



Your Award Winning Hometown Newspaper

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Gazette Christmas Shopping - Trip 1

By Mary Masonholder Wilson

It's Christmas time! What fun! For many, though, it is a stressful time as they try to find the "perfect" gift for someone, or they try to find the gift for someone who already has everything he/she needs. Or, maybe you are buying for someone elderly who has no room in his/her house for one other item. What do you get them? That's where John and Mary can help you. They've started going to some of the businesses in CJ to see just what there is to buy. Save yourself some stress and try shopping here in town instead of at the big stores out of town.

Then, too, look at these lists to see if there is something YOU would like to have. Then let someone in your family know what it is so it can be purchased and given to you. If your family lives out of town, tell them anyway. They could call the store or business and put in an order. Better to get something you want and can use than another gift that will never be touched. Pay particular attention to gifts that provide you food, fun, or provide a service that you could use. For example a gift certificate to a restaurant, a car detailing that gives you a clean vehicle, a class that might teach you a new skill or bring you together with other people for companionship and a good time. Maybe you have become handicapped or it is harder to get around and you have special needs. You might find something on these lists and maybe Medicare would pay for part of it.

These shopping trips will be published for four weeks. Read them carefully and find something you want or you think someone else would want. Keep money in Columbus Junction and stress off your mind!

Our Shop: This is a shop located at the north end of CJ and specializes in handmade items, especially those that are knitted. Items here start at about \$10 and on up, and all of them are handcrafted. Some of the products here are hats and mittens, doll clothes, baby blankets, pillowcases, towels, neck scarves, and socks. Lots of socks are sold here. Also periodically classes are given in embroidery, knitting, and tatting. During our visit to this store, there was a class going on with lots of chatting and fun. Gift certificates are



Some gifts we found available at Our Shop

available for classes, sewing supplies, or already made items. The wall is lined with different threads and yarns. Each item is unique, beautifully made, and some have the Columbus School name. Carol Foster, owner, will graciously give you suggestions on classes, supplies, and items. The American Girl doll clothes are very cute.

La Hacienda: This is a restaurant that serves mainly Mexican food. They have a buffet on Monday's through Friday's at noon that is all you can eat and is very popular. Often it includes fried chicken or chicken wings along with the Hispanic fare. Birthdays are made "special" here. The celebrant gets to wear a big, black sombrero; blow out a candle on a piece of cake during the singing of "Happy Birthday", and have a small beverage of choice—either alcoholic or nonalcoholic. Gift certificates are available and could give someone a good time plus good food.

Columbus Lumber Company: You might ask, "What can I get at a lumber yard?" The answer is, "Plenty." Obviously they have lumber. They also have windows, doors, and siding. Do you have a parent that needs a new door? Wouldn't this be

a better gift than something they don't need? If the cost is too much for one person, maybe some of your brothers or sisters would go in on it also. The Lumber Yard also has hardware, handles for cabinets and cabinets, stain, tools, plumbing supplies, and much more. Gift certificates are available. Wouldn't a remodel or even an upgrade be a great Christmas gift?

HyVee Drugstore and Pharmacy: Beside medication, there are many items to buy here. There are greeting cards, Columbus shirts, and Columbus Community School T-shirts. There are many items here to help the elderly or handicapped. Again, Medicare might pay for part of it. There are special recliners to help a person out of the chair. There are canes, tub/shower supports, seat lifts, bathing chairs, and a knee scooter/walker. There are special shoes for diabetics. Also wheel chairs can be purchased or bought. Any of these gifts could be so helpful to someone.

Gips: This is a consignment store located beside the Economart. There are so many items in this store, it is impossible to name them all. There are clothes, household items, boots, books/games, toys, baby equipment,

car seats, decorative items, lamps, furniture. You might even find a "collectable" here. Prices are right and Mary Brune, owner, is very selective about what she takes, and thus items are in excellent condition.

G & W Auto Parts: Again, it is amazing what is here. There are tool kits, also specialty tools for special jobs, such as snap ring pliers. There are gloves, filters and oil, and an orbital waxer/polisher. There are many other items for your auto needs: power steering fluid, extension cords, ice scrapers, jumper cables, wrench and socket sets. Gift certificates are available for the person who wants to pick out his/her items themselves.

The Feed Wagon: This business is located in Columbus City. Yes, it has feed, but it also has feed for the animal/nature lover. There are bird feeders, dog and cat food, and bird seed of different types. Gift certificates are available. Providing someone the joy of watching birds all winter could be a wonderful gift.

These are just a few of the stores that John and Mary visited. More stores and ideas will be featured in the following weeks. We hope you have already found a few items to purchase. Happy shopping, and watch for Part 2 next week.

