

Serving from all corners of the world

Briefly -

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

"One hundred percent of every dollar goes to the cause," is a phrase not many charitable organizations can claim, but as members of the Senior Citizen Center Board learned recently, this is certainly true of the Lions Club International Foundation. Representatives from the Lions International and the local Lions Club met with members of the Senior Citizen Board last week to tour the progress on the Center's recovery, and also to present the Board with a check for \$22,665 from the Lions Clubs International Foundation and a check of \$650 from the local Club to help in the Center's renovation efforts.

How the Lions International came to take on the cause of the Columbus Junction Senior Citizen Center is a story that has its origins half way around the world. Last June, during the area flooding, the Lions International was holding its convention in Bangkok, Thailand. Past International Director Dave Stoufer, a Lion from Iowa, heard about the flooding in Eastern Iowa and approached the Convention Chairman and expressed a desire to have the Lions help. The Chairman told Stoufer to get some information to work with. Stoufer made a cell phone call to Lion Gary Fry, who provided details of the flooding damage and what areas were hit. Shortly after receiving the details, the Lions International Foundation made a total of \$150,000 available for relief efforts. "From the time I got off the airplane in Bangkok, Lions from around the world were already asking me about the flooding, and offering help," said Stoufer.

Both Fry and Stoufer then contacted local Lion, Kris Johnston, to see what help was needed in the Southeastern District. "We really relied on Kris' help," said Fry, "as the District Governor can apply for an immediate \$10,000 grant during an emergency for necessities. Kris was able to get the information we needed for this grant." A total of \$42,000 was eventually granted to



Pictured above with the check from the Lions International Foundation are, back row: Lion Ron Baird, Lion Jerry Gerot, Past Lion International Director Dave Stoufer, and Past Lion International Director Gary Fry. In the front row are: Lion Joann Baird, District Governor Bob Brown, Senior Center Board member Polly Prior and Lion Kris Johnston.

Iowa counties for necessities. "This money was distributed in the form of vouchers that could be exchanged for food, clothing and toiletries," explained Johnston. He stated that in the first few days \$2,600 was distributed to ten local families for these items.

After immediate needs were addressed, the Lions International then began exploring ways to help in the recovery efforts. An additional \$100,000 was committed for affected counties. Of this, \$50,000 was earmarked to help bring back community centers in Columbus Junction, Oakville and Palo. "Community Centers such as yours are vital to small communities," said Fry, "and we knew that the first step in a community's recovery would be the restoration of the community center.

In Oakville, every meeting addressing the recovery is now being held in the restored center." In addition to the Lions International, funds for recovery efforts have come from other Lions Clubs. "Last fall at the motorcycle rally, at our sausage/pancake breakfast, Lions Club President Jerry D. Gerot, was approached by a biker who was a Lion from San Jose, Illinois," said Johnston, "and he sent us a check for \$250 from his club."

Senior Center board member Polly Prior commented, "The Lions were a Godsend to us. Kris came to me and asked what they could do, and I never imagined that they would do so much for us. With the Lions' help, we are so much further in our recovery than I ever imagined." Senior Center board member Tom Huston said, "We always felt the center was

important to save, we just weren't sure how we would do it. Polly has applied everywhere, many groups have come forward, and now with Kris' involvement in obtaining this help for us from the Lions, we're going to make it. Our goal is to be open by the first of May, and everyday we are moving closer to this goal." The Lions funds will be used for heating and cooling equipment, and also to replace some appliances.

"Our motto is 'We Serve,'" said Johnston, "and we are pleased to have had the opportunity to be of service to the Senior Center." Service inspires service, and soon, through the generosity of the local Lions Club and the Lions International Foundation, the Senior Center will soon be able to return to their role of serving the citizens of the Columbus Community.

Blood checks at Econ-O-Mart

Econ-O-Mart will be hosting blood pressure, blood sugar and SpO2 checks on Wednesday, February 25th, from 9-11 a.m. This is a FREE community service sponsored by the Morning Sun Care Center. There will also be offered a Total Cholesterol Count. Free will donation will be accepted for this test to help cover the cost of the testing strips. Everyone welcome.

Cedarcrest Tee-Off Party

Saturday, February 21st at 6:00 is our annual Tee-Off Party, formally called Booze and Dues party. All members are invited or if you're thinking about joining Cedarcrest this year, then come on out and check us out. Food and beverages will be provided.

