

Conesville holds a great Watermelon Days

By Deb Bean
Gazette Staff

Two weeks ago the weather was beautiful and Watermelon Days in Conesville made its sweet come back. Mayor Denny Bennett decided in 2008 not to have Watermelon Days for what he thought was a lack of interest. This year the council took a vote and decided to go ahead with plans for the Watermelon Festival. "I have to admit, I called it off last year for what I thought was lack of interest. But after seeing the crowd of people for the parade and other activities, I am very proud to have been a part of it," comments Mayor Bennett. One thing that was different this year was that before the parade, the National Anthem was sung by a young local lady, Aurelia (Awie) Ramirez, and Rick Peters announced the parade. Tim and Jackie Bell of Bell's Melons were the Grand Marshals.

"We had a good group of people that worked to carry out the festivities and they worked really hard to pull it all together", says Mayor Bennett. The committee was Herb Gartzke, Jerry Lowe, Saul Briones, Sonia Briones, Shanna Briones, Marilyn Ramirez, Doug Walker and Anna Walker.

Some interesting information I stumbled onto thanks to Helen



Aringdale from the Gazette: In 1900 a railroad car of melons cost \$50 to ship and approximately 800 railroad cars were shipped. This is the time when Clyde and Hal Wolford were

in business.

So it seems that Watermelon Days will be something this little town can look forward to for years to come. (Congratulations to everyone

who helped make Watermelon Days 2009 such a success. Celebrations such as this are what makes small towns a great place to live and raise a family.)

A man with a lifetime of friends

By Deb Bean
Gazette Staff

If you grew up in the Conesville area then you probably know Willard Solomon. Willard is a sweet and lovable man that has lived his life happy and carefree. One thing that most people may not know about Willard is his love of kids, especially getting pictures of kids. Kids that have grown up in Conesville and have gone on to graduate and get married have probably given him a senior picture or wedding picture of themselves. He cherishes every one of the pictures he receives. He'll tell you

he hangs them up on his refrigerator or carries them in his wallet.

This past weekend at Watermelon Days David and Carrie Forbes and their family were attending the parade and ran into Willard. David grew up in Conesville and is one of the kids Willard remembers. Willard, of course, was making over David and Carrie's 5 month old daughter, Bella. Carrie snapped a picture of Willard holding Bella. "He kept telling me to make sure I give him a picture of him holding the baby," says Carrie.

After Willard handed Bella back to Carrie he reached in his pocket and

pulled out his wallet and began thumbing through some pictures and handed one to David and to his surprise it was his graduation picture. "Look it here, I got you, right here," grinned Willard as he patted David on the back.

So we thought we would surprise Willard by putting his and Bella's picture in the paper for him to cut out and cherish.

Pictured is the photo Carrie Forbes took of Willard Solomon and her daughter, Bella Forbes at Conesville Watermelon Days.



City Council optimistic on grant applications

By Jim Rudisil

The potential that Columbus Junction will receive two grant awards continues to be encouraging, city officials agreed during the August 26 city council meeting. The city applied for \$600,000 in funding to upgrade the Iowa River levee late last year; and then earlier this year submitted a \$3.2 million proposal to move the city's water treatment plant. Both applications were related to efforts to mitigate future damage from flooding similar to that which hit the city last year.

Mayor Dan Wilson said he was optimistic after an August 19 meeting that the city's application to the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) for the levee upgrade would get a serious look. He said the meeting was called by the IDED to review the city's request to raise the height of the levee to 34.5 feet. During last year's flood, the Iowa River crested at about 32.5', breaking down flood protection efforts and inundating the lower east end of the community.

Wilson and other officials said the meeting brought together a variety of federal, state and local officials to discuss the proposal and gather information. "We talked our way through the need for the levee and what happened last year," Wilson said, adding a tour of the levee was conducted by the group.

Wilson said he was hopeful the opportunity to review the project would help convince the IDED to support the city's request. Council member Hal Prior said he was encouraged by the response from the officials. "I didn't hear anything negative out of the whole thing. I thought it was very positive," he said.

Council member Phil Kaalberg agreed, explaining the meeting pro-

vided an opportunity for all the officials to become familiar with the proposal. "When they see it come across their desk, they'll know what we're talking about," he said. Kaalberg said he left the meeting feeling the city had strengthened its case for the funds. "I felt really good that after the meeting there was nothing to stop us from going ahead," he said.

Wilson said around 15 officials from the Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Emergency Management Administration, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, University of Iowa and Louisa County participated in the meeting with several city officials.

Council member Mark Huston, who said he was optimistic the city would receive some assistance, said some of the officials had indicated a decision might be made within a couple of months. The city is also hopeful a request for federal assistance to move the city's water treatment plant is still alive.

According to earlier discussions, the city requested \$3.2 million from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) in February, along with a \$356,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application. Wilson said the CDBG funding had been awarded, but the city was still waiting to hear about the larger grant. Officials are viewing a site along Collins Road as a potential new location for the plant.

In other action, the council learned that an engineering study of the city's sewer system in the south part of town is progressing, but few results have been released. Prior said he and other local residents who had water backup in their homes earlier this year had not yet been contacted by the engineers.

Kaalberg said he knew the invest-

igators had been in town recently, but suspected they were checking out parts of the system before they met with the local residents.

The council also received its monthly economic development report from representatives of the community development center board. Brooke Wilson, an intern with the center; and Nitza Lopez-Castillo reported on a number of activities involving the center.

Wilson said Iowa Workforce Development had agreed to provide another year of funding support for the center, which means Lopez-Castillo will continue to have her salary as assistant director paid through the grant. The development center board also staffed booths at the Johnson County and Louisa County fairs, Wilson also told the council.

