

PEN CITY CURRENT

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Thursday, May 2, 2024 | 6 pages | Volume 8 • Issue 77



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County can consolidate courts

TAX LAW: Governor signs tax bill including the repeal of Special Law of 1848

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A bill signed into law by Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds will permit Lee County officials to consolidate court services in the county under one roof.

A 176-year old Iowa Act required Lee County, and only Lee County, to conduct criminal court hearings and clerk of court duties in both Fort Madison and Keokuk. The bill, Senate File 2442, was signed by Governor Kim Reynolds today and includes her priority of a 3.8% flat-tax rate.

Section 46 of the new bill specifically repeals the special law of 1848 that mandates two court systems in Lee County.

Lee County Chairman Garry Seyb said this is just an initial step in a long process.

“I’m just pleased that we’re going to have the opportunity to affect our own destiny going forward. What that is remains to be seen,” he said.

“At least the ability to make change has been placed in the board’s hands. That change will be influenced by a myriad of people - district courts, public input, and cost savings, and everything that goes along with that.”

Seyb said the county won’t be doing anything that will be an overnight decision.

“It won’t be on the agenda next week. It will be thoughtful and likely will take multiple years before a decision is made. There’s a lot to consider here as far as feasibility.”

He said step one was getting the law changed and now a commission should

See **COURTS**, page 3



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison’s Javean Davis gets ready to fire a serve in his doubles match at Dankwardt Park on Wednesday. Davis was paired with Aiden Benda and the two finished 4th at the Southeast Conference tournament in Burlington. For the story see inside today.

WATER ECOLOGY

AWARE comes to Skunk River

LEE COUNTY – This July, hundreds of volunteers will pile into canoes to take on seventy-five miles of the Skunk River, to scrounge out every tin can, lost shoe, bowling ball, tire, and any other trash they can find from the waterway.

Iowa Project AWARE, an acronym for A Watershed Awareness River Expedition, is a canoeing and educational event where participants paddle down a different river in Iowa every summer, removing trash along the way. This year’s Iowa Project AWARE is scheduled for July 7-12 on the Skunk River from the Keokuk/Washington County border to just before the Mississippi River in Des Moines County.

Local organizations, such as Skunk River Paddlers, are excited for the event to visit their river.

“Skunk River Paddlers firmly believes that Project AWARE increases civic participation, community connections, and public awareness of the importance of our rivers, in addition to removing tons of trash and junk,” says Skunk River Paddler, Diane Birt.

After a long day of cleaning the river, volunteers gather back in camp to enjoy educational programs that broaden watershed awareness and strengthen community understanding. Topics include geology,

See **RIVERS**, page 4

IOWA NEWS

College Savings Iowa reducing fees families pay for investment

DES MOINES, Iowa – State Treasurer Roby Smith announces College Savings Iowa has once again reduced its fees. “There are many important expenses fighting for our attention these days, which is why investing in your children’s education with College Savings Iowa is an accomplishment worth celebrating,” said Smith. “Now you can add even lower fees to your celebration! This exciting update helps keep more of your hard-earned savings in your account – right where it belongs.”

The price reduction brings the asset-based fees of College Savings Iowa’s investment options down to 0.17%. This means account owners pay only \$1.70 per year for every \$1,000 invested. “It’s also worth mentioning there are no sales commissions or advisor fees, and no fees charged for enrollment, account maintenance or withdrawals,” Smith continued. “By reducing College Savings Iowa’s one and only fee, we’re continuing to make education savings easy and affordable!” College Savings Iowa is the state’s di-

rect-sold 529 plan and is administered by Smith. It offers a low-cost, tax-free way to save for tuition, room and board, books, computers and other qualified education expenses at eligible education institutions. This includes two- and four-year colleges, graduate programs and apprenticeship programs. Additionally, up to \$10,000 can be used to pay for tuition expenses in connection with enrollment at a K-12 institution per year or used for repayment of any qualified education loan.

