

Revisiting the Flood - One Year Later

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

As all of you know, this issue marks the first anniversary of the infamous flood of 2008. I've thought about various ways to celebrate this event, but have decided that a formal celebration isn't necessary, we are celebrating it every day. As I've witnessed this past year, our community doesn't dwell on adversity, we just roll up our sleeves and deal with it. Our celebration is our accomplishments.

When I look back at the past year, I've come to respect so many people. Our able city administration during the flood, the many volunteers who showed up and asked what they could do, and then the owners of the businesses and organizations that were damaged who had to deal with the rebuilding. Last week there was an article in the Des Moines Register detailing the difficulties of the communities trying to recover from the flood. A similar article appeared in last Sunday's Quad City Times. Both articles talked about the problems communities such as Cedar Rapids and Iowa City were having in obtaining government money to rebuild. What was interesting in both articles was the absence of our community. Neither article mentioned us.

At first I was upset. I felt that this was an insult to the many property owners in our community that endured tremendous expenses in rebuilding their businesses, and organizations who stuck to their mission of rebuilding. I was so upset that I called an acquaintance of mine at the Register and expressed my disappointment, and she directed me to a person that contributed to the article. The contributor's comment to me was that she hadn't heard much from Columbus Junction since the flood,



The lower business district, last year



A view of the same area, this year

so we weren't included. My response to her was that we were too busy rebuilding to have time to keep them updated.

That's when it dawned on me. We're different than many of these communities. We aren't still waiting for help to come, we went ahead and did things. We're nearly rebuilt, and we haven't asked for much assistance.

When FEMA came to town the question they asked was, "Where's the damage?" We already were busy fixing it. We couldn't wait for them. We did receive a lot of news coverage during the flood, but we never asked for it. In fact, some of the at-

tention we received was a nuisance; at times it even hampered our recovery work.

So I guess that I just need to come to the conclusion that towns like Columbus Junction, and our neighboring communities like Oakville, aren't news stories anymore since we don't have our hands out. The large news organizations are more interested in bigger communities that will probably never recover to their original condition because they are still waiting for help. We rolled up our sleeves and went to work. Not much of a story, unless you live here. And then it's a great story. We can take a tre-

mendous pride, and have our own personal celebration, every time we drive through the flood area and recall the damage we saw twelve months ago, and see today that nearly everything has returned to normal. And in many situations, even better than before.

As our headline said one year ago, this is a community of great people, and as the subsequent year has shown, great people will do great things. It's a story that will be remembered by generations of Columbus Community citizens, even if it is ignored by the larger news organizations.

Secretary of Agriculture visits community

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

"Building a 21st Century Economy," was the phrase emphasized by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack when he visited the Columbus Community last week to observe flood control and conservation projects underway. "We plan to make new investments in energy, build over 1,000,000 homes and make 130,000 home loans this year," said Vilsack, when explaining the Administration's commitment to the stimulus package.

One segment of the visit was to observe conservation work that is being undertaken in the area. Vilsack's first stop was at Chinkapin Bluffs to see the watershed area and discuss with area levee district officials and conservation representatives programs that the federal government has available. While at Chinkapin he also discussed the importance of agricultural production in the coming years. "Great opportunities are available for farmers right now," said Vilsack, "not only in the areas of food production, but also renewable energy." He explained that there has been an increase of 108,000 small farms in recent years which have annual sales of less than \$10,000. In the same period large farms, those with annual

sales of more than \$500,000 have increased by 41,000. However, in the middle range of farms, numbers have declined by 80,000. "This is the level of farmers that we are dedicated to helping with new programs and opportunities," said Vilsack. "It is urgent that we find a way to create jobs in smaller communities that will help this segment of farmers to supplement their income and survive."

He went on to explain that the emphasis is to encourage large farms to increase exports of their products to other nations, and allow the small to mid-level farms to provide for local markets. "I can envision a situation where small farmers can sell produce and other food items directly to local schools, hospitals and other institutions," explained Vilsack. He complimented small communities such as those in Louisa County in the excellent job they do utilizing land use. He pointed out the Chinkapin Bluffs area as an example.

Vilsack then visited the newly renovated Senior Center. He stressed to those in attendance the strong desire that the administration has to help improve life in small communities through grant opportunities. "Think differently about your programs when applying for grants," said Vilsack, "don't qualify yourself." He explained that funds are available for a



Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack reviews the watershed area from Chinkapin Bluffs.

wide variety of projects, ranging from emergency vehicles, to health clinics, to infrastructure and conservation needs. "We have invested \$1.5 billion dollars in Iowa so far, and plan to invest more," said Vilsack. "The President is very aware of issues small communities face, and he is dedicated to helping."

Other areas visited by the Secretary were the Colonel's Kids Day

Care Center and the Columbus Junction Fire Station. Representatives of each organization were on hand to detail the damage created by the flood and the subsequent recovery efforts. "You have a strong community with a strong local government," said Vilsack, "and your determination is what we see in small towns throughout the country. We are there to help, all you need to do is ask."

Meet the new administrator at Colonial Manor

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

Meet Roberta "Bobbie" Shirkey. Bobbie is the new administrator at Colonial Manor. Although she has just begun her duties, she has already made a positive impression on the staff of the Manor. "Bobbie is a very kind and warm person, and I'm really looking forward to working with her," said Director of Support Services, Molly Bausch.

Shirkey grew up in Washington, Iowa, where she still lives with her husband, Mike. They have three grown daughters, and four grandchildren. Mike owns and operates "Mike's Lawn Care and More" in Washington.

"I began working in long term care in 1974," said Shirkey, "and discovered that it was my calling. I

realized that there was nothing that brought me more satisfaction than working with the elderly, so I furthered my education and obtained my administrator's license in 1991." Prior to accepting the position at Colonial Manor, Shirkey was the administrator of a 118-bed facility in Davenport.

