



Your Award Winning Hometown Newspaper

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## A Passion that Evolved into a Business

By Donna Carpenter

When you think of a person filled with enthusiasm, energy, and optimism here in Columbus Junction, it's not difficult for local business owner, Sue Johnson to come to mind.

What a long and fun-filled journey it has been for Sue, who had operated Plants and Things. Several years ago, a young girl from Belmond, IA with a fashion merchandising degree, met a first year teacher on a blind date. After their marriage, he suggested that they move to his hometown of Wapello for a couple of years. That changed everything. Thirty-five years and many adventures later, Sue fondly recalls how she came to Columbus Junction.

About thirty-three years ago, her sister-in-law, Kristie Cummings, told her that there was a plant shop for sale in Columbus Junction. For Sue, who absolutely loved plants, and in fact acquired 150 of them in her home, it was a dream come true. She purchased Mary's Tropical Fish Store, which was located north of the building that houses La Hacienda. Making the decision not to sell fish, but rather, focusing on plants, it didn't take her long to realize that she needed to find out more about flowers. Although this was her God-given talent, she had no formal training in it, as she was self-taught. She loved working with plants and flowers and could look at something and recreate it. Sue set out with enthusiasm and attended many floral shows. Inspired by the creations she saw, she scaled arrangements down, as most of them were cost prohibitive.

After about three or four years,

Sue moved to her present location, knowing that it was a more visible one for her business, as well as a larger space in which to work. As she provided more plants and flowers, people began asking for other gift items.

Over the years Sue has researched the trends of the time and added them to her store, with Willow Tree being the number one seller, with Isabel Bloom following. Candles, silk flowers, jewelry, and wines are also popular gifts. She has maintained both high quality and affordable prices in a small town setting, a balancing act that she believes to be vital.

Missing numerous family events and activities over the years, Sue has given 100% loyalty to her customers, not wanting to let anyone down. Much of her business revolves around weddings and funerals, so she knows all too well that "life happens" and customers might need her on a moment's notice, consequently she's always been ready to assist the people who have counted on her.

Sue noted that Valentine's Day has been her biggest holiday, followed by Mother's Day. Relaying that this is not a one-person job, Sue spoke fondly of many of the local employees who have worked at the store, over the years, complementing their talents. Proud of the fact that she's provided both FTD and Teleflora wire services, she has had the capability of wiring flower arrangements all over the world.

While devoting endless hours to her customers and store, Sue has actively participated in Community Club, organizing both Columbus Day and Family Night, no small tasks, modestly stating that she feels like



Columbus Junction is her home and it's given so much to her.

Sue takes great pride not only in the quality of her work, but also the time she spends informing customers how to care for their plants. Her greatest joy has been to put a smile on someone's face, cheering them up, as she delivered flowers to them. (She has delivered arrangements all over Louisa County, as well as Mediapolis and Winfield). One vivid memory for Sue was making a flower arrangement shaped like a guitar for a funeral, at the family's request, as the deceased had played the guitar. Always ready for a challenge, she created a stealth bomber out of flowers, attributing her creativity to her father, whom she recalled had created things.

You may ask why Sue has made the decision to sell her extremely successful business after thirty-three years. Officially, as of June 1, Rachel Rees took over the helm, having purchased it. Both Rachel, and her mother, Diane Olson will operate the

store, maintaining the same quality and service that we've all become accustomed to. Sue knows she's leaving her "baby" in good hands and feels comfortable with the transition, as both Rachel and Diane have worked at the store for three years. Sue has also agreed to work with them any time she's needed over the next year.

So, what's the next adventure for Sue Johnson? Well, she's been assisting her husband at the Indian Hills Golf Club for the past four years, and the long hours, as well as seven day weeks, have resulted in two jobs for her. And, of course, as any grandparent understands, she and her husband, Kent, wish to spend more quality time with their grandchildren. No matter what lies ahead for Sue, you can rest assured she'll put her heart and soul into it. Congratulations and best wishes in the future, Sue. As you've stated, "Columbus Junction is my home." We'll all be glad to welcome you home any time.

## Roundy Flies Around the World

By Mary Masonholder Wilson

Passport—check; baggage—check; camera—check; flight attendants—ready; pilots and plane—in place; destination—the world; departure place—Roundy Elementary School in Columbus Junction, Iowa. Take-off time—8:45 A.M. following announcements, attendance, and expectations.

Trying to decide which country or continent to go to was a big decision on Thursday, May 30 for the Roundy Elementary Students. Teachers, or flight attendants, had been planning these trips for weeks and all the students had to do was get their passports (which they had made) and their baggage and board the next "flight".

