

Bonnichsens elected to 4-H Hall of Fame

By Carmen Lawrence
Gazette Staff

If you were an audience member in the grandstand at the 2010 Louisa County Fair on Monday, July 26th, then you got to witness a visibly surprised and appreciative couple walking up on stage to receive notice that they were being inducted into the State 4-H Hall of Fame for their many years of dedication to 4-H and to Louisa County. Royce and Charlotte Bonnichsen of rural Columbus Junction were shocked that evening because every member of their family managed to keep their nomination and induction a secret for weeks.

An astonished Charlotte exclaimed into the microphone, "I wondered why my kids kept telling me I needed to change my shirt." She was referring to the fact that they knew she would be in front of a large crowd that evening.

A more emotional Royce stated that he spent so many years helping their own kids through 4-H and fair time that he now is glad that he gets to help other peoples' children experience 4-H and the Louisa County Fair.

Anyone that has ever had anything to do with the Louisa County Fair can understand why the Louisa County Extension Council nominated the Bonnichsens for this prestigious award.

The couple has literally lived the 4-H Pledge, and given their heads, hearts, hands and health to 4-H nearly their entire lives.

Charlotte is a lifetime 4-H'er. She started as a child and was a nine-year member in the Live Wires Club during the 1940's in the Wyman area. In her adulthood, she was a 4-H leader for ten years with Betty Boulton for the Sparkettes 4-H Club that met at the Spring Run Church. She was also a three-year 4-H Committee member and avid fundraiser.

Ever since he has had kids, Royce has been involved somehow with 4-H. He has been a 4-H Committee Member, fundraiser, volunteer and Fair Board member. Royce spearheaded the fairground's hog barn remodeling in 1981. He helped raise \$16,000 for the chore, plus had



Pictured above are Royce and Charlotte Bonnichsen of rural Columbus Junction receiving a plaque at the 4-H Building on the Iowa State Fairgrounds on Sunday, August 22, 2010. The couple was named the 2010 inductees into the State 4-H Hall of Fame for Louisa County. The Bonnichsens have not only been very involved with 4-H, but have served Louisa County in many other capacities throughout their lives. Photo by Jill Townsley.

a crew working almost every weekend on building it. Royce has been so involved with Louisa County 4-H and the fair that in the 1970's, he was made an honorary 4-H member at a 4-H county banquet. When asked why he wasn't involved with 4-H as a child, Royce said, "I was always told we didn't have money to do foolishness." Royce grew up during the Great Depression.

Royce and Charlotte's eight children: Raymond, David, Bill, Terry, Rhonda, Dana, Penny and Tom, all were involved with 4-H. The couple would always buy the kids' animals and feed, and then the kids did all the work themselves. After fair when they sold their livestock, the kids would then get to keep all the money. One of their kids, Terry, had the

Grand Champion Market Steer (all Home Raised) four-times at the Louisa County Fair. Their son, Tom was the first-ever Grand Champion Market Steer that was actually a Market Heifer (his trophy said Steer). And their daughter, Penny managed to pay for almost all of her college plus a car with the money she earned through 4-H.

When asked what they most enjoyed about being involved with 4-H, Charlotte said she enjoyed everything she learned. She learned canning, sewing, doing demonstrations, and record keeping. She then got to pass on what she learned to her kids. Royce most enjoyed helping his kids through their 4-H career. He would help them do chores or help them lead their calves.

What they are now taking delight in is the fact that a fourth generation of their family is now in 4-H. Their great-granddaughter, Kyndal is now in a Clover Kids group in Morning Sun, and rest assured - she will be in 4-H when she gets old enough. Charlotte has also been kind enough to pass her vanilla ice cream recipe on down so the kids can win the ice cream contest at the fair.

So when Sunday, August 22, 2010 rolled around, the Bonnichsens and their entire brood were in the 4-H Building on the State Fairgrounds to receive their award. Every county had a nomination, but Louisa County definitely could argue that its inductees were the most dedicated ones in the state - or at least, had the biggest family there to cheer them on.

She didn't grow up to be Falinda, but she still sings her heart out

By Deb Bean
Gazette Staff

Ever since Aurelia Zuniga Ramirez can remember, she has been singing. "As soon as I learned to talk I was singing," says Aurelia. She recalls listening to the radio and imitating everything the singers did with their voice. She also remembers as a young girl singing Opera to the point it drove her mother, Rachel Gomez and sister, Sara nuts! She also recalls her childhood dream was to grow up and become an Opera singing Nun and change her name to Falinda. "Falinda still comes up quite often at family get togethers and believe me I still get teased about it," laughs Awie. When asked how she came to be called 'Awie' she smiles and remembers her younger days growing up with her cousin, Stephanie (Briones), "It's her fault because she could never say, 'Aurelia' so she called me, Awie and the name just kind of stuck. I still don't think she can say it seriously," laughs Awie. She admits at first she hated it, but now she feels it is who she is. Now when someone calls her Aurelia, she feels it sounds kind of weird to her.

