

# What are we voting for next Tuesday?

By John Carpenter  
Gazette Staff

Next week the citizens of the Columbus Community School District will be asked to go to the polls and decide on two important issues. The first issue will be the election of two members from five candidates to serve on the school board. A profile of each candidate was published in last week's issue of the Gazette, and everyone must vote their personal choice. Under no circumstance does the Gazette, nor will it ever, endorse a candidate in a local race. We have the utmost respect for anybody who is willing to serve (generally non-paid, or underpaid) in an elected position. The decision is up to the voters.

However, there is a second issue that is equally important to the future of the school district. This issue is the adoption of a "Revenue Purpose Statement" associated with the one-cent sales tax we pay across the state of Iowa to support the infrastructure of schools. Currently, Columbus Schools collect the one-cent sales tax from three places. Because the Columbus School District exists in both Louisa and Muscatine Counties, the sales tax money from those two counties goes to them. Wapello, Morning Sun, Winfield-Mt. Union, L-M, and Lone Tree are also in Louisa County. The total Louisa County money is distributed to each of the school districts on a per pupil basis. The third place is from the state of Iowa. Because Iowa counties are unequal in the amount of retail sales they have, high retail counties like Polk County (think Des Moines) raise a lot more money for their students. As a fairness issue, the state allows counties to keep up to a certain amount, and the rest is skimmed off to be redistributed to counties that have much less. Columbus receives about \$265,000 from the state on a yearly basis to help close the gap.

It is the Gazette's understanding that at this time Columbus has two separate revenue purpose statements for the money they receive from Louisa and Muscatine Counties. These statements went before the public and were approved. Now, if the school district wants to borrow money from the state-wide supplementary money they receive, a third revenue purpose statement needs to



Proposed location north of administration building for Community College

be in place stating what types of purchases will be made. And, it must be approved by the voters. The Revenue Purpose Statement that is being proposed to us is the same as the one that the voters approved for the Louisa and Muscatine County monies.

Excluding any change by the state legislature, our school will receive these state funds, but they must be used only for current infrastructure needs. And they have been: the geothermal heating and cooling system, new roofs on both the middle and high school, the resurfacing of the all-weather track, the new hardwood basketball floor at the high school, new high school lockers, renovations of the restrooms at the junior high, new doors at the junior high and high school, technology upgrades at the high school library, new cabinets, sinks, and work areas in the home economics (now called Family Consumer Science) room, and air conditioning in the junior high building along with a number of other projects that did not have to come from the school's general budget (i.e. property taxes). But the school is not allowed to use these funds to repay debt on new projects that the school may take on in the future without the citizens' approval. That is what the revenue purpose statement is for.

Now there has been some confusion recently on what plans the school may want to borrow money for. There was a long-range plan unveiled at a past school board meeting that indicated a number of ideas to consider in the future. These included purchasing ground west of town to

re-locate the athletic fields. Building a second road to Roundy Elementary. Sharing in the cost of construction of a community college building with Muscatine Community College, and the construction of a wrestling facility. Any of these plans would require the passage of the revenue purpose statement as the annual sales tax amount received would not be able to accomplish these goals without the ability to borrow additional money. Or if they were able to accomplish one or more of the goals, the taxpayers would need to come forward to handle infrastructure needs that are presently being paid for by the sales tax.

However, the school's administration and board have discovered that there is considerable objection from the public in purchasing of ground west of town and the relocation of the athletic fields, so the Gazette has been assured that this issue has been removed from the table. All of the School Board candidates at the "Meet the Candidates" night two weeks ago made it clear that they were dropping this issue. The School's Superintendent informed the Gazette that he has visited a number of community groups and has left with the indication that the public is not interested in this purchase, so he has also removed this from the table.

But in the Gazette's view, what remains on the table is very important to the future of the Columbus Schools. The addition of a second road to Roundy Elementary is important as access is now difficult during busy times. A new wrestling room is

important as wrestling is an integral sport in our identity, and they, along with numerous physical education classes, have been operating in very outdated facilities. And the key element, in the Gazette's view, is the opportunity to cost-share with Muscatine Community College in the construction of a community college building. This would truly give our school an opportunity to be a K-14 grade facility, and give college academic opportunities to all of our students as well as adults.

But we must be able to stretch the costs of these projects over a number of years, and be able to pay for them with sales tax proceeds rather than property taxes. This is truly a measure that means what it says: Property Tax Relief. It has been a number of years since we have heard of any small school proposing a bond issue, today schools are financing construction projects with sales tax proceeds, and Columbus shouldn't be any different. We are already paying the sales tax to other counties, it is our choice as to whether we make a purchase, and now we have the opportunity to benefit from these purchases.

