

IOWA TODAY



Visitors return to the main restaurant on a tractor after harvesting berries in the field on June 23 at Wilson's Orchard and Farm in Iowa City. (Geoff Stellfox photos/The Gazette)

Iowans now can receive non-English voting materials

Injunction long had barred state from providing forms in other languages

By Clark Kauffman, Iowa Capital Dispatch

An Iowa judge has blocked the state from attempting to prevent election officials from offering non-English voting materials to the public.

Under the ruling, Iowa counties will again be allowed to provide citizens with non-English ballots, voter-registration forms, and absentee ballot applications. The decision dissolves a 15-year-old injunction that blocked the practice.

The ruling was handed down in a lawsuit that was filed on behalf of the League of United Latin American Citizens of Iowa. The lawsuit challenged the state's application of the English Language Reaffirmation Act to election materials. The act, which was signed into law by Gov. Tom Vilsack in 2002, requires that all political documents from the state "shall be in the English language" unless the materials are deemed "necessary to secure the rights guaranteed by the Constitution."

In 2003, the Iowa Secretary of State's Office began to make non-English voter registration forms freely available online. Steve King, then a conservative Republican member of Iowa's congressional delegation, filed a lawsuit, arguing the practice violated the state's English Language Reaffirmation Act. A district court judge agreed and issued an injunction in 2008 that barred the secretary of state from providing voter registration forms in any language other than English.

But in doing so, the court noted that the parties in the case had not addressed a central provision of the law allowing the use of "any language" for documents that are necessary to secure rights guaranteed by the Constitution. "This exception may justify the use of non-English voter registration forms," the court noted.

In the wake of that ruling, the secretary of state and the Iowa Voter Registration Commission stopped providing voting materials in languages other than English. LULAC of Iowa objected, arguing the action was damaging to its efforts to mobilize Latino voters. In June 2021, the organization

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Iowa looks to harness its natural strengths to grow

AGRITOURISM



A ripe strawberry glistens in the sun on June 23 at Wilson's Orchard and Farm in Iowa City.

State, local governments increase focus on programming to support tourism on agricultural operations

By Marissa Payne, The Gazette

IOWA CITY — As birds sang overhead, Hayley Crabb set two blankets down on the ground overlooking the vibrant green trees and fields that make up Wilson's Orchard. Her 2-year-old daughter, Jean Slezak, munched on some fresh berries they'd just picked from the fields below as they waited for their pizza to be ready.

"Good raspberries, huh?" Crabb smiled at her daughter, who couldn't keep her hands off the carton of plump red berries they'd collected.

Since moving to Iowa City last summer, Crabb said she and her entourage have come to Wilson's a few times a month, mostly on Friday family evenings. The kids love the free tractor rides and the berry-picking, and Crabb appreciates music nights or other family-friendly events.

Wilson's is a place where they can stimulate their energetic toddlers, reduce screen-time and enjoy the outdoors with a refreshing beverage. Crabb's drink of choice on

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TAKE AN AGRITOURISM CLASS

ISU Extension will offer a class for those interested in learning from Iowa's leading agritourism operators and experts. It will be held July 25, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Loess Hills of Missouri Valley, Iowa. Register by July 5. There is a \$10 fee. Visit go.iastate.edu/DKHNMN.

IOWA PROFILE

Biotech CEO returns to UI roots in aim to revolutionize health care

'I really like building something that solves a significant unmet need'

By Vanessa Miller, The Gazette

IOWA CITY — During her trek to base camp on Mount Everest last year, Iowa native Leslie Williams — of course — was taken by the grandeur of the peaks that engulfed her.

But it was the people — the Napelese villagers, Sherpas, guides and fellow biotech executives on her team — who made the experience life-changing.

"You become very close to those that you're trekking with," Williams said. "But also, in the villages, you realize how little you need to be happy. People get so caught up with things that shouldn't

matter. And you have to make sure that you pause and reflect on that on a regular basis."

Williams, at the time, was taking a well-deserved pause from decades of professional exploration, discovery, development and entrepreneurial highs and lows.

