

TOP STORIES SEPT. - DEC., 2024

FMPD ID body found in creek

TOP STORY: Police identify man in creek as Jeffery A. Moore, missing since October

Nov. 10 - Webviews: 10,486,
Facebook: 35,117

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The body found in a creek bed behind Vinnie’s Longbranch last week has been identified, however the cause of the death hasn’t been determined. The body was identified Friday morning as 39-year-old Jeffery Allen Moore, who was reported missing on Oct. 13 of this year. According to Fort Madison Police Chief



MOORE

Cody Potthast, initial investigations would hint there doesn’t seem to be foul play involved, but he couldn’t say definitively because of the decomposed condition of the body when discovered on the afternoon of Saturday, Nov. 2 in Fort Madison. Potthast said an autopsy has been ordered for additional information in the case. He said the identification was revealed on social media, before police were officially notified and the investigation continues.

Moore, a 5’10”, 175lbs. black male was last seen at approximately 3:30 a.m. on Oct. 13, 2024 in the 2400 block of Avenue L. According to police, Moore suffered from a severe mental health diagnosis and was not believed to be in possession of his medication when he was determined to be missing. His obituary appears in today’s edition and family and friends are invited to celebrate Jeff’s life with a potluck meal at 12:00 pm/noon on Saturday, November 16, 2024 at Shopton Park, 29th and Avenue O, Fort Madison.

Fiery crash on west end

sends two to hospital

Sept. 1 - Webviews: 9,976, Facebook: 15,363

FORT MADISON – An early morning accident Saturday resulted in a fiery crash that injured two and destroyed a home. According to Fort Madison Fire officials, LeeComm dispatched the Montrose Fire Department and Des Moines Township Fire to 6010 Avenue O at about 12:30 a.m. Saturday for a vehicle that had struck a home. As a result of the collision, a fire ignited that involved the vehicle and the structure. A Lee County Sheriff’s deputy arrived on scene and said two individuals in the vehicle had been removed. However, it was unknown whether anyone was in the home at the time. The sheriff’s deputy requested mutual aid from Fort Madison Fire & Rescue due to the unknown oc-

cupancy of the structure. Power was also affected on the west end of Fort Madison due to the accident. Fort Madison fire was called at 12:34 a.m. and arrived on scene about six minutes later. Upon arrival, the vehicle and the structure were fully engulfed in flames and an all-call of off-duty fire-fighters was requested. Also upon arrival it was determined that two occupants of the home had escaped the burning structure and were reportedly uninjured. Montrose Fire and Des Moines Township fire arrived on scene and the West Point Fire Department was called for mutual aid. Assisting that scene were Alliant Energy, Lee County Sheriff, and Fort Madison Public Works.



A pick up truck was still in the front of a home in the 6000 block of Avenue O after it collided with a home at 12:30 a.m. Saturday morning. Two in the truck were injured. Occupants of the home were able to escape without injury before the home and truck became engulfed in flames.

Legionella

detected at

Klein Center

Oct 3 - Webviews: 2,808,
Facebook:12,008

WEST BURLINGTON – The Klein Center, an independent long-term care facility, is taking mitigation measures to address a concern about Legionella bacteria in the water supply. A Klein Center resident tested positive for Legionella, a type of bacteria, after developing pneumonia-type symptoms. Because Legionella bacteria can be found in water sources, water samples from the Klein Center and Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center - West Burlington, were sent to the Iowa State Hygienic Lab for testing. Immediate steps were taken to engage the support of the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services with input from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to remediate the situation. Water was shut off to the household where the resident resided, and residents were provided bottled water for drinking and hygiene use.

