

Assisted Living soon to be a reality

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

Another step in the improvement of the quality life in the Columbus Community moves closer to fruition as work is progressing on the new assisted living facility that will stand adjacent to Colonial Manor. As reported in an earlier Gazette story, nine living units are planned at the new Colonial Estates, with room available for expansion.

Although the facility will have its own entrance, it will be accessible from Colonial Manor through a breezeway. This will allow access to the Manor for the staff and the assisted living tenants, as they wish. Each unit will have a bedroom, bathroom, living room and kitchenette. Along with the individual living units, tenants of Colonial Estates will have access to a community kitchen, front room, dining room, study, laundry room and beauty shop.

The first step necessary in the construction process was the installation of a new street to give direct access to Colonial Estates. The street was poured in November, however not without a number of weather difficulties. An unusually wet November delayed construction a number of times, but Colonial Lane is now finished and footings for the structure itself are in place. Weather permitting, the floor is expected to be poured this week. It is hoped that the structure can be enclosed before winter weather sets in. A completion date of next summer is still being anticipated, as the general contractor feels that, despite the weather issues, the project is still within two weeks of schedule.

As stated in the earlier story, this facility will now give our community the final level of care needed by the elderly, assisted living, a level that is not available elsewhere in



Newest street in town, Colonial Lane

Louisa County. Caring individuals came together in 1975 to make an investment in a nursing home for the community. They dismissed an opportunity for an immediate profit on this investment by retaining local ownership and not selling the facility to outside interests as many smaller communities did. Later, in 1995, the group went a step further and moved to local operations as well as local ownership. These individuals then made another investment in 1998, with the creation of Colonial Heights, an independent living facility. These investments were not without sacrifice. The stockholders realized that their return on investment would be sacrificed for a time as the facilities

were paid off, but they did not back off in their interest in our community's welfare.

And today, as in 1975 and 1998, the Colonial Manor stockholders once again have shown that they are willing to make the welfare of our citizens their top priority with the construction of Colonial Estates. As with all ventures, there are risks. A risk that there may be some time before there are enough residents in the facility to make it cash flow (however as of this date there appears to be a number of interested parties), a risk that dividends on their stock will be reduced or even eliminated for a time being as the facility is paid off, and the ever present risk of escalat-

ing costs, both in construction and after the facility is in operation. But, as one stockholder indicated to the Gazette, these are risks they are willing to take and manage when the payoff is the opportunity to offer such a needed service to our area citizens.

Individuals with this unselfish sense of compassion and progress is what allows the Columbus Community continue to move forward, and the new assisted living facility will soon be in place to serve many generations of Columbus area residents.

(The Gazette congratulates and commends the Colonial Manor stockholders and staff on this new venture, and we will keep readers updated on the construction progress.)

County property owner converts flood damage to wildlife habitat

By Jason Johnson, Public Affairs Specialist

Following the June 2008 floods when a levee broke along the Iowa River sending torrents of water out of its banks, Felipe Urquiza of Wapello knew floodwaters would always threaten his home and 13-acre farm that sit in the Iowa River floodplain in Louisa County.

With his home damaged beyond repair and cropland inundated by floodwaters, Urquiza decided to voluntarily retire his flood-prone cropland and enter it into a permanent easement. The land will be restored to deep-rooted permanent cover of wildlife habitat in 2010, and be allowed to flood naturally.

Urquiza is one of 35 Iowa landowners to enroll in the USDA's Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program's floodplain easement option through funding by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. This allows the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to acquire the land and fund the conservation restoration work. Urquiza and the other landowners in the program retain several rights to the property, including control of public access, and undeveloped recreational use such as hunting.

Statewide, private landowners voluntarily placed nearly 4,000 acres into the EWP program using ARRA funds, according to Monica Monk, easement programs coordinator for NRCS in Iowa. Urquiza's easement is just one of a handful in Levee District #11 in Louisa County, where a major levee broke. "These easements will help mitigate persistent downstream flooding on the Iowa River," said Monk. "Restoring floodplains to a natural state ensures riverine ecosystems function properly."

Those functions include conserving and improving fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, floodwa-

ter retention, groundwater recharge, and open space; reducing long-term federal disaster assistance; and safeguarding lives and property from floods and erosion.

Safeguarding his family is a major reason Urquiza chose to move away from the Iowa River floodplain, where he lived for seven years. His family, including two infants, evacuated their home at 3 a.m. as floodwaters threatened their home on June 13, 2008.

"The sheriff's department about knocked down our door to get us out of there," said Urquiza. "When we gathered our things and left, the water was about halfway up our tires - another hour and they would have had to rescue us by boat, or who knows?"

This wasn't the first time the home flooded. "Our home was raised about four feet following the 1993 floods (by previous owners)," he said. "We were assured it wouldn't flood again."

The family home was destroyed, filled by four feet of water. It will be razed through a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood disaster program. "The (government) programs will help us buy a new property and possibly build a new house," said Urquiza.

Urquiza has not decided how he will use the property, but he likes how the restoration work will create needed wildlife habitat. "I enjoy nature a lot, so I'd like to see the land look like it did before it was farmed," he said. "During harvest I saw all kinds of wild animals running for cover - maybe this can be a wildlife refuge."

Applications for the EWP floodplain easement program were submitted voluntarily and screened to ensure they met specific criteria before selection, such as the impact and connectivity of streams and floodplains, their proximity to wetlands and wildlife habitat, and the likelihood of generating jobs through restoration ac-

tivities. These activities include, but are not limited to, removal of structures that impede or alter water flow; re-establishing natural vegetation; and restoring fish migration routes.

For more information about the ARRA of 2009 flood recovery, visit www.recovery.gov.