She was in need of a reset — coming off the reverse merger of the first company she founded a decade earlier in 2010: ImmusanT Inc., which aimed to develop immunotherapies for autoimmune diseases but had completed five clinical trials before eventually failing to meet its primary endpoint.

While "devastated" by the end of ImmusanT, the failure was just another dip on Williams' professional roller coaster of unexpected ends propelling massive successes. And it ushered in another

new ascent — both literally in Nepal and metaphorically at the University of Iowa, where Williams started her academic pursuits in the late 1970s.

'THIS IS FUN'

As the daughter of an educator and of a technician who had dreamed of attending the UI College of Engineering but never did, Williams — the youngest of three from Gowrie — early on had a passion for discovery, service and science.

"I only looked at one school," Williams, now 62, said about the UI. "And that was the school I looked at because I was looking for a top nursing school. I didn't think of anything else. I really was focused on patients and impacting patients and loved science."

She graduated with honors in 1982 and began working

as a registered nurse in a UI Hospitals and Clinics operating room before relocating to North Carolina's Duke Medical Center, where she worked as a nurse and tacked on a second job — making her entree into research and the opportunities it held.

"That's when I got exposed to the business side of medicine," Williams said. "And I started thinking, there's more to it. I can do this in a bigger way. This is interesting. This is fun."

And so when Glaxo Inc. offered her a job as a sales representative, she said yes.

"I moved to Virginia for Glaxo, and I did very well. But I was always itching to go back to school," she said. "And the physicians that I ended up meeting said, 'You

► CEO, PAGE 8D



Leslie Williams is a biopharmaceutical industry veteran, entrepreneur and experienced biotech CEO with vast experience building companies, raising funds and negotiating strategic collaborations domestically and internationally. An Iowa native and University of Iowa graduate, Williams recently worked with UI researcher Chris Ahern to found and now lead hC Bioscience Inc. — innovating in protein editing with tRNA-based therapeutics targeting genetically defined diseases including cancer. (Submitted photo)

Agritourism/Pursuing potential

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a recent Friday was a sparkling cider.
 “I think businesses like Wilson’s that add these extra touches like the free tractor rides, live music, the pizza oven, it’s just another compelling reason to come out here,” Crabb said. “It’s clear they put a lot of effort into this space and also try to make it affordable and accessible to people.”

Although Iowa is a national and global leader in agriculture, interest still is growing in fully harnessing the potential of these agritourism businesses to draw residents and visitors like Crabb and her family out to play and spend their spare cash.

More businesses and government entities are looking to capitalize on the Hawkeye State’s natural assets and entrepreneurial farm operations to further grow agritourism — an industry of agricultural businesses that engage the public in their farm operations, whether through farm or winery tours, hay rides, pumpkin patches, berry-picking or other activities.

In the Corridor, local governments are working to boost agritourism operations, seeing its potential to attract visitors to the region. State officials looking to boost Iowa’s national profile see similar opportunity in the industry and have elevated their focus on programming to support agritourism businesses.

VISITORS GIVE BOOST

Nicholas Iseman, who lives in Iowa City but grew up on a farm near Brighton, walked toward the entrance of Wilson’s and paused to snack on some of the raspberries he’d picked. Several yards behind him, the strawberry fields beckoned with a powerful sweet, fruity aroma.

Although it would be great to see more agritourism operations around the state, he said, that may be difficult as most of Iowa’s agriculture is dedicated to crops that don’t readily support tourism uses.

“Out here, you’ve got strawberries and raspberries where you can just walk up with a little carton and fill them up,” said Iseman, 22. “Corn and beans is very much a combine thing. People don’t want people trampling through all their stuff. Deer and what-not do enough damage through it, much less tourists through your cornfield.”

Iowa may be the top producer of corn and soybeans, but it lags behind other U.S. states in successfully branding itself as a destination for its agricultural operations.

Penn State University’s College of Agricultural Sciences in early June shared findings that agritourism and direct sales activities are most prevalent in the Northeast, accounting for about one-fifth of all U.S. farms that offer some form of agritourism, including direct sales. The research is based on U.S. Department of Agriculture Census of Agriculture data.

