

Giving thanks for our Community

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

Tomorrow is when families across America will sit down and give thanks for their blessings. It is a time to stop and contemplate what is most dear to us: our families, friends, and way of life. While thinking about this over the weekend, I started to make a list of what I was thankful for. I have been very lucky in my life. I have a great family, wonderful friends, and a profession that brings me great joy. But another thing I am grateful for is the opportunity to live in a community that is alive and bustling.

As I stated in the issue following the flood, this is a community of great people. I don't need to go into detail on the community's response after the flood, we all know how we came together during that crisis. But it is only one example of our strength. There are many more reasons that I am so thankful for having an opportunity to live in this community.

We have opened our doors to a wave of young families of different cultures. Undoubtedly there's been some difficulties, but they have been overcome for the most part, and we are now a young community rather than an aging community.

We have a school that is a beehive of activity. Just visit the school someday, there's something going on everywhere. The students look happy and excited.

Our business district is bustling. There are a number of days when I go out on the street and see every parking space filled. We do have a few empty storefronts, but not many. There is a sense of entrepreneurship



Busy downtown Columbus Junction on Monday afternoon. (Photo by Aly Ryan)

in our downtown area.

We are caring people. A look at the monetary donations after the flood, or the many successful benefits that are held in the community for individuals facing difficulties, shows that nobody needs to feel alone in the Columbus Community.

We have a rich heritage. Every summer we publish stories of family and neighborhood reunions that have been held for years. We just celebrated one of the largest attended

Columbus Days in its fifty year history. Next week we will celebrate our 21st Family Night.

We have an array of medical services in our community: doctors, dentists, a chiropractor, a pharmacy, a care center that sincerely looks out for the needs of its residents.

We have two very progressive banks that keep our community's interests in the forefront. Our supermarket will rank with any in the area for services and inventory. The list

could go on and on, but these are a few of the highlights that come to mind.

To conclude, the news sources are telling us that we may be headed for some difficult economic times, and maybe we are. But if so, we will survive. And this will happen because of the great people we have here. As this Thanksgiving nears, I give thanks to all of you readers for allowing me to be a part of what God smiles on everyday, *the Columbus Community*.

City begins to receive FEMA recovery funds

By Jim Rudisill

After several months of anticipation, Columbus Junction city officials finally got the news Monday they been waiting to hear, a \$148,000 federal reimbursement check had finally arrived. City officials had been anticipating the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) check for several weeks, but had become increasingly frustrated over its delay.

Mayor Dan Wilson explained the city had spent most of its \$250,000 reserve to fight this summer's floods and needed the reimbursement to replenish the city's coffers. At the council's November 24 meeting, rescheduled from November 26 because of the Thanksgiving holiday, Wilson was finally able to announce the revenue.

"We've had some progress," he told the council, adding additional checks are expected, but unknown when..

"It was good getting that first check," Wilson said.

There was also plenty of other

good news during the relatively brief council meeting. In addition to the FEMA check, officials provided a positive report on other flood recovery efforts and the council was told the city's supply of winter road salt had suddenly been increased by three additional truckloads.

While the big financial news was the FEMA check, other officials also reported progress on other financial and economic efforts.

Wilson said around \$85 million in other federal funding is in the pipeline, but he did not have any details on when any of that might funnel down to local governments. Funding from Governor Chet Culver's Jumpstart program and the Embrace Iowa program were also helping local businesses and non-profits, such as the Colonel's Kids day care center, recover from the flooding.

Council member Hal Prior also told the rest of the council the local senior citizens center had received its first of two expected recovery checks. He did not identify the amount of the check, but said the assistance would

help cover a variety of expenses. Heat should be on in the center within a couple of weeks. Prior told the council a state emergency official had visited the center last week and suggested some additional funding sources to help with the center's recovery.

Prior also reported a video was being produced by Iowa Workforce Development officials to highlight the role the state employment agency has played in providing recovery workers for repairs at the center. He was unsure when the video would be available.

In other flood related discussions, Wilson said officials were still waiting to hear on the status of the Subway restaurant. He said there had not been any official word from the company about recovery efforts and he said if the city does not hear something soon, it might need to consider taking action.