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WEATHER

THU 02 May..... Showers likely, chance of thunderstorms, 78° F/ 56° F ☁
FRI 03 May..... Slight chance of showers and thunderstorms, 74° F/ 54° F ☁
SAT 04 May..... Partly sunny then chance of thunderstorms, 72° F/ 52° F 🌧

IOWA LOTTERY

LUCKY FOR LIFE 04/30..... 7 8 19 36 41, Lucky Ball: 1
MEGA MILLIONS 04/30..... 10 18 27 37 61, Mega Ball: 5 Megaplier: 3
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PICK 3 EVENING 04/30..... 7 1 0
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Obituaries

OBITUARIES

JAY R. VEST

Jay Riley Vest, 91, of Keokuk, passed away on Tuesday, April 30, 2024, at his home in Keokuk.

Jay was born on October 21, 1932, in a farmhouse near Salem, Iowa, the son of Jay Douglas and Pearlie (McKim) Vest. On July 17, 1954, he was united in marriage to Loa Spessard in Ainsworth, Iowa. She survives.



VEST

Jay graduated from North English High School in 1950, attended Iowa State Teacher's College, and received his BA from Iowa Wesleyan University in 1957. He went on to receive his MA at Western Illinois University in Macomb in 1965. Jay started his working career at Dexter Corporation in Fairfield, Iowa, and went on to work in education as a teacher and principal for forty years, thirty-seven years of which were spent in the Keokuk School District, and the remainder at Agency and Keosauqua. He retired in 1994. Jay was a member of Trinity United Methodist Church in Keokuk and the Keokuk Kiwanis Club. He enjoyed spending his free time reading, golfing, and cheering for the Iowa Hawkeyes and the Chicago Cubs. He also enjoyed traveling and spent fifteen years "snowbirding" with the Tuttle and Kerstens. For many years he could be found most mornings at Hy-Vee drinking coffee with his friends.

Jay is survived by his wife Loa Vest of Keokuk; two daughters: Cynthia "Cindy" (Jerry) Ruffcorn of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Melanie Baker of Anna, Texas; six grandchildren: Ryan (Kara) Ruffcorn, Amanda (Shane) Rairden, Lyndy (Shawn) Roost, Caitlin (John) Kolosick, Brandi (Trey) Stolp and McKenzie (Bryon) Manning; fifteen great-grandchildren; and his sister Joan Nelson of Lakewood, Colorado.

Jay is preceded in death by his parents, his infant son Steven and his sister Glenneva Peebler.

Visitation will be held on Saturday, May 4, 2024 from 12 pm (noon) to 2 pm at Printy Funeral Home, 917 Blondeau Street, Keokuk, Iowa, 52632. A private family burial will follow at Hickory Grove Cemetery in Keokuk.

Memorials may be directed to Trinity United Methodist Church in Keokuk or the American Cancer Society.

Tributes and condolences may be left at www.printyfuneralhome.com.

Printy Funeral Home of Keokuk is in charge of arrangements.

Pen City Current obituary policy

Pen City Current runs obituaries one time at no charge to funeral homes and they run the day they are submitted in most cases. They are also run as submitted by the funeral homes. Reposting of obituaries due to changes can only be requested by the submitting funeral home and will be assessed a \$15 reposting fee.

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OBITUARIES

LINDA ROXBERG

Linda Roxberg, 81 years, of Denmark, Iowa died on March 9, 2024 in Spring Hill, Florida. She was born in Burlington, Iowa on December 10, 1942 to Selma (Brady) and Lawrence Huebner. She graduated from Denmark Academy High School in 1960, Burlington Junior College in 1962, and Northeast Missouri State Teachers College in 1964. On June 5, 1965, she married Gordon Glenn Roxberg in Denmark.



ROXBERG

She started her teaching career in Rowley, Iowa, then taught kindergarten at Denmark Elementary School from 1965 to 1969. She was a substitute teacher for Fort Madison Community School District for the remainder of her career. She was a member of the Denmark Congregational United Church of Christ, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the T.T.T (Tri T) Society. She was a founding member of the Denmark Historical Society.