Growing up in Columbus Junction and attending Columbus Community Schools, Awie reflects on the music teachers that helped inspire her to sing. "I remember always loving music, loved to hear the different things my voice could do. When I was in school all three music teachers I had; Mr. B, Mr. Duncan, and Mr. Haunestein, taught me how to use my talent to the best of my abilities," smiles Awie. She loved to sing and it showed. "I was a good student, aside being told quite regularly to stop talking by every single one of my teachers," laughs Awie. Music is where she excelled and truly gave 110%, receiving a perfect score at contest for her solos her junior/se-

nior year made incredible memories for her.

She joined a girls' group called, "Theta-Rho" when she was 12. They traveled all over the U.S. and would compete in competitions throughout the year. In 2003 she traveled with the group to Nova Scotia, Canada where Awie competed in the international competition and won 1st place singing, "How Do I Live" by LeAnn Rimes. In 2004 Awie competed again in the international competition in Saint Louis, Missouri and again won 1st place for her solo, "There You'll Be" by Faith Hill.

Awie works at Arthur Tax and Accounting in Columbus Junction and looks forward to going back to the Thirsty Camel once owners, Reuben and Dee Deese, get the business back and running again after a fire destroyed their business in November 2009.

"Singing was a career I never really pursued but it has stayed with me throughout the years and I've been fortunate enough to continue performing," says Awie. She has sung at many weddings, participated in Columbus Day entertainment in past years, sang the National Anthem for many different activities and events and most recently sang at a funeral for a friend's family member. Awie has been asked several times by Nick Marin to sing the National Anthem at his Mixed Martial Arts events. "I was singing in Iowa City at the Fairgrounds and was approached by Juan Partida and he asked to sing the National Anthem for a boxing event in Iowa City and while singing for them I was approached by another man who asked me to sing for the Hawkeyes sometime," sighs Awie. "Every time I sing more and more doors are opening for me and I am taking every opportunity I can get to continue doing what I love the most. I have the most incredible support system and the most amazing family and friends," smiles Awie.



Awie sings the National Anthem at Conesville's Watermelon Days

Several weeks ago Awie was contacted by Jason Stoneking (Swing First MMA) asking her to sing the National Anthem in Cedar Rapids Saturday, August 21 for a Mixed Martial Arts Show that will be televised around the U.S. to about 30 million viewers through Mediacom Connections and Fox Sports / FightZone. Awie will be standing center cage with the color guard to perform the National Anthem! "We are proud to have her join us," states one of the promoters, Clairene Stoneking by email.

"If nothing else comes of it I know that I am able to share these experiences with everyone I love, especially my four year-old son, Aidan. I love that I have been able to pass my love of music down to him and I know he will be as talented, if not more talented than his small town, mama. I thank God for every opportunity I've been given and appreciate every pat on the back and 'great job' I hear," smiles Awie.

Diversity comes with growing up in Columbus Junction. Awie admits she has really never been able to leave. Her whole family on her

mother's side is here. Even when she lived in Muscatine, she felt like it was just too far away. "I am a Zuniga, so just about every other Latino you meet in Columbus Junction is related to me in one way or another," laughs Awie. Occasionally Awie gets asked how she learned English so fast or why she speaks it so well. "It is quite funny when I say I was born in Iowa City and have never been to Mexico. Most people don't believe me but it is true," says Awie. When her mom and sister would go to Mexico, Awie would stay with her Uncle Ruben because she always seemed to have some activity, event or club thing she couldn't or didn't want to miss.

There has been a few times when Awie was accused of having no pride in her culture and been told that she is too "white". Usually when the topic comes up, all Awie has to do is say that she comes from a Tejano family and that settles the argument. The truth is her family comes from Texas. People that know Awie know how incredibly proud of whom she is and that she loves having the best of both worlds. "I carry both American and "Tex-Mex" traditions and will carry

Briefly -

City Council meets tonight

The City of Columbus Junction will hold a regular Council meeting today, Wednesday, August 25, 2010, at 5:30 p.m., in the New Civic Center/City Hall.

Lions Club schedules breakfast

The CJ Lions are once again serving breakfast (pancakes, eggs, sausage, coffee, juice and milk) on Saturday, September 5th, and Sunday, September 6th, from 7:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M., at the Columbus Junction Senior Center. All you can eat: Adults - \$6.00, and children under 12 - \$4.00. Good food from good people for a good cause (Lionism).

FFA sets informational meeting

The August Columbus FFA meeting will be held today, Wednesday, August 25th at 7:00 p.m. at Chautauqua Park. Any student in grades 9-12 wishing to learn more about the opportunities that the FFA has to offer is welcome to attend and parents are welcome and encouraged to attend as well. Following the meeting, a meal will be provided and the Columbus FFA Alumni will have a brief meeting. Anyone interested in learning more about the FFA and the Alumni are welcome to attend. If you have any questions, please contact FFA Advisor Katie McWhirter at 319-728-2231 x 3621.