A meeting will be held on September 3 at 7 p.m. at Roundy Elemen-

tary to review plans for the community health center, which is scheduled to be constructed soon in Columbus City. In a related note, Wilson said over \$10,407 in flood disbursement certificates had been redeemed.

An effort to resubmit a Safe Streets to Schools grant will also be launched this fall, she told the council. The latest effort will renew a proposal to construct a new sidewalk between Columbus City and Columbus Junction.

In final action, Wilson presented a letter from Police Chief Marlin O'Donnell, announcing he planned to retire on December 31, 2009. City officials said O'Donnell had worked for the city since September 1992. Wilson said he would schedule meetings with council members and the council's public safety committee to discuss the pending vacancy.

Louisa County Tractor Ride



Pictured above are tractors congregating at the Columbus City Hall last Sunday after the 5th Annual Louisa County Tractor Ride. Photo by Frank Best.

Briefly -

School to sponsor blood drive

Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center is announcing a blood drive sponsored by Columbus Community High School FCCLA on Wednesday, September 23, 2009 from 1:30-6:30 p.m., at the American Legion Hall in Columbus Junction. To donate, call Lois Mincks at 319-728-2231, ext. 3332 or email her at: lois.mincks@columbus.k12.ia.us.

Columbus City seeks candidates

The City of Columbus City will have the following seats up for election this year: Two Council member seats and the Mayor. If you would like to run for election, please pick up nomination forms from the City Clerk. City Hall is open on Monday nights from 4-6 p.m., or you may call Lisa Hills at the Columbus Junction State Bank at 319-728-2436. Last day to file for office will be September 17, 2009.

Columbus Junction seeks candidates

The City of Columbus Junction will have the following seats up for election this year. Mayor: 4-year term; Two Council: 4-year terms. Nomination papers can be picked up at City Hall between the hours of 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Nomination papers must be turned back in by 5 p.m. on September 17, 2009.

Lions Club to host breakfast

The Columbus Junction Lions Club will hold two pancake, egg and sausage fundraiser breakfasts on Saturday, September 5 and Sunday, September 6, from 7-11 a.m. both days, at the Columbus Community Senior Center at 125 E. Walnut Street. This will be in conjunction with the "Thunder in the Sand" motorcycle event being held at the Circle of Pride Rodeo Grounds. However, everyone is invited to attend - local residents, visitors and bikers. Cost for all-you-can-eat is \$6.00 for adults and \$4.00 for children under 12. Menu will include pancakes with flavored syrups, scrambled eggs, sausage, coffee, milk and fruit drinks. Proceeds help support Lions' projects locally, statewide and internationally.

Habitat plans trip

Louisa County Habitat For Humanity is taking a fall trip to the Kane County flea market on Saturday, October 3. We will leave the Wapello Museum at 7:30 A.M., pick up at Grandview if needed, then pick up at Muscatine HyVee parking lot 8:00 A.M. Last day to reserve is September 29. Cost is \$60 per person. Send checks ASAP to get your name on the list to: Ruth Yackle, 110 N. Pine Street, Wapello, IA 52653. If we don't have at least 40 people for the trip, it may have to be canceled. Everyone welcome to go!

Half Hour Club to meet

The Half Hour Club will meet on Tuesday, September 8th at 12:30 p.m. for a salad luncheon at Columbus City United Methodist Church. Hostesses are the officers. Roll call: Favorite Author. Program: Books and Good Samaritan Shoe Box project.

82nd Hanft Reunion scheduled

The 82nd Hanft Reunion will be held on Sunday, September 13th at Chautauqua Park. The potluck lunch will begin at 12:30. Reminder cards are not being mailed this year so remember to call your out-of-town relatives and encourage them to attend.

Amateur Radio Club to meet

The Muscatine Amateur Radio Club will meet on Monday, September 14, at 7:00 pm at the Flickinger Learning Center, 413 Mulberry Avenue in Muscatine. (Please use the 5th street entrance.) All amateur radio operators, and those interested in learning more about amateur radio, are invited to attend. For more information, visit muscatinehams.org.

SE Iowa Hamfest scheduled

The Muscatine Amateur Radio Club and the Washington Area Amateur Radio Club will present the 25 Annual Southeast Iowa Hamfest on Sunday, October 4th at the Muscatine County Fairgrounds in West Liberty, Iowa. The hamfest features indoor and outdoor flea market, commercial vendors, license testing, food and drink. Gates open at 7:00 am. All tickets are \$5. Children age 14 and under are admitted free. For more information, visit www.muscatinehams.org or call Tom Brehmer, at (563) 263-3097.

City of Fredonia seeks candidates

The city of Fredonia is seeking an applicant for a city council seat. Deadline to apply is Monday, September 14, 2009. Contact Mayor Al Sonderberg for details.

Train Show in Washington

The Washington Model Railroad Club will hold its annual Train Show and Swap Meet on Sunday, October 4th, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., in the Knights of Columbus Hall, 606 West 3rd Street, Washington, Iowa 52353. All scales represented. Admission is \$4.00 for adults, children 6-12, \$1. Early arrivals \$5.00. Swap tables to rent: \$18 each. A food stand will be available in building. For information, contact Mike Worley at 319-653-3782.

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.

Gazette's Holiday Deadline

Due to the Labor Day Holiday, the Gazette's deadline for news and ads for next week will be this Friday at 1:00 p.m.

Columbus Day plans now in progress

The Columbus Day Committee of the Community Club will be meeting to make plans for this year's Columbus Day. If anyone has ideas for new events, or would like to nominate someone for distinguished citizen, please contact Sue Johnson at Plants and Things or John Carpenter at the Gazette. A theme for this year's Day will be announced soon, but the committee is also open for ideas on a theme. We are always looking for volunteers, so if you would like to help, please let us know.