

"Making the residents' safety our first priority"

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

"Providing the best quality care for our residents" has always been the trademark of Colonial Manor. A statement such as this is easy to make, but the actions of the administration and staff at Colonial Manor during the recent flooding shows that they do more than just make the statement, they practice it.

Administrator Rich Kirschling said that he was alerted by city officials on the Saturday morning of the flood of potential problems that might develop with the city's water system. Kirschling took into consideration four factors regarding the water status: availability of water for drinking and cooking, water for fire protection, availability of water for bathing and cleaning, and water for proper function of the facilities' sewer system. "I felt that there would be adequate bottled water available for drinking and cooking," said Kirschling, "but I had serious concerns about the other three factors." The Manor uses over 165,000 gallons of water a month, so bringing water to the facility through a portable system was not feasible.

"The city did a wonderful job of keeping us updated on the situation," said Kirschling, "but eventually we had to make the call. I met with our staff, and we decided that moving the residents to another facility until the water situation was taken care of was the most prudent move we could make to ensure that our residents would remain safe and properly cared for." Shortly after the decision was made and the proper authorities informed, Kirschling heard from Washington Mayor Rick Cicalo that room was available at the Washington Care Center for the Manor's residents, and transportation could be provided by the Washington Minibus system.

Kirschling was then contacted by Marty Wills, Washington Care Center's administrator, and was told that they were making their facility ready for the residents. That's when the Manor staff went into action. Lifts, medical supplies, medicine, clothes, and other necessary items for all thirty-seven residents had to be organized and ready for transportation, as well as explaining to the resi-



A welcome home party for the residents of Colonial Manor after their "Summer Camp"

dents what was happening. "We said it was summer camp," said Kirschling, "and all of the residents made the best of it." Eight buses were sent, and the total move only took 2 1/2 hours. "It was the smoothest evacuation I have ever witnessed," said Kirschling, "and the credit goes to our dedicated staff, and also the staff's family members. Many of them came in with their spouses and helped in the evacuation. This understanding by family members was very important in helping us accomplish such a major undertaking."

The residents were all placed in the west wing of the Washington Care Center, which allowed them to remain together and receive care from the Manor staff. "This arrangement allowed our residents to continue to receive the quality care from our staff that they have become accustomed to," said Director of Support Services Molly Bausch, "and also allowed us to continue with daily activities for

our residents."

But once the residents were safely located in Washington, the job wasn't done. The Manor facility needed to be looked after, so Kirschling and his wife moved in. "It became our 40 room and 40 bathroom mansion," said Kirschling, "and Ginny and I made the best of it." An interesting side note was that, since the Manor is never locked from the outside, a key needed to be found. "The staff always locks the doors from the inside at night," said Kirschling, "so we had to do a little hustling to find an outside key when we left the Manor to transport the residents."

"This never could have been accomplished with such little disruption without the cooperation of so many people," said Kirschling. "I can't say enough for the work of our staff, many of them had to drive 3 1/2 hours to get here because of the road closings, and some of them even were experiencing flood damage to their

homes, but they still came. Also, we can't say enough to express our appreciation to the Washington Care Center. Like all businesses, Marty and I may be competitors, but competition never enters the picture when it comes to the care of our residents."

The residents are now all back in their familiar surroundings at Colonial Manor and everything has returned to normal, but with a difference. This difference is a heightened sense of comfort that everyone in the community can take in knowing that when their loved ones or friends become residents at Colonial Manor, they can be assured that their care and safety will always be protected regardless of the situation or crisis. The unselfish actions of the staff at Colonial Manor two weeks ago underscores the fact that "Providing the best quality care for our residents" is more than a statement at Colonial Manor, it is a way of life.

A Letter from the Mayor

The last three weeks have been difficult times and defining times for the Columbus Community and the entire area. There is much to be thankful for and many thoughts as I look back on this experience.

First and foremost, the spirit of this community has never been stronger. I want to thank everyone for their volunteer efforts. These efforts are demonstrated in many ways but all played a significant role for our community and its safety. The manner in which so many people "stepped up" is truly admirable and the pages and pages of volunteers we signed in will make a lengthy book.

To all of you who helped sandbag, build levees, drive trucks, operate equipment, donate equipment, deliver water and food, prepare and donate food, serve food, and help in any of countless ways, thank you. Many of you accepted leadership roles to help organize and execute needed tasks, thank you. We are fortunate to have contractors and business people with equipment and expertise, thank you. Thanks to Aaron and the Econ-O-Mart for donating so much food and drink and thinking of all the volunteers while you had much to do yourselves. Thanks also to Casey's and Subway and any others who donated even while busy saving their own supplies. We have many good corporate citizens and friends who worked with us.