Diane Van Wyngarden, state tourism specialist with Iowa State University Extension, said Iowa has more traditional row-crop and livestock farming, whereas other states may use smaller tracts of land for their agricultural uses to plant specialty fruit that is more likely to draw consumers.

Van Wyngarden said



Lexi Churchill of Dubuque explores the strawberry fields for ripe berries June 23 at Wilson’s Orchard and Farm in Iowa City. (Geoff Stellfox photos/The Gazette)



Visitors explore the Wilson’s pavilion June 23 at Wilson’s Orchard and Farm in Iowa City.

the Iowa Economic Development Authority learned through its strategic planning process that agritourism is a gap in its programming and is making more of an effort to provide information and marketing for it.

It’s growing as a statewide initiative, she said, and traditional farmers are learning agritourism can provide another income stream. ISU Extension is working with organizations such as Travel Iowa to offer classes to better educate farmers on beginning or growing their agritourism business.

“There are people who have a traditional farming background, but they want to do it a different way or they say, ‘My passion is this type of products or fruit or vegetable or animal,’ and so they really want the opportunity to do that on their own,” Van Wyngarden said. “But to generate a revenue, they realize they need to generate income by inviting visitors and sharing.”

Van Wyngarden said agritourism operators need to have “three Ps” to succeed: passion for what you do, personality to engage the public and perseverance to push forth despite challenges.

Agritourism operators say weather is among the greatest challenges they face — influencing whether visitors even come to their operations on a given day or, at its most extreme, damaging their property. And as human-caused climate change worsens, the weather is only getting less predictable.

“If you were a customer looking to come out to our farm, you would check the weather probably before you come, so it can really make or break us,” said Sammy

Petersen, who manages Bloomsbury Farm in Atkins with her family. “We had a very successful fall last year because the weather was good. It definitely can and will happen where we don’t have a great weather season.”

That’s pushed the Petersens to get more creative — opening at different times during the spring, summer and fall to spread the risk, never too reliant on one season’s success. Bloomsbury held an Easter festival called Bunny Bash, has a wine and flower festival starting July 28 and opens its haunted attraction *Scream Acres* in the fall.

Running a heritage farm that’s stood for more than 150 years helps give Bloomsbury an edge to weather the challenges, Petersen said.

“Our unique passion for sharing our home with the community is something that makes us special too,” Petersen said, especially with each family member’s unique strengths to draw from.

A POLICY PUSH

As consumers want more of a physical experience to complement time spent in the digital realm, Paul Rasch, owner of Wilson’s Orchard, said that demand seems to have fueled policymakers’ recent interest in supporting agritourism.

At the state level, operators said the Iowa Agricultural Tourism Promotion Act that Gov. Kim Reynolds signed into law in 2021 was a major boost for their farms. It acknowledges the inherent risks of farming and limits the potential liability of agricultural tourism farms in certain circumstances.

“It’s always top of mind for us to keep safety of our guests at

the forefront of all our projects and plans, but we are a farm,” Petersen said. “We’re on uneven ground. We have a petting zoo. It’s just a different environment.”

Another law enacted in 2020 bars counties from requiring a permit for agricultural producers offering “agricultural experiences” such as a harvest dinner, diminishing bureaucratic hurdles operators face to run their operations.

In addition to the IEDA’s increased focus on tapping into the economic potential of agritourism, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship also has looked to support the industry. Petersen noted the Choose Iowa grant program, intended to help applicants try new ways to process or sell agricultural products, can give a boost to existing or up-and-coming businesses.

Locally, the noise of agricultural processes coming from the operations or dust generated from visitors venturing up gravel roads to reach the sites may pose a political problem for some communities, Rasch said.

“Local governments have to walk a tightrope between supporting or being seen as supporting local farming and agritourism operations and taking account for the kind of people that are living out in rural communities, increasingly, who want everything quiet and dust free,” Rasch said.

In Linn County, officials are drafting a policy to promote agritourism businesses in Iowa’s second-largest county. The policy is anticipated to return to the Board of Supervisors in the coming months after the Linn County Farm

Bureau provides input, Planning and Development Director Charlie Nichols said.