Linda is survived by her children: Christopher Roxberg of Denmark, Iowa; Jillyn (Erik Thiessen) Roxberg of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; one granddaughter, Megan Roxberg of West Point, Iowa. She was preceded in death by her parents and husband.

The family of Linda Roxberg will Greet Friends from 12:30 pm - 2:30 pm Sunday, May 26, 2024 at the Denmark Congregational United Church of Christ, Denmark, Iowa. A private burial of her cremated remains will be at Denmark Cemetery, Denmark. A memorial has been established, contributions may be left at Barr Memorial Chapel or at the church during the service. Barr Memorial Chapel is honored to serve the Roxberg family and an online guest book may be found at www.barrmemorialchapel.com.

DAN E. GUSTAVSON

Dan E. Gustavson 63, of Burlington, IA, formerly of Keokuk, passed away Monday, April 29, 2024 at Oakview Nursing Home in Burlington, IA

He was born on December 11, 1960 in Springfield, IL the son of Gordon Reed and Helen Irene George Gustavson. He graduated from Keokuk Senior High School with the class of 1980.



GUSTAVSON

Dan was a member of Trinity United Methodist Church in Keokuk, IA. He has worked for Park Ridge Workshop in Montrose, IA and Bridgeway Workshop in Keokuk, IA.

Dan loved listening and singing to music as well as dancing. He loved going out to eat. He also enjoyed watching his nephew Tyler's sport games.

He is survived by one brother, Robert Gustavson (Patty) of Aurora, CO and two sisters Diane Sparrow (Carl) of Keokuk, IA and Peggy Peterson (Doug) of Keokuk. He is also survived by five nieces and nephews, Tamara Hoffstatter (Michelle), Wendy Croissant (TJ), Tim Hoffstatter (Heather), Adam Sparrow (Stephanie), Tyler Peterson (Kaisie) and several great nieces and nephews as well as several step great nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents and aunts and uncles.

A graveside service will held 11:00 Monday, May 6, 2024 at the Keokuk National Cemetery with Pastor Dave Barrett officiating.

Memorials may be made to Trinity United Methodist Church.

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



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Charles Vandenberg, Editor

(319).371.1670
Charles.V@PenCityCurrent.com

Lee K. Vandenberg, Sales Manager

(319).371.4125
Lee.V@PenCityCurrent.com

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Sports/From the Front



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison Head Coach Dean Hogan talks with the doubles team of Javean Davis and Aiden Benda on Wednesday morning at Dankwardt Park in Burlington. The Hounds were participating in the Southeast Conference tennis tournament.

Doubles teams place 4th, 6th at tourney

PCC Staff

BURLINGTON – Aiden Benda and Javean Davis captured 4th place at the Southeast Conference boys’ tennis tournament Wednesday in Burlington.

The event was originally set for Thursday, but organizers wanted to avoid projected storms and get the event in so it was moved to Wednesday which caused a conflict for some tennis players who also play golf for the Bloodhounds.

Benda and Davis started the tournament seeded 3rd in doubles play. Players must choose whether to play singles or doubles and cannot play both.

The Bloodhounds fell behind early to Fairfield’s Ethan Cass and Ryland Anderson, who were seeded 6th to start the day. After falling 2-6 in the first set, the two rebounded with a 6-3 win in the second set after trailing 3-2. They would then come back to win the tiebreaker 10-5.

The win put them in the semifinals against Mt. Pleasant’s Lou Schimmelpfennig and Phoenix Watson who set the Bloodhounds down 6-4, 6-4. The loss moved the Hounds into the 3rd-place match where they tangled with Burlington’s Tomas Rascon and Thomas Fell. The Burlington duo handed Benda and Davis a 6-4, 6-2 loss to give the Hounds the 4th place finish.