We owe a special "thank you" from the entire community to Tyson for all their help. The willingness and assistance in hooking us up to wells for city water was invaluable. Our interruptions of water service were held to a minimum. We know how much a shower and a flush can mean.

Local and area churches played a major role in helping people who were displaced and caring for individual needs during this time, thank you.

I want to give a special thanks to Rich, Dan, Matt and the staff at the school. Opening your resources to the community and providing housing for the National Guard, water distribution, food preparation and delivery, and the use of the school communications system were all essential to our efforts.

Our community has a volunteer fire department that is second to none. They are skilled and willing to assist us in many ways. I called on them continually for help and they always answered the call. Thanks to Todd and all the firemen for everything you have done to help. You played many different roles in this event and you played them all very well.

Obviously, we are very thankful for the help from the National Guard. Their help with security, traffic control, and everything else we asked of you was greatly appreciated.

Finally, I want to personally thank each of the city council members and the city staff for their leadership and tireless effort you gave and continue to give each day. I can assure everyone that you have good people working for you in your police department, public works department, and city hall. I could go on and on with the thank you list and the stories of what I witnessed during this time, but time and space are limited and there are a couple other topics I want to address.

The amount of media attention and political visits to Columbus Junction has been a little overwhelming at times, and I know many of you are asking why we received so much of this coverage, especially at the national level. I believe I can answer that question for you. Governor Culver, General Darden (National Guard) and others from the State of Iowa first visited Columbus Junction when we were building levees and filling sandbags as we worked to protect our community. They toured the area, looking at our levees, the preparation, the volunteer work, and the planning. The Governor and the General both told me they had not seen any community, regardless of the size, that was better prepared, had a better coordinated volunteer effort, and had the spirit of cooperation that they witnessed here. They thought we were the one community that had a chance to "beat" this wall of water coming at us. This sentiment was echoed by other political leaders who visited us and by state emergency management coordinators. The Columbus Community had people all over the state and particularly within state government cheering for us.

It is very important for all of you to know that the sandbagging and levee efforts were not in vain. We did not get "beat" or lose. We did not win all the battles we wanted to win but we were successful on many counts. Our levees helped buy some time for businesses and organizations to move their equipment and inventories. Medical records, dental equipment, and much more were saved. Our levees helped us in recovery as we pumped water out of the flooded area and over the levees so people could re-enter to make initial assessments. Our levees and sandbags helped us save our water plant and treatment facility from contamination and our "down time" was minimal. Our levees and sandbags helped minimize the damage to many buildings as we reduced the flow and the time the water was in the buildings. These are all important successes.

Now we focus on clean-up and recovery. We will still need your help. Our businesses are making plans for rebuilding and most are committed to the same locations and to being better than ever. The attitude and spirit of those directly damaged by the flood waters is as positive as the attitude of the volunteers and entire community. However, they have suffered a great economic loss and will need your "business" in the future. Even those businesses who were not directly damaged still feel the indirect economic loss. It will be very important for us all to concentrate on helping this business recovery. Buy local has a whole new meaning for us. We want to keep all these businesses here and revitalize the economy of the area.

Finally, we learn a great deal about our community from a time such as this. Or at least we reaffirm things we knew but took for granted. We know we have great friends in the area. Cities, churches, businesses, and individuals from surrounding communities were here working with us. We learned the Code Red system works and is a valuable tool. We also learned the school information system is a real asset for the community. We confirmed that the Civic Center was a good investment for this community and we learned just how valuable a resource it can be. Finally, we learned again how great this community is. It is a caring, volunteering, unselfish, and resilient community and truly is "a small community with a big heart." Thanks again to all of you. Mayor Dan Wilson

Briefly -

Benefit for Charlie Burroughs

Letts Poker Run Benefit for Letts Fireman Charlie Burroughs (injured in a motorcycle accident 5/18/08) July 5th. Sign up at the Letts Fire Station 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Last one out at 1:00 in by 5:00 PM. There will be 50/50, food, fun and raffles. Want to join the fun of the Poker Run but rather not drive? Join us on the Farmers Bus Leaving Letts at 1:00. Join us afterwards for an evening of fun at the Letts Street Dance! Letts will hold their annual Street Dance Saturday, July 5th at 6:00 PM to Midnight. Come join the fun with the Lynn Allen Band. Must be 21 years old. Sponsored by the Farmers Bar & Grill. For more information call Steve Barnes at 563-299-9856.