Donnellson center’s

license suspended

Sept. 7 - Webviews: 3,547,
Facebook:11,207

DONNELLSON – Aspire of Donnellson had its license suspended on Aug. 30 in the wake of an emergency transfer of residents from the facility on Aug. 27. On Friday, the facility was informed that its agreement with the Centers of Medicare & Medicaid services was also being terminated effective Monday, Sept. 9, essentially shuttering the skilled nursing facility at 901 State Street. According to an email sent to Pen City Current Friday from Diana McCool, Communications Specialist with the Administration Division of the Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing, residents of Aspire were removed from the facility effective Aug. 28, as DIAL found during a survey that the health or safety of residents of the facility required action on an emergency basis, in accordance with Iowa Code sections 135C.10 and 135C.11(2).

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WEATHER

TUE 07 Jan..... Mostly cloudy & cold, 23° F/ 7° F

WED 08 Jan..... Sunny & cold, 19° F/ 5° F

THU 09 Jan..... Sunny & cold, 22° F/13° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LUCKY FOR LIFE 01/05..... 6 27 31 33 47, Lucky Ball: 13

PICK 3 MIDDAY 01/05..... 148

PICK 3 EVENING 01/05..... 750

PICK 4 MIDDAY 01/05..... 1131

PICK 4 EVENING 01/05..... 2557

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2024 – A Year in Review: September – December

We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2024

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Larry Adamson	John Kenneth Bogert	Floyd E Cowles	Alma Marie Evans	Don F. Hall	Richard L. “Rick” Holtkamp
Barbara S. Akers	Lola May Boon	Linda C. (Craig - Phillips)	Sherry D. Faeth	Ronald E. “Bud” Hallam	Michael R. “Mike” Hornung
Ralph Gregory Akers	Oneida Mae Bourgeois	Pidgeon	Vicki Lorene Fenton	David “Dave” Lloyd Halterman	Bonnie Sue (House) Witt
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Sandra Sue (nee Allen)	Latham	Diana Crowell	Sally Ann Fogle	Frank Louis Hansen	Denise Michelle Howell
Shipman	Alice Lucille Bowen Johnston	Russell “Russ” Wayne Crowell	Larry Craig Fojtik, Sr.	Lynn Marie Hardy	Katherine M. Howes
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2024 – A Year in Review: September – December

PAW moves animals into new digs

Sept. 15 - Webviews: 827,
Facebook: 9,670

FORT MADISON – The \$6.5 million brand new PAW Animal Shelter has its first official residents.

Paid and volunteer staff were working over the week-end to move dogs and cats from the crumbling current shelter into the state-of-the-art 20,000 square foot new facility built just north of the current space.

Director Sandy Brown said the group is still raising funds to pay for the facility. Jordan’s Way, a national shelter fundraising campaign which has generated close to \$150,000 in two events over the past two years, will be back in town again in October. Brown said she’s setting a goal this year of \$130,000.

“Truthfully, a lot of people didn’t think we’d see this in my lifetime. So God is good,” she said.

Brown said most of the construction is done on the facility, but there are a few fixes that need to be addressed in a couple of the rooms.

But the facility was not built to expand services to allow more animals on site. Brown said it was built to make adoption easier for local residents, and more comfortable for potential owners and the animals



themselves.

“We didn’t build this so we could take more animals. We’re full. Even with all the new facilities, we’re full,” she said. “What it does is allows people to come into a facility that was created to give people a chance to sit and interact with dogs and cats before they adopt them.

“We’ll even have some love seats and other furniture for meet-and-greets.

The animal and owner can sit together without distractions and focus on one another.”

Current procedures involve bringing bigger dogs outside to mingle with people interested in adopting. Brown said in that environment, the dogs are distracted sniffing grass and by cars driving by, birds and other stuff, and they aren’t focused on those wanting to adopt.

Central Lee bus driver killed in accident

Nov. 14 - Webviews: 9,065,
Facebook:21,224

MONTROSE – A Tuesday afternoon accident has claimed the life of a Montrose man and bus driver in the Central Lee School District.

