

## FEMA helps replenish area government coffers

By John Carpenter  
Gazette Staff

There are generally three steps in overcoming a disaster: cleaning up the damage; assessing and repairing the damage; and figuring out how to pay for the damage. Two of those steps have been completed at many locations in the community, and now the third step is beginning to be solved, at least for many area government agencies.

The Columbus Benefited Fire District is a very good example of how these steps were taken. The fire station served as the command center during the early stages of the flood preparation activity. A good deal of activity was centered at the station, but as the flood became eminent, the command center was moved to higher ground at the American Legion. And as we all remember, the flood waters came into the station.

After the waters receded, the volunteer firemen undertook the difficult task of cleaning up. The station was built with the thought that it might flood, so a number of precautions were taken during construction. All sheet rock was installed horizontally so only the lowest layer had to be removed. Where possible, electrical installations were elevated. The lining in the bay area was screwed in so it could be removed, cleaned, and reinstalled.

Many hours of volunteer labor from the firemen helped alleviate some of the clean-up cost, but a considerable amount of damage still existed. The floor was destroyed, all of the interior doors held water, so they had to be replaced. The counters in the kitchen area were destroyed. All insulation had to be replaced. Mildew had to be removed and disinfectant applied. The total cost of the renovation, excluding the



View of the newly restored kitchen area in the fire station

firemen's labor, was in the area of \$85,000.00.

Fortunately the Fire District had the funds available to cover this cost, however these funds were being held in reserve for a new truck. It appeared that either the truck purchase would have to be delayed, or the District would need to take on more debt than was anticipated for the new truck purchase.

But last week the District received a check from FEMA for \$75,000 to help defray these expenses. This check, along with a Jump Start Iowa check for \$7,500 that was received earlier, has allowed the District to replenish their reserve ac-

count.

A very similar situation is occurring with the City. City officials are still assessing their costs, but have received in excess of \$200,000 from FEMA. A meeting is scheduled for this week with FEMA to complete and discuss additional project worksheets for the city. "I am confident that we will recover nearly all of the expenses that we incurred during the flood," said Mayor Dan Wilson.

In addition to the Columbus Community, FEMA has been very active in other areas of the county. \$3,540,000 has been paid by FEMA to local government bodies for other

expenses. These projects include levee repair, drainage districts, and secondary roads. Homeowners have also received FEMA funds. As of December 20th, FEMA officials state that \$5,707,000 has been sent or set aside for homeowners to repair their homes, help in rent payments, and replacement of furniture and appliances.

The effect of the 2008 flood will be felt for many years in Louisa County, but fortunately the government, through FEMA, has helped to alleviate some of the recovery costs. The Gazette will continue to update our readers on further recovery stories as they are received.

## 2008 Year in Review

By Deb Bean

**January 2, 2008:** 2007 sets record weather in Iowa. 2007 was the 4<sup>th</sup> wettest year in the 135 years that records exist.

Presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton made an unscheduled stop in Muscatine. Alia Lawrence, daughter of Ron and Carmen Lawrence of Columbus Junction was able to meet the former first lady along with Alia's grandparents, Bill and Myrna Larkin of Muscatine.

Tom Huston was pictured sitting in his office at the Columbus Junction State Bank. Huston celebrated 50 years of service to the Bank and our community.

The local Royal Neighbors of America recently presented local resident Lisa Reynolds with a check to help her with medical expenses following her recovery from a recent heart transplant.

**January 9, 2008:** January thaw created problems for the Columbus Gazette. Three inches of water was on the basement floor. Luckily nothing was lost that couldn't be replaced.

**January 16, 2008:** Thirty-three area organizations were the beneficiaries of Community Foundation grant awards. A presentation ceremony was held at the Louisa County Heritage Center. In their third year of awards, the Community Foundation presented checks totaling \$58,200.00.

Work began on a temporary home for a new health clinic. A modular clinic will be installed on property adjacent to the Colonel's Kids Child Care Center.

**January 23, 2008:** Colonel's Kids Child Care Center received word that their facility has received a 4 Star Rating in their recent Quality Rating System Evaluation. The center received a certificate of recognition from the Iowa State House of Representatives.

Roundy After School Program a BIG Success. The after school program Clues Club started at Roundy last year is going strong this year with child participation more than doubled for the club.