Alumni Banquet options sought

The Columbus Alumni Committee appreciates your understanding of the postponement of the Alumni Banquet due to the flood emergency. Possible alternatives for this year are: 1) to reschedule in July, 2) to cancel for this year and refund ticket money, or 3) to cancel for this year and present the ticket money to the Presbyterian Women, who had made some preparations. If you want your opinion heard, call Jerry Bell or Jim Howell.

Hand Bell concert at Historical Society

WAPELLO, Iowa - Guest artist, handbell soloist Kristine Stout of The Joybell Theater and Gift Shop in Nashville, Ind., will provide a special concert titled Joy Un-Speak-a-Bell at 7 p.m. Friday, July 18, at the Louisa County Historical Society, 609 James L. Hodges Ave. (US Highway 61), Wapello. Stout plays three octaves (37 bells) of English hand bells. Those attending are urged to be prepared to smile and be amazed at Stout's artistry and grace. Her music creates a one of a kind evening of inspiration and joy. To learn more about Kristine Stout, go to www.joybelltheater.com. Tickets are \$5 at the door. Proceeds from the concert will support the Louisa County Historical Society.

Hy-Vee Pharmacy and Louisa Vet Clinic to open

Notice to HyVee Pharmacy Customers: We will be OPEN July 7th at our temporary location in the Iowa Telecom building at 326 Hilltop Road, Columbus Junction. Thank you for your patience.

Notice to Louisa County Veterinary Clinic Customers: Starting Monday, July 7th we will be working out of the back of the Clinic.

Senior Farmers' Market coupons

Senior Farmer's Market coupons will be available for distribution to eligible seniors beginning June 30, 2008, from 10-11:30 a.m., at the City Hall in Columbus City, Iowa. Eligibility Requirements: Age 60 or older; Louisa County resident; Income limits - \$19,240 or less for an individual, \$25,900 or less for a couple. If an eligible couple, each receives a booklet of coupons and each booklet contains \$28 worth of coupons redeemable at authorized farmer's market locations. Coupons available on a first come, first serve basis until supply is exhausted. Coupon distribution is a service of Southeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging, Inc., in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture.

Senior Meal program relocated to Columbus City Hall

Columbus City, Iowa, has generously offered the use of their City Hall at 2703 Columbus Street as a temporary location for our Senior Meal Program. This nutritionally balanced midday meal is for persons age 60 or older and will be served at 12 noon beginning July 7, 2008. Contributions are accepted from age eligible seniors. All others must pay the full posted cost of \$8.45. The "suggested" contribution range for meals consumed by elders is \$3.50-\$8.45. A 24-hour advance reservation is required and can be made by calling Barbara Spurling at 728-2412 no later than 12:30 p.m., on the day prior to the day you wish to eat. For Monday service, the deadline is 12:30 p.m., on the Friday before.

Legion Auxiliary to meet

The American Legion Auxiliary will meet Tuesday evening, July 8, at 7 o'clock. There will be installation of new officers. There will be a special program that you will not want to miss. Elizabeth Miller will be the hostess.

CCHS Class of 1993 plans reunion

The CCHS Class of 1993 will be celebrating their 15-year reunion on August 16th in Columbus Junction. If you are a classmate or a friend/relative of a 1993 graduate, please contact Jennifer (Eutsler) Buchanan at classof1993cchs@yahoo.com or 507-388-4332. We would like to contact as many classmates as possible to join us in celebrating the upcoming reunion.

Library to observe 60th Anniversary

The Columbus Junction Public Library will observe its 60th Anniversary with an Open House Thursday, July 17 from 3-6 P.M. Please join the Staff, Board, and Friends of the Library to celebrate this milestone.

Wyman School Reunion

The Annual Reunion and get-together for all former Wyman School students and teachers will be held July 12, 2008. The school was started in 1912 when 3 one-room school buildings were moved into town. Classes continued there until the school was closed in 1978. The Reunion and Banquet will be at the United Church of Crawfordsville, doors open at 5:30 P.M.; Banquet and entertainment at 6:30. For more information or to make reservations please call Lorraine Frame at 319-257-3401 or John Wittrig at 319-257-3377.

Shellbark Club supper trip

Shellbark Club will be going to Kalona for supper July 10th at 6 p.m. Everyone will meet at Ainsworth Corners at 5 p.m., to car pool.

Local banks announce holiday hours

The Community Bank and Columbus Junction State Bank will be closed on Friday, July 4th. Both banks will resume normal Saturday banking hours on Saturday, July 5th.