At 3:45 p.m. LeeComm dispatched first responders to Montrose for a man in his 40s pinned under a vehicle in a garage, with the caller unable to access the area. By 3:46:46 p.m., LeeComm dispatchers gathered the necessary information and issued alerts to first responders, completing the dispatch process at 3:47:03 p.m.

Montrose Police Chief Todd Shields, arriving on the scene within minutes, found the man trapped beneath the vehicle he had been working on. Shortly after, Shields requested assistance from a Lee County Medical Examiner Investigator.

Due to the unattended nature of the death, the medical examiner was notified, and the body was sent to the state medical examiner’s office for autopsy. According to Shields, there was no indication of foul play, and the incident was deemed an unfortunate accident.

It appears a lift had failed on the vehicle and trapped Chris Rule, who drives bus 37 for the Central Lee School District, under the vehicle where he succumbed to his injuries.

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?

How 5 Lies About Low BACK PAIN May Keep You Hurting, Frustrated & Exhausted...Forever!

NEW Scientific Breakthroughs Often Make Short Work of Low Back Pain...Just What Big Medical Centers and High Priced Clinics Are PRAYING You Never Figure Out On Your Own!

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.

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”!

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!

WOULDN’T YOU RATHER:

Turn over in bed without pain waking you up?

Get up in the morning without being as stiff as a board?

Be able to stand for as long as you want without sitting down for relief?

Lean forward over the sink without that “stabbing” in your back or leg?

SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH:

A hidden muscle may be causing your SCIATICA! Does Your Back Seem “Too Old” for Your Own Body? Not everyone qualifies for treatment, so help us see if you do. If you check off even one box, drop what you’re doing and call James Healthcare NOW. And bring this coupon when you come in for your 39-Point “Back-Pain Track-Down Exam”. Now check off what describes you:

- ☐ Tension...always tight across the beltline
- ☐ Bent—crooked off to one side and can’t stand up straight if your life depended on it
- ☐ 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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2024 – A Year in Review: September – December

GRHS announces billing changes

Sept. 16 - Webviews: 6,951, Facebook:18,113

LEE COUNTY – Patients of physicians, clinics, and services provided by Great River Health Systems could be looking at some sticker shock for services provided after Aug. 1 of this year.

The predominant hospital system of southeast Iowa announced a change to its billing protocols with services beginning on that date. Great River Health is the umbrella company of Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Centers in West Burlington and Fort Madison, among 21 other clinics in Des Moines, Henry, and Lee counties.

According to an announcement from the health system on Monday, Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center Clinics - in West Burlington and Fort Madison, and Henry County Health Center Orthopedic Clinic, now follow a provider-based or hospital-based billing model for outpatient services.

Provider-based refers to the billing process for services received in a hospital-owned medical practice that is a clinically integrated department of the hospital, or outpatient clinics that are actually part of the hospital.

Officials said last week in an emailed statement to Pen City Current that the provider-based billing is the national model of practice for healthcare organizations that provide both hospital and physician services to their patients.

“Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center is taking proactive steps to ensure high-quality care remains available to all of our patients. We strive to maintain a high level of physician services in our communities. By converting to a provider-based billing model, Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center is ensuring it is reimbursed fairly for services it provides,” the statement indicated.



Members of the Lee County Special Response Team gather after conducting a “high-risk” search of a home in the 3000 block of Avenue J Tuesday morning. Several individuals were detained.

High-risk raid nets arrests

Sept. 16 - Webviews: 6,951, Facebook:18,113

FORT MADISON - Member of the Lee County Special Response Team (SRT) were joined the Lee County Narcotics Task Force Tuesday to assist them with conducting a high-risk warrant service in the 3000 block of Avenue J in Fort Madison.

The warrant was executed at 8:30 a.m. and SRT was on scene for approximately 20 minutes. Officers did deploy flashbang during the execution of this warrant, which may account for any loud explosion heard in the area during this

time. The warrant was executed without incident, and numerous individuals were detained and turned over to the Lee County Narcotics Task Force.

