

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

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www.pencitycurrent.com

TOP POSTING SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER December 18, 2023

Koch makes offer on IFCo

Energy company offers \$3.6 billion for Wever facility

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 25,788
WEBSITE VIEWS: 864

WEVER – According to press release issued Monday morning, a Koch group has reached an agreement to purchase Iowa Fertilizer LLC, in Wever for \$3.6 billion and considerations.

The transaction between OCI Global and Koch Ag & Energy Solutions remains subject to receipt of certain U.S. antitrust approvals, but does not require OCI shareholder approval.

Officials said the transaction is expected to close in 2024.

Iowa Fertilizer has a Payment in Lieu Of Taxes, or PILOT program in place with Lee County and according to the language of the agreement, the agreement does not to appear to

be assignable to a new owner without approval of the county.

That agreement provides a 20-year exemption for property taxes with payments made annually in lieu of property taxes. Currently IFCo is paying \$600,000 annually through 2025. That agreement caps the payments at \$1.3 million through the final five years and then the facility will be subject to regular county industrial taxation schedules.

Lee County Supervisor Chairman Garry Seyb said he wasn't aware of the news Monday evening, but said the county will wait and watch how things unfold.

"We'll have to wait and see how this unfolds and see what our county attorney's opinion of the agreement is," Seyb said.

The property is currently valued at just over \$73,000,000 according to Lee County records.

NOVEMBER 6, 2023

County OKs speed cameras on Hwy. 218

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 26,383
WEBSITE VIEWS: 2,883

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Speed cameras are coming soon to a highway near you.

Lee County Supervisors heard an update from Andrew Noble with Sitestream LLC, the company contracted by the county to install and monitor the speed cameras, at Monday's regular meeting of the board.

Noble said six cameras will be installed along Hwy. 218/27 in three different locations by the end of the week. He said the cameras won't be issuing speeding notices until December 11, but they will be functional starting Monday.

"Construction starts this week. We'll be installing six cameras on Highway 218/27 with three locations northbound and three southbound with construction to be completed this week starting Wednesday," Noble said.

"The anticipation is that at the end of this week all six will be operational."

After the cameras are installed and operational, there will be a two-week data gathering period for Iowa Department of Transportation. Noble said for those two weeks the cameras will be providing data only, with no photographs or tickets being sent. Following that 14-day period, the cameras will be operational for an additional two weeks issuing notices with warnings attached.

"These will be notices sent to people speeding past cameras. No monies will be owed for those notices. But we do invite them to go to the website where it will show their vehicle recorded by the camera," Noble said.

Following that grace period for motorists, the notices will then be sent carrying fines.

Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber didn't address how much the fines would be, at what speed fines would start, or what ranges of fines would be in place.



WEBER

NOVEMBER 14, 2023

Holtkamp next TSR General Chairman

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 10,750
WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,010

FORT MADISON – The next three years of the Fort Madison Tri-State Rodeo are in good hands.

In October, the Rodeo committee announced Bobby Holtkamp will be the rodeo general chairman for the next three years.

Holtkamp slides into the position after more than 15 years volunteering with the rodeo committee on the advertising, hospitality, security, and pre-rodeo committees.

The Fort Madison native follows previous chairman Tony Johnson and Chuck Kempker, who took over in a rare 1-year term to usher in the rodeo's 75th anniversary.

"I had some hopes that I would've been next, but there are a lot of good people involved with this," Holtkamp said.

"Chuck took it and ran with it and



Past Tri-State Rodeo general chairman Tony Johnson, left, hands off the general chairman buckle to incoming general chairman Bobby Holtkamp Tuesday at the Tri-State Rodeo Arena.

had a great, great exciting year. It was record-setting and I've had some people since I was announced tell me that will be tough to follow. But I'm up for the challenge.

"I don't think I'll ever reach the level of Chuck's event, but we're not going to go backwards, we're going to keep moving."

Holtkamp said it was special to have Chuck run last year's event because he was able to rely on his past rodeo

experience to bring a special event to the C.E. "Eddie" Richard's Arena on the rodeo grounds in September.

"It was such a cool thing for Chuck because he's been involved for so many years and he brought back some of that old rodeo stuff - stuff that I never would have thought of doing."

On Tuesday, Holtkamp was passed the ceremonial General Chairman Buckle from Johnson, who's still recognized as past chairman.

