

A proud family in a time of need

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

It has come to the paper's attention that there is a young family in town that needs our help. There is a courageous story, but there is no reason that they need to be undertaking this situation alone. Here's the story, as I know it.

The family is a typical family, a Father and a Mother, three sons, ages 18, 14 and 3, and a 5 year old girl in kindergarten. But this is where the typical portion ends. The mother has been battling cancer for some time, and has recently been told that the treatments are not effective, and she will be returning home. Her condition is now very weak, and the outlook is dire.

When the young mother's condition worsened, the father was forced to give up his job to care for her. At that point the 18-year old son took a job to provide for the family's finances. The 14 year-old son undertook his mother's responsibilities. He is cooking for the family and caring for his two younger siblings. He is the one who helps his younger sister get ready for school, and sees her to the bus.

The family has no other relatives in the area. They are too proud to ask for assistance, and insist that they are getting along. Donna and I went to their home last Sunday, and visited with the 14 year-old son. We took some basic items for the family, things that a family would need in their day-to-day lives such as laundry soap, garbage bags etc. The young man was appreciative, but when we asked him if there were any other things they needed, he declined saying that they had what they needed.

So maybe we should have just left the issue there, and went on about our lives. But Donna and I couldn't. When I looked into the young man's eyes, I could see a sadness that someone of his age should never have to experience. His younger siblings were playing, like all kids do, but their play was mixed with a sense of nervousness. He told us that his Father was upstairs resting. He was probably trying to catch a bit of sleep after spending a night with his wife in the hospital. We didn't see the 18 year-old son, but I would guess he was also resting up for another work week.

Folks, these are just kids, all of them. They are facing an issue that is heart breaking, but they are dealing with it in a maturity that is well beyond their years. They have not asked anyone for anything, and they have come together as a family to provide for each other. But there is only so much that they can do alone. Their expenses have to be very high: daily trips to and from Iowa City, medical costs, meals eaten on the road, and they are trying to pay for these with one income provided by an 18 year-old son.

The father has remained stoic throughout this ordeal, but the burden on him has to be suffocating. Not only does he have to suffer through his own emotional roller coaster, but he must also be alert to his children's emotional stability. This can be overwhelming when one also tosses in what may appear to be unsolvable financial issues.

I remembered when I was in a similar situation twenty years ago, but I was blessed with supportive family both here and in Emmetsburg, and with a very supportive and understanding employer. I never had to face alone what this family is facing.

So here's where we can come in. These individuals are members of our community family, they are good productive people, and this is the type of family that we brag about when we talk about the Columbus Community. Although they may not be asking for help, they need ours help. Anything that you can do would be wonderful, and you can do it in a couple of ways. If you want to give something directly to the family, contact the school, as they will know who I am referring to, and may be able to inform you of any items that they might need. If you feel you would be able to help with a direct financial contribution, you can leave your gift at either bank. They have been alerted to this situation, and will be prepared to direct it to the family.

I know that we are asked to give to many causes, and they are all good causes. But the look I saw in the eyes of that young man on Sunday convinced me that this is one of those strong, self-reliant families that have made this community such a great place to live. This family is one of our own, and they need our help.

Thank you for anything that you may be able to do to help.

Briefly -

Alumni Banquet scheduled

The annual Columbus Schools Alumni Banquet will once again be held the second Saturday in June. The location is Roundy Elementary School for the meal and program. The United Presbyterian Women will provide the banquet meal. Make sure this event gets on your summer calendar!

Music Boosters in need of overnight host families

On Friday, April 8, the Columbus Community Music Department will be hosting musicians from Luther College's Jazz Orchestra. The musicians will be interacting with CCHS students in the afternoon and then performing in a free-will offering show at 7:30 p.m. in the school auditorium. Following the performance the musicians will need housing for groups of 2, 3, and 4 male students overnight. If you are interested in showing these students our Columbus Spirit please contact Music Booster members Kim Carson at 319-212-0580 or carski1282@hotmail.com or Donna Wittmann at 319-728-7705.

City Council meets tonight

City of Columbus Junction will meet today, March 23, 2011 at 5:30 p.m. at the New Civic Center / City Hall for its regular meeting.