A yes vote on the sales tax referendum is urgent for the future possibilities of our school, and the Gazette has been assured that this vote will not result in the purchase of real estate outside of town, nor will it cultivate the moving of our athletic fields. Please make plans to vote next Tuesday, and let your voice be heard.

## Briefly -

### Pride of Iowa to host CJPM

Pride of Iowa Marketplace and Simply Soothing will host a CJPM this evening, Wednesday, September 7th from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. at 211 Main St. in Columbus Junction. Appetizers, sandwiches, desserts and iced tea will be served. The store will be open for browsing and shopping. Odessa Vineyards will be hosting a wine tasting, and bottles will be available for sale.

### CCHS Class of 1971 plans reunion

CCHS Class of 1971 will be holding their 40th class reunion on October 8, 2011 starting at 5:00 p.m. at the Cedarcrest Country Club in Columbus Junction. Please RSVP to Randy and Nancy Orr by September 24th by calling 319-728-3189 or email [Randy\\_nancy71@yahoo.com](mailto:Randy_nancy71@yahoo.com) also see us on facebook.

### CCHS Class of 1976 plans reunion

Members of the CCHS Class of 1976: Reserve the dates of Friday and Saturday, September 16th and 17th. We will be having our 35th class reunion! Letters will be sent to you and you can get updates at <https://sites.google.com/site/cchswildcat1976>.

### Columbus City Elections

The City of Columbus City will have the following seats up for election this year: Three Council: 4 year term and Mayor: 2 year term. Nomination papers can be picked up at City Hall on Mondays, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. or contact Lisa Hills at the Columbus Junction State Bank from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (319-728-2436). Nomination papers must be turned back in by 5:00 p.m. on September 22, 2011.

### Conesville City Elections

Nomination papers are now available for Conesville city elections. On the ballot will be the position of Mayor, 3 four-year council positions and 1 council position to fill a vacancy. Pick up papers from City Clerk Joyce Payne. Call 725-4203, 319-530-9233 or city hall, 725-4217. The deadline for filing is September 22nd at 5:00 p.m.

### Emma Beckman Chapter to meet

Emma Beckman Chapter 445, Order of the Eastern Star, will be serving a spaghetti supper to the Masons and their families prior to the Mason's regular meeting on September 15, at the Masonic Center. Serving starts at 5:30 p.m.

### FCCLA Pink-Out Night

Thursday, September 29th, join the Columbus Volleyball Team for a "Pink Out" against Pekin. The FCCLA will be selling Columbus Wildcat Pink Power t-shirts for the game for \$10. Pre-order by Friday, September 16th to make sure you have your shirt for the game. All proceeds will go to the Gary Hamilton family. Order forms can be found in the Gazette or you may pick them up at the Columbus Junction State Bank, Columbus Community Bank, or at the Columbus School Offices. Questions call Lois Mincks at CCHS 319-728-2231 ext. 3332.

### Half Hour Club to meet

The Half Hour Club will meet starting the new year on September 13th at 12:30 p.m. with a salad luncheon at Columbus City Methodist Church. Program: Beat for Peace - Polly Prior. Samaritan Purse Christmas Boxes - Rita Chaney. New Books - Kay Perkins. Roll call will be A School Memory.

### Blood Checks at the Senior Center

Colonial Manor Staff will be at the Columbus Senior Center on Tuesday, September 20th from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. to do blood glucose, blood pressures and cholesterol checks We'll see you there!!

### Benefit for Sammi Smith

Friends and neighbors will be hosting a benefit for Sammi Smith on Saturday, September 17, 2011 at the Louisa County Fairgrounds. The day's activities will begin at 3:00 p.m. and include games, food, music and fun.

### St. James Fall Festival

On Sunday, September 11, 2011, St. James Catholic Church in Washington, Iowa, will be holding its Fall Festival at the KC Hall. Dinner will be served from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The cost for adults is \$10.00, Kids (6-12) \$5.00, Children 5 and under are free. The meal includes: Turkey, ham, homemade dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, salads, rolls, desserts and beverages. For Washington area delivery contact, Marlene Vogel at 319-653-5173. Pick Up/Take Out is also available that day. The Country Store will be open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. An auction begins at Noon. Youth games are from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

### Legion Auxiliary to meet

The American Legion Auxiliary will meet Tuesday evening, September 13th at 7:00 p.m. Vivian Loyd will be hostess.