In commenting on her impressions of Colonial Manor, Shirkey said, "I was impressed with Colonial Manor from my first visit. This is one of the cleanest, most inviting and positive homes I have ever seen. All of the residents appear to be well cared for, and look very comfortable. Colonial Manor's history of positive surveys speaks for itself. When one looks at the length of service of our staff, you know that people are proud of this facility. I'm really looking



forward to being a part of Colonial Manor, and the Columbus Community." Welcome, Bobbie, we're glad to have you.

Briefly -

CCIC to meet

CCIC will meet on Tuesday, June 23, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. at the Columbus City City Hall. Dorothy will serve as hostess.

Blood checks at Econ-O-Mart

The Econ-O-Mart will be hosting blood pressure, blood sugar and SpO2 checks on Wednesday, June 24, from 9-11 a.m. This is a FREE community service sponsored by the Morning Sun Care Center. There will also be offered a Total Cholesterol Count. Free will donation will be accepted for this test to help cover the cost of the testing strips. Everyone welcome.

Fair books available

The fair books are in for the Louisa County Fair, July 27-August 1. Locations in Columbus Junction to be picked up are: Columbus Junction State Bank, Community Bank, Plants and Things, Special Effects, Columbus Gazette and City Hall.

Great Beginnings Preschool

Great Beginnings Preschool is now accepting student applications for the 2009 - 2010 school year. Great Beginnings offers quality care and education for children ages 3, 4 and 5. The school also provides transportation to and from the preschool. For more info please contact the preschool at 728-2669 or Beth Hills at 728-3157.

Community Club to meet

The Community Club will meet this Thursday at Noon at the Senior Center. Please note the change of location.

Senator Harkin to be in Wapello

Senator Harkin's office will be holding a meeting on Friday, June 26, 2009, at the Wapello Ambulance Barn at 1 p.m. The meeting will be a discussion of concerns about health care reform. It is especially important that EMTs in the county attend to express their concerns regarding the changes in certification and how it will impact providing emergency life saving interventions. It is also desired that health care providers will be able to arrange their schedules to make their voices heard.

Visual Support Group to meet

The Louisa County Visual Support Meeting will be held on Thursday, June 18th. We will meet at the Sub Station in Wapello at 1 o'clock. Alana Poage from the County Health Department will be our speaker discussing the Flu and You. Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings. Lois Richers 1-319-527-2630.

Flea Market at Senior Center

The Senior Citizen 5th Annual Giant Flea Market/Yard Sale will be held Saturday, June 20, 2009 from 8:00 AM until 2:00 PM. The event will be held in the parking lot at the Columbus Junction Senior Center. Many Groups and Families Participating! Everything from A to Z — Antiques, Collectibles, Antique Toys, Furniture, Household Items, Glassware, Tools, Fishing Equipment, Other Sporting Equipment, Clothing, Children's Items, Auto Accessories, and Books and Lots of Miscellaneous Items. SEE YOU THERE!

Shellbark Club to meet

The Shellbark Club will meet on Thursday, June 18th, at 11:30 a.m. in Wapello at Johnnie B's. Please note the change of the meeting place.

St. Jude's Fish Fry in Conesville

Conesville is hosting a fish fry and auction on Saturday, June 20, 2009, from 12:00 Noon until 4 p.m. Dinners are Adults: \$8.00; Children: \$5.00. We would like to ask everyone to give a helping hand. Please help by donating new or gently used items for the auction (No clothing please), to help support these special children. Auction items can be dropped off at Bell's Melon Shed in Conesville. For more information, or if anyone is willing to help, please call Amy or Skip Kirk at 728-8829 or Saddle Bronc at 725-6011.

Team Gene to hold car wash

The Relay for Life Louisa County Chapter - TEAM GENE is planning to do a car wash at Lynn's Hy-Way Service on June 27th from 10 am - 3 pm to raise money for this year's Relay for Life. The Relay team will be doing the car wash by donation, and they are planning to also have some other activities with it like a lemonade/kool aid stand and bake sale and possibly a raffle or giveaway of some kind. If you have any questions, please call Micah Sarver at 319-461-7177.

Farmers' Market this Friday

Fridays 4:30 to 6:30 at the American Legion parking lot, through October 9. The market offers fresh produce, baked goods, homemade noodles, jams and jellies, frozen meat, plants, iced tea and lemonade, crafts and even dog treats! Buy fresh and local - taste the difference. Support the local economy. For more information including how to participate as a vendor contact Mallory or Nitza at 319-728-7971.

Fair Queen and Princess

contestants sought

Seeking contestants for the 2009 Louisa County Fair Queen and Princess Contests. Contestant packets and information can be found on our website at www.louisacountyfairqueen.com. The contest date is Monday, July 27th. Fair Queen contestants must be at least 16 years of age and no older than 21 by August 1st. Winner receives a \$500 scholarship and a \$250 cash award along with many gifts from local sponsors. Awards will also be given to runners-up and Miss Leadership and Miss Personality. All contestants will also receive t-shirts and certificates. There is no entry fee for the Fair Queen contest. Fair Princess contestants must be at least 4 and no older than 8 by the contest date. All contestants receive tiaras, sashes and certificates. Entry fee is \$25. Winner receives a savings bond, crown and sash.

Amateur Radio Club to hold Field Day

The Muscatine Amateur Radio Club will be conducting their 2009 Field Day operations beginning Saturday, June 27 at 1:00 pm and continuing through the night until Sunday, June 28 at Noon, on the lawn of Muscatine Community College. All amateur radio operators and those interested in learning more about amateur radio are invited to participate. For more information, call 563-263-3097.