Teachers and students chose a country or continent to research and the results of this work came to fruition when students "traveled" from room to room and thus went "around the world." Continents covered were Australia, Asia, Antarctica, South America, North America, Africa and some of the specific countries were Italy, Spain, England, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, and Canada.

Each classroom had displays, food from the country, and activities. For example, Canada was serving French toast bites with Canadian maple syrup. Also students visiting this country could play hockey. In England, students ate rice pud-

ding and then voted whether they thought the forthcoming royal baby for William and Catherine would be a boy or a girl.

Flight attendants (associates from Roundy) took their flights from country to country where teachers were dressed in costumes for their countries and ready to receive and educate each group of travelers. Also there was an assembly for the group featuring dancing done by Danza San Judas (who wore tribal costumes and told a story with their dance.), Folk Mexican Dance with flowing skirts, and finally Traditional Chin Dance and costumes. Each group was well received by the students.

One sixth-grade boy had a special meal. The fifth and sixth graders were given a reading challenge to read different genres of literature, and Coletrane Sipes was the only student in both grades to meet the challenge. He got to have lunch with city people Mallory Smith, Jared Todd, Polly Prior, and school personnel Georgina Benitez and Kari Peterson Zuniga.

At 2:45 P.M. the students boarded their return flights and returned to their classrooms. Baggage, including souvenirs, had to be claimed and preparations made for leaving. All the travelers hated to come home, but what a trip it had been! All agreed the next time a plane is leaving for one of these countries; they plan to be on it.



Traditional Chin dancers in costumes



Coletrane Sipes and Jared Todd enjoy lunch together

## Governor Branstad issues Disaster Proclamation for Louisa County

(DES MOINES) – Governor Terry E. Branstad last week issued a proclamation of disaster emergency for additional counties in response to recent storms and flooding.

Eight counties are included in this proclamation: Benton, Grundy, Johnson, **Louisa**, Lyon, Mitchell, Poweshiek and Wapello.

The Governor's proclamation allows state resources to be uti-

lized to respond to and recover from the effects of these storms, including for removal of debris and wreckage on publicly or privately owned land that may threaten public health and safety.

This proclamation of disaster emergency also activates the Iowa Individual Assistance Program in the following five counties: Grundy, Johnson, Mitchell, Poweshiek and Wapello.

The Iowa Individual Assistance Program provides grants up to \$5,000 for households with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, or a maximum

annual income of \$39,060, for a family of three.

Grants are available for home or car repairs, replacement of clothing or food, and for the expense of temporary housing. Original receipts are required for those seeking reimbursement for actual expenses related to storm recovery. The grant application and instructions are available at the "Disaster Assistance" link on the Iowa Department of Human Services website: [www.dhs.iowa.gov](http://www.dhs.iowa.gov). Applications must be received within 45 days of the date of proclamation, May 29, 2013.

The Governor issued proclamations of disaster emergency on May 28 for 13 counties: Buena Vista, Butler, Cherokee, Floyd, Ida, Iowa, Jasper, Mahaska, Marshall, Plymouth, Sioux, Tama and Wright. The Iowa Individual Assistance Program was also activated on May 28 for 11 of those counties: Buena Vista, Butler, Cherokee, Floyd, Iowa, Jasper, Marshall, Plymouth, Sioux, Tama and Wright.

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## Briefly -

### Columbus Alumni Banquet

The Columbus High School Alumni Banquet will be held on Saturday, June 8, 2013, at the Roundy Elementary School. Registration and social hour at 5:30 p.m., followed by the meal and program. Advanced tickets may be purchased at both local banks. The 50-Year Class of 1963 and the 25-Year Class of 1988 will be honored. The 50-Year Class will be touring the new school facilities at 4:00 p.m. Other alumni attending the Banquet may join the tour by meeting at 4:00 p.m. in the High School parking lot.

### Legion Auxiliary Blood Drive

The Columbus Junction American Legion Ladies Auxiliary will host a community blood drive from 1:30 pm to 6:30 pm on Monday, June 24<sup>th</sup> in the American Legion Hall located at 99 Second Street, Columbus Junction. To donate, please contact Tammy Martin at 319-212-0160. Walk-ins welcome! Donor Eligibility Criteria: Potential donors must be at least 17 years of age (16 with parental permission form available through [www.bloodcenter.org](http://www.bloodcenter.org)) and weigh more than 110 pounds. A photo I.D. or MVRBC Donor Card is required to donate. To schedule an appointment for donation, please call the Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center at (800) 747-5401. Donors who last gave blood on or before 4/29/2013 are eligible to give blood at this drive.