School Board rejects early retirement program

By Jim Rudisill

For the fourth consecutive year an early retirement program will not be offered for licensed employees of the Columbus School District. The board voted 4-1 against offering a program during the board's regular November 21 meeting. The last time an early retirement program was offered in the school district was during the 2008-09 school year.

Superintendent Rich Bridenstine, who submitted his resignation to the board last month, recommended against offering an early retirement. "Offering an early retirement program should benefit the school district and if it doesn't, it shouldn't be offered," he told the board.

Bridenstine said the district is currently not in any financial hardship and the district is not in any danger of losing a significant number of good young teachers. Nine teachers would likely be eligible for an early retirement, but Bridenstine said he did not know how many of those would actually use the program. Board president Marsha Gerot said if all nine retired, it could impact the district. "Losing nine teachers would not be a benefit for the district," she said. Other board members agreed; and approved Dave Duncan's motion not to offer a program. Board member Sandy Martin, who had earlier offered a motion to offer a program that failed when it was not seconded, voted against Duncan's motion.

In other action, the board agreed to ask G. Tryon And Associates, Johnston, Iowa, to attend a special December 5 budget workshop to

present its proposal for seeking a replacement for Bridenstine.

The board also agreed to split up the duties Dan Vogeler had provided as the district's maintenance/transportation/activities director. Vogeler also submitted his resignation in October, but his final day will be in December. Under the new arrangement, elementary principal Shane Rosenberg will assume the elementary custodial director's duties, while secondary principal Jeff Maeder will take over the junior/senior high school custodial duties. Technology coordinator Todd Heck will assume the maintenance and grounds director's responsibilities.

Each of the new assignments will include a \$4000 stipend. Meanwhile, Vogeler's other duties as activities and athletic director will be assumed by Nate Carlson. Carlson's salary will be increased by \$7,493. All of the additional duties extend only through the current school year. Bridenstine said he would offer a recommendation for Vogeler's transportation duties at the December 5 meeting.

In other personnel action, the board accepted the resignation of Maureen Bridenstine as the district's TAG and high school speech coach, effective at the end of the school year. The resignation of Katie Farrier as the assistant varsity softball coach was also accepted. Her resignation is for the upcoming season. Other new hires included: Alicia Bright, junior high wrestling cheerleader sponsor (\$353); Nicole Beckley, elementary art activity (\$707); Eric Field, speech coach (\$1414); Steve Riley, high school varsity cross-country coach (\$3959); Katie Coil, junior high spe-

cial ed associate (\$10.21 per hour); Beth Allen, K-3 At-Risk After School Associate (\$15 per hour); and Amy Widmer and Jill Hernandez, who will share the duties of a Migrant After School tutor (\$30 per hour). The last three positions are being funded by a grant.

Bridenstine also asked the board to give him some direction on the 2012-13 calendar. He said under current state law, the earlier regular starting date for school would be August 27. However, that date would not allow the district to end its first semester at Christmas, a three-year-old practice in the district. Bridenstine said the school could start earlier than August 27, but would need to hold a public hearing on any earlier date. An earlier date could also conflict with families planning to attend the Iowa State Fair.

Bridenstine said a start date next year that would correspond to this year's date would be August 15. However, the state fair runs from August 9 to August 19, which would make August 20 the earliest possible start date that would not conflict with the fair. "I think you either need to stop the semester at Christmas or not start until August 27," Bridenstine said. Starting school on August 27 would mean classes going to the end of May and possibly extending into June if there are any snow make-up days. Bridenstine said that could also create an imbalance in the number of school days between the first and second semesters. Bridenstine said there already is some difference, with the first semester going for 86 days and the second running 94 days. He said the ideal split is 90 days each.

Gerot said students she had talked with supported ending the first semester at Christmas. She said the students complained about coming back to school for semester tests after being away from the classroom for nearly two weeks. Duncan had a different take on the Christmas break, suggesting that when he was in school he may not have been able to finish a class assignment if classes had ended before Christmas. Despite that, he still supported seeing all the possibilities. "I think we need to explore all (options), but I do want to see an option for starting August 27 with two equal semesters," he said.

The board directed Bridenstine to develop three calendar proposals, using August 27, August 20 and August 15 as optional starting days.

In final action, Bridenstine presented the annual swimming pool report and received permission from the board to investigate submitting a Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) grant to upgrade the pool. Bridenstine said the pool report showed the facility's ending balance on September 30, 2011 was \$32,704. He credited the district's voter-approved Public Education and Recreation Levy (PERL) for most of the surplus. "The PERL has greatly supported the swimming pool," he said, adding however, the facility was still facing major renovation needs. He said it needs a new bathroom, decking repairs and other work, which the CAT grant could help meet. He said a grant award of \$100,000, coupled with additional funding from the school district and the City of Columbus Junction could meet the needs for 20 years.