CCHS Class of 1984 to hold reunion

The Class of 1984 will be meeting today, Wednesday February 18th at 92 Roadhouse at 7:00 pm. This is to make plans for their 25th Class Reunion.

Columbus City Council vacancy

The City of Columbus City has a vacancy on the Council and is looking for anyone willing to serve as a Council Member. Please contact Mayor Mark Shear or City Clerk Lisa Hills or you may submit your name to the City by February 28th, 2009.

School to hold blood drive

The Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center announces there will be a blood drive on Tuesday, February 24th from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Columbus Community High School gymnasium located at 1004 Colton Street, Columbus Junction. To donate call Larry Abrams at 319-728-2231, ext. 3334. Walk-ins are welcome. Donors who last gave blood on or before December 30, 2008 are eligible.

Meal Site's Thursday Coffee

The Meal Site's 4th Thursday coffee will be held on February 26th in the Hope Bible Church basement at 8:30 a.m. Everyone is welcome.

Grassley to hold Town Hall Meeting

U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley invites you to a Town Hall Meeting in Louisa County today, Wednesday, February 18, 2009, from 5-6 p.m., at the Wapello Ambulance Building, 400 Highway 61 South, Wapello, Iowa.

Cattlemen to hold Banquet

The Louisa County Cattlemen's Association will hold its annual Banquet on Wednesday, February 25, 2009, at the American Legion in Columbus Junction. The event will start with a social hour at 5:30 p.m. Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. Tickets will be \$10 at the door, or in advance. Entertainment will be by Brooke Turner. For more information and tickets, call Wade Edwards at 319-657-3054.

Legislative Forum scheduled

A Legislative Forum will be held on Saturday, February 21, 2009, with Senator Tom Courtney and Representatives Dennis Cohoon and Tom Sands at the Burlington Public Library from 9:15-11:00 am.

Master Gardeners to meet

The Louisa County Master Gardeners will be meeting on February 24, 2009 at 7:00 PM at the First Presbyterian Church in Wapello. Kathy Dice, Naturalist with Louisa County Conservation, will be presenting "Permaculture: Thoughtful Landscaping for Food and Profit". A short business meeting to follow. In lieu of monthly dues, please bring canned food items for donation to the Wapello and Morning Sun Food Pantries. All Master Gardeners, MG Interns, and their spouses/significant others welcome.

Blood Drive in Morning Sun

Morning Sun Community is sponsoring a blood drive for the Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center on Monday, February 23rd from 3:00 pm to 6:30 pm at Morning Sun Community School, 311 Division Street. Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center is the exclusive provider of blood and blood products to Unity Healthcare. For more information call Michele Hemphill at 319-868-5781. Walk-ins welcome.

Shellbark Club to meet

Shellbark Club will meet Thursday, February 19th at 11:30 a.m., at Pork's in Winfield.

Amateur Radio Club to host SKYWARN

The Muscatine Amateur Radio Club will host SKYWARN severe weather spotter training on Monday, March 9th at 6:30 pm in the upper level meeting room at the Musser Public Library, 304 Iowa Avenue in Muscatine. The class is free and lasts two hours. No registration is required. For more information, call 563-263-3097.

Community Club to meet

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

Louisa Longbeards to meet

The Louisa Longbeards Chapter of NWTF is hosting their ninth anniversary Hunting Heritage Banquet on Saturday evening, March 7, 2009. The event is being held at Briggs Civic Center, Wapello. Doors open to the public at 5:30 p.m. for viewing auction items. A rib-eye supper will be served at 6:30 p.m. Merchandise to be auctioned includes guns, framed pictures, a rocking chair, sculptures, knife set, NWTF wooden chest, etc. Raffle tickets will be available for a chance on guns and merchandise at the banquet. Purchase your Sportmen's Tier Raffle ticket before March 1 to receive an extra \$20 worth of general raffle tickets. To renew your turkey membership and purchase banquet tickets, contact Todd Shutt, 210 Pleasant Street, Wapello, Iowa 52653. If you have any questions, Todd's phone number is 319/572-1522 or e-mail is t_shutty@hotmail.com.

Jump Rope for Heart

Roundy Elementary Students in grades 3-5 are participating in Jump Rope for Heart. Along with learning new jump rope steps they are also learning about things they can do to keep their hearts healthy. Students will be asking for donations for the American Heart Association until Feb. 20. They will celebrate that day during their Physical Education class with all types of jumping activities! If making a donation by check, please make the check out to the American Heart Association. If you have any questions or would like to make a donation please call Mrs. Vogeler at Roundy Elementary at 728-6218.

