

Ackley World Journal

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BECKY SCHIPPER/
ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL

Rae (far right) and her classmates enjoy their cookies and conversations during the celebration day. Students enjoy the time out of the classroom, sharing the fun with their friends and teachers.



It's the Cougar Way

BECKY SCHIPPER
EDITOR

When students come together in a building, there are bound to be differences. Throw in staff, administration, support staff and volunteers, and there becomes a countless number of ways to act and react to the huge number of interactions taking place each and every day.

In a continuing effort to provide AGWSR elementary students with consistent school-wide expectations, the district provides the students with a program they've dubbed 'The Cougar Way'. While readers may be familiar with the term, not all know what takes place with the program.

Previously known as PBIS (positive Behavior Interventions and Supports), the program provides each student district-wide - in this particular instance, those in grades K-5 - the same expectations and rules for their behavior in the school.

Through the program,

students learn that they must be respectful, responsible and that they are, in fact, a team.

Armed with the knowledge which has been provided through a simple outline of what is expected of them in each area of the school - classroom, hallway, restrooms, cafeteria, even

on the bus and at recess, students build a set of instincts and reflexes within the confines of the district buildings. Together they build shared beliefs which bind them together and provide a feeling of contributing to something larger than themselves.

Molly Forgy serves as a Student Success Coach and is one of the members of the districts' Student Success Team. Their goal is to accentuate the positive actions of the students through the Cougar Way.

"When we see students exhibiting positive behaviors, we - teachers, administration, staff, and support staff, can give

Paw Points to that student," explains Forgy. As an example, if they see a student give another student a compliment, a Paw Point is provided. Students, in turn, can use those points to 'purchase' rewards - things like candy and other small trinkets, from the Cougar Store.

Points can be accumulated and used for larger rewards, things like listening to music on headphones, being royalty for a day (wearing a crown and sash), using Mrs. Keninger's chair for the day, being a captain in P.E. class or using a fancy chair for the day.

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COUGAR > PAGE 2

Accentuate the POSITIVE



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The AGWSR school board held their second meeting in their new board room on Feb. 13. The room includes four large screens, one on each wall, so those attending can view documents, such as this presentation made at the meeting by the AGWSR Student Success Team.

Plans for the future of AGWSR

BECKY SCHIPPER
EDITOR

The AGWSR board heard again from SiteLogIQ at their February meeting, a follow-up from the presentation made the month prior. The company specializes in energy services and facility solutions and could help the district proceed through possible future projects.

SiteLogIQ deals with all aspects of construction projects from designing and engineering to management of projects and handling public relations.

Jeff Herzberg, representing the company, spoke to the board via ZOOM, and explained that the company can provide the board with a better understanding of the district's needs and fill a lead role in making those facility changes happen. The company can aid in the formation of groups charged with assessing and gauging the needs/wants of the district.

Erik Smith, superintendent, explains:

"In the past, the board had

discussions on how to best move forward with our facilities. These discussions led to the HVAC project in Wellsburg, along with the office project in Ackley," he said. "We have also held discussions on an HVAC project in Ackley, athletic facilities, bus barn and other district needs and wants. None of those discussions included the greater community. What we are doing is backing the train up a little and bringing the community into the discussion so we know what their priorities are."

SiteLogIQ can lead community-based groups designed to gather feedback and input on potential projects as well as determining what the communities will support, according to Smith. In turn, discussions change from a board led project to a community led project which is a benefit if it is decided a bond referendum is a feasible funding stream to accomplish those goals.

Smith notes that on recent projects at the school - the HVAC project in Wellsburg and the office

project in Ackley - he needed to work with an architect, engineer, and general contractor. On larger projects, Smith would need to also work with a construction manager and public relations firm. Working with SiteLogIQ, would release him from those roles and allow him to focus on his positions with the AGWSR and G-R school districts.

SiteLogIQ does charge a fee for projects at a rate of 18.75 percent of the cost.

With a \$20 million project, for example, those fees would be included in the cost of the project, changing the actual amount available for it. Using that same \$20 million project example, \$16,250,000 would go to the project, the remainder would be paid to SiteLogIQ in fees.

Smith noted that the \$20 million is an example and that the district would, by no means, spend that much, unless the community decides that is what they want to spend.

Further cuts made in city budget

BECKY SCHIPPER
EDITOR

With Mayor Mike Nuss absent, Mayor Pro-Tem Judy Crawford led the Feb. 8 Ackley council meeting. Along with discussions surrounding the merger of the Ackley Volunteer Ambulance Service and Eldora EMS, members discussed changes to Fiscal Year 2024 budget.