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WEATHER

FRI 05 Jan Cloudy & cold, 37° F/ 31° F ☁
SAT 06 Jan Cold with chance of snow, 37° F/ 28° F ❄️
SUN 07 Jan Partly sunny & cold, 36° F/ 25° F ☁

IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 01/03..... 10 17 31 47 51, Star Ball: 4 All Star Bonus: 3
LUCKY FOR LIFE 01/03..... 3 17 21 25 43, Lucky Ball: 12
PICK 3 MIDDAY 01/03..... 2 8 3
PICK 3 EVENING 01/03..... 1 5 4
PICK 4 MIDDAY 01/03..... 4 0 0 3
PICK 4 EVENING 01/03..... 4 2 6 8
POWERBALL 01/03..... 30 31 38 48 68, Powerball: 8 Power Play: 10

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2023 – A Year in Review: September – December

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Rosalie A. "Rose" Armstrong
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Atterberg
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Elvin "Pork" Beach
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Joner Junior "Pete" Brown
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Travis Brown
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Wright-Mays
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Kathleen Susan Cornelius
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Virgie A Courtney
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2023 – A Year in Review: September – December

We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2023

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2023 – A Year in Review: September – December

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

Richter earns Hall of Fame nod

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 11,457
WEBSITE VIEWS: 774

WEST POINT – Mikaela Foecke Richter, a 2015 graduate of Holy Trinity Catholic High School and member of the Crusaders' 2014 state champion volleyball team, will be inducted into the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union Volleyball Hall of Fame for the Class of 2023.

Richter, who went onto play for the National Champion Nebraska Cornhuskers, will be accepting the award Thursday, Nov. 2, prior to the finals of the State High School Volleyball Championship at Xstream Arena in Iowa City.

She finished her high school career with a state record of 2,813 kills, 473 blocks, 378 aces, and 854 digs. Foecke touts a career record of 187-17 and is a two-time Gatorade State Volleyball Player of the Year. Additionally, she won gold at the NORCECA Women's U20 Continental

Championship. As a Cornhusker, she recorded 1,684 kills and 266 blocks and won two national championships as well as being named NCAA Championship Most Outstanding Player twice.

Richter was unanimously elected to the Union's Hall of Fame by the union's Awards Jury.

Richter was part of the 2014 state championship team at HTC and set a single match record for kills with 37 at that tournament.



DECEMBER 20, 2023

Bendlage setting new bars for Holy Trinity student-athletes

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 8,723
WEBSITE VIEWS: 272

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP
PCC SPORTS

FORT MADISON - Mary Kate Bendlage wants to win, so her sister knows she has the perfect partner for the family card games during the holidays.

"Oh yeah," Anna Bendlage said. "She is super-competitive. We never, ever lose. That's our claim to fame."

Holy Trinity girls basketball coach Tony Johnson has seen that competitiveness, too.

"That's been her makeup from the first time I met her," Johnson said. "Full throttle. 'What can I do to help us win.'"

Holy Trinity volleyball coach Melissa Freesmeier had Mary Kate in the lineup as a freshman.

"She's a workhorse," Freesmeier said. "She never gives up."

When it comes time for penalty kicks to decide a match, Fort Madison soccer coach Carrie Burken knows who will raise her hand first.

"She's the person that wants to score the winning goal," Burken said. "She's the person who wants to do PKs. Always like, 'I want to take the first PK.' I think for her to want to step up every single time speaks to her mindset, and her attitude as an athlete and a person."



Bendlage waves to the student section after the Lady Crusaders wrapped up a semifinal win at the 2023 State volleyball tournament in November.

Here's why Bendlage is so competitive, why she is willing to grab any moment that presents itself.

"I don't know where the drive came from, but I think a lot of it comes from the hard work I put in during practice," Bendlage said. "If I put in all of this extra time to be good at the things I'm doing, I want to win. I just don't want to go out and play and be mediocre. I want to go out and do great things, and show people that all of the hard work that we're doing is for a reason, and we want to win."

DECEMBER 20, 2023

High-speed chase lands one in jail

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 7,201
WEBSITE VIEWS: 2,103

LEE COUNTY – A high-speed chase through Lee County has landed one yet-to-be identified man in the Lee County Jail.

According to Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber, a male suspect is in custody after about 10 deputies with the sheriff's department including reserves, along with officers from Fort Madison, West Point/Donnellson, and Keokuk police departments and two K9 officers searched the woods near Hillcrest off of 227th Street.

Weber and Chief Deputy Will Conlee

located the individual walking up a creek bed after several hours trying to locate the male in the timber.

Weber said if wasn't for the people in and around the area the search would have gone into the night.

"If it wasn't for the people of Lee County in that area this would have turned into a night search. Had the neighbors not been observing and on the lookout we wouldn't have caught him when we did," Weber said.

The suspect led officials on a high-speed dangerous chase up Hwy 218 from the intersection at Hwy. 61 in Keokuk.