### Legion Auxiliary to meet

The American Legion Auxiliary will meet on Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, at the home of Verl and Earlene Lekwa. A potluck dinner is planned for 6 p.m. with a short meeting following. The meat and drink will be provided. Bring your spouse and lawn chair.

### Conesville Blood Drive

The Conesville Revitalized Fun Fest will host a community blood drive from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm on Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup> located at Conesville Community Center/City Hall, 306 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Conesville. To donate, please contact Rosa Perez at 563-272-9071. Walk-ins welcome! Donor Eligibility Criteria: Potential donors must be at least 17 years of age (16 with parental permission form available through [www.bloodcenter.org](http://www.bloodcenter.org)) and weigh more than 110 pounds. A photo I.D. or MVRBC Donor Card is required to donate. To schedule an appointment for donation, please call the Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center at (800) 747-5401. Donors who last gave blood on or before 4/13/2013 are eligible to give blood at this drive.

### Flood Reunion

Save the Date – The Columbus Firemen are scheduling a flood reunion for the community. The proposed date is set as Saturday June 15<sup>th</sup>. If you have any unique photos that you would like to share let the firemen know. More information will follow in later issues.

### Half Hour Club to meet

The Half Hour Club will meet Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m. Please meet at Weber and Huston parking lot to carpool to Grazing the Parks. Connie Lewis is in charge of the program. Meeting will follow at Main Street Gifts and Antiques after the tour. Roll Call: My Favorite Park. Hostess: Program Committee.

### Louisa County Relay for Life

The 2013 Louisa County Relay for Life will be on Saturday, June 15, 2013, at the Wapello Football Field from 5-11 p.m. Opening Ceremony begins at 6:00 p.m. We are having a birthday party to help American Cancer Society celebrate their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday! Come help us celebrate with cupcakes and beverages. Other food and drink items will be for sale. We will celebrate and honor our survivors and take time to remember those who have lost the battle. We will have a pie auction, a silent auction and many other activities. Purchase a luminaria bag to honor a cancer survivor or in memory of somebody that has lost their battle. These bags will be placed around the track and lit at dusk. What an awesome sight! Celebrate – Remember – Fight Back!

### Historical Society free Breakfast

The Louisa County Historical Society, Highway 61 in Wapello, will hold a FREE Will offering biscuit and sausage breakfast on Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup> from 7-9 a.m.

### Historical Society Tractor Ride

The Louisa County Historical Society will host its third annual Tractor Ride on June 22nd, 2013. The group will leave Wapello at 9:00 am. Lunch along the way will be furnished with a meal and drawings for prizes at the conclusion of the ride. Call Mac McGill at 729-2281, Danny Gipple at 523-8278, or Dick McCormac at 728-8818 for details and registration forms.

### Letts Fest

The City of Letts will be holding its second annual Letts Fest on June 29<sup>th</sup>. The community is looking for vendors, and participants in the parade and car show. If interested, please contact Jake Shoppa at 563-571-4561; Monica Bieri at 319-212-1613; or Joy Murphy at 319-330-6063 and 319-726-3052.

### Letts UMC Fun Days

Fun Days are being planned for students K-6 at the Letts United Methodist Church. The day will begin at 9 a.m. and end at 2. Lunch will be served. Activities, crafts, games, snacks, and music. Registration forms at the church office or call office in the a.m. M-F at 726-3641. Fun Days scheduled for June 20 and June 27 and August 1 and August 8. No fees. For questions, call Pastor Marsha Gerot at 319-725-6722.

### Rededication of Chautauqua Park

A ceremony and tree planting will be held on Saturday, June 8 at 2 pm to rededicate Chautauqua Park in Columbus Junction. The event will recognize the over 100 year history of the park as well as recent renovations that include a new bathroom, water fountains, trail and signs as well as renovated WPA installations and playground equipment. Frank Best will be the featured speaker. The event is free and open to the public, refreshments will be served.

### Annual Rees Reunion

The annual John A. Rees Reunion will be held at noon Saturday, June 15, 2013 at Marr Park west of Ainsworth. We will meet in the first shelter for a potluck meal. Officers are President Sarah Mayo, Vice-President Joel Greene, Secretary-Treasurer Sharon Rees and Web Master Richard Arthur. Drink Committee will be Kay Davis, chair, Megan Wheeler and Jeanne Davis.

### Shellbark Club to meet

Shellbark Club will meet on Thursday, June 13<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 a.m. at Jerry's in Mt. Pleasant. Please meet at Spring Run Church to carpool at 11:00 a.m.