The Lee County Special Response Team (SRT) is made up of law enforcement officers with the Fort Madison Police Department, Keokuk Police Department, and the Lee County Sheriff’s Office.

Assisting in the execution of this search warrant were the following agencies: Lee County Sheriff’s Office, Lee County Attorney’s Office, Lee County EMS, Lee County Conservation, LeeComm Dispatch, and the Lee County Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT).

Lexy Reu joins FM Chamber operations

Nov. 14 - Webviews: 1,587, Facebook: 9,021

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison Area Chamber of Commerce is delighted to announce the hiring of Lexy Reu as the new Member Relations Coordinator. Lexy brings a deep-rooted passion for her hometown and a strong commitment to fostering community ties and supporting local businesses.

Lexy Reu was raised in Fort Madison and graduated from Fort Madison High School in 2015. She continued her education at Southeastern Community College, where she earned Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees in 2017. Lexy’s local upbringing and educational background provide her with a unique perspective and understanding of the Fort Madison community.

“I am confident that Lexy’s passion, knowledge, and dedication will greatly benefit the Chamber and its members,” said Chamber Director, Savanna Collier. “We warmly welcome her to the team and I’m looking forward to the positive impact she will make. I’m excited to work with her!”

In her new role, Lexy will work closely with Chamber members to enhance their experience, ensuring they receive the support and resources needed to thrive. Her enthusiasm for community engagement and her background in marketing will be invaluable assets to the Chamber.

Lexy currently resides in Lee County with her husband, Brandon, their two sons, Bowen and Maverick, and their dog, Bear. She cherishes spending quality time with her family and friends.

“I am thrilled to join the Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce and contribute to the success of our local businesses and community,” said Lexy Reu. “I am really looking forward to collaborating with Savanna at the Chamber to support the growth and prosperity of Fort Madison.”

Lexy can be reached at membership@fortmadison.com.



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2024 – A Year in Review: September – December



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison PAW Director Sandy Brown hits a volunteer in the face with a Cool Whip pie in the early going of Wednesday’s Jordan’s Way fundraiser in Fort Madison.

DOT denies county ATE application

Oct. 1 - Webviews: 1,011, Facebook: 7,311

The Iowa Department of Transportation handed down decisions today that said Lee County’s six speed camera locations are not approved due to them not having issued tickets prior to Jan. 1, 2024.

Lee County had the cameras up prior to the deadline set in new legislation signed by Gov. Kim Reynolds in May, but they were not issuing tickets until the new year started.

That decision has caused the DOT to pull the permit for Lee County and Sheriff Stacy Weber said the company who owns the equipment will be coming to get the automated traffic enforcement apparatus.

Weber and Lee County Supervisor

Chairman Garry Seyb said Tuesday they are looking forward to an appeal process.

“They were turned off immediately,” Weber said. “They are not gathering information at this point and we will follow the law. I’ve been in contact with State Rep. (Martin) Graber and State Sen. (Jeff) Reichman and they are encouraging me to work through that process.”

What that process is is still an unknown.

“No one can tell me what that looks like,” he said. “I don’t know if they know what the process is yet. I don’t know what that looks like, but we will cooperate with that and, if given the opportunity to appeal, we’ll do that.”

PAW raises \$119K in 4 hours

Oct. 24 - Webviews: 411, Facebook:10,834

FORT MADISON – It was another wild afternoon at the PAW Animal Shelter with Jordan’s Way on the property to help raise awareness and funds for the no-kill facility.

According to Director Sandy Brown, the group raised \$119,000 in four hours from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday afternoon in a live Facebook event coordinated by Jordan Way founder Kris Rotunda.

About 20 minutes before the end of the event, an anonymous donor called in a \$50,000 donation.

“That’s not \$50, or \$500, or \$5,000. That’s a \$50,000 donation,” Rotunda said during the live event.