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2023 – A Year in Review: September – December

OCTOBER 20, 2023

Bloodhounds earn 3A playoff berth

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 6,922
WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,172

WASHINGTON – Fort Madison earned a berth into the IHSAA Class 3A playoffs Friday night but didn't know until about an hour into the bus ride home after wrapping up the regular season with a 21-7 win over Washington.

After the game Head Coach Derek Doherty told the Bloodhounds that they were a good enough team and they deserved to be in the post-season, but they wouldn't know until later that evening.

The Iowa High School Athletic Association released the final Class 3A rankings after all games had wrapped up Friday night. It was the final regular season games for 3A, 4A and 5A and the first round of playoffs for 8-man, 1A and 2A.

When the final records and math had been tabulated, the Bloodhounds secured the final playoff spot with an IHSAA RPI Index of .5542, just .0007 ahead of Grinnell who was left out of the post-season. Both teams finished 6-3, but Fort Madison's tough schedule

playing three of Class 3A's tops 10 teams during the year paying a last-minute reward. Humboldt made the playoffs with a 5-4 record and an RPI Index of .5871.

Following the game Friday night Doherty said he was just going to have to do some math or wait for the IHSAA to sort it out.

"I'm gonna find out what has to happen and I'm gonna try some math. I can't promise anything, but I hope the math teachers taught me enough to figure this out," he said.

"But we don't feel like this should be the end for us. We're a good football team and we've fought through some adversity and our schedule has been brutal. If we have another team in there instead of Williamsburg and our record's changed, we're in."

Doherty said that it would be silly if a team like Fort Madison's isn't in the playoffs.



DOHERTY

NOVEMBER 1, 2023

Crusaders reach 1A Championship

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 7,541
WEBSITE VIEWS: 779

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP
PCC SPORTS

CORALVILLE — It will be the longest day. "Oh my gosh," Holy Trinity sophomore Presley Myers said. "All the feels."

The third-seeded Crusaders will play for the Class 1A state volleyball championship after Wednesday's 25-17, 25-17, 25-21 semifinal win over second seed Boyden-Hull, but they'll be the last ones playing at Xstream Arena when they play Ankeny Christian at approximately 7 p.m.

Then again, it's been the Holy Trinity Late Show all week, so what's one more day of waiting?

All the feels, indeed. "Anxious," libero Teagan Snaadt said. "Excited." "It feels amazing," senior hitter Natalie Randolph said. "We've been talking about getting to the state tournament all year. Now that we're here, we want to win the championship."

It's been the routine all week for the Crusaders (33-



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Senior Mary Kate Bendlage adds the HTC sticker to the Class 2A title bracket after the Crusaders recorded their second sweep of the IGHSAA State Volleyball tournament in November.

10) — go to class, get out of school early, head to the arena, play the last match of the day.

The waiting is the hardest part.

"Not sure if there will be much class going on in our minds," Randolph said, laughing.

BACK PAIN?

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



Dr. Jason James, D.C.

It'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") waded a wand over them, and they're cursed... doomed to suffer forever.

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

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

MYTH #3: Your Back is "Out"!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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- Tension...always tight across the beltline
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- Trigger Point...zinging pain to butt-cheek
- 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!
- Vice-like...constantly locked down tight!
- Shooting...vicious but short-lived
- Lumbago...hard to pin it down—just seems to hurt all the time, but it's hard to say where
- One-sided...right at that "bone" on one side
- Jack hammer...pounding off and on like a heartbeat or a toothache in your back
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2023 – A Year in Review: September – December

NOVEMBER 3, 2023

Crusaders fall to Ankeny Christian in 1A title match

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 6,097
WEBSITE VIEWS: 649

The tears and hugs were for the cruelty of the finality.

Holy Trinity's three-set loss to Ankeny Christian in Thursday's Class 1A state volleyball championship match set off sadness for the Crusaders.

Not because of a lack of effort or a failure of execution, but more from the reality of the postseason.

Forty teams in five classes showed up at Xstream Arena for the state tournament. Thirty-five of them left with a loss.

Those are never good odds in the crucible of the postseason, but hopes grow with each step, and the Crusaders took every step but the last one.

That, junior libero Teagan Snaadt said, was something to appreciate.

"It hurts," Snaadt said. "But we worked hard all year,



and we can't dwell on what we didn't do great today, but what we did (all season)."

The Crusaders won 33 matches overall. They did not lose a match in the SEI Superconference South Division, an impressive zero in a division loaded with talent.

Their postseason run was almost perfect until the championship match — only one set lost in the four regional matchups and in the first two rounds at the state tournament. It was an efficient, surgical stretch — some of the wins were dominant, others were by a strategy of steadiness, keeping pace with an opponent until a weakness could be found to exploit.

And then the final round came against an opponent that had lost only three times this season and was looking to repeat as champion.