James Janic and Peyton Howard avoided a last-place finish to take 9th after defeating Keokuk’s Raden Meier and Kole Kepper. Howard and Janic were able to put the Chiefs away 6-2, 6-2. The two were seeded 8th coming into the tourna-

ment.

In singles action, Connor Blindt and Isaac Mason both represented the Bloodhounds. Blindt took 8th place going 0-3 on the day due to the higher seeding. Blindt was seeded 5th, while Mason was seeded 7th. Mason only got two matches on the day and dropped them both 6-1, 6-2 in the opening round and 8-0 in consolation tennis.

Blindt lost his matches 6-3, 6-1, 10-8 in a close 1st-round consolation, and lost the 7th place after battling to an 8-8 tie, falling 8-1 in the tiebreaker.

The Lady Hounds held their conference meet in Fairfield where Alyssa Crowther and Elizabeth Tanner competed in singles, while Mady Emmett and Brook Johnson, and Lila Shepard and Lily Arnold competed in doubles play.

Tanner was seeded 9th to start the day and almost knocked off 8th-seeded Sophia Rule of Keokuk. Rule shut out Tanner in the first set 6-0, but needed a 7-5 win in a second set tie-break to take the second set 7-5 and the match. Tanner then fell 9-7 to Fort Madison’s Alyssa Crowther to finish in 10th. Crowther got to the 9th-place match with her teammate after falling to Fairfield’s Faith Jones 6-0, 6-0.

In doubles action, Emmett and Johnson fell 6-1, 6-3 to Keokuk and then lost 8-5 to Mt. Pleasant for 10th place which is where they were seeded to start the day. Shepard and Arnold lost their opening round match to Keokuk’s No. 4 seed team 6-0, 6-2 and then knocked off Fairfield’s No. 8 seed 8-4. They then lost to Mt. Pleasant’s No. 3 seed team 8-6 for a 6th place finish on the day.

Board to go slow with new law

COURTS - Continued from Page 1

be formed to look into the options the county has.

Tom Schulz, vice chairman of the Lee County Board of Supervisors, echoed Seyb’s comments and said he was happy with the decision, but he said it will take a lot of diligence on the part of the board and the public to determine the best path going forward.

“We’re certainly happy the governor signed the bill and is giving us the authority to look into the possibility of consolidating our court service,” Schulz said.

“It will certainly not be a short process, but we will begin looking at it immediately to see what it will entail, including the cost savings.”

Schulz said other considerations have to include finding someone who might be interested in taking over the Fort Madison courthouse should they decide to close that facility.

Supervisors have indicated a preference to close the North Lee County Courthouse in favor of the South Lee County facility because that building is larger and could accommodate the 8th Judicial District recommendation of at least four jury-capable courtrooms.

“If we can’t find someone to do that, it wouldn’t provide much (budgetary) relief if we have to continue to heat and cool that building.”

The county spent over a quarter of a million on the North Lee County Courthouse in 2022 including tuckpointing and retaining wall improvements. In 2023 that figure was \$58,918 and this year through April the county has spent \$36,501 on the courthouse.

The bill also includes a change in the state’s income tax to a 3.8% flat rate, which Reynolds indicated was a top priority of her legislative session.

“Since 2018, I’ve proposed, worked with the legislature, and signed four landmark tax reform bills, which not only set the stage for Iowa’s first ever flat income tax, but also eliminated taxes on retirement and inheritance income, cut property taxes, and made our code more friendly to farm families,” Reynolds said.

“And because of our conservative budgeting practices, it’s clear that we’re well-positioned to go further, faster which is why I proposed a fifth tax package this year. The bill I’m signing today allows the flat rate we enacted two years ago to go into effect in 2025, while reducing it yet again to 3.8 percent. The bottom line is that every Iowa taxpayer will experience significantly lower rates starting next year, and collectively, all the tax cuts we’ve enacted since 2018 will save Iowans more than \$23.5 billion over a decade.”

The governor signed a total of 40 bills on Wednesday to include a modification to the retirement calculations for sheriffs and deputy sheriffs, restricting bail for 1st-degree murder or felonious assault committed against public safety personnel.