Say thanks to a vet by donating or raising funds for Honor Tour

COLUMBUS JUNCTION - A countywide effort is underway to raise funds to send local World War II veterans to Washington, D.C.

The four-day trip, which will include visits to 14 sites in the country's capital including the new World War II Memorial, is scheduled for May 13-16.

There is a sense of urgency to help these heroes see the monument. The youngest World War II veteran is 80 years old and many do not have the financial or physical capability to make the trip without assistance. The fundraising will make it possible for them to make the trip at no cost. There will be 15 wheelchairs on the trip to help the men get around.

Area residents have the opportunity to say "thank you" to 30 area veterans, six from Louisa County, by helping them make the trip.

"We have an honorable cause," said Sam Bell of the Columbus Junction American Legion. "We need to get donations. We urge everyone to give." Tax-exempt donations are being accepted by the Columbus Junction American Legion and the Wapello V.F.W.

Businesses, individuals, organizations, school groups, and churches are being asked to hold fund raisers to show the respect and gratitude the veterans deserve.

The Louisa County veterans who plan to go on the Honor Tour are Russell Orr (Army), Richard Utter (Navy-Marines), Farrel Gentzler (Army) all of Columbus Junction, Delmore Evans of Columbus City (Navy), Wayne Buster of Grandview (Marines) and Bill Furnas of Letts (Navy). There is a waiting list.

One thousand dollars needs to be raised for each veteran. Escorts will pay their own way. Funds need to be turned in by April 1.

Tour organizers, said a filmmaker from San Francisco will be documenting the tour. The Honor Tour should not be confused with the Honor Flight, a national organization, which is a one-day trip meant for those with poor health. Doctors, nurses and caregivers are included on those tours.

For more information, call Pam Ramer at 563-299-0948 or go online to www.wv2honorstour.com or if you would like to make a donation, or have suggestions, please contact:

Allen Wright Hanft American Legion Post
c/o Sam Bell
Community Bank
229 Main Street
Columbus Junction, IA 52738
or
Glenn Allen VFW Post 5166
c/o Butch Buster
703 Buchanan St.
Wapello IA 52653



Tour organizer Pam Ramer describes her emotions while watching the Veterans on the last Honor Tour.

Letter from the Mayor

Let's take on the challenge of the "30 second rule".

I am still amazed at the spirit and character that the people of our community demonstrated last summer in the work to prevent the flooding and in the work to recover. Some of this work is still going on and the spirit and character are still on display. I believe we can keep this momentum going and make a statement about our future.

Others have noticed us, too. Keep Iowa Beautiful and Keep America Beautiful have seen the pride we have in our community and they have seen us pull together to accomplish our goals. They are interested in investing some time, money and expertise in our community to help us achieve even more. This is a real opportunity for us to move ahead and make our community even better.

The visual aspects of a community are important. It tells others a lot about us when they don't have time to stop and really get to know us. The visual images give them a peek into who we are and what we think of ourselves. We might even get enough interest for people to come back for a visit or to just slow down and take another look at Columbus Junction. Most of us realize we have some work to do in this area. But, most of us also realize we have a lot to work with. We have some real advantages, like the trees and landscapes, the rivers and ravines, etc. Our downtown has some historic structures with some character. We have unique features that we can emphasize to those who come for a visit or just pass by.

The improvements will not take place overnight. It is not a quick fix or just a little cosmetic surgery. This is not just a new sign or a little paint. This is a process that involves both planning and implementation and it will not work unless the people of the community get behind it and make a difference. This is part of the comprehensive plan for the future of our community. It takes the same attitude and commitment that people of this community demonstrated last summer.

As Mayor I would ask two things of the citizens of the community. First, please participate in the process. Give some thought to things we can do to improve our appearance and how we want others to see us, both now and in the years ahead. Fill out a survey with some of your ideas and come to a meeting (there will be several opportunities to share ideas). Be positive and take an optimistic approach. Secondly, I would ask all of you to get involved in the implementation. Help make the plans work. There will be ways to be involved. An overall plan for this type of development will include many projects scattered throughout the community. It may include your street or neighborhood, the park or the swinging bridge.

Now is an opportunity to make a real difference for the future of this community. We have worked on a solid and meaningful recovery from a disaster. We have many reasons to be proud and feel good about ourselves. Let's keep the momentum and move ahead. We have good people with good ideas and we are getting the resources in line. Good things will happen if we continue to work together.

Thanks. Dan Wilson, Mayor of Columbus Junction