Ankeny Christian's defense was a blanket that seemed to get to every Crusader shot. Holy Trinity had just 29 kills in the three sets, unable to cut the lines of power to the Eagles' hitters, who produced 45 kills.

"At the end of the day," Holy Trinity coach Melissa Freesmeier said, "they were just better than us tonight."

The finish did not diminish what Holy Trinity accomplished, and the week was a celebration of that and the history of the program. Assistant coach Mikaela (Foecke) Richter went into the IGHSAU's Hall of Fame before the championship match, and the Crusaders stayed behind after pre-game warmups to watch the ceremony.

"It was well-deserved," Freesmeier said. "She's a great person, she was a great player, it's great to have her with us as she teaches younger kids how to be present in a game."

SEPTEMBER 16, 2023

Contractors injured at OCI in Wever

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 3,760
WEBSITE VIEWS: 667

WEVER – Two contractors at OCI Nitrogen in Wever were hospitalized Friday afternoon after suffering injuries as a result of burns.

According to a company spokesperson, the two individuals were conducting regular maintenance operations and were gassed, causing severe burns. LeeComm dispatchers

said the burns were ammonia-related. One of the employees was airlifted to an Iowa City hospital, while the other is being treated at Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center.

The facility released a statement Friday evening.

"In the late afternoon of Friday, September 15, two contractors working at OCI Nitrogen Iowa (formerly Iowa Fertilizer Company) were injured while conducting scheduled maintenance at our plant in Wever.

DECEMBER 19 2023

Matt's Greenhouse to stay under local ownership after sale

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 8,696
WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,512

FORT MADISON – The diligence of three friends and co-workers has secured the immediate future of a long-standing member of the Fort Madison business community.

Matt Mohrfeld, owner and operator of Matt's Greenhouse, has agreed to sell his family's operation to two long-time friends and business partners in Ty Louck and Ted Goldie.

Matt's Greenhouse is now known as TNT Greenhouse, LLC and will be owned by the families of Louck and Goldie.

Mohrfeld said he started the process of selling the business about two years ago.

"We then had the value of the business determined and that's an elaborate process. You do an asset valuation, and income valuation, and other comparables, and we put an offer to sell out to a couple organizations. Ty and Ted being one, and then another group," Mohrfeld said.

Mohrfeld, who also serves as the city's mayor, said both groups were interested, but selling to Louck and Goldie made more sense. Louck and Mohrfeld got their



From left to right Ty Louck, Matt Mohrfeld, and Ted Goldie stand in front of the holiday poinsettias in the new TNT Greenhouses, after Goldie and Louck purchased Matt's Greenhouse.

start working for Phil Beebe's operation in the late 70s.

"There's an odd connection there that keeps going round and round. And Ty does exactly what we did, just a different customer base, so it's a very logical transition," Mohrfeld said.

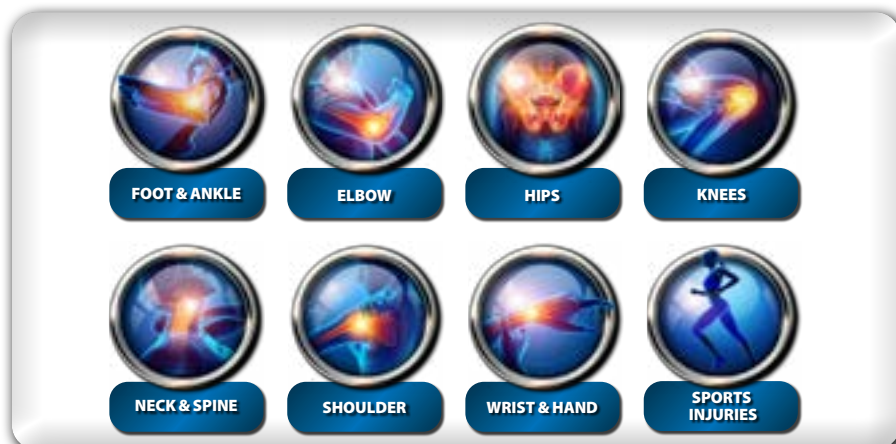
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2023 – A Year in Review: September – December

SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

2023 Tri State Rodeo will go down in record books

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 5,660
WEBSITE VIEWS: 899

FORT MADISON – Using the word phenomenal to describe this year’s Tri-State Rodeo isn’t out of bounds.

Chuck Kempker, the General Chairman of the 75th Tri-State Rodeo, said this year’s event couldn’t have been scripted any better.

When asked if this year’s Rodeo maybe was the best ever, Kempker didn’t mince words.

“That’s about as fair of a statement as you’re gonna get,” he said. “I could not have scripted it any better than what the outcome was.”