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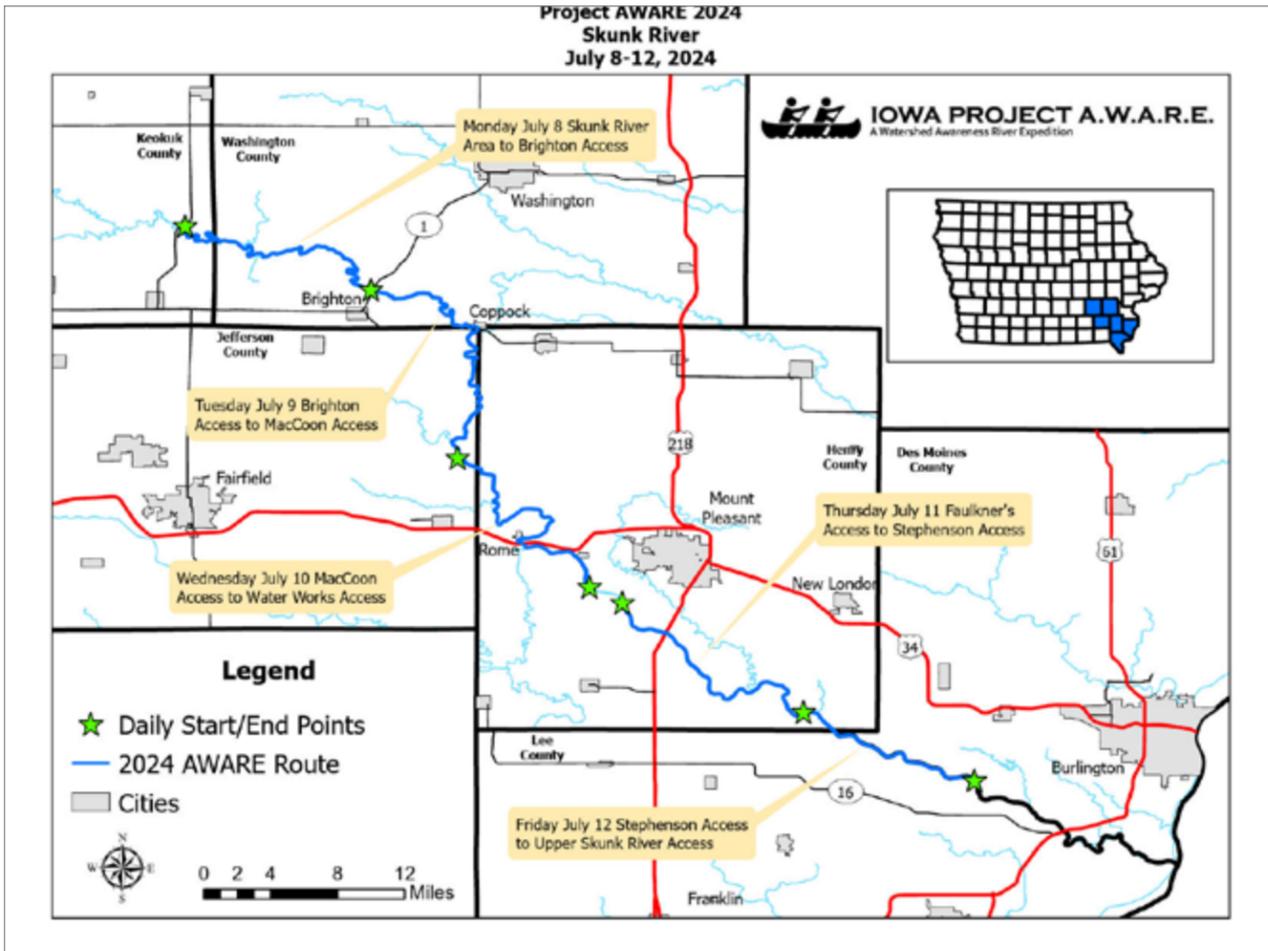
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From the Front



Project AWARE has been cleaning rivers for 20 years

RIVERS - Continued from Page 1

ecology, natural resources, local history, and archaeology of the watershed. Along with programs, there are interactive activities where participants can improve their outdoor skills and get hands-on experience with water quality testing and nature identification.

