

Celebrating 20 years of wildlife habitat

By Natalina Sents

As has been the custom for many years people gathered for the annual Louisa County Pheasants Forever Banquet to support wildlife habitat in the area. On February 6, 2010 people gathered yet again for a night of fun and fundraising. A delicious meal was catered by Kalona Country Katering, and meat was donated by Tyson Fresh Meats. Pheasants Forever member Mike Todd and family kindly cooked the pork.

Sponsors of the group who had made a contribution above a given standard were recognized and participated in a raffle of four shotguns. As he has done for years, Keith Forbes of Iowa City donated a Henry Golden Boy Rifle. The beautiful lever action went home with the holder of a lucky card that evening. Also, for many years John Dahl of Dahl Shooting Supply in Fairfield has overseen the transfer of all firearms. Raffles yielded prizes to other lucky people in attendance.

Other raffle prizes included airline tickets to anywhere in the continental United States donated by the Quad Cities Airport, tires, a chain saw, a microwave and guns. Along with raffles, the main event of the evening is an auction. Small Auction Service of Wapello, has provided its assistance with auctioneering since the early years of the organization in Louisa County. Items auctioned included tastefully framed and matted wildlife art, sculptures, and an English Pointer puppy. Seven hunting vests, were auctioned or raffled off, giving the buyer a chance at a



A view of the crowd at the Pheasants Forever Banquet. Photo by Natalina Sents

new gun safe. Local craftsmen also donated beautiful pieces of hand made furniture to be auctioned to raise money for habitat.

The Louisa County Chapter has been around since the local chapter was founded on January 2, 1990. Tom Young, Mike Todd, Ken Purdy, Phil Hubbard, Brian McCleary and Richard Grimm have all headed up the chapter. Chad Grimm currently serves as the president.

The Louisa County Chapter of Pheasants Forever started off as a small group who put on a humble and ill attended banquet. The first banquets were held at the Briggs Center in Wapello and the American Legion in Columbus Junction. Attendance at

the events grew. The banquets are now attended by more than 200 people and are held at the Circle of Pride which generously allows the group to use their spacious facilities to accommodate such a crowd.

The money raised at this event is used to provide and preserve habitat for wildlife, including pheasants. Funds stay in the local area and make the county an inviting environment for animals. Money is used to help farmers with cost shares to plant native grasses, trees and establish other soil conservation measures that benefit wildlife and the general environment. The chapter has also assisted the Louisa County Conservation Board in habitat management, as well

as facility and programming development. The chapter also assists with the planting of food plots and provides manpower for controlled burning and planting of native grasses.

The 20 year existence of Louisa County Pheasants Forever has benefited hunters and non hunters alike who enjoy the establishment of habitat that preserves the birds and animals in the area.

Louisa County Pheasants Forever is thankful for the support of so many people and businesses that help preserve and plant habitat for pheasants and other wildlife. All the people who help make the banquet and its purpose a success are greatly appreciated.

City Council discusses delinquent water bills

By Jim Rudisill

Ignoring the monthly water bill might end up costing some Columbus Junction residents. According to city officials, the city has been sending out around 60 late notices each month reminding residents they are delinquent with their bills. All bills are due on the 15th of each month and the notices routinely go out the following day, city clerk Julie Heindel told the city council during its regular February 10 meeting. Heindel said about half of the reminder notices go out to repeat offenders.

Mayor Dan Wilson said the notices, which are mandated in the city's current water ordinance, are posted at each residence by the city's public works department staff. While residents who don't pay their bill before the deadline are assessed a 10% late charge, the reminders often fail to prod delinquent residents into paying. Heindel said this is especially true for the repeat offenders.

If a bill remains unpaid after the reminders are delivered, a second notice is posted on the front door warning the owner that the water will be shut off in 24 hours unless the bill is paid. "Most people come in after the shut-off notice is posted," Wilson told the council, but by then the city has incurred a considerable expense in employee time to monitor the billing and post the notices. He said that is time that could be spent on other city projects or needs.

"All the work we do on the reminders is not effective," Wilson said, explaining residents who were delinquent were not facing any additional cost or threat until the shut-off notices were posted.

"We may need to be more aggressive to shut people off, (because) until we get to the final step, they won't come in," he told the council.

Wilson suggested the city could either drop the initial reminder and go immediately to the shut-off notice; or penalize residents who receive the initial reminder. He said a \$10 penalty for receiving the reminder and a \$25 cost for a shut-off notice could be implemented.

"For people using the system, at least they are going to pay for it instead of us paying for it," he said.

In a related discussion, Heindel also pointed out that some apartment buildings, especially if they are older structures, either have only one shut-off for the entire building or a shut-off has never been found. That means the city is either forced to shut off the entire building if one person is delinquent or may not be able to shut off anyone if the shut-off is missing.

The council did not take any action and Wilson asked the council's utility committee of Dave Duncan and Phil Kaalberg to continue researching the issue. The two said they would consult with the Iowa League of Municipalities and other communities before reporting back to the council.

City landlords and apartment owners might also be facing some increased scrutiny from city officials. Wilson and council member Mark Huston said they had recently met with officials of the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC) to discuss upgrading the city's rental code. "They said there are some teeth in our ordinance, but that we needed to adjust (some parts)," Wilson reported.

