

Community Foundation awards \$93,000 in Grants

An enthusiastic crowd of about 80 people attended the 5th annual Community Foundation Award Breakfast held at the Morning Sun Community Center, Monday, January 18.

The Community Foundation of Louisa County awarded \$93,154 in grants to 46 local non-profit organizations, schools, and governmental agencies.

According to President Ken Purdy, the Community Foundation of Louisa County (CFLC) was established in 2005 to receive a share of the revenue from the state gambling profits for the purpose of establishing a Louisa County endowment fund and for providing grants to local non-profit organizations. CFLC retains 25% of the funds received from the state in a permanent endowment fund and is allowed to grant 75% of the funds. This is the fifth granting period and to date, CFLC has awarded grants totaling \$346,914 to 149 organizations. The Community Foundation of Louisa County (CFLC) is an affiliate of the Community Foundation of the Great River Bend and



a member of the Iowa Council of Foundations. Grant applications will

be open October 1, 2010. Persons wishing to make a donation to the

CFLC endowment fund may be eligible for a 25% Iowa State tax credit.

City Council okays look into local phone company ownership

By Jim Rudisill

Competition for telephone, Internet and cable TV services in Columbus Junction might be enhanced under a proposal presented to the city council during its regular January 13 meeting. Columbus Gazette Publisher John Carpenter outlined the plan, explaining he had already talked with officials at Louisa Communications, Morning Sun, and other nearby communities. Carpenter explained to the council.

According to Carpenter, the city and Louisa Communications could create a partnership with the city providing a municipal-owned telephone service, using equipment provided by Louisa Communications through its Morning Sun office. Louisa Communications already operates a similar system in Mahaska County; and it provides service locally in Wapello and other nearby communities. Carpenter explained to the council.

Under Carpenter's plan, the city would pay Louisa Communications a monthly fee for each household that registered for the service. There would be around \$8 in taxes and other service fees, he said, suggesting if the city charged \$15 for the service, it could generate a profitable revenue stream. "I think it has a lot of benefits for the city," he said, estimating the city could earn up to \$5000 a month from the service.

He said that is currently money that is going out of town to other providers. "I don't think the city has anything to lose," he said, explaining Louisa Communications would provide service and other technical support.

If the plan was pursued, the city would need to seek a federal economic stimulus grant, Carpenter said. The stimulus grant would cover the cost of extending an existing fiber optics line to the estimated 1000 homes in Columbus Junction and Columbus City. The fiber optics line would have the capability of providing telephone services and eventually Internet and cable TV access, he told the council.

Carpenter estimated it could cost up to \$2.5 million to complete the extension, but he said the proposal met the required funding guidelines and political leaders he had talked to had been encouraging. "I think it would be an ideal project," he said.

Mediacom currently is the only cable TV providers in the community; and Carpenter said if the city offered a competing system, it could help lower costs for local residents. He also said a new service could provide more programming than the existing system.

City officials appeared interested in the proposal. "I think it's a great idea," council member Hal Prior said, although he later wondered what would happen if Louisa Communications went out of business. Carpenter said the company was solid and said even if the company did stop operating, another company would likely step in and assume the

operation. Prior also wondered how much of the cost the grant would actually cover.

Carpenter said he hoped the grant would fund the entire plan. "I would like to go and get it all. I don't think the city (should) acquire debt," he told the council.

Mayor Dan Wilson said the idea was attractive to him because it offered some competition to the existing services. He agreed with the earlier suggestion that the competition would mean lower costs. "Having competition and giving people some choices is a good thing," he said.

Council member Mark Huston also said he liked the idea, but was unsure how the city's existing agreement with Mediacom would affect any new system. "I think it's worth looking into. I know we have a franchise agreement with Mediacom and we might have to look into what that means," he said, reminding everyone that Columbus Junction had its own telephone system several years ago.

The council agreed to authorize Carpenter to discuss the proposal with the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission and others and return to the council next month with more details. The council also appointed Phil Kaalberg as a council representative to work with Carpenter on the proposal.

In other action, the council approved hiring Joe Reid, Columbus Junction, as a new city police officer. Reid has been a reserve officer for the city since 1994. He will receive a \$26,000 annual salary. Reid fills the vacancy created when former police chief Marlin O'Donnell retired and assistant chief Donnie Orr was named to that position. The council also approved promoting officer Greg Torres to Orr's old position. He will receive an additional \$500 stipend in his new position.

In final action, the council approved the appointment of the Columbus Gazette as the official newspaper and the Columbus Junction State Bank and Community Bank as the city's official banks.

Wilson also presented a short summary of last year's progress in the city and a review of future activities in the community. Wilson said flood recovery had been a major focus last year and likely would continue into 2010. He also recognized the cooperative efforts made last year and expressed appreciation to everyone who had helped with recovery and similar activities.

He said the flood recovery had suffered a setback with the failure to obtain federal funding to upgrade the levee, but he assured the council that effort would continue. "(We'll) continue to hold politicians' feet to the fire to get us some help," he promised.

In the meantime, the effort to relocate the city's water treatment plant continued to look good, with a possible announcement on that funding request coming in the next 30 days.



Mayor Dan Wilson and Police Chief Don Orr welcome new officer Joe Reid to the Columbus Junction Police Department



Mayor Dan Wilson and Police Chief Don Orr swear in Greg Torres as the new Assistant Police Chief.

He also praised efforts to beautify the community and said the effort to enhance the downtown, upgrade sidewalks and create an attractive Highway 92 corridor would continue through local cooperation with the Keep Iowa Beautiful/Keep America Beautiful campaigns.

Wilson also told the council he

hoped to develop new ordinances and controls over rental properties in the community and continue efforts to upgrade park and recreation facilities. He said a key component of that effort would be combining the existing park board and swinging bridge board into a parks and recreation board.