The public is welcome and encouraged to attend in-camp programs requiring no registration. (Registration is required for on-river cleanup only.)

In the 20 years since this event started, over 6,000 volunteers have removed 489 tons of trash from 1,429 miles of river, with 81% of all trash recycled.

Whether you can join for an evening program, one day on the river, or the entire weeklong expedition, Iowa Project AWARE volunteers can expect to leave with an improved understanding of the Skunk River, the beautiful

communities that call it home, and a rejuvenated sense of appreciation for local watersheds.

Registration will open March 20th at www.iowaprojectaware.org, with limited space available!

Iowa Project AWARE is coordinated by N-Compass, Inc., an Iowa 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Marion, Iowa. The mission of N-Compass, Inc. is to protect and improve the environment and natural resources through

environmental education and community engagement.

For more information about Iowa Project AWARE, to make a donation, or to register for the event, visit www.iowaprojectaware.org.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

**PUBLIC NOTICE
ORDINANCE NO. D-111**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF FORT MADISON, IOWA, BY AMENDING THE NATURAL GAS FRANCHISE

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Madison, Iowa, and MidAmerican Energy Company entered into a natural gas franchise agreement for Natural Gas Ordinance No. D-070, adopted by the City Council on December 15, 2020, and

WHEREAS, the City of Fort Madison and Mid-American Energy Company agree the franchise must be amended

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Fort Madison, Iowa, as follows:

1. That Section 3 of Ordinance No. D-070 being:

Section 3. Franchise Fee. There is hereby im-

posed a franchise fee of one and one half percent (1.5%) upon the gross revenue generated from sales of natural gas by the Company to customers receiving service, including transportation and distribution, and located within the corporate limits of the City. The percentage of franchise fee will not be increased during the first ten (10) years, starting from the effective date of the franchise Ordinance.

is hereby struck and the following Section 3 is substituted therefore:

Section 3. Franchise Fee. There is hereby imposed a franchise fee of one and one half percent (1.5%) upon the gross revenue generated from sales of natural gas by the Company to customers receiving service, including transportation and distribution, and located within the corporate limits of the City. With respect to the distribution or transportation by the Company of natural gas sold to the customer by a third-party supplier of the commodity, the percentage of gross receipts shall be applied to the customer's full cost of gas delivered within the City, including all costs of acquisition, ownership, and transportation whereof, wherever incurred. In determining the amount of the fee, the Company may presume that the customer's commodity cost of gas is the same as if the gas were sold by the Company, unless a different cost is provided.

PASSED AND APPROVED by Council on the 16th day of April, 2024.

/s/ Matt J. Mohrfeld, Mayor

City of Fort Madison, Iowa

ATTEST: /s/Justina M. Cullen, City Clerk

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Sports

Notre Dame finds lightning in second half of win over CL

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELLSON – Heavy lightning in the area almost derailed the Central Lee/Burlington Notre Dame boys soccer game Tuesday, night, but it may have derailed the Hawks’ chance of moving over .500 on the year.

After a very, very short lightning delay disrupted the flow the game in the second half at the 17 minute mark, the Nikes took advantage of a reset to catch Central Lee a little flat after the confusion.

Game officials stopped play to check radar after seeing lightning in the western skies over Lee County. After briefly pulling the players off the field, officials allowed play to resume immediately after getting clarification that the lightning was not within 10 miles of the field.

On the restart, Notre Dame got the ball in the box and senior Bobby Wildrick punched one in past Hawks’ keeper Hunter Gregory for what turned out to be the game-winning goal, putting the Nikes up 2-0.

Central Lee junior Ayden Kent would score unassisted with 3:35 left in the game to cut the lead to one.

