard, Pohren, and Kodi Moeller with a time of 4:41.14.

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## 2023 – A Year in Review: January – April

**APRIL 26, 2023**

# Bowker's resignation adds to Housing Authority's troubles

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 9,675**

**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,113**

FORT MADISON – Another crazy twist in the saga that is unfolding at the Fort Madison Housing Authority came about Wednesday afternoon at a special meeting at Hillview Village.

Commission chairman Rebecca Bowker abruptly announced her resignation to the media following the adjournment of the five-minute meeting that was called to vote on suspending Executive Director Mike Dear and a maintenance staffer.

The two were on the agenda for a motion to suspend pending an administrative review. There was no agenda item for a closed session under Iowa Code section 21.5(i) to discuss the subject of the possible suspensions.

Executive Director Mike Dear was in attendance and addressed an audience of about 30 residents, thanking them for their support and the support of the staff who



**BOWKER**

was also in attendance.

Bowker said there would be no public comment due to the nature of the agenda.

“Due to the nature of the meeting, we will not be taking public comments from anyone in the audience. We are just going to move forward with meeting,” Bowker said.

“Due to recent facts that have come to light and the need for possible administrative action, these motions are brought before the board.”

There was no motion offered to suspend Dear, but board member Jamie Carle made a motion to table the item. Board member Carmen Salazar seconded the motion. There was no discussion period following the motion and second and Bowker went straight to a vote.

Carle and Salazar voted in favor of tabling the issue, but Bowker voted against the motion to table. With only two of the four current board members voting in favor of

tabling it, Bowker said the motion to table failed, but the agenda item was never returned to.

Board member Jenny Divine was not yet on the meeting via Zoom, but the board had a quorum to start the meeting without her.

Divine joined the meeting after the first vote to table, and Bowker went straight to the next agenda item which was to suspend a maintenance worker pending an investigation into his hiring.

Carle voted again to table the issue and Salazar seconded that motion as well. That motion to table was approved 3-1 with Divine voting to table the motion, as well.

After that, Bowker adjourned the meeting. Dear asked if he was going to be able to speak but Bowker had adjourned the meeting.

After the meeting when asked about the administrative procedure of not revisiting the first agenda item, since only a motion to table the issue had been voted on, Bowker confirmed that vote to table had failed.

**FEBRUARY 28, 2023**

## Show Choir battle returns to glory at Hound Dome

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 9,800**

**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,117**

FORT MADISON - It's that time of year again.

You should get a wristband and see this one because it's one of the biggest ever.

The Fort Madison Show Choir's annual Bloodhound Invitational is this weekend and Director Taylor Stoddard says this one is shaping up to be the biggest ever.

Stoddard said this year will involve 25 performances, including three from local groups.

“This gym will be packed the entire day. This year is bigger than most,” he said.

“I would say this is our biggest event and fundraiser. Just because it brings in so many people. 16 groups, including our three performances. There will be 25 performances and six groups will perform twice.”

The event starts with performances at 9 a.m. with awards being presented at close to 11 p.m. However, the kitchen

will be open starting at 8 a.m.

Stoddard said it's the reputation of the event and the level of competition that's bringing so many schools. The event will feature performance levels from middle school to Class 4A.

Southeast Polk is making the trip down and Stoddard said they are one of the most improved squads in the state.

“The competition has grown, and we have a good reputation. We have great judges every year. This runs smoothly and the recent success of Fort Madison show choirs also makes it a great event to be at,” Stoddard said.

Fort Madison is having a top-shelf year, as well. Stoddard said the students have really bought into the program and it's showing. He said the Hounds, which compete in 3A, are now starting to hold their own with 4A schools.

“The real difference this year is the kids have really bought in. They've realized if they put in the work, they are going to enjoy it that much more. The hard work makes it more fun. That has allowed us to work on things we haven't been able to do until this year,” he said.

**APRIL 20, 2023**

## FMCS D Board pivots on decision to end shared programs

**FACEBOOK VIEWS: 8,263**

**WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,209**

FORT MADISON - The Fort Madison Community School District has reached a new tentative agreement with Holy Trinity Catholic schools regarding shared athletic programs, according to a release from Fort Madison school board President Josh Wykert today.

Wykert said the agreement will need to be approved at a special meeting scheduled for Tuesday night.

Also on the agenda will be agreements with Central Lee schools regarding the shared wrestling program, and possibly agreements for non-hosted shared programs including the swimming agreement with Burlington High School.

“FMCS D and HTC have tentatively reached a new agreement to take part in shared athletic programs for the 2023-2024 school year,” the statement indicated.

“The agreement, if approved by both school boards, would include a \$20,000 flat fee paid annually by HTC to FMCS D to cover expenses like coaching, uni-

forms, transportation, field rentals, officials, dues, worker fees, and staffing.

“The FMCS D Board of Directors will vote on the proposed agreement at its April 25th meeting. The HTC School Board will vote on the agreement during a meeting at a later date.”

Wykert said the \$20,000 annual fee, which is an increase from the \$10,000 originally proposed by the HTC board, is not the only change to the agreement, but wouldn't comment on what additional changes have been agreed upon.

“It's not the only change. The actual agreement will have more items change, which I won't comment on specifically, but they will be a change from prior agreements,” he wrote in an response to a Pen City Current email.

“Central Lee will be on the agenda as well.”

On April 11, FMCS D decided to end the shared programs following the 2022-23 athletic calendars, but has since changed directions. The two schools reopened conversations following a formal vote April 17 to allow the agreements to expire.

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Pen City Current will not publish an e-Edition  
Monday, December 25 through Friday, January 5.  
Our special 2023 Year In Review editions will publish  
Wednesday, January 3 through Friday, January 5.  
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**2023 – A Year in Review: January – April**

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