Brown was hoping to get to \$150,000 and set a new record for Jordan’s Way. As part of the fundraiser, the “Top Dog” among the shelters that Rotunda hosts fundraisers at, will get a \$25,000 check from the Jordan’s Way Foundation. Those funds are in addition to the revenue raised during the event.

Donations count up until the following Wednesday at 5 p.m. so Brown said people can still donate on the PAW Facebook page, website at www.pawfortmadison.com, venmo: @fortmadisonpaw@yahoo.com, paypal at: fortmadisonpaw@yahoo.com, or by direct donation in person at the facility at 2031 48th Street in Fort Madison.

“We ended at \$119,000, but we’ve had donations come since then and we have until next Wednesday. Anything that comes in until 5 p.m. next Wednesday will count toward our amount. We want to hit \$150,000, so we have to raise another 30,000 or so by then.”

Brown said the shelter has been asking for donations for more than three years now and the staff and board thought this might be a tougher task. It was the third time Rotunda has brought his efforts to the shelter. The shelter won the Top Dog award in 2023.

Myers named 1st team All-State

Nov. 18 - Webviews: 1,139, Facebook:8,175

FORT MADISON - Four Holy Trinity volleyball players were honored on the Iowa Girls Coaches Association all-state teams released Monday.

Presley Myers was a first-team selection. Adalyn Kruse was a second-team pick. Anna Bendlage and Teagan Snaadt were fourth-team selections and were also named to the academic all-state team.

The four were also honored on the Class 1A Southeast all-district team. Holy Trinity coach Melissa Freesmeier was named the district’s coach of the year after leading the Crusaders to their fourth consecutive state tournament.

Myers led the Crusaders with 347 kills and 82 blocks. She had a .326 kill efficiency. She was fifth in serving aces with 32.

Kruse was second on the team with 310 kills and 357 digs, and ranked third with 25 blocks.

Bendlage led the Crusaders with 582 assists and was third with 144 kills. She was also the leader in serve percentage at 97.3 percent, and led the team with 44 aces. She had 227 digs and 19 blocks.

Snaadt was the team’s best defender with 444 digs. She was second in serving percentage at 96.1 percent, and third with 102 assists.

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2024 – A Year in Review: September – December

McMillens open First Fitness in WP

Dec. 4 - Webviews: 411, Facebook: 1,687



WEST POINT – A new fitness center that’s been open for about nine weeks in West Point is one of those things you have to see to really believe.

First Fitness, located at 209 7th Street in West Point, opened just after Rodeo weekend and has quickly become a known entity around Lee County.

Owners Bryor and Danielle McMillen opened the facility in September after spending close to a year renovating the old NAPA Auto Parts store just behind the filling station on 7th Street on the city’s east side.

Bryor McMillen said they wanted the facility to be one they could be proud of, as well as the residents of West Point.

“If you’re gonna do it, you might as well do it right,” he said. “I tried to make it as nice as possible

because people can get intimidated with all the equipment in one space. So we wanted to make it inviting, but yet as loose as possible, if that makes sense.”

The couple did a complete renovation of the inside retail space from structural improvements to efficiencies and security.

Even getting inside the door has been changed. First Fitness has a KISI app that, when installed, allows you to hold your phone to a sensor to unlock the door. That way attendance can be tracked.

McMillen said one of the things he had been hearing as he did his research on area gyms was that people had trouble getting in to workout 24/7. He said the KISI app will make that a non-issue with members at First Fitness.

The name is homage to several things, but foremost is a reference to first responders. McMillen and his wife Danielle are both first responders. There is also a discounted rate for first responders, seniors, military professionals, and others.

Currently the rate is a flat \$50 a month, not including discounts, and McMillen said the word is getting out and memberships are strong for just two months of being open.

The idea came out of the McMillens service to health care.