The two said the SEIRPC had helped West Burlington and other communities develop a rental code and the commission would be willing to provide a similar service for Columbus Junction. Huston said SEIRPC's fee would be \$50 per hour up to \$1500.

"They do offer a little bit of everything," he continued, adding there was even commission staff available who could conduct inspections if the city wanted to use that service. "We aren't trying to terrorize anyone, we just want landlords to act appropriately and treat everyone fairly," Huston said, adding he felt this was an action the city needed to take.

"(The SEIRPC) tries to help us with what we have, what we ought to have and get us started on a rental program," he said.

Council member C.P. Pierce said he felt the rental code upgrading would be supported by the commu-

nity. "I think citizens would appreciate this, especially if they live next to someone who's not meeting code. I know I would," he said.

Wilson said having the SEIRPC conduct the study would be a positive step. "It's good to have someone from outside and the fact they have done this before is a valuable asset," he told the council.

Huston agreed and said it offered the best option for the community. "This is the only way I know to get going," he said.

Kaalberg also agreed and said the effort would move the city forward with something it had been promising. "We've been talking about doing this for a long time. We need to get going," he said, adding however, he was concerned the proposed contract did not include a time frame. "I don't want it to drag out a year," he said.

Huston acknowledged the contract did not specify a completion date, but assured the council the commission would not delay. "I would hope by the middle of summer they would have a plan," he said.

Wilson agreed the SEIRPC staff had indicated it would provide a proposal as quickly as possible. "(The) SEIRPC is going to review and get back with something that could be implemented," he said.

The council agreed to sign a contract with the commission to conduct the rental code review, provided it complete the work by August 1. The commission will review the current

U of Iowa students to help with Clean-up and Beautification Project

Seven students from the University of Iowa's Urban and Regional Planning Department are working with the Community Development Center and Keep Columbus Beautiful to put on a series of events around Earth Day, April 22. The students are taking on this task to learn more about planning and organizing community improvement efforts. Residents and business owners will benefit with a cleaner and more attractive community and perhaps some ideas that will become annual events.

The students, who are all Master's Degree candidates, have

been working with the Community Development Center since last fall. Their names are Karl Burhop, Andrea Heffernan, Zak Hingst, Liz Levy, Suyun Ma, Ashley McAskill, and Sara Snyder. Any one of these students may be contacting you in the near future about some aspect of their project; your cooperation is greatly appreciated. The students are eager to learn and meet the people of Columbus Junction as well as to pull together a successful Earth Day event that meets our needs.

The group is working in subcommittees on three main projects which

Briefly -

Alumni Banquet scheduled

The annual Columbus-Cotter-Conesville Alumni Banquet will take place on Saturday, June 12, 2010 at Roundy Elementary School. Reserve the date on your calendar and plan on celebrating with fellow graduates!

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.

Empowerment Board to meet

The Des Moines/Louisa County Caring CommUNITY Empowerment Board will be meeting at the First Presbyterian Church, 801 Middle Street, Mediapolis, IA, today, Wednesday, February 17, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.

2010 Fair dates announced

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.

Ham and Bean Supper scheduled

A Ham and Bean Supper will be held at the Columbus City Masonic Lodge on Friday, February 19, 2010 from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. A Free Will Donation will be available.

Legislative Forum set

A Legislative Forum will be held at the Southeast Community College (West Burlington, IA) from 9-11 a.m. on Saturday, February 20, 2010, with Senator Tom Courtney and Representatives Dennis Cohoon and Tom Sands.

School to hold blood drive

The Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center announces that the Columbus Community High School will hold a blood drive on Tuesday, February 23, 2010, from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., at the high school gymnasium. To make an appointment to donate, call Larry Abrams at 319-728-2231 x3334. Walk-ins are welcome. Donors who last gave blood on or before December 29, 2009, are eligible.

Shellbark Club to meet

Shellbark club will meet February 18th at 9:00 A.M. at the home of Janet Gripple. Please note the time change.

Community Club to meet

The Columbus Community Club will meet this Thursday at Noon at the Senior Center. 2010 dues are now due.

Women's Health Luncheon

A Women's Health Luncheon will be held Saturday, March 6th at 12 Noon in the East Room of the Corner Market (340 North 2nd, Wapello).

Community Foundation grants \$500 to HOPES Program



Jim Crawford, Community Foundation of Louisa County, presented a \$500 Grant to Jill Hoben, Coordinator for Lutheran Services toward their HOPES Program (Healthy Opportunities for Parents to Experience Success). Submitted photo.

when it is available. Subcommittees are listed with the contact person first: [Communications Assessment/Community Asset Mapping](#) Andrea Heffernan - andrea.heffernan@gmail.com, Karl Burhop, Ashley McAskill [Youth Group Committee](#) Liz Levy - elizabethlevy@uiowa.edu, Andrea Heffernan, Sara Snyder [Earth Day Event Committee](#) Karl Burhop - karlburhop@uiowa.edu, Zachary Hingst, Suyun Ma, Ashley McAskill, Sara Snyder