The Rodeo was a complete sellout Wednesday for the Jim Baier/Dodge Ram Chute-Out and Saturday’s finale was also sold out.

But Kempker said Friday’s show with country Hall of Famers Alabama on stage was definitely something for the record books.

“We were at least a thousand plus over capacity on Friday night. And Alabama certainly did their part. It was memorable for sure. I breathed a sigh of relief when they opened the gates to let the crowd spill into the arena and let off some of the pressure,” Kempker said.

Kempker also gave a big thumbs up to Mother Nature.

“You just can’t ignore that part. You have to put the great weather in there, too. It was a gorgeous week. You could not have planned for anything that great,” Kempker said.

“This is just one of those things where you go through the year and you just plan it to go as good as possible and hope for the best. The outcome this year was fantastic.”

Typically, the General Chairman takes the role for two years, but Kempker was asked to take on the 75th Anniversary as a one-time Chairman. He said he’s fine with doing it just one time. He had served as chairman



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

The 2023 version of the Tri-State Rodeo, its 75th, will go down as one for the record books as far as attendance.

in 2000-2001 and has been part of the rodeo operating committee for close to two decades.

He said planning the rodeo’s 75th anniversary was a group effort.

“Everything just fell into place, the community, the committee, Holy Trinity’s volunteer group, any hiccups couldn’t even be called minor,” he said. “Everything ran as smooth as it could’ve. You have in the back in your mind what you’re thinking, and you take it to the board of directors. Then you have them standing behind you and saying this is where we need to be.”

NOVEMBER 27, 2023

Dallas City man killed in structure fire

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 4,087
WEBSITE VIEWS: 554

DALLAS CITY - A Dallas City man has died as a result of a structure fire Monday morning.

Hancock County Sheriff Travis Duffy released a statement about the residential fire in Dallas City on Saturday.

At approximately 10:47 a.m. Dallas City Rural Fire Protection District was paged to a structure fire at 180 West Second Street. Firefighters from Dallas City, Colusa, and Lomax all responded to the scene. When firemen arrived on scene the structure was heavily involved. Crews battled the fire and located a person inside who was already deceased.

When deputies arrived they met with fire officials and learned that they had made entry into

the residence where they discovered the resident was still inside. The fire was extinguished, and deputies worked with fire officials to investigate the fire and death. The Hancock County Coroner was called to the scene along with an investigator from the Illinois Fire Marshal’s Office. Both offices then joined the investigation.

The victim was removed from the scene and transported for autopsy. Preliminary results show that the victim died of carbon monoxide and smoke inhalation. The victim was identified as Lonnie E. Lewis, 74, of Dallas City. Family members have been notified.

The fire itself remains under investigation and no foul play is suspected.

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W-2319024 11/23

There’s Snow Place Like Home for the Holidays.

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. Breaking news will continue to be published on our website 24/7.

As we take time for our family this holiday, we thank you for your support and patronage and wish you all a very Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year!

PEN CITY CURRENT
It’s Black & White and Read all over

2023 – A Year in Review: September – December

OCTOBER 28, 2023

Rump finishes 4th at IGHSAU x-country run

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 5,470
WEBSITE VIEWS: 656

FORT DODGE – It may not be the case, but is sure seemed like Fort Madison sophomore Avery Rump really wanted to get out of the cold.

The Bloodhound raced to a personal best 18:54.0 good enough for a 4th-place finish at Saturday's Class 3A girls IGHSAU State Cross Country meet at Kennedy Park in Fort Dodge.

Rump said she was surprised at how cold it was.

"I checked the weather a week before and I was like, 'it's not going to be that cold,' but then it got colder. And I was, like, wholly crap, how am I gonna do this?" Rump said.

Fort Madison Coach Brian Mendez said the cold is an equalizer.

"I think it kind of evens everything out, Mendez said. "We've run in races this cold, but I'm not sure

we've run at state when it's been colder."

Temperatures hovered in the upper 20s, but with the north wind blowing, windchills were in the teens as both girls and boys ran the 5,000-meter run, some in shorts and sleeveless garb.

Fort Madison's Jacob Shottenkirk wanted to finish in the top 30 in the boys' Class 3A run and just missed that goal by finishing 34th with a time of 16:49.5. Paetyn Wiegand finished 86th with a time of 20:49.6.

Avery said she layered up as much as she could without being restricted.

"I was shivering and was running around trying to stay warm. It definitely messed up the pre-race. It made everything numb. I was drooling, it wasn't fun... and I'm sure it wasn't pretty," she said.

OCTOBER 22, 2023

House fire leaves FM family homeless

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 6,494
WEBSITE VIEWS: 3,122

FORT MADISON – A Sunday morning fire has left several Fort Madison residents without a home.