Along with cuts from their wish lists, made in January, another round of cuts needed to be made, to adjust it due to the legislative error regarding multi-residential property roll-backs which had been put in place in previous legislative sessions.

City Clerk Malena Dennis had predicted in January that the City of Ackley would need to cut another \$50,000 from the budget in order to meet those changes.

Further cuts to the FY24 budget, approved at the February meeting, equaled \$32,150, which may or may not meet the decrease needed due to that error.

"We don't know exactly how much will need to be cut, but at least we'll be somewhat in line when that figure is determined," Dennis said. "Department heads looked at their budgets to see where they could make further cuts."

Council approved the FY24 proposed budget which included the following cuts, in addition to those made last

month: Parks, Cemetery and Streets will cut a new mower - opting instead to repair the current one; Community Beautification removed some shipping charges; Ackley Police Department will see a \$300 decrease in uniform allowance, \$500 from training, and another \$500 from vehicle repairs; Ackley lifeguards will no longer be reimbursed for training; Animal Control budget decreased by \$500; and the Ackley Fire Department will see a \$2,000 decrease in their budget. Also cut from the budget was funding planned for mayor and council trainings, as well as travel and meeting supplies from the Ackley Public Library.

This second draft, approved by the council, leaves the city \$36,456 in the black.

"If they cut \$40,000 from our revenue, we'll be \$4,000-ish in the red," Dennis explained. "I won't know revenue until it is completely passed through." She continued, "I expect to see revenue loss for the next eight years. We'll struggle. The best we can hope for is a reassessment of properties."

A public hearing on the proposed budget will be held on March 8 at 7 p.m. in council chambers. Residents may voice their opinions at that meeting. Written comments may also be made prior to the meeting.

COUNCIL > PAGE 2

BOARD > PAGE 2





BECKY SCHIPPER/ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL

Brittany Shaffer is the new office assistant at the World Journal. She began her role in late October, and is already meeting subscribers and readers who visit the office.

New face at the Ackley World Journal

There's a new face at the Ackley World Journal as Brittany Shaffer joins the staff as office assistant. Brittany began her role in late October and will be in the office each Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, assisting customers, answering phones and taking care of other tasks.

Brittany is familiar with the area, living in Ackley as a child before moving to Hampton where she attended school from fifth through 12th grade. In 2020, she and her husband, Reid, moved to Ackley with their children – Kaydence, Piper and Phoenix. Reid is employed at Unverferth in Shell Rock. He serves on the Ackley Volunteer Ambulance Service.

Brittany is enjoying her role and has already taken on a bi-weekly feature she has yet to name, and contin-

ues to provide readers with a favorite column – 'Memory Lane'.

"I'm enjoying my position and learning new things each and every day I'm in the office," Brittany said. "I look forward to helping our customers with what they need and meeting them is a highlight of my work day."

Along with office duties, you'll find Brittany out and about in the community taking photos, deliver papers and gathering news leads.

"This is an exciting time to join the AWJ and I'm happy to have Brittany share in providing our readers with their news. I'm confident that she will continue to grow into her role of helping in the continued success of the paper," said Becky Schipper, Editor of the Ackley World Journal. ●

Franklin County names Extension Officers

Four officers were elected during the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Franklin County extension council organizational meeting in January. The nine-member county extension council annually elects officers to comply with Iowa law.

Kari Subbert, Hampton, is the newly-elected chairperson. Subbert will preside at all meetings of the county extension council, have authority to call special meetings and perform

duties as performed and exercised by a chairperson of a board of directors of a corporation. Joe DeVries, Sheffield, was elected vice chairperson.

Kaitlyn Porter, Geneva, was elected secretary and has the responsibility of keeping the minutes of all county extension council meetings and signing required papers for the council.

The council elected Laela Ragsdale, Hampton, to the treasurer position. The treasurer has

charge of all the funds of the county extension council; receives, deposits, pays and disburses. The treasurer ensures an accurate record of receipts and disbursements and submits reports to the county extension council.

As elected officials, the county extension council is the governing body of ISU Extension and Outreach. The county extension council with ISU Extension and Outreach support hires county staff, manages the county extension budget of approximately \$250,000 and helps determine programming.

In partnership with ISU Extension and Outreach, the council provides educational opportunities that bring university resources to the needs of the county and region. Local county extension programs include the 4-H and Youth Development Program, Iowa Master Gardeners, and Private Pesticide Applicator Training.

The Franklin County extension office is located at 31st Ave NW in Hampton. To learn more, visit www.extension.iastate.edu/franklin. ●

BOARD > CONT'D

A group to review facilities would be made up of parents, community members, city officials, students, staff, business owners, and others from within the communities the district serves. The sole focus of the group would be to review facilities and determine a facilities plan moving forward. The core group would make recommendations on projects.