**January 30, 2008:** Columbus City to use Community Foundation grant to purchase emergency genera-

tor. The Community Foundation of Louisa County awarded the city of Columbus City \$3000 to go towards a new generator for their Emergency Shelter Program at the new city hall.

Columbus 6<sup>th</sup> graders fill Ruben's Wish List. Last year we told you of Ruben Zuniga's first travel to Guatemala with a group of Doctors and Nurses from the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics called, "The Iowa Miles of Smiles Team." Ruben is planning his second trip with the team. This year he made up a Wish List and with the help of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students the list was filled. Along with the supplies on his list they also collected \$354 in monetary donations.

Work has begun to prepare the temporary site for the new Community Health Center of Southeastern Iowa, Inc. (CHC/SEIA) Louisa County Community Health Center in Columbus Junction.

Fire Department receives Wal-Mart grant. Mt. Pleasant Distribution Center associates presented the Columbus Junction Fire and Rescue with a \$1,000 grant on January 23, 2008. The fire department plans on using the funds to help purchase hand held radios for the fire fighters.

**February 6, 2008-**Valentine's Day 2006 was revisited by John Carpenter. On February 14, 2006 the ribbon was cut opening the doors of our new Civic Center to the public. The facility has become home to a number of institutions in town, and also has served numerous organizations. With its potential of four meeting rooms, some type of meeting or event is scheduled in the building nearly every day.

The Columbus Youth League coaches have established a memorial fund in honor of Cody and Tanner Ray.

Habitat for Humanity elected new officers at their January meeting. New officers for 2008 are: President-Ruth Yakle, Vice-President-Trish Woepking, Secretary-Jack Reif, and Treasurer-Bob Buckman.

**February 13, 2008-**Weather only a duck can appreciate. Kay Huston took a picture of the ducks enjoying Huston's Pond during the severe weather.

The winter of 2007-2008 is one

that we will be telling our grandkids about for years to come. Our area experienced some type of storm during every weekend in December. January continued with much of the same, more snow and bitter cold. Now February seems to be following a similar pattern. A 4-inch snowfall a week ago Sunday afternoon and continued through the night and then turned into a thunderstorm by Monday morning.

C.W.O. selects 2008 Prince and Princess of Hearts. The Prince chosen was Bryce Grimm and the Princess was Emma Lamp.

**February 20, 2008-**City feels effect of difficult winter. Flooding through another stormy weekend in the winter of 2007-2008, city crews and supplies have been pushed to extremes. The community again experienced a dangerous winter storm this past weekend with a combination of rain, ice, snow and the extreme cold.

School Board to institute "Distinguished Graduate Program."

Civic Society receives \$1,500 Community Foundation Grant. The Community Foundation of Louisa County (CFLC) awarded the Civic Society of Columbus \$1500 for multicultural outreach and the Hispanic Cultural Festival \$1800 for their event.

**February 27, 2008-**Gazette unveils new Web Site. Today the Gazette is proud to announce that it has moved into the electronic age. From now on you will be able to go to your computer and type in [www.thecolumbusgazette.com](http://www.thecolumbusgazette.com) and enter the Gazette's new website. We wanted to put something out there in cyberspace that would provide value to our site visitors, as well as assuring potential advertisers that our site would be visited.

March Winds Blow to reappear. The 40<sup>th</sup> production of the annual variety show March Winds Blow will be presented Friday, February 29<sup>th</sup> and Saturday March 1<sup>st</sup> in the Columbus Community auditorium.

Columbus Junction Senior Center receives \$3,000 Foundation Grant for roof replacement. The Community Foundation of Louisa County (CFLC) awarded the Columbus Community Senior Center \$3000 to go towards replacing the roof at the Columbus Junction facility.

## Briefly -

### American Legion Christmas Party

The American Legion Auxiliary, and Sons of the American Legion have rescheduled their Christmas party, potluck and gift exchange to Tuesday, January 13. Social hour begins at 5:30, with dinner following at 6 p.m.

### Decategorization Board to meet

The Quad County Decategorization Board will meet on Monday, January 12, 2009, from 9-11 a.m., at the Burlington Chamber of Commerce, 610 N. 4<sup>th</sup>, Burlington, Iowa.