Alliant flips switch on new solar field

Sept. 12 - Webviews: 1,247, Facebook: 7,171

LEE COUNTY – A drive through northeast Lee County shows the current collaboration between agriculture and energy generation industries. With solar panels gleaming above the stalks of corn and bean bushes weeks from harvest creates a powerful landscape in the county.

Alliant Energy began testing last week with a 150-megawatt solar project in Lee County. The footprint, which is more than six miles across as the crow flies, is the second largest solar project in the state of Iowa. The largest is the Duane Arnold Solar Project in Linn County.

According to an Alliant spokesperson, the project has generated an investment of a quarter of a billion dollars. And

while the full capacity of the project hasn’t yet been realized due to additional testing required, the project is already producing about 97 megawatts without the full field turned on. Alliant officials anticipate close to 316,000 megawatt hours in the first year alone, enough to power 30,000 homes.

Construction started late in 2023 and slowed down for the winter, but ramped up again in the spring.

“In total it will be approximately one year from the time we broke ground to the time we expect to place the project into service,” said Chris Caporale, a communication specialist with Alliant. “We expect to be fully operational this year.”



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2024 – A Year in Review: September – December

YMCA renames endowments fund after Rushers

Oct. 30 - Webviews: 881, Facebook: 6,392

FORT MADISON - We are thrilled to announce the renaming of our Endowment Fund to the Keith and Jan Rusher YMCA Endowment Fund. This change honors Keith and Jan Rusher, whose dedication to the Fort Madison Family YMCA and the community has left an indelible mark. Their commitment to promoting health, fitness, and positive influence in the lives of others embodies the spirit of the YMCA. We are grateful for their years of service and support, and we look forward to the continued impact of the Rusher Endowment Fund in fostering community wellness and development. Keith and Jan Rusher Story: Since their move to Fort Madison in 1969, Keith and Jan have woven themselves into the fabric of the community, becoming steadfast members of the Fort Madison Family YMCA. Their dedication



to fitness and community service has left a lasting impact, with Keith teaching Nautilus Aerobics for 28 years and serving multiple terms on the YMCA Board of Directors, including as Board Chair. Keith was instrumental in the development of the YMCA's current facility, which opened in March 1975 at a cost of \$970,000. His passion for fitness and community welfare is evident in his commitment to the YMCA's mission. He and Jan have supported the Fort Madison Family YMCA Endowment Fund since 2014, reflecting their belief in the organization's positive influence on youth and adults alike.

FM Partners board votes to disband

Oct. 1 - Webviews: 1,884, Facebook: 6,278

LEE COUNTY – An effort to bring Lee County together and GROW Lee County has taken another step. The team at Lee County Economic Development Group has announced a change in direction that will bring the operations of Keokuk Economic Development Corp. and Fort Madison Economic Development Corp. under the roof of LCEDG ops in Montrose. The move has also resulted in the disbanding of Fort Madison Partners, which has overseen operations of FMEDC, the Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce, the former Fort Madison Main Street organization, and the Fort Madison Beautification Foundation. According to Partners Executive Tim Gobble, who will now be working with LCEDG, the work of the Beautification Foundation will continue with him in his new post. In an announcement to Partners members this morning Gobble said the decision was made with mixed emotions “With the joining forces of the three economic development entities in Lee County taking place in January 2025, the Fort Madison Partners Board of Directors has made the difficult decision to disband the organization,” he wrote. “This decision was not made lightly, and it reflects our commitment to ensuring that our community, and county, continue to thrive in new ways.” The move will reset the Fort Madison Chamber as a stand-alone entity with an intention of hiring one additional staff person to help with membership services.