So far, Nichols said the county is not planning to require site plans for agritourism uses that fall below “Tier 2” agritourism uses such as restaurants, breweries, wedding venues or a mix of those uses.

County officials visited Bloomsbury Farm in Atkins, Colony Pumpkin Patch in North Liberty and Walker Homestead in Iowa City to study how these businesses operate to guide Linn County’s policy development. Nichols said they found these uses change from year to year — an operator might start a haunted house, for instance — so policy language needs to be flexible and encompass the dynamic nature of these uses.

“We want to be ‘agritourism friendly,’ and we view this type of use as a great way for our farmers to generate extra income while educating the public on agriculture,” Nichols said.

Fueling industry growth also is a priority in Johnson County, where businesses are in the early stages of banding together to strengthen the area’s reputation as an agritourism destination.

Sarah Thompson, director of rural development for the Iowa City Area Development Group, said her position emerged as a result of Johnson County leaders looking to better serve rural parts of the predominantly urban county. Agritourism businesses there started to meet regularly earlier this year and are working to grow their group, mostly by word-of-mouth so far.

Eventually, Thompson said the group is likely to take on more advocacy for favorable policies at the local and state levels. For now, they hope to craft a regional brand to help Johnson County and eventually neighboring counties be recognized as a destination.

“We have all these cool places, but even Wilson’s will say sometimes there are people in Iowa City who don’t know we’re here and we’ve been here 25 years,” Thompson said. “... That’s a long-term goal is to work regionally as well to try to get people to consider Iowa or Johnson County, especially, as a destination — as a place you go that’s fun and there are all kinds of

things to do.”

‘INVESTMENT’ NEEDED

As agritourism grows, Van Wyngarden said the industry is changing quickly in Iowa.

In the coming years, she anticipates food will remain a universally popular facet of Iowa’s agritourism growth. There’s interest in local foods and learning how to grow your own produce. Some are looking to food preservation and sampling homegrown foods in new recipes.

“Everyone loves good food,” Van Wyngarden said. “They realize they can do it themselves and it may be easier, it may be more fun than what they realize.”

In the Corridor, where many of the agritourism operations’ visitors tend to live relatively nearby, operators expressed less of a need for overnight accommodations. But in rural areas, visitors may be looking for more places to stay overnight to get a feel for what a night is like on the farm.

Overall, Rasch said in a state like Iowa, stronger efforts to market the produce and experiences that farms such as Wilson’s can provide are a “great unfulfilled potential.” If tapped, he said it would likely lure visitors from major cities in neighboring states to visit.

He envisioned state funds supporting an initiative like the federal American Rescue Plan-funded Destination Iowa tourism program to build the state’s agritourism brand.

“We all know that agriculture can be seen as having a bit of a black eye with respect to confinement farming, with respect to use of pesticides. On the other hand, the idea of farms still is strong and very popular in the consumer mind and Iowa’s brand (is) very associated with the good things of farming as well,” Rasch said, such as friendliness, common sense, salt-of-the-earth individuals.

At the state level, Crabb said it feels like there’s not much investment in natural spaces and public lands. She hopes to see Iowa change that trend.

“I know that this has to be such a challenging venture for a small-business owner to be able to start up and sustain — that they wouldn’t be able to do it without state support,” Crabb said.

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Isabella and Edward Santoro pose for a portrait Thursday at the former Winga's restaurant they are renovating into a diner in Washington. Isabella's mother, Lorraine Williams, owns Cafe Dodici and Dodici's Coffee Shop in the southeast Iowa town. (Savannah Blake photos/The Gazette)

Some small towns working to 'SHRINK SMART'

Researchers: Successful towns focus on quality of life, not population growth

By Tom Barton, Gazette Des Moines Bureau



The old Winga's Cafe sign sits on top of the building that Isabella and Edward Santoro are renovating to turn into a diner in Washington.

WASHINGTON, Iowa — A retired couple peers into the storefront window, cupping their hands over their faces to get a peek at the renovations of the former Winga's Restaurant on Washington Square.