Kent almost scored in the first half when a scrum just outside the box kicked a ball loose from Nike keep Taylor Lundgren. Kent got caught up in a three-player tangle and couldn’t get free to track down the ball.

Central Lee had four shots in the first half, the second being a rocket from senior midfielder Landon Crank right up the middle from about 18 feet, but Lundgren took the shot off both hands and again the ball got loose to the left, but there were no Hawks in pursuit to clean up the carom.

Notre Dame got on the board first and early when Gregory got caught just a bit high in the box and Notre Dame’s Seena Nowroozi lifted a shot high over Gregory, just off his fingertips, that bounced into the net for a 1-0 lead at 33:23.

Crank leads the Hawks with five goals on the season on 25 shots on goal. Kent has three goals on 14 shots on goal.

The Hawks fall below .500 at 3-4 overall and 3-4 in the SEI Superconference. They will host Keokuk on Friday either with a 5 p.m. start or a 7 p.m. start if the Lady Hawks’ postponed game with Keokuk is slated to start at 5.

HAWKS’ HIRE

Hawks hire Swanson as new boys head basketball

PCC Staff

DONNELLSON - The Central Lee Community School District is pleased to announce the appointment of Jonny Swanson as the new head boys’ basketball coach at Central Lee High School.



SWANSON

Alongside his coaching duties, Swanson will also join the school’s faculty as a physical education teacher.

Swanson brings a wealth of successful coaching experience to Central Lee. Most notably, he led the 8th grade boys’ basketball team to a state tournament appearance in 2024 in Illinois. His achievements were recognized when he was nominated for the 2024 Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Junior High Boys Basketball Coach of the Year award.

Additionally, Swanson has experience working with Coach Wooten’s Basket-

ball Camp in Frostburg, Maryland, and volunteered with the Western Illinois University Women’s Basketball Program, assisting in opponent analysis through film study.

“We are thrilled to welcome Jonny Swanson to the Central Lee community,” said Wes McGraw, Central Lee Activities Director. “His coaching expertise and dedication to player development are exceptional, and we look forward to seeing his impact on our high school boys’ basketball program.”

“I am honored to have the opportunity to lead the boys’ basketball program at Central Lee High School and contribute to the school’s physical education department,” said Swanson. “I look forward to building upon the team’s achievements and fostering a culture of excellence both on and off the court.”

Swanson will be starting his new role this summer with team basketball workouts and running the youth basketball camp.

Hounds win sets up SEC battle

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison Bloodhounds have set up a clash for the Southeast Conference lead Thursday after shutting out Mt. Pleasant 6-0 in boys soccer action Tuesday night.

The Hounds were coming off an unprecedented four-game losing streak including SEC losses to Burlington and Fairfield.

Fort Madison is also dealing with substantial injuries to key players including Noah Swigart, Henry Graham, and Oliver Santiago who rotates in the net with Conner Gehling.

Next up is Washington who comes to town on Thursday for a game at Baxter Sports Complex. The Demons are one game in front of Fort Madison in conference play at 5-1. The Hounds are 4-2 after Tuesday’s win and are 7-6 overall. The Demons carry a nice 8-2 mark on the season.

On Monday, senior Leif Boeding got the scoring started with a penalty kick eight minutes into the match. His second penalty goal in two days.

Mario Gomez Gutierrez then scored back-to-back goals - the first on assists from Boeding and Jan de Gracia Hernandez and the second from Boeding with 10 minutes left in the half. Boeding would get another shot on goal to convert with less than a minute left to take the Bloodhounds to a 4-0 lead at the half.

Boeding would get the hat trick at the 23-minute mark of the second half and Connor Horn would wrap up the scoring with a shot off a pass from Hernandez with 13 minutes left in the match.

Gehling would record three saves to preserve the shutout. Hernandez and Boeding each had two assists.

Fort Madison won the junior varsity contest 3-2. Horn scored twice and Russell Chaknine had a goal in the win.

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