Freeport gives \$50K to playground

Dec. 18 - Webviews: 1,051, Facebook: 5,697

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison Riverfront playground project got a boost this week in the form of a \$50,000 check from a local industry. City officials were notified about a month ago that the city was a recipient of the donation from the Freeport McMoRan Foundation. Freeport McMoRan is the parent company of Climax Molybdenum in Fort Madison. The foundation has made several similar donations to the groups in the area for community development efforts. “We commend the City of Fort Madison in your efforts to create a destination-style playground and activity center that supports the other development efforts happening at the riverfront,” wrote Tracy L Bame, President, Freeport McMoRan Foundation, in a letter to the city dated Nov. 12, 2024. The playground is part of the city’s riverfront development efforts and will be located to the west of the new Fort Madison Marina and Turnwater Bar and Grill on the newly elevated park ground. Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld and his wife Beth started the park renovation efforts with a \$25,000 contribution and fundraising and design efforts are still underway.

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2024 – A Year in Review: September – December

GRHS ends relationship with two Medicare plans

Sept. 23 - Webviews: 1,341, Facebook:6,721

BURLINGTON – Great River Health System has announced that they are no longer accepting two forms of Medicare Advantage plans.

Information on the change came Monday morning, a week after the health system put out a release about their change in hospital designation which created a new, two-tiered billing structure.

The hospital system, including SEI Regional Medical Center and Henry County Health Center, will no longer be accepting Medicare Advantage plans offered by Aetna and Wellpoint. Wellpoint is formerly Ameri-Group.

The Aetna plan's coverage will no longer be accepted for clinic or hospital services starting on Oct. 10 of this year. The Wellpoint plan will stop at the end of the year.

A hospital spokesperson said the participants in both plans have been notified by letter of the change.

“We are also contacting scheduled patients on an individual basis to help them understand their options, including finding an in-network provider,” the spokesperson said.

“This decision was made after contract terms Great River Health presented to these two carriers were not accepted. The contract terms were reasonable and accepted by other insurance carriers. We will continue to provide emergency care for all patients in our Emergency Departments regardless of their insurance.”

Hospital officials said they attempted to push the Aetna date back to the end of the year, but the carrier would not agree to the extension. That cancellation affects approximately 1,300 patients.

Patients currently using Wellpoint have also been sent letters with information about the discontinuation of coverage. That affects approximately 300 patients, according to hospital data.

Mohrfelds launch Holganix franchise

Nov. 25 - Webviews: 2,293, Facebook:6,168

WEST POINT – The Mohrfeld family of West Point is investing in fixing your dirt.

The generational farm family in rural West Point has invested in a product that introduces microbes into farm soil to enhance the productivity.

Not only are they investing to increase the availability of the product in Iowa and Nebraska, but they are investing in a new facility just west of South Park across 5th Street to house and operate sales of a product called Bio 800+ through the Holganix Midwest franchise.

“This is a biological. We put live microorganisms back into farm ground,”



said Brian Mohrfeld, president of the West Point company.

“It's basically a soil health product. Our motto is ‘We're bringing soil back to life.’”

Mohrfeld bought into the company about three years ago when he heard about

the benefits to agronomy.

“My dad was talking 60 bushel beans when he was farming and, 20 years into my time farming, we were still talking 60 bushel beans. So we just started looking for new ways (to boost production).”

The product is applied in the fall with a Bio 800 breakdown, and then a spring product that goes on with planting. The product can be applied through planters or through sprayers and comes in liquid form.

Fort Madison woman killed in November traffic accident

Nov. 16 - Webviews: 5,530, Facebook: 6,211

FORT MADISON – A 70-year-old Fort Madison woman was killed Friday evening when she was struck by a vehicle on the city's west side.

According to a report from the Iowa State Patrol's office, Nancy Lynne Kuhljuergen, 70, of Fort Madison sustained fatal injuries after she was struck in the 5100 block of Avenue O.

Kuhljuergen apparently was heading north across the highway near Fort Colony Restaurant at 6:05


p.m. when she was struck attempting to cross the roadway.

She was allegedly hit by a 2009 Toyota Tacoma driven by Jeffrey Stephen Jordan, 70, of Argyle.