"That happens a lot," says Edward Santoro. He and his wife, Isabella Santoro, are investing their sweat and equity in the old Winga's Diner.

The family-run restaurant started in 1928 as the North Side Cafe. It was a staple on the square until it closed in 2006. The storefront has sat empty ever since.

The Santoros hope to open a new restaurant in the space, Northside Diner, next spring.

The renovations have been extensive, removing layers of drywall, linoleum and false ceilings to expose original hardwood floors, brick walls, tin ceiling tiles and skylights, as well as refurbishing the former restaurant's original wood and glass walk-in cooler.

In 2021, the Santoros applied for and received a \$100,000 Main

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Pipelines need more than state to sign off on plans

Sioux City DOT's office to review proposals for 3 carbon capture projects

By Erin Jordan, The Gazette

If Summit Carbon Solutions wants to build an underground carbon dioxide pipeline through north-central Iowa's Wright County as it proposes, the company is going to have to pay more than \$400,000 in fees to cross agricultural drainage tiles and ditches.

Under a resolution passed last month in Wright County, pipeline companies must bore 2 feet below tiles and 5 feet below open ditches — a more expensive process than cutting a trench at crossings, said Dean Kluss, a farmer who chairs the Wright County Board of Supervisors.

"There's millions of dollars of infrastructure out there put in a long time ago," Kluss said about county-controlled drainage tiles that remove water from the flat, rich fields of north-central and north-west Iowa. "To replace it now is extremely costly. That cost should be borne by the industry that wants to put this (pipeline) in."

While the Iowa Utilities Board will decide whether three CO2 pipelines proposed in the state get permits, other government bodies must sign off on parts of these multibillion-dollar projects. And some local regulations may throw a wrench in the works.

Summit Carbon Solutions wants to build a 2,000-mile pipeline, with nearly 700 miles of it in Iowa, to transport carbon dioxide from ethanol plants to underground sequestration sites in North Dakota. The Iowa-based company has asked the utilities board

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Age of AI: Faculty faces new reality as classes start

'Chatbots can inspire you. That is fine. But you should write the content'

By Vanessa Miller, The Gazette

IOWA CITY — For the first time in his 45 years as a professor, Iowa State University's Michael Bugeja — like many of his peers — included

new language in a syllabus this fall for his "media ethics" course addressing head-on an issue threatening to infiltrate all corners of higher education.

"We will not be monitoring the use of ChatGPT," distinguished journalism professor Bugeja wrote. "But you should know that your instructor's expertise is

technical in nature, and he is quick to identify (artificial intelligence) hallucinations."

AI hallucinations — which are artificial intelligence-generated untruths and fabricated information — are what worry Bugeja most about generative-AI tools like ChatGPT, a "large language model chatbot" capable of producing high-level writing,

code and other content based on prompts and questions.

"Language models generate false information that is easy to fact-check," Bugeja warned incoming students. "That said, if you use ChatGPT to help you write a discussion-board response, you will be cheating yourself

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The area's only
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Towns/Moving past population loss

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Street Iowa Challenge Grant to help with the estimated more than \$300,000 cost to revitalize the building. The grants help local improvement projects such as historic building rehabilitation and upper story renovations to bring new businesses and residents to downtown districts.

Isabella serves on several committees and boards, including the steering committee of the local library board and the Hotel Motel Tax Administration Committee. The committee advises the Washington City Council on uses of the revenue derived from the tax on overnight lodging.

The committee conducted a survey of residents to garner ideas for how best to use the tax money in the town of roughly 7,300. A vast majority said they wanted more restaurants and dining options.

"I get it. I miss that not living in a big city," said Isabella, who was born and raised in Italy and spent most of her childhood in Florence.

She moved to Washington during her high school years.

A graduate of the University of Iowa, she pursued a career in international relations in Washington, D.C., and New York, but realized after a couple of years that it wasn't her calling and returned to Iowa to join her family business.

Her mother, Washington native Lorraine Williams, opened Cafe Dodici, an American-Italian restaurant that serves rib-eye in addition to dishes like goat cheese torta and chicken roulade.