Space still available at local Business Academy

The Louisa County Small Business Academy began last week with nine future businesspeople in attendance. The 8-week course is offered to individuals interested in starting or expanding a business. Topics covered include legal aspects of business, insurance, marketing and accounting. Classes will be held on Wednesdays from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at the Columbus Junction Civic Center. New attendees can join the Academy already

in session. To register and receive materials and an orientation please contact Nitza Lopez-Castillo at 319-728-7971 or cdc@columbusjunctioniowa.org. The next session will be Wednesday, January 20. The topic will be how to write a business plan and the speaker will be Hal Prior, co-owner of H & P Minerals and Gems in Columbus Junction. Please join us!

Part 3 of 2009 Year in Review will continue in next week's issue

Briefly -

Concert for a Cause

Esterlyn, an up and coming Christian rock band, will be performing at the Columbus Community School's Auditorium on Tuesday, February 23, 2010. The 7:00 p.m. concert is a benefit with all proceeds going to the Louisa County Ambulance Service. Esterlyn has opened for popular Christian rock bands such as Kutless, Thousand Foot Krutch, Pillar, Fireflight, Stellar Kart, Disciple and more. The concert is being sponsored by Victory Christian Center, 122 Ninth St, Columbus Junction, IA. For more information on purchasing the \$10 general admission tickets, contact the church by either calling 319-728-5720, going to the church website, www.vccjunction.org, or by contacting a Columbus Junction ambulance volunteer.

CWO Prince and Princess of Hearts

The Columbus Women's Organization is looking for candidates for their annual Prince and Princess of Hearts Contest. Children 0-5 years of age are eligible for the contest, which will run from Friday, January 29th through Friday, February 12, 2010. Deadline for entry and photos is Wednesday, January 27th at noon with all entry material delivered to Twyla Peters at the Columbus Medical Clinic, or Kirsten Shellabarger at Horak Insurance. Prince and Princess of Hearts will be determined by the largest amount of money donations in that child's name at these locations: Columbus Junction State Bank, The Community Bank and the Econ-O-Mart, between Friday, January 29th through Friday, February 12th, 2010. The Prince and Princess will be crowned on Saturday, February 13th, 2010 beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the American Legion in Columbus Junction. The winners will each receive a \$50 Savings Bond donated by Community Bank and the Columbus Junction State Bank, and get to ride in the Columbus Day parade. **MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN!** All proceeds from the contest benefit the Senior Girls Dinner, annually sponsored by the C.W.O.

LDG Business Festival

The Louisa Development Group invites area businesses to attend the first Louisa Development Group Business Festival. The festival will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 21 in the new Morning Sun Community Center.

Retirement Party for Marlin O'Donnell

Everyone is invited to a retirement party for Marlin "Moose" O'Donnell on Saturday, January 23, 2010 at the Fire Station in Columbus Junction. Supper will be served starting around 6:00 p.m. Come join the fun and celebrate with Marlin.

Free Concert at C.J. Presbyterian

Sunday, January 31 at 2:30 p.m., the CJ Presbyterian Church will host a free concert of Christian music. Performing will be "Fellowship", a men's quartet consisting of Jay Hauenstein, Paul Duncan, David Duncan and Brian Cummings, accompanied by Jill Bowen. Also featured, from Winfield, is "Selah." Members of the women's group are Deb Lowe, Liz Wasson, Barb Phelps, Linda Haight, Deb Remick, Kim Davis, and accompanist Mary Kilpatrick. Following the concert, refreshments will be served. If you enjoy Christian music of all kinds, be sure to mark Sunday, January 31 on your calendar. We hope to see you there!

Red Cross Rendezvous

You can help the American Red Cross through a generous contribution of cash or an auction item for *Rendezvous for the Red* on Friday, March 5, 2010. March is Red Cross Month and it would be the ideal time to support your local Red Cross unit. If you would like to donate, please call Janet Winter 319-726-5908 or the Red Cross office at 563-263-6124.

School Improvement Committee to meet

The Columbus Community School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) will hold its #3 meeting on Monday, January 25, 2010, at 6:30 p.m. in the Roundy Elementary Library.

Flu Shots available

Seasonal flu shots are still available by appointment at UI Health Care - Lone Tree, located at 109 West Jayne St. Flu shots are available to anyone in the community. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 319-629-4214.

Community Club to meet

The Columbus Community Club will meet this Thursday at Noon at the Senior Center.

Census in need of workers

US Census 2010. Work up to 40 hours per week. Temporary Part-time job with 2010 Census. Enjoy good pay, flexible hours, mileage fee reimbursement, chance to serve your community. Call 1-866-861-2010.

Riverboat Foundation to meet

The Washington County Riverboat Foundation will meet at the Riverside Casino and Golf Resort on January 21, 2010 at 6:00 pm. This is a public meeting.

Amateur Radio Club to meet

The Muscatine Amateur Radio Club will meet Monday, February 8th at 7:00 pm in the upper-level meeting room at the Musser Public Library, 304 Iowa Avenue in Muscatine. All amateur radio operators, and those interested in learning more about amateur radio, are invited to attend. For more information, visit muscatinehams.org.

Radio exams available

The Muscatine Area Volunteer Examiners will be testing for all classes of amateur radio operator licenses on Sunday, February 14th, at 1:30 PM in the upper-level meeting room at the Musser Public Library, 304 Iowa Avenue, in Muscatine. The exam fee is \$15. For more information, visit muscatinehams.org.

2010 Fair Dates set

The dates for the 2010 Louisa County Fair are: July 24 - Parade and Fair Kickoff; and July 26-31 - Fair. The dates for the State Fair are August 12-22.