Briefly -

City Council meets tonight

The City of Columbus Junction will hold its regular Council meeting today, Wednesday, November 23, 2011, at 5:30 p.m. at the New Civic Center/City Hall.

Fredonia seeks snow removal bids

The City of Fredonia will be taking bids for snow removal. The deadline is Monday, November 28, 2011. Send your bid to: City of Fredonia, P.O. Box 169, Columbus Junction, IA 52738, or it can be dropped off at the Fredonia City Hall. The City Council will be having a special meeting on November 28th to select a bid. You are invited to attend that meeting. If you have any questions, please call Lisa Exline at 319-750-0801.

No Fellowship Coffee at Hope Bible until December

Hope Bible Church would like you to know that there will be no Coffee Fellowship on the Friday after Thanksgiving (Nov 25th). We will resume with the Fellowship on Friday, Dec. 2nd at 8:30 a.m. We wish you all a blessed Thanksgiving Day and look forward to hearing about your family times when you return.

Marr Park Center closed for Thanksgiving

In observance of Thanksgiving Day, the Conservation Education Center at Marr Park will be closed on Thursday, November 24th and Friday, November 25th. Happy Thanksgiving!

Pleasant Grove Christmas Program

Mark your Calendars: The Pleasant Grove Community Church is having a special Christmas program, Sunday evening, December 4th. The high school kids of the First Baptist Church of Silvis, Illinois will be here to present to us "Christ-myths". It is a puppet program about all the different myths that are out there in the "world" about Christmas and concludes with the Christian message. It is appropriate for young and old. The church will have a potluck meal at 5:00 p.m. and the program at 6:00. Please bring a dish to pass, we look forward to seeing neighbors and friends.

Sheriff's Office Dodgeball Tourney

On Saturday, December 3, 2011, the Louisa County Sheriff's Patrol will hold its first annual Dodgeball Tournament, at the L-M High School Gym at 10:00 a.m. The cost is \$25 per team. Teams are 4 players, at least one female per team. Players must be 16-years-old or older. To register a team, contact Lindsay or Lisa in dispatch at 319-523-4371 or email louisacounty_dispatch@yahoo.com. Please have your team registered by November 1st. Prize for winning team. Will also have a 50/50 raffle. Concession stand will be open. Tournament will be double elimination.

Thanksgiving Traditions

By Mary Masonholder Wilson

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays. Why? It is so simple. There are no presents to buy, eggs to dye, and the decorations are oh so easy. It is a day to be with family, eat, and enjoy the beauty of fall.

In the past growing up on the farm, it was a tradition to celebrate if the crop was harvested or not. If the crop was harvested by Thanksgiving, that was a special joy. Our relatives, most of whom were farmers, would compare notes as to yields, moisture level of the crop, and prices being paid. Today a Thanksgiving tradition is to talk about what professional football team is going to win and what college teams might be in the Bowl Games.

Traditionally the weather at Thanksgiving is beautiful. It is often a day when the sun shines and illuminates the golden white fields that have just been stripped of their crops. Trees are bare and once again a wide view is seen through the leafless limbs. Skies are pink and orange at sunset contrasting against the deep blue.

Our meal is always turkey with dressing and potatoes and gravy. Sometimes my husband Dan smokes a turkey to add some variety to the meal. He also makes a fresh cranberry, orange, apple relish that we have each year. Pumpkin pie is a favorite, but Lelia Wilson (my late mother-in-law) always made a peach pie until her passing, and now our daughter Emily has taken over that task. Luckily she got lessons from Lelia, and the pie tastes pretty much the same. A new favorite pie is a pumpkin/pudding, caramel that is very sweet, but very good.

Today, we often play cards or other group games, such as pictionary, at our gatherings. I really enjoy the games. I have to say though that I miss the discussion of crops and recipes that were at the holidays of old. Today there is no one in the group who is actually farming, and recipes do not seem as important. Now, some people are reading the newspaper ads and planning their "Black Friday" shopping strategies.

A ceramic pilgrim, his wife, and a turkey were often in the center of the table. My mother always wanted a cornucopia as a sign of the bountiful harvest and it was often full of gourds, Indian corn, and other signs of fall. I carry on these traditions today.

Whatever your Thanksgiving traditions, remember the purpose of the day and be thankful. We are oh-so-very blessed.