Fort Madison firefighters were called to 3426 Avenue N for a structure fire Sunday at 7:38 a.m.

Two contractors working in the area noticed the smoke and called for assistance and then started calling and knocking for anyone in the structure.

"We ran around back and knocked on the door and, sure enough, there were people standing inside the door," said Sean Skinner, one of the contractors.

"We had to coax them because they weren't coming out. Then when they came out we asked if everybody was out and they said there may be someone upstairs. By that time, there was some really heavy smoke coming from the house."

The other contractor, Shane McKoon, said he had to stop a woman from running back into the house.

Skinner said he almost called off work Sunday, which would have kept him and McKoon at home in Keokuk.

"It's just a blessing that I decided this morning to come to work. I was thinking of staying home because of all the hours we've been working. But by the time we coaxed them out and firefighters got there, the first floor windows were pouring with black smoke.



Firefighters work on a house fire on Oct. 22, 2023 in the 3400 block of Avenue N. The home was destroyed in the fire.

OCTOBER 16, 2023

West Point boy hit by car while bicycling

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 5,544
WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,329

WEST POINT – A 13-year-old boy from West Point was seriously injured Saturday morning while bicycling with a friend.

According to West Point Police Chief Brad Roberts, the boy was struck by the sideview mirror of a pickup truck while both were headed north on 5th Street at about 11:40 a.m.

Reports indicate that the boy allegedly swerved inadvertently into the lane of traffic and the collision

knocked him from his bike and then he was run over by a trailer being hauled by the pickup. The trailer was hauling a fuel box with approximately 150-200 gallons of gasoline.

The truck was driven by Richard A. Trelstad, 52, of Fort Madison. He was not charged in the incident.

The boy suffered serious injuries as a result of the accident and was transported by helicopter to University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics by MedForce Air transport. No condition report has been released. Family has requested the name of the minor be left out of this article.

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2023 – A Year in Review: September – December

OCTOBER 28, 2023

Armed robber hits FM Hardee's

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 5,762
WEBSITE VIEWS: 2,119

FORT MADISON - On Tuesday evening, November 7th, 2023, at approximately 7:45 PM, Fort Madison Officers were summoned to Hardee's at 1431 Avenue H for an armed robbery. The subject was last seen fleeing west out of the building.

It was learned a lone male subject entered the premises displaying a large knife demanding money. His features were disguised by a hooded sweatshirt and face mask. When refused, he punched the manager in the face, cutting the back of his left hand, and fled when a patron stepped in to confront him.

Fort Madison Fire & Rescue provided first aid to the store manager. She was subsequently transported to the hospital by Lee County EMS. Detectives conducted interviews and collected evidence while officers and a K-9 team searched the area.

It was noted that there existed distinct similarities to an October 7th robbery at Dollar General, giving cause to believe that the same person is responsible for both crimes.

Currently, the suspect remains at large. The Police Department is seeking a white male, short with a stocky build, and brown hair, with a bleeding injury to the back of his left hand. His clothing included a black hooded sweatshirt, black facemask, white shoes, and black sweatpants. He also wore an untucked red undershirt that was visible below the waistline. Surveillance photos from the store cameras are pending.

Tips can be submitted anonymously to Lee County Crime Stoppers by calling: 319-376-1090, their website at: www.leecountytips.com, or via the P3 Mobile App, and may be eligible for a cash reward. Otherwise, information can be submitted directly to the Fort Madison Police Department via LeeComm (319)372-1310.

DECEMBER 6, 2023

FM Marina wins Placemaker Award

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 4,878
WEBSITE VIEWS: 581

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.

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



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.

NOVEMBER 27, 2023

Burglars hit Horan's Cabaret ATM

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 4,623
WEBSITE VIEWS: 3,358

FORT MADISON - A burglar has struck again in Fort Madison, this time at The Cabaret where police are reporting an ATM inside the

facility was broken into early Monday morning.

According to a statement this afternoon from Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff, shortly before 6 a.m., a burglary reportedly occurred at Horan's Cabaret, at 1337 Avenue G.

The owner stated that after she unlocked the establishment that morning, a male subject wearing a ski mask was encountered inside. He immediately fled, leaving with a substantial amount of cash taken from an ATM. Investigation revealed that entry was made through a secluded back door, and that the perpetrator was apparently inside a significant amount of time, evidenced by the

effort taken to cut open the ATM with an angle grinder. The victim could only provide a preliminary clothing description, which included a puffy black ski jacket, silky looking black ski pants, and a black ski mask.

Officers attempted to locate the subject and canvassed the area for witnesses and surveillance video. A detective was called in to process the scene.

Rohloff said a substantial amount of cash was stolen from the ATM inside The Cabaret.