"We may need to push, but hopefully we'll hear something from them," he said.

Officials connected with the mo-

tel have been in contact with city officials and indicated they are interested in reopening the building, Wilson said.

In other action, the council learned a potential road salt shortage this winter might have been eased by the unexpected acquisition of three more truckloads. City officials had reported earlier this month that the city only had one truckload of salt on hand and was unlikely to obtain any more. The city used nine truckloads last winter.

However, Wilson told the council Monday that three more loads had been located by city workers and the outlook now was much brighter, although officials said they would remain conservative with salt use this winter.

In final action, the council agreed to reschedule its December 24 meeting to December 29 because of the Christmas holiday. Wilson also reported that city workers were optimistic that recent cleaning of a sewer would solve backup problems in the south end.

Kathy Vance honored at Extension Awards Convocation

Kathy Vance, Louisa County Extension Education Director (CEED), was awarded the Iowa State University Extension Achievement by an Educational Team Award at the 2008 Extension Awards Convocation in Ames on October 23. Vance received the award as a member of the

statewide Horizons Project Team. They were recognized for their outstanding effort in delivering an educational program, carried out with much originality or creativity.

The Horizons Community Leadership Program to Reduce Poverty helps targeted communities build

stronger leaders to address economic issues and implement change. Morning Sun has been a Horizons community and learned about poverty through Study Circles. In addition community volunteers completed 30 hours of LeadershipPlenty® training, identified and prioritized community

needs, and completed several community projects. Vance was involved in the project in Morning Sun and is currently overseeing the Horizons process in Columbus Junction.

These awards were presented during the annual Iowa State University convocation ceremony.

Winter Nature Camp scheduled

Fresh air, exercise and time away from the electronics are just what kids will need over the holidays. You'll find all that and more at the Winter Nature Camp to be held Tuesday, December 30, 2008 at Langwood Education Center. Two camps will be offered for youth in grades K-6th. The first camp will be held from 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. and the second from noon - 3:00 p.m. Youth may attend either camp, but not both.

Participants can expect to spend time both indoors and out. There will be lots of hiking and exploring nature in winter plus crafts, games and snack. Each camp is limited to fif-

teen children. Pre-registration is required by Friday, December 19. Carpool lists will be available to help working parents get their child to camp. Langwood Education Center is located three miles southeast of Grandview.

For more information or to receive a registration form, contact Louisa County Conservation at 319-523-8381 or lccb@lccb.org.

Registration forms are available online at www.NaturallyLouisaCounty.com under "Upcoming Events", as well as at Louisa County libraries. Registration form and payment of \$10/child is required to reserve a spot.

Economic Development Committee asks for community input on signs

The Economic Development Committee of Columbus Junction met recently to again discuss entrance signage for the town. Previously the committee had determined that two signs would be erected, one on the east entrance to town and one on the west entrance. However, with the flooding this summer, it is felt that a sign on the east entrance would not be practical.

The committee is now considering a single sign located in a position that would be centrally located. The committee will meet again on Wednesday, December 17th at 5:00

p.m. at the Civic Center. Anyone who would like to participate in this project, or who might have ideas to share are encouraged to attend. Your input is important, as this will be a long term investment in our community. If you have questions, please feel free to contact any of the following committee members: Dan Wilson, Al and Dianne Bohling, Hal and Polly Prior, Julie Heindel, Andy Carpenter, Jim and Freda Sojka, Bernabe Rodriguez, John Carpenter, Mallory Smith, Nitzza Lopez, Tony Onesto, Jim Gabriel and Tim Wink.

Briefly -

2009 County Fair dates set

Dates for the 2009 Louisa County Fair will be Monday, July 20 through Saturday, July 25, 2009.

Christmas at the Heritage Center

WAPELLO - The annual Christmas at the Heritage Center will be celebrated at 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 7 at the Louisa Center Church, 609 N. James L. Hodges Ave., Wapello. Everyone attending is invited to join in singing Christmas carols. Special music will be presented by Alana Poage, Merlin Schneider and Lori Arnold, with Sandy Winter accompanying on piano. Harlan Winter, former pastor of the Wapello and Morning Sun United Methodist Churches will share Christmas stories. Following the program, refreshments will be served at the Museum building south of the church.