Bridgett Ball wins Columbus High School Columbus Day Quilt



Bridgett Ball, rural Winfield, won this beautiful quilt at the raffle drawing on Columbus Day, Saturday, October 10th. The quilt was designed by Lori Beenen's Columbus High School Geometry Class. It was sewn together by students in Lois Minck's consumer science class. The quilting was done by Janet Novy of Kalona. The students that worked on it donated it to the Louisa County Habitat for Humanity to be used as a raffle item for a fundraiser. Thank you, Columbus Junction students!

Don't miss family night
downtown columbus junction,
tonight 5:00 - 8:00 pm. Play
the family night treasure hunt.
stop in the gazette for forms

Briefly -

Legion and Auxiliary Christmas Party

The American Legion and Auxiliary members will hold their annual Christmas potluck and party Tuesday, December 8th. Social hour is at 5 p.m. Dinner is at 6 p.m. Remember to bring a man and woman's gift to exchange. Also, please bring men's white socks to be taken to the Veteran's Hospital and to the Veterans Living at Colonial Manor.

Blood Checks at Senior Center

Colonial Manor will be doing blood pressure and blood sugar checks on December 10th at the Columbus Senior Center from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Family Night in Columbus City

Columbus City will hold their annual Family Christmas Night on Wednesday, December 9, 2009 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Columbus Masonic Lodge. Santa will be arriving at 6:00 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

CJUMC Christmas Concert

The public is invited to a Christmas Concert entitled "The Spirit of Christmas" on Wednesday, December 16, 2009, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. at the Columbus Junction United Methodist Church. Come hear the wonderful sounds of Christmas music by local performers in the beautiful candle-lit sanctuary and enjoy fellowship and refreshments following the concert (no admission fee).

Family Night at the Senior Center

The Columbus Community Senior Center will be open tonight, Wednesday, December 2 for Family Night. We will be serving cookies and punch. To kickoff this wonderful season of love and sharing, we are asking that when you come to the Senior Center you bring a food item to be donated to the Food Bank. As we all know there are those who are in need and especially at this time of year we need to share. Come on Family Night to meet with friends for sharing cookies and to share a food item. We will be looking for you.

FFA Pancake Supper

The Columbus FFA Alumni and Columbus FFA are hosting a pancake supper from 4:30-7:00 p.m. on Friday, December 4 in the student center of the High School. All proceeds will go to the FFA, helping with throughout-the-year expenses.

Half Hour Club to meet

The Half Hour Club will meet on Tuesday, December 8th, at 12 Noon at the Columbus Junction Senior Center. If you want to eat lunch, please call the center the day before. Program: Columbus Community Music Department will be present around 1 p.m. Hostesses are Kay Perkins and Ruth Buser. All members are to bring one dozen cookies. Roll call: Favorite Christmas story or presents.

CCHS Fall Play

The Columbus Community High School fall play is "*The Importance Of Being Earnest*" by OSCAR WILDE. Oscar Wilde's masterpiece, *THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST*, received its first performance in London over one hundred years ago, in February, 1895. It has been an enormous popular success in theaters throughout the world since that date. It has been called, "the wittiest play in the English language." Two young gentlemen living in 1890's England use the same pseudonym ("Ernest") on the sly, which is fine until they both fall in love with women using that name, which leads to a comedy of mistaken identities when they end up together in the country and their deceptions are discovered - threatening to spoil their romantic pursuits. The performance will be: SATURDAY, December 5, 2009, at 7:00 pm in the Auditorium. Tickets are \$4.00 for adults and \$3.00 for students.

Christmas at the Heritage Center

WAPELLO - The Louisa County Historical Society will hold its annual Christmas at the Heritage Center program at 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6. The Rev. Harlan Winter will lead carols and program at the Louisa Center Church located on the Heritage Center campus, 609 N. James L. Hodges Ave., Wapello. The program will be followed by refreshments in the museum. Everyone is welcome. As always, there is no admission fee.

County Sears Houses sought

WAPELLO - Beginning in 1908 and ending in 1940, Sears sold kits for building houses through its catalog. An entire house in 30,000 pieces could be shipped in two boxcars. Purchasers also received a 75-page instruction book on how to put it together. Prices ranged from \$495 to \$4,115. In 1924 the easy payment plan was \$30 a month including interest. This information was found in the August-September 2009 issue of "Reminisce" magazine. The Louisa County Historical Society would like to know if any Sears houses were built in Louisa County. If you have information, please call the Heritage Center at 319-527-5247.

Christmas events in Morning Sun

On Saturday, December 5, the Morning Sun Lioness will be hosting their Yuletide Traditions Christmas Tour of Homes along with a bread and bowl supper to be served by the Lioness from 4-7 p.m. The tour will be held from 3:30-7:00 p.m. The Singing Tigers will perform at the school cafeteria from 5-6 p.m. The Community Betterment will be hosting the festival of trees at the new Community Center on Saturday, December 5th from 3:30-7:00 p.m. (Tour of Homes ticket required), Sunday, December 6th from 2-6 p.m. (donation at door), and Monday, December 7th from 5-8 p.m. (donation at door) during the Monday Night Uptown Stroll. Stroll events will include the Festival of Trees, horse drawn carriage rides, soup supper at the fire station, free hot chocolate, bake sale at the library, Santa will be at the fire station and of course businesses will be open late.

PEO to meet

The next meeting of PEO Chapter CX will be held at the home of Susie Leonhard on Monday, December 7 at 7:00 pm and co-hosted by Judy Sievers.

School Board to meet

The Board of Education for Columbus Community School District will hold a Special Meeting/Budget Workshop I on Monday, December 7, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. at the Roundy Library, 1212 Colton Street, Columbus Junction, IA 52738.