

Letts Community Center receives \$400,000 Boost

By Deb Bean
Gazette Staff

For several years now the little town of Letts, approximately 400 people, have been holding monthly supper fund raisers to build a new Community Center/Library/City Hall/Disaster Shelter. The meals have become a monthly 'come to meetin' for locals in their community and surrounding communities.

According to Mayor Jerry Kirk, people look forward to the monthly meals because it's a time to gather and see friends you may live next to, but because of people's busy lives, may not see much of. These fund raisers have generated a portion of the money needed to get the project started.

Little communities have people with generous hearts, and when this project first came to light and the meals began, a person of the community who wishes to remain anonymous has left a generous donation each month during the meals. And in addition, two elderly sisters in Letts donated a large sum of money towards the project.

A building committee was formed which is made up of council members, library board members and town residents. The group has located a site on the north side of Letts, and several grants were written. One issue that has risen since the little community began this project is people not understanding that the grant money that is received is given to Letts for the Library project only, and cannot be used for other projects.

One thing that needed to happen before any plans were set in stone is that the State of Iowa Library Association must determine the size for a new building construction before plans are allowed to move forward. It is important



Proposed site for the new Letts Library/City Hall

to remember that the library would not only serve Letts residents but Grandview, rural Louisa and Muscatine residents. "With this process we had to scale down the new city hall, the community room was made slightly larger which will actually be very nice to be able to accommodate larger community functions. This is a 'turn key' building construction which includes parking and some internal components needed to furnish the project, and we hope we will come in under the estimated price, but when preparing a budget we always estimate higher," states Mayor Kirk.

Now if you don't think little communities are made up of people with huge hearts, this little community raised over \$107,000 and also have

a number of additional grant applications pending.

Where did the \$400,000 dollar grant come from? I-JOBS Funding was appropriated by Gov. Chet Culver and the Legislature for local government or nonprofit organizations on a competitive basis. The program is part of an overall \$830 million I-JOBS bonding package. \$118 million is designated to rebuilding Iowa infrastructure. And those monies came from that fund. Mayor Kirk attended the meeting of the I-JOBS Review Panel in Waterloo where he learned his small town in Louisa County would get the money. "We want to make this happen without raising taxes and will finance a portion of what is needed," states Kirk.

Small rural communities like Letts are in danger of losing their residents when there is nothing to offer them but a home. With Letts getting to move forward with their plans to better their community by building a bigger and better community facility, they can proudly say they have a place where groups can hold their meetings such as the Lions Club, Girl Scouts etc. and where those once a month suppers can still take place for towns people to meet, visit and get to know one another.

After all, it's a small community within Louisa County that has many good residents there that have a high amount of pride to call Letts their home.

Senior Center "Roars" Back to Life

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

The roaring sound citizens of Columbus Junction heard this weekend may have been motorcycles at the semi-annual rally sponsored by the Circle of Pride, but an additional roar was made by the Senior Center as it re-opened after its second flood recovery.

As we all remember, the Center was severely damaged during the flood of 2008. A complete rebuilding of the facility was necessary, and through the determination of the Center's Board, the building was restored and a wonderful grand opening was held in early summer.

But less than a month after the opening, a one-hour five inch rain fall brought water back into the building. Dry wall was damaged, all of the cabinets were destroyed, and the floor was ruined. Millwork and doors were saturated, and the new piano was destroyed. Fortunately most of the new furniture was saved.

However, this once again put the Center out of business, and recovery work was again needed. "We weren't back to square one," said Senior Board member Polly Prior, "but we were pretty near it."

But this weekend, as the city opened its doors to the Thunder in the Sand attendees, the Senior Center was able to also open their doors to the Lions Club for their semi-annual biker's and public pancake breakfast.



Motorcycles begin to arrive at the Senior Center early Saturday for the Lions Club annual Pancake Breakfast

Congratulations to all of the Senior Center Board members and contractors who worked extra hours to

have the Center ready for this weekend. Through their efforts, the Senior Center is once again back and ready to serve the citizens of the Columbus Community.

The Senior Center will resume serving meals at the facility beginning Monday, September 14th

Calling all downtown business owners and Columbus Citizens

This past weekend I went to Elkader to visit Donna's Mom. On our way we drove through Manchester then went to Elkader. On Saturday afternoon we went to Strawberry Point to eat dinner. Manchester is about 5,000 people, but Elkader and Strawberry Point are actually smaller than Columbus Junction.

What I noticed, though, as I drove through these towns was how neat and clean the downtown area was. Honestly, it was Saturday evening, and there wasn't a scrap of paper on the streets.

There wasn't even any paper in the curbs. And nowhere did I even see weeds growing.

So on Monday I called the City Administrator in Strawberry Point and asked her how they do it. She said that the city doesn't do anything special, it is just handled by the citizens and business owners. If someone sees litter, they pick it up. And regularly they go out and sweep in front of their businesses. She said it has just always been a practice there.

When I came home on Saturday evening I went to town to get something from the grocery store, and everywhere

on our Main Street was litter. It was in the curbs, on the sidewalks, and in the grass.

This has been a problem that has been discussed for years in town. A couple of weeks ago in Helen's "Do You Remember" column there was a discussion by the Community Club, thirty or forty years ago, concerning this same problem. And I'm convinced that this isn't a cultural problem, or a lack of pride, it is an age problem. We are a young community, and young people have more of a tendency to litter than older people. But we can reverse this situation.

So what I am going to do is begin calling on all of the businesses and ask for your help. And I'm also asking our citizens that if you are on the street and see litter, pick it up.

To emphasize my point, please turn to page 7 of this week's issue. I have used some of the photographs I took in Strawberry Point to show their downtown in contrast to our downtown. So please, step forward and help. Let's do everything we can to make our town impress visitors as much as Strawberry Point impressed me. They would have easily passed the thirty second rule, could we?

Briefly -

Blood Drive at Columbus School

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.

Ice Cream social in Columbus City

The Columbus City United Methodist Church invites the public to an ice cream social and cakewalk on Sunday, September 20th starting at 4 p.m. A free will offering will be accepted for the ice cream and toppings. The price for the cakewalk is \$1.00 for 4 tickets. Come and enjoy some old fashioned fun! This event is sponsored by the Columbus City United Methodist Adult Fellowship.

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 Jct. 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.

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.

Habitat plans flea market 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 Yakle, 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!

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.

Radio "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.

Train show scheduled 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.

Washington County Conservation Education Center adjusts hours

Washington County Conservation Education Center will be closing early at 5:30 rather than 6:30 on September 10, and 17.

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.

Shellbark Club plans trip

Shellbark Club will meet on Thursday, September 17th at 10:30 a.m. at Ainsworth Corners to travel to Kalona to have lunch at Ruby Miller's home at 11:30 a.m. Please call Judy Wilson by September 14th to indicate if you can or cannot go.

Breakfast at Ainsworth Opera House

The Ainsworth Community Center/Opera House will be holding their breakfast buffet on Saturday, September 12, 2009. Time is set for 7 am to 9 am and the cost is \$7 for adults, children 10 and under are free. This is a fundraiser for the Opera House. Many breakfast items will be available for you to choose from. Hope to see you there!