Community Christmas Cantata

Begin the celebration of the Advent season, by enjoying the presentation of a community Christmas cantata on November 30, 2008, the first Sunday in Advent. Directed by Jay Hauenstein, accompanied by Jill Bowen, and narrated by Steve Hellscher, the Community Choir will present "The Promise Fulfilled" by Lani Smith, at the Columbus Junction United Methodist Church, 7:30 p.m. Additional seasonal selections will also be presented. A time of fellowship and refreshments will follow the cantata performance. This ecumenical event is sponsored by Junction Entertainers LTD.

Christmas Potluck at Colonial Manor

Family, Friends and Guests please come join us for a Christmas Potluck on Wednesday, December 10th 2008 at noon in the Resident Dining Room. Meat, rolls, beverages, and table service will be provided. Please bring a dish of your choice. We hope you are able to celebrate with us!

Advent at Conesville United Methodist Church

The Conesville United Methodist Church will begin observing the Advent season on Sunday, November 30th. Everyone is invited to come worship with us. A brunch will follow the services, which begin at 8:30 a.m.

Elvis Presley and Patsy Cline to visit Colonial Manor

You are invited to attend an afternoon of special entertainment by Elvis Presley and Patsy Cline. This is the fourth year to visit Colonial Manor and they always provide a great program. Be sure to mark Tuesday afternoon, December 2nd, at 2:00 on your calendar. The entertainment will be held in the resident dining room. We look forward to seeing you!

Etude Club potluck

Etude Club's December 2, 2008 Christmas potluck meal and meeting will be in the home of Marsha Gerot starting at 6:00 p.m. The lesson on "Happy Christmas Stories" will be shared by all members. Members are asked to bring paper products to this meeting to be given to the Community Action Program (CAP). If you are unable to attend, be sure to inform the hostess ahead of time.

PEO to meet

The next meeting of PEO Chapter CX will be held at the home of Jill Masonholder on Monday, December 1 at 7:00 pm. The meeting will be co-hosted by Judy Sievers. Members will enjoy a \$10 Gift Exchange "wrapped" in an old handbag.

School Board to meet

The Board of Education for the Columbus Community School District is giving notice of a Special Meeting/Budget Workshop I on Monday, December 1, 2008, at 6:30 p.m. at the Roundy Library, 1212 Colton Street, Columbus Junction, IA 52738.

FCCLA Christmas items

The Columbus FCCLA is selling personalized cakepans, mugs and cutting boards. If interested, call Lois Mincks at Columbus Community Schools at 728-2231, ext. 3332. Orders will be placed by December 4th, and will be back by Christmas.

Louisa Interpretative Center grant

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, announced today that the Department of Transportation is awarding a grant of \$576,000 for the Louisa Interpretive Center along the Great River Road. The Federal Highway Administration's scenic byways grants recognize, preserve and enhance America's scenic roads and highways throughout the United States.

"I am pleased that this funding will give Iowans and those from across the country the opportunity to better enjoy the beauty of the Mis-

issippi River," Harkin said. "These investments are important to further developing tourism in Iowa."

The Louisa Interpretive Center will contain exhibits and information about the area's cultural and natural resources associated with the Mississippi River. The center's design will incorporate the mound-building architecture of past Native American cultures of the area. This grant will go toward costs associated with archaeological and geotechnical studies, land acquisition, grading work and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification.

Gazette Family Night Happenings

A number of things will be happening at the Gazette office on Family Night.

The local Brownie Scouts will be on hand to receive your used clothing for the Gazette's annual clothing drive. Any good, usable clothing will be appreciated. Last year we received 4 tables of clothes, and found a good home for every article.

Also, the new Columbus Women's Fitness Center will have a tree displayed, and will be ready to answer questions and accept appli-

cations from new members. So, if you have been considering joining the Center, Wednesday, December 3rd is your chance. If you want to join, but can't make it on Family Night, applications are available at the Gazette, Northwestern Mutual and H&R Block.

And don't forget, it is the place to pick up one of John's Famous Homemade Cookies. I'm sure these cookies have become a regular Family Night Holiday Tradition to generations.