### FCCLA cornshock sales

The Columbus FCCLA are holding their annual decorative cornshock sales. The cost is \$10, we will be taking orders until Thursday, September 15. You can order calling the school at 738-2231 ext 3332. They will be delivered on Saturday, September 17. The proceeds go to help support FCCLA members leadership conference and activity expenses.

### Shellbark Club to meet

The Shellbark Club will meet Thursday, September 15th at 11:30 a.m. at Unc & Neph's in Washington.

### This week at the Farmers' Market

Fridays from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the American Legion parking lot, now until October 14th. The market offers fresh produce, baked goods, homemade noodles, jams and jellies, and plants. Some vendors accept Iowa Farmers Market Nutrition, WIC and Senior Program coupons. Buy fresh and local and taste the difference. For more information, including how to participate as a vendor, contact Nitza or Mallory at 319-728-7971.

### Visual Support Group to meet

The Louisa County Visual Support Group will have their meeting on the 2nd Thursday of September (8th) at 1 p.m. We will meet at the Corner Market, which is located at 340 North 2nd in Wapello. This month we are having "Big Card Bingo" and would welcome anyone wishing to have a fun afternoon to join us. For more information contact Lois Richers at 319-527-2630.

# Colonel's Kids celebrate 10th Anniversary

By Kathy Vance

It was August 12th and the 2-year-old group were counting to twelve and insisting to their teacher that it was the 2nd Friday in the month. Then they counted together through the months to conclude that it was still the 8th month of 2011.

It's while you are 2 in Colonel's Kids Daycare and Preschool that you really learn your numbers, even though you started counting wayyyyyy back when they were reading to you in the infant room and you helped count out the sheep....1 sheep was sleeping, 2 sheep were eating, 3 sheep were playing and so on.

It's not all about numbers at Colonel's Kids, but this month is special. This month Colonel's Kids celebrate their 10th Anniversary. It was on an August day in 2001 they began 10 years of providing services to parents; 10 years of providing education, enrichment and security to kids; 10 years of being a part of the local economy. Here's how the numbers stack up:

10 years...520 weeks...2,600 days...over 31,000 hours of time spent supervising, holding, feeding, nurturing and teaching our children.

Over 500 children have been served in one-way or another (some of them for a full 10 years!)...over 200 families lives have been touched.

Dozens of local folks have been employed over the years. Currently the staff numbers 10 with an annual payroll of \$120,000 that is pumped right back into the local economy thru employees that are all Louisa County residents.



Of the annual expenditures of just over \$200,000 another \$60,000 is also pumped back into the local economy through purchases like food, cleaning services, plumbing, phones and insurance.

10 years ago there were 2 student computers and 1 staff computer. Today, thanks to a Strengthening Rural Iowa Grant there are 8 computers - 6 of those utilized directly by the kids.

1 brand new website!! Also a result of the Strengthening Rural Iowa Grant. Visit them online anytime at [www.colonelskids.net](http://www.colonelskids.net) and you can download all the forms you need to apply to enroll a child or as a parent with a child in the center!

At the risk of being repetitious, it really isn't all about the numbers at Colonel's Kids. Director Joy Lekwa, herself celebrating 9 years of employment with Colonel's Kids says, "I really enjoy seeing how the kids grow

and develop. Some of them start here as infants and we have gotten them off the bottle onto food, out of a crib onto a cot, from crawling to walking to running and from pre-school to kindergarten and beyond. It's a satisfying job and a wonderful organization to be part of."

For Lekwa and the other employees it's really about building community as much as anything else. The board insists on professional development for all staff to maintain the high ratings, licensing and accreditation the center enjoys, but they also encourage staff participation in local parades, speaking opportunities and Community Club. They have regular volunteers in the center from the high school working on Silver Cords. The school age kids visit the pool twice a week during the summer, the ambulance, fire department and local Lions all visit the center. And all

members of the staff keep up on services in the community and surrounding region that will benefit the children, parents and families - like immunization schedules, dental clinics and even the hours that Santa will visit with kids uptown.

As they look to the future the Colonel's Kids Board and Staff are looking at better ways to market and communicate with their current families as well as those that might need their services in the future. The recent Strengthening Rural Iowa Grant process has involved additional training and encouraged strategic planning that has helped them map a future that will ensure they continue to be an important place in the community and an integral part of the lives of the families they touch for many years to come. 10 years and counting....Happy Birthday Colonel's Kids!