It was noted that the circumstances bore similarities to the November 7th burglary at the Cottage Café, 5833 Avenue O, also involving the theft of cash from an ATM. The investigation continues to pursue various leads.

The burglary is the second in the past 30 days and police are currently investigating the link of that burglary at Hardee's with a burglary in September at the Dollar General on the east side of the city.

Again, assistance from the public is sought regarding information that may lead to the apprehension of the person responsible for this crime.

Tips can be submitted anonymously to Lee County Crime Stoppers by calling: 319-376-1090, their website at: www.leecountytips.com or via the P3 Mobile App, and may be eligible for a cash reward. Otherwise, information can be submitted directly to the Fort Madison Police Department via LeeComm (319)372-1310.

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2023 – A Year in Review: September – December

OCTOBER 5, 2023

PAW's new animal shelter on track for completion

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 6,080

WEBSITE VIEWS: 903

FORT MADISON – The first step into the new PAW Animal Shelter is jaw-dropping.

The \$6.5 million project is on track to be completed by the end of the year, but Director Sandy Brown is hoping to have the dog kennels and runs in before the weather gets too cold.

Schickedanz Construction is managing the construction with about six local contractors.

Project manager Pebbles Schneider said everything is on track to have the facility completed structurally before January, just a bit behind schedule.

She said cost overruns are typical on a project like this, but construction is coming along according to bids on the work.

“It’s going to be a little bit longer than we expected with lead times on materials and getting things scheduled. We had some delays in the beginning, but we’re moving along especially with the big dog runs in back,” she said.

Officials are hoping to have those runs done soon so when colder temperatures set in, the dogs have an indoor facility to allow them to get out of the cold Iowa temperatures. Brown said the big dogs like Huskies and St. Bernards, which thrive in the colder temperatures, will still be able to be outside.

The current facility is 1,800 square feet, but the new facility will be more than 20,000 square feet.

Brown said that increase in size is coming at the



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Construction crews continue to work inside the shell of what will be the new PAW Animal shelter in Fort Madison. The new structure will be in excess of 20,000 square feet and will be one of the top five animal protection facilities in the state.

right time. She said pet adoption has bottomed out over the past six months as a result of the economy and post-COVID.

“A bag of dog food has gone through the roof. The cost of everything is going up and pets are no exception. Adoption has just bottomed out and we have a lot of animals right now,” Brown said.

“We come in and say is it big enough, then we come again and say, ‘Oh, this is really big,’ then the

next time...is it big enough. It’s going to be a beautiful building and they are really working hard to get it done,” she said.

The new facility will have indoor kennel runs on the south side of the facility with outdoor dog areas in between each kennel run. Those runs have 32 kennels per run giving them more than 100 kennels. The north side of the facility is reserved for cats and cat runs.

NOVEMBER 15, 2023

Montrose Health Center gets a super-Nova as a new pet

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 4,814

WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,095

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE – The Montrose Health Center just got itself a super-Nova.

The 3-year-old standard poodle is now the star of the assisted living center on Montrose’s southwest side. The center test drove the girl for a week and a half before officially accepting her to replace “Maggie”, who was at the center for more than a dozen years.

Maggie died several years ago and the center’s administrator Mallory Orton said they needed to let things settle in for a while after that before introducing another pet to the center.

“Maggie was perfect here, very smart and we were known as the Lee County facility with the dog for 14 years. I’d like to get that back out there that we have a dog because a lot of people don’t want to leave their

animals at home,” Orton said.

PAW Director Sandy Brown was on hand to officially donate the animal to the shelter. She said the facility began looking for a replacement a while back.

“They came in and asked, and we immediately said they needed to look at Nova,” Brown said.

Orton said the dog fit in very quickly and became acclimated to her surroundings.