Colonial Estates to host luncheon

Colonial Estates Assisted Living will be hosting a Taste of Italy Luncheon at noon on Friday, April 1st. Martin Brothers will provide a wonderful meal with drinks and dessert at no charge. Please contact Sarah at 1-319-728-2276 to R.S.V.P. by Monday, March 28th.

Cultural Awareness seminar

A CULTURAL AWARENESS AND ACTION SEMINAR Sponsored by Charter for Racial Justice Committee of the United Methodist Women on Saturday, MARCH 26, 2011, at Columbus Junction UMC, 517 - 2nd Street, Columbus Junction, IA. Registration and meal \$6.00 - contact Marsha Gerot 319-726-6722.

Day of the Child in Burlington

My Future is Green! The 23rd Annual Day of the Child event at Westland Mall, West Burlington, will be held on Sunday, March 27, 2011 from 12-4 p.m. Sponsored by Community Action of Southeast Iowa. This free, no pressure event gives families time to engage in a variety of activities with their children. Over 400 children attend this event with their families each year. Children have the opportunity to play, do art or craft projects, build with blocks, listen to stories and have fun! Adults gain awareness of the services and support systems that exist in our community.

FFA to hold Blood Drive

The Columbus FFA will be sponsoring their annual blood drive on Monday, April 4th from 1:30-6:30 p.m. at the American Legion. If you are 16, you must have a parent permission form filled out, which can be picked up in the high school office. Last day of donation must be on or before February 7, 2011. If you are interested in signing up for a time to donate, please call Katie McWhirter at 319-728-2231 x 3621 or email katie.mcwhirter@columbuscsd.org.

FFA to hold Consignment Auction

The Columbus FFA will be having their 2nd Annual Consignment Auction on Saturday, April 2nd at 10:00 a.m. at the old Sajak's building on Highway 92. Unloading/Check-in times for consignments will be available soon. For more information, visit www.mcwhirterauctionco.com.

Visual Support Group to meet

The next meeting of the Louisa County Visual Support Group will be on Thursday, April 14th at Corner Market. For more information contact Lois Richers at 319-527-2630.

"Minute To Win It" contest

There will be a "Minute To Win It" contest - Columbus style - next Friday night March 25, 2011 beginning at 7 p.m. We would like adult teams to enter also. Teams consist of 3 or 4 team members. Cost is \$20 per team. Prizes for top 3 teams. Each team will play at least 4 "Minute To Win It" games. Spectator admission will be \$1.00. Entry deadline is Thursday March 24th at NOON. Entry forms can be picked up at the school and from Las Vegas. We need a minimum of 12 teams to have it.

Breakfast at Ainsworth Opera House

Ainsworth Community Center/Opera House will hold their monthly breakfast on Saturday, April 2nd. Time will be from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. at 284 Railroad Street. Cost is \$7 a person, 10 and under free with adult. The menu includes biscuits and gravy, ham, sausage, scrambled eggs, hash browns, fresh fruit, sweet rolls and a little April foolishness are on the menu. This is a monthly fundraiser for the Opera House. Hope to see you there. We do appreciate support from the community.

Pack 54 Pancake Supper

An all-you-can-eat Pancake Supper will take place on Monday, March 28, 2011, from 5-8 p.m. at the L-M Elementary School. The menu includes pancakes, scrambled eggs, whole hog sausage, coffee, milk and orange juice. 7th Grade through Adults - \$6.00, Grades K-6 and Seniors - \$4.00, Pre-School - free. Tickets can be purchased from any Cub Scout of Pack 54. Tickets can also be purchased by calling Mary Ann at 563-263-8886 or Karen at 319-726-4515, or tickets can be purchased at the door.

Shooting Star 4-H Club to hold "Breakfast for Supper" meal

On Sunday, April 3, 2011, the Shooting Stars 4-H Club will be hosting a "Breakfast for Supper" meal at 6 p.m. for the entire congregation of the Pleasant Grove Community Church, as a way of thanking them for the use of its facilities throughout the year. Also, the families of the Shooting Stars members are invited to attend the supper. Please mark the date on your calendar and plan to attend!

