

Observer Editorial**Hats Off!**

By Janine Kock, Observer Editor and Publisher



– Hats Off to Hot Lunch! We all know that it's impossible to please every student every day, but our hot lunch programs do a great job of providing meals to our students. Not only that, but so many times the hot lunch staff become good friends with the students they see and feed each and every day! Supply chain issues continue to wreak havoc with meal planning as those in the lunch program attempt to prepare ahead for an entire month of meals, but they continue to do their best and are hoping supplies will become more readily available.

October 10-14 is being observed as "National School Lunch Week." Promotional materials state that "the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) serves nearly 30 million children every school day. President John F. Kennedy created National School Lunch Week (NSLW) in 1962 to promote the importance of a healthy school lunch in a child's life and the impact it has inside and outside of the classroom."

Locally, students at Ar-We-Va and the Carroll Schools are celebrating National School Lunch Week on Thursday, October 13 with free donuts, long johns and cinnamon rolls being offered to everyone that day!



– Hats Off to Hurricane Help. While no one wants to have to face a hurricane's utter destruction in order to see the best come out in people, it is refreshing to read story after story of people helping others. From life-saving rescues to offers of food, shelter and clothing from near and far, and from the work of professionals such as those from MidAmerican Energy and other power companies to the American Red Cross, the recovery efforts are receiving assistance from all over the country and the world.

One local native, Fred Farrell, who grew up in Vail, has lived in Fort Myers for 31 years and has gone through five major hurricanes. After surveying the damage, he told his Facebook friends last week, "Nothing comes close to this" and "This area will likely never be the same." Farrell goes on to describe his own family as "safe and very fortunate," noting that power was restored quickly in their neighborhood and there was no significant flooding or structural damage.

While Farrell, a 1985 AWW graduate, does not know I'm "borrowing" his post, he said Floridians are thankful for everyone's prayers and concern and added, "If anyone is inclined to send a few dollars for direct relief to people in need in Southwest Florida, I will ensure that your money goes directly to people who need it, of which there are many." He noted that his wife has several co-workers that have lost vehicles, homes, etc... and have no place to go. He listed his Venmo address -- @Fred-Farrell-1 -- and said, "Thanks in advance to any of you that can assist. Every little bit helps!"

Observer Quick Poll**Trick-or-Treat Candy**

The most recent Observer Quick Poll asked, "What is your favorite fall food?"

The answers from which readers could choose were as follows: Chili, 4; Apple Crisp, 2; Anything Pumpkin, 2; Caramel Apples, 2; Pasta, 1; and Hot Chocolate or Cider, 1.

The new question for the next two weeks is "What is your favorite trick-or-treat candy?" The answer list this time includes the following: Snickers; Reese's Peanut Butter Cups; M & M's; Skittles; Starburst; or Forget the Candy -- Give me money or a toy!

Go to The Observer's website today to register your opinion! Visit www.westsideoobserveronline.com. Once on the home page, scroll down until you see the heading, "Take Our Poll."

Consider This Week's Words of Wisdom

Better to chase a dream than to be pursued by regrets.

– Harvey Mackay, businessman and author

Letter to the Editor...**Needed: More milkweed plants, more pollinators**

Dear editor,

There is much to be said about the decline of monarch butterfly populations. Monarch butterflies serve as the proverbial "canary in the coal mine" because they are among the highly visible pollinators.

I have done a bit of research and one study says that there needs to be between 2 and 3.5 billion additional plants of the milkweed family species to ensure their survival and increased population.

The common milkweed we are all accustomed to seeing is only one of the many milkweed species that monarchs use for larval food. The only milkweed species that should not be used is the tropical milkweed.

Prairie Moon Nursery at Winona, Minn., is a very good source for free information about ways to help pollinators.

Galen Bral, Manilla

Wall of Fame Words: LTC Kyle Obrecht 2022 Inductee

Following are the comments made by 2022 Wall of Fame inductee Kyle Obrecht as he was recognized during the Homecoming pep assembly on Friday, September 16.

Good afternoon. I would like to begin by saying I am so honored to be inducted into the Ar-We-Va Wall of Fame. Thanks so much to my niece, Kora, for nominating me and to the committee for selecting me. And, of course, I feel especially honored to stand here alongside my fellow honoree, Brian Luft.

If you would have told me when I joined the Iowa Army National Guard for college money as a 17-year-old kid that I would be standing here receiving this honor over 23 years later, I would not have believed you.