Fort Madison Police, Fort Madison Fire & Rescue, Iowa State Patrol, Lee County Sheriff's Office, and Lee County EMS Ambulance responded to the scene.

Traffic was blocked off in the area while emergency crews responded to the accident.

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2024 – A Year in Review: September – December

Groups break ground on broadband work

Oct. 17 - Webviews: 651, Facebook: 5,809

WEVER – Work to begin hooking up more than 100 homes to high-speed broadband access in and around Wever kicked off Wednesday morning with a ground-breaking at the Wever/Green Bay Township Community building.

Officials representing Lee County Economic Development Group (LCEDG), Lee County, Danville Telecom, Southeast Iowa Regional & Economic Port Authority (SIREPA), and the underground contractor for the project met at the building to celebrate the partnership that not only



created the opportunities for home and business owners, but will help expand broadband county-wide.

Danville Telecom CEO Tim Fencil said the project which capitalized on state grant funding, \$1.95 million in coun-

ty ARPA funding, and private financing, has created a network in the county that is providing individual home service, but also an attractive network for other companies to help expand capacity, as well.

“We here to celebrate

substantial completion of the Lee County Broadband project which completes a redundant fiber optic loop, which is a big deal. Also making connection to 120 homes and a broadband intervention zone,” Said LCEDG President Dennis Fraise.

Lee County cuts ribbon on new Keokuk ambulance facility

Nov. 19 - Webviews: 1,773, Facebook: 5,094

KEOKUK – County officials cut the ribbon on a brand new \$1 million Lee County EMS facility in Keokuk Monday night.

The new facility replaces a dilapidated ambulance and staff garage and was built on the location of the former Lee County EMS Ambulance center. It also is about two years in front of a new EMS bay in Fort Madison that will be part of the Lee County Health Department.

Lee County Supervisors Chairman Garry Seyb

called the facilities “generational projects”.

Seyb said he wanted to thank the taxpayers for supporting the project.

“They have funded this as well as ARPA funding, and they’re our boss. That’s who we work for, and we really try to make decisions that are best for the taxpayers, always,” he said.

He said the project came in under budget by close to \$100,000, which he said is phenomenal in today’s construction market.

FM sends three to state x-country meet

Oct. 23 - Webviews: 585, Facebook: 5,999

PELLA – Fort Madison qualified three runners Wednesday night for the state cross-country meet in Fort Dodge next week.

But it wasn’t without a little drama. The Fort Madison girls just missed qualifying as a team by one point behind Washington 97-96. Pella won the meet going away with 18 points taking the top four spots. The Dutch’s Marissa Ferebee raced to a 16.37.99 which would have placed in the top 10 in the boys’ Class 3A qualifier.

That left junior Avery Rump as the only qualifying Lady Hound to make the trip. Rump’s 19:44.31 was good enough for 11th overall.

With Pella, Winterset, and Washington taking 21 of the top 25 runners, only four other runners qualified for the trip.

That left Jordyn Marshall (18th), Addison Rump (19th), and Mara Smith (21) out of the state meet. Marshall ran a 20:27.42, Rump ran a 20:32.90, and Smith finished at 20:35.29.

Fort Madison also got good efforts from Ellie Hellman, 21:32.91, McKayla Schinstock 23:23.04 (53rd), and Ellie Huebner 23:37.56 (58th).

Smith and Washington’s Kendall Hinrichsen battled all the way to the finish line with Hinrichsen edging the Fort Madison junior by .05 seconds.

Avery Rump said she was really disappointed that she won’t have her teammates next to her again next Friday.

“Mostly you think about being the best you can be and maybe getting a couple girls because I don’t know what’s going on behind me or in front of me either,” she said.

“But I’m really disappointed that the team didn’t get to qualify because they’ve been right next to me this season. If no one else makes it with me, it will be really weird not going to the line with anyone because I’ve always had someone.”

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2024 – A Year in Review: September – December

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