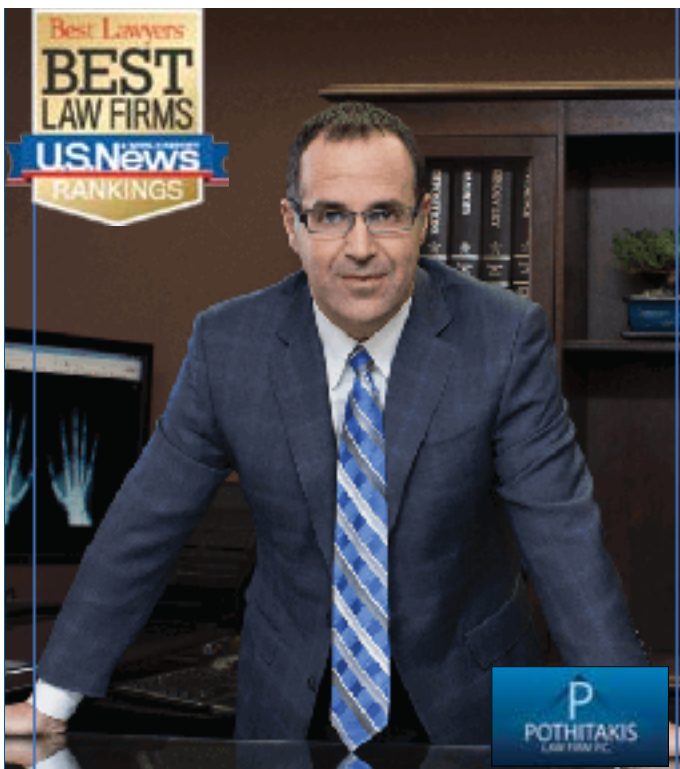
“We let her do her thing for the most part. We do have a kennel over here and she goes to that to shut down for a little bit. But she walks the halls and the other morning she rounded with the nurse when they were passing out pills,” Orton said.

Brown asked who was already sneaking the dog treats and about four residents of the 10 who were on hand to see the dog, raised their hands, along with several staff members.

Wednesday PAW officially donated the dog to the center and now the facility will be responsible for feeding and caring for the animal as it wanders the hallways spending time with residents.



Montrose Health Center residents interact with Nova, their new pet poodle donated by PAW Animal Shelter.



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2023 – A Year in Review: September – December

OCTOBER 17, 2023

ISP offender stabbed, airlifted to Iowa City

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 3,462
WEBSITE VIEWS: 1,107

FORT MADISON - Few details on an Oct. 18 stabbing at Iowa State Penitentiary in Fort Madison have been released by Department of Corrections officials.

According to reports, an air MedEvac helicopter was dispatched to the east side of the prison grounds to take an offender to Iowa City hospitals with injuries sustained in the altercation.

Nick Crawford, a spokesperson for the DOC, confirmed the incident late last week but provided few details.

"I can confirm there was an altercation that took place Sunday evening between two inmates," Crawford wrote in an email to Pen City Current.

"One of the two involved was taken to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics for further treatment and evaluation and has since been released back to the institution."

Crawford said the altercation was quickly brought under control by security staff and no staff members sustained injuries as a result of the incident.

Crawford declined to comment on the exact time of the incident and what type of weapon(s) were used in the altercation.

The incident remains under investigation.

NOVEMBER 20, 2023

Private energy firm looking at wind farm

FACEBOOK VIEWS: 3,585
WEBSITE VIEWS: 711

LEE COUNTY – A private energy firm is looking at northwest Lee County for an up to 400-megawatt wind farm.

An official with Tenaska, an independent energy firm headquartered in Omaha, Neb. confirmed the project is underway, but in the very early stages.

"We're very early in development. Size of that project is up to 400 megawatts contingent upon securing land rights and getting interconnection rights that will enable us to move forward," said Kyle Gerking, a Tenaska project manager out of Omaha.

"We're on the front end of that. We intend to come meet the Board of Supervisors and other local decision makers as we believe in being transparent with our development. We'll introduce the project and let them know what's going on."

Lee County landowner Andrew Johnson brought the project to the attention of Lee County Supervisors Monday morning as part of a discussion about future zoning and setbacks for utility projects.

Johnson, who was at the center of the opposition to land grabs under eminent domain for Navigator's Heartland Greenway CO2 pipeline, said the county has some time now to look at setbacks for landowners. The Navigator pipeline project has been halted and all activities around the project has been stopped.

"I don't think that project is dead by any means, but the

county has some time now to do something," Johnson said.

Board President Garry Seyb said any time the county kicks around the idea of zoning on private land, they ultimately face opposition.

"No landowner in the county wants us telling them what to do with their land," Seyb said. "Anytime we do that, we get phone calls."

Supervisor Matt Pflug said he could about guarantee that the county will get some opposition to zoning.

But Johnson said he can see why people don't want the government telling them what to do or allowing for zoning, but he said setbacks could be something to be discussed.

Pflug asked Johnson if he would support any form of zoning or setbacks. Johnson said if was framed right, he could get behind it.

Supervisor Chuck Holmes suggested that the Lee County Farm Bureau get together and provide some guidance to the county in the form of a statement outlining what they may be looking for.

Most of the opposition to the Navigator project was around eminent domain and the dangers of a pipeline rupture.

Gerking said, at this point, Tenaska and Cordelio Power plan on obtaining voluntary easements in the project and won't use eminent domain.

"We've just started talking with landowners to see if there's interest," Gerking said. "We are a private developer and don't have eminent domain capability. We are seeking voluntary easements and feedback has been positive."

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2023 – A Year in Review: September – December

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