Cookies plus Kids

An Informational Meeting for all Columbus Community High School Students (Parents are encouraged and welcome to attend) on Wednesday, September 15 at 6:30 p.m., at the Columbus Senior Center. Questions, please call Mike and Renea Jay at 319-530-4010 during evening hours.

Early Childhood Board to meet

The Des Moines/Louisa Early Childhood Area Board (formerly Empowerment Board) will be meeting at the First Presbyterian Church, 801 Middle Street, Mediapolis, IA, today, Wednesday, August 25, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.

Keep Columbus Beautiful meeting

It's time to get organized for fall clean up and beautification projects! The new Keep Columbus Beautiful committee invites everyone to participate in a planning meeting on Wednesday, September 1st from 5:00 to 6:00 pm at the Civic Center. For information on Keep Columbus Beautiful or to volunteer, contact Mallory at 319-728-7971 or cdc@columbusjunctioniowa.org or committee chair Jim Gabriel

Republican Fundraiser scheduled

The Louisa County Republicans will hold their annual summer fundraiser on Saturday, August 28. The fete will be held at the Briggs Civic Center, downtown Wapello. A social time will begin at 6 p.m., with a meal to be served at approximately 6:30 p.m. Featured speakers will be candidate for U.S. Congress Mariannette Miller-Meeks, and State Representative Tom Sands. Tickets are \$25 per person (\$15 for students), and are available from Louisa County Republican Central Committee members, and at the door.

County Tractor Ride set

The 6th annual Louisa County Tractor Ride will be held on Sunday, August 29, 2010, starting at the Morning Sun Elevator. Sign in will be at 8:00 a.m., and roll out will be at 9:00 a.m. The trip will be approximately 42 miles, going 10 miles-per-hour minimum. The destination is the New London Nursing and Rehab Center. Lunch, provided by Elder Implement and served by Louisa County Cattlemen's Association will also be in New London. For more information, contact Lee Harris at 868-7872, Dwight Schaper at 728-8961, or Dan Harris at 850-8188.

R.S.V.P. Club news

The R.S.V.P. Club of the Columbus Junction State Bank is hosting a day trip to see a musical concert tribute - A Closer Walk With Patsy Cline at Circa 21 Dinner Theatre in Rock Island, Illinois on Wednesday, September 15. This production shares the life history of Patsy Cline and reminds the audience of the songs that she made famous - Walkin' After Midnight, I Fall To Pieces, Crazy, and Back in Babies Arms. This is a matinee performance. We will leave Columbus Junction at 9:30 a.m. and be home by 5:30 p.m. The price is \$85 and includes the show and buffet meal with dessert. You do NOT need to be a member of the R.S.V.P. Club to go on this trip. Contact Ramona Wink by this Friday, August 27 to sign up. We need 30 to go. Home- 319-728-7041, Cell 319-212-0366, Email wink123@lisco.net. Discover the joy in traveling with a Really Special Variety of People!

Practice School crosswalk etiquette

School crosswalk etiquette: If a student is in the crosswalk, the car needs to stop. Cars have not been stopping as the students walk across to the Springer Street Arts Complex. Please be aware of pedestrians' right-of-way.

these down to my son, Aidan as well. At Thanksgiving we have a turkey and tamales," laughs Awie.

Awie says 90% of the time she is asked by Caucasians to sing for or at their event. There have only been a few Hispanic events that she has performed for. If she hasn't sang for Hispanic events it's simply because she has not been asked, not because she doesn't want to. Awie says if she was given the opportunity she would be more than happy and proud to sing at any Hispanic event. "I am very proud of who I am and I am very aware of the blood that runs through me," states Awie.

When asked if she has considered trying out for American Idol or Americas Got Talent, Awie's reply was very down to earth. It seems to me that being a single mom to a son she adores, living in a town she loves having family and friends support her as a mom and a singer is all she needs. Tryouts for American Idol are going to be held in the next month or so, it

is something that she has considered but when she stops to think about it she is not so sure that is the kind of life she would want to live, although admitting she thinks it would be fun to see how far she would go. "Who doesn't want to be famous? But then again, I absolutely love my life right now and I love being able to see my family when I want or take Aidan wherever he wants to go. I want him to have the same upbringing and childhood I had," smiles Awie

If some sort of music career were ever to come Awie's way, she knows it would be a lot of time and hard work that would go with that kind of career and that is time Awie would much rather use raising her son to the best of her abilities. "He is what is most important to me and he is my priority, everything else I can put on hold for now. At the end of the day I have no regrets and everyday I thank God for the life he has given me and the life I have been able to give my son" states Awie.