Governor and Lt. Governor bring "Jobs Tour" to town

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

Governor Terry Branstad and Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds were in town last week to unveil their "Jobs for Iowa Plan." Governor Branstad stated that although agriculture is strong, these remain challenging times in Iowa's unemployed number is at 100,000.

Along with this high unemployment number, Iowa's population growth is the 10th slowest in the nation. With this slow growth, Iowa will be one of only 10 states in the nation to lose congressional seats as a result of the 2010 Census.

The Governor's and Lt. Governor's plan calls for a public-private partnership to spur economic progress and develop a more customer service attitude among economic development professionals. It is thought that this can eliminate many of the unnecessary hurdles that potential employers must cross in job development.

The plan will also eliminate the current number of incentive programs with a more focused set of stimuli that will provide maximum flexibility for potential employers interested in Iowa.

The plan will develop a public authority to assume many of the activities currently being performed by the Iowa Department of Economic Development. Also, a private 501c3 non-profit organization will be created to house the Iowa Innovation Council to allow Iowa to better compete in the global business economy.



Columbus Junction Mayor introduces Governor Terry Branstad and Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds at the Governor's "Jobs For Iowa" tour last Friday.

The private entity will eventually house on-going marketing and tourism activities.

Governor Branstad has also offered legislation to reduce Iowa's 2nd highest in the nation commercial property tax by 40% over a five year

period. He has also offered legislation to lower the top corporate income tax rate to 6%. To fund this he has offered legislation to raise the top tax rate on casinos to 36% from the current 22%.

The Governor and Lt. Governor

said that they are urging the legislature to set aside partisan differences to help attack this job loss. "We cannot handle 21st century problems with 20th century tools," said Branstad, "200,000 new jobs isn't just a goal, it is a necessity."

School Board hears parents' response to reading emphasis

By Jim Rudisill

Columbus elementary students are losing interest in school and becoming bored because of the emphasis this year on reading and writing, a group of teachers and parents told the school board during its regular March 21 meeting. High school English teacher Wendy Watson told the board its decision last year to focus on math and reading in an effort to boost achievement scores could eventually be counterproductive.

Under the reading program, science and social studies are still taught by elementary teachers, but through a reading emphasis and not as individual courses. The board decided to focus on reading last year after low scores landed the district on the federal School In Need of Assistance list.

However, Watson and several parents who attended the meeting said by focusing so much on reading, the district was eliminating the hands-on instruction that sparked interest in school and learning. "We definitely need to do something about reading and writing, but I think we can do both. We have to look at what is best for kids," Watson said.

The parents agreed and said the current system that includes 60 minutes of writing and 30 minutes of oral language each day was not developing the right attitude in students.

"Reading is important, but you have to instill a love of learning," one parent said, explaining her child, who used to enjoy coming to school, was now going in the other direction.

"It's hard to send him to school when he hates it," she said.

Watson and the parents emphasized they were not blaming teachers or others for the attitudes they see students developing, only the procedures the district was implementing. Watson however said there was a simple solution to the problem.

She suggested taking 45 minutes a day from writing and oral language and re-introduce science and social studies back into the daily instruction.

Another parent also suggested adding a science and social studies grade back on students' report cards. She said many parents are confused about those courses because there are no letter grades for them on the report cards. "It looks like you aren't teaching them," she said.

Board president Marsha Gerot

thanked Watson and the parents for attending the meeting and sharing their concerns, but there was no commitment made by the board to make any teaching adjustments.

While student scores on achievement tests contributed to the adoption of the elementary reading emphasis, a discussion on using more test scores to develop other instruction procedures generated some disagreement between board members.

Gerot said the scores of individual students, coded to prevent specific identification, should be provided to board members so they could determine if students were achieving grade level and not just growth from one year to another. "Our goal is to get everyone to grade level," she said.

Gerot said a recent trip to Storm Lake helped convince her the board needed to have the information. "Storm Lake had scores as a database that could be shared," she said.

Several board members however were not convinced they needed to use individual scores. "We can't be there everyday looking over (teachers') shoulders. We have to trust someone," Polly Prior said.

"I think the (latest test scores)