Herzberg asked the board what investment they were willing to make to reach the communities goals for the district.

Examples of projects the board has discussed in the past include an athletic complex, an example that was used frequent-

ly during the discussions with Herzberg.

The board had discussed the need for a public relations company in the recent past. Those conversations have been put on hold until a decision on what services could be provided by SiteLogIQ.

The February meeting also included the possibility of increasing options available to students during breakfast and lunch. Smith explained that one way to do so is to work with a food service management company.

"We are in the first step of the process which is completing the Request for Proposal," Smith said, adding the next step is to open a bid window allowing any company that wishes to provide the ser-

vice to submit a bid.

"We have not committed to anything at this time," Smith said. "We are simply trying to determine what a company would be able to provide the district related to food service. If approved in the future, the company would hire the (nutrition) employees, with current employees to have first consideration."

Smith said that the district is not planning to change meal costs to families, rather hoping for an increase in the variety of food being offered as well as getting increased quality and participation. He noted that districts like Grundy Center and Hudson use outside companies, while A-P had gone back to their own service. ●

COUNCIL > CONT'D

In other business, council approved a liquor license for Grumpy's Bar. Councilman Dan Scallon abstained from the vote. A liquor license for the Ackley American Legion, pending dram shop insurance, was also approved.

A vote to approve an Agreement Addendum for PeopleService was tabled by the council. It included a total adjustment increase of 7.1 percent. Maintenance and repair costs (maximum) would be increasing from \$21,966 monthly to \$23,526 per month, monthly compensation would increase to \$16,533 (from \$15,437) and the 'base amount' from \$4,848 to \$5,192.

Joe Wessels requested

the city investigate other services to see if they can do the work at a lesser rate before anything is signed. A decision is planned for the March meeting.

A request for a drone with thermo-vision for the Ackley Police was not directly approved by the council. While all agreed to its benefits to residents, Chief Gerry Frick was asked to pursue other funding options, including a search for grants which might aid in the purchase.

Frick explained that the drone could be used to aid in the battle of meth in the community, including that the thermal imaging could show where the drug is being 'cooked' at. He noted that the drug can be manufac-

ured in vehicles, homes, even in 18-pack beer boxes while walking through the community.

"I need probable cause to search, thermal imaging would provide that," Frick explained. "In addition, the drone could be used to find people who are lost, for instance, in the woods at Prairie Bridges, and could aid the fire department in battling fires."

Frick will move forward with getting his license to fly a drone, so that in the event funding can be found, he is prepared.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Ackley City Council is planned for March 8 at 7 p.m. in council chambers at city hall. ●

COUGAR > CONT'D

pen for a day.

"Each child earns points on their own," Forgy explained. "Once a month, all students (K-5) take part in celebration days."

Celebration days include many different activities for the entire elementary student body. In December, students watched a holiday movie in the school cafeteria; January's activity was Crazy Shoe Day and allowed students to 'Start the New Year off on the Right Foot'.

"We hold activities which entice all the students and build a culture of working together," Forgy said. She added that the group activities allow the staff to see a different side of students as the academics are set aside for that time period.

February's celebration included decorating Valentine cookies and, of course, quickly consuming them. As the activity took place, students bonded, learning another way see their classmates outside of a classroom setting, and shared a fun time together.

Trinkets used for rewards for Paw Points are supported through Cougar Connection (equivalent to a parent/teacher organiza-



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Julius, an AGWSR third grader, concentrates on his cookie, decorated during the most recent Cougar Way Celebration Day held Feb. 10 at the Ackley Center. The program provides all AGWSR students with behavior guidelines, with focus on their positive actions. Celebration days are held monthly for those in grades K-5, is a fun time for all to share.

tion) and through donations made by community members and teachers themselves.

Forgy came to her role three years ago. In 2014, she earned her bachelor's degree in social work, after which she completed an internship and mental health retreat for students in grades seven through nine.

"I was so moved that I returned to school earning my K-8 special education degree," Forgy explained. "Simply put, my role is to teach social and emotional learning at AGWSR."

Through her position,

Forgy sees kids who are struggling to manage their emotions, and that struggle is on the rise. Cougar Way provides students with lifelong skills, an extra layer of learning those skills in addition to what the student is learning at home.

Other individuals take on the role of Student Success Coach at other levels – Ginger Williams for the high school, Jo Prusha in middle school, Jill Johnson, who leads the Student Success Team, and Jessica Klahsen, who comes weekly to the district as the school social worker. ●



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515 Washington Ave., Iowa Falls
641-648-0099
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