I had no plans to make a career of my military service, but I'm so glad I did. The military has taken me all over the United States and the world. I've had so many cool opportunities, experiences, and adventures while serving to include the United States Army Ranger School, jumping out of airplanes and helicopters, establishing the Regional Medical Coordination Centers as part of the Iowa National Guard's COVID-19 Emergency Response Task Force, leading Iowa's young men and women that serve, just to name a few.

Thanks so much for your recognition of my service; I feel fortunate to have been able to spend my career in service to our state and country, and I am looking forward to continuing to serve in uniform.

Lastly, I want to thank my wife, Ashlie; my children, James and Johnny; my mom, Sandy; and my entire family for their continuous support of my service. I also want to thank all of you, Ar-We-Va, and this entire community for your support over the years.

I am grateful each day to have grown up here in this school and community where teachers, staff, and community members work hard to instill the work ethic and kind of qualities necessary to be successful, regardless of what type of career path you choose.

Thanks so much! And, Go, Rockets!

Watch for comments from the other 2022 inductee, Brian Luft, in a future edition of The Observer.

The Empty Nest

By Curt Swarm, Mount Pleasant

About the only difference between Curt and his high school history teacher, (besides age), is that Curt has bigger feet and a pen in his shirt pocket!

I'm humbled as well as flattered to be invited to my hometown of Monroe for a "Meet the Author and Book Signing." It will be at the Monroe Public Library, 416 Buchanan St., on Saturday, October 15 at 10 a.m. Y'all come. My book, *Task Force IED* will be available there.

Thinking back to the last time I was in the Monroe Public Library, I was a small tyke. My mother would send my sister and me on a hot summer's afternoon to the library, mainly to get us out from under foot. If I remember right, the Monroe Library was a one-room affair on the back of the fire station, facing the old water tower. A lot has changed since then. The Monroe Public Library is now in its own very modern building reflecting the needs of a progressive community.

I also got my writing start in Monroe. I was a senior in high school and the class clown. Realizing that my buddies were going off to college and I was not, for the first time I decided to take grades and studies a little more seriously. There was a first year English teacher (I need not mention her name) who assigned us a short story to write. I threw myself into the assignment and wrote what I thought was a pretty good short story. I turned the story in and it came back to me the next day with a big fat red F at the top of the page with a note, "Plagiarized!" I didn't know what "plagiarized" meant so I looked it up. Shocked, I confronted the teacher and she told me that I did not have the talent to write such "creative prose" and that I must have copied it. Suffice it to say we got all that straightened out. The F was changed to an A-, the minus for my misspellings. But I was left with the knowledge that I did have a God-given talent for writing and that's how I wanted to spend my life—writing. A degree in English from Iowa State University followed a number of years later, and I have spent my life writing, mostly in business, a free newspaper column, "Empty Nest," and several books. I even teach creative writing in our home.

I wish I could locate that teacher and thank her.

Not only will there be a book signing in Monroe, but my high school class of '66, since we missed our 55th class reunion last year due to COVID 19, is going to hold a class reunion following the book signing. It will be at Karlin and Darrell Hjortshoj's (pronounced "Hortsoy") house, 5394 Hwy F70, Monroe, at 1:00 p.m. It's a potluck with Karlin and Darrell providing the meat. All who attend the book signing, whether they were a member of the Class of '66 or not, are welcome to attend. It should be a gala affair. BTW: Karlin and Darrell's house is right beside where I grew up at Maple Hill. So this is quite the nostalgic venture for me.

Suzanne Johnson is responsible in large part for making a lot of these arrangements with the library and the Hjortshojs. Suzanne is married to my former high school history teacher, Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson had the audacity to award me an hour of detention one time (I'm sure I deserved it), causing me to be late for football practice. I had to run laps for that infraction. As Mr. Johnson handed me the "green slip" he said, "Swarm, you'll never amount to much." Today we are best of friends.

My book, "Task Force IED" is about the Iowa National Guard's deployment to Iraq. It's a barn burner and doing quite well in sales. "Task Force IED" has a five-star rating on Amazon. It would be a privilege for me to sign your copy. See you in Monroe on Saturday, October 15th.

Have a good story? Call or text Curt Swarm in Mt. Pleasant at 319-217-0526, find him on Facebook, email him at curtswarm@yahoo.com, or visit his website at www.empty-nest-words-photos-and-frames.com.

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Author Returns to Hometown of Monroe for Book Signing and Class Reunion.