### Half Hour Club to meet

The Half Hour Club invites everyone to hear Ruben Zuniga talk about Operation Smiles on January 13 at 1:30 p.m., at the Civic Center in Columbus Junction. Hostesses are Joan Crafton and Martha Murry. Members are asked to bring one dozen cookies.

### Conservation Board seeks applicants

The Louisa County Board of Supervisors is seeking applicants for a volunteer conservation board member. The term begins January 2009 and lasts for five years. Doug Brown of Wapello, who completed eight years of service on the board in December, is seeking reappointment but anyone interested is encouraged to apply. The five-member board serves without pay and is responsible for establishing the policies and goals of the conservation board. Applications and information will be available at the Louisa County Auditor's office in the courthouse or online at [www.lccb.org](http://www.lccb.org). Completed applications should be returned to the auditor by January 19 for consideration. For more information about the conservation board, call 319-523-8381 or email [lccb@lccb.org](mailto:lccb@lccb.org).

### Amateur Radio Club to meet

The Muscatine Amateur Radio Club will meet on Monday, January 12, at 7:00 pm in the upstairs meeting room at the Musser Public Library, 304 Iowa Avenue in Muscatine. All amateur radio operators and those interested in learning more about amateur radio are invited to attend. For more information, visit [muscatinehams.org](http://muscatinehams.org).

### Shellbark Club to meet

Shellbark Club will meet at Ainsworth Corners on January 15<sup>th</sup> at 11 a.m. for brunch.

### Trivia Night in Wapello

Please join us for a night filled with competition and fun on Saturday, January 24, 2009. If you like game shows or just want to get together and have a good time try our Trivia Night sponsored by the Wapello Cemetery Association. Trivia Night will be held at the Briggs Civic Center, in Wapello at 6:00 PM. The association is trying to raise funds to improve the roads at the Wapello Cemetery by hosting this fundraiser. The Trivia Night is limited to 16 teams. Each team consists of 8 people. There is a fee per person to play. Teams of all ages make the best competitors. There will be 100 questions relating to 10 trivia categories. The team that answers the most questions correctly will win. Cash prizes will be awarded at the end of the evening. Concessions will be available throughout the evening. You must be pre-registered to play. Registration is due by January 15, 2009. For registration and cost information please call 319-523-3001 day or night, or 319-523-3170 and 319-523-3327 at night. If you have any questions about the game or the cost of entry please call any of the numbers above. Please come and join us for a night of fun.

### At the Heritage Center

Habitat for Humanity will be presenting a program at the Heritage Center in Wapello on Sunday, January 11th at 2:00 p.m.

### American Legion Fish and Chicken Fry and Ioin raffle

The American Legion will be hosting a Fish and Chickn Fry with a Ioin raffle this Saturday, January 10th at the Legion Building. Serving will be from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. The price is \$8.00

## Ruben Zuniga to speak to Half Hour Club on "Iowa Most" Giving Children Smiles

Columbus Junction's Half Hour Club invites the public to learn about "Iowa Most." This will be at the Civic Center/Library (highway 92) January 13 at 1:30 p.m. in the first floor meeting room. Ruben is a volunteer on a team of thirty nurses, surgeons and medical personnel that "travel many miles to give children smiles."

The Rotary Club 6000 of Iowa City, with their delegate, Gary Pacha, helps make these missions a success. Dr. Canady, Otolongist, is a surgeon of the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics and is the leader of the team as well as being the cheerleader of the volunteers. He is the president of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

Surgeries performed are cleft lip, cleft palate, teeth extractions, tubes in ears, fenulectomies (cutting of skin under the tongue), and also make obtractor devices.

Ruben was selected to work with the team as a sterilization technician.

He speaks from the heart about how rewarding this mission is to him. He often finds himself in tears after seeing the children being operated on and thinking how it will change their looks and their life and seeing the parents in tears of gratitude. He has traveled with the group to Guatemala in 2007, 2008, and now will be again with the group in February of 2009. He is an ESL assistant at Columbus Community School and a member of St. Joseph's Catholic Church. After his day at school, he works as a sterilization technician in an operating room at the University from 5 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. A resident, of Columbus Community for many years, he is married and a father of two daughters.

For those wanting to help, he collects new or nearly new small to medium sized stuffed animals, coloring books and crayons to carry with him to the children. Also cash is appreciated. After the presentation, the club invites all to visit with Ruben and have coffee and dessert.

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