Williams opened the restaurant in 2003 after moving back to her hometown following a 30-year sales career in Italy. It was a time when she says downtown was desolate.

In the early 2000s, J.C. Penney's, a hardware store and other downtown mainstays had departed, leaving vacant storefronts and derelict buildings behind. For years, Williams carried around the idea of restoring Washington's downtown and felt the time was right.

She and her husband bought the empty building, stripped off the wood siding to reveal the historic brick architecture beneath and remodeled — decorating the interior with chandeliers, jade dragon eggs and bamboo tables that Williams had collected during her travels.

Despite skeptics' concerns that a posh eatery could survive in a small town, Williams and company soldiered on. She opened a coffee shop next door and renovated apartments above into Airbnb vacation rentals.

The restaurant served as a catalyst for change. Throughout downtown, community pride shows in new brick sidewalks, period street lamps, restored storefronts, a variety of shops and restaurants humming with activity, a bandstand and lighted fountain in Central Park, and a stately \$7 million public library completed in 2009.

The old J.C. Penney's store has been renovated into The Village, a collection of individually owned boutique shops.

"It happened gradually and everyone took a little piece of the pie," Williams said. "Money got spent — grant money, personal money, chamber money, city



Owner Lorraine Williams visits with Wendy Heck of Washington and her friends as they eat lunch Thursday at Cafe Dodici in Washington. Williams says she likes to visit each table and say hello to make the dining experience more personable. (Savannah Blake photos/The Gazette)



Grand Mound Hometown Pride Committee member Sarah Beuthien poses for a portrait Friday in front of the Grand Mound mural. According to a poll by Iowa State University, townspeople of Grand Mound feel positive about their town because of the work they put in to local businesses and community resources such as parks.

IOWA IDEAS IN DEPTH WEEK: URBAN/RURAL DIVIDE

Are the issues facing Iowa's urban and rural communities a divide or are there solutions that can work for both?

Join The Gazette for a free virtual Iowa Ideas In-Depth Week, Monday through Friday, to learn from Iowa experts about the Urban/Rural Divide.

Sign up and learn more at www.iowaideas.com/in-depth/urban_rural_2023.

money, casino money (from Riverside Casino & Golf Resort). You name it. It all came together. There's a new YMCA, a new hospital, a new high school. Everything benefits from a vibrant downtown.

"It's the energy and heartbeat of your community," Williams said. "But, people who live there have to believe in their community and make that leap to make that expensive renovation."

State and regional experts say it's a prime example of how shrinking small towns can manage and stabilize population loss, by focusing on growing community pride and identifying projects that add to residents' quality of life.

POPULATION LOSS

In 1900, Iowa's rural population was just shy of 1.7 million, with almost three-fourths residing on farms or in small towns. However, with the exception of the 1990s, Iowa's rural population has declined in every census over the last 110 years.

By 2010, only 36 percent of Iowans remained in rural areas. Sixty-nine counties recorded population loss between 2010 and 2020, according to U.S. census data.

Washington's population has fluctuated over the last three decades, but has held fairly stable at more than 7,000 residents. The town shed some residents from 1990 to 2000, but saw growth from 2000 to 2020.

Most small Iowa towns, however, will never gain population, said Kimberly Zarecor, a professor of architecture who is leading an Iowa State University research project to understand how shrinking small towns maintain quality of life.

Rural America has been shrinking for decades, and the Great Recession accelerated that contraction as rural manufacturing jobs disappeared, schools closed, farms consolidated, people moved to cities and suburbs, and rural areas saw fewer births and more deaths, Zarecor said.

Iowa has about 940 towns — 75 percent of which have populations of less than 750 people, according to the Iowa Department of Management.

All were founded in the 19th century when there was a need to serve the small farms that surrounded the town. But over the last three

decades, farms have consolidated and agricultural production has shifted to larger farms.

"Family sizes are smaller and fewer people are working in agricultural careers where they have to live on the farm, and it's driving population down," Zarecor said.

"Add on top of that this trend for a preference of suburban living — affordability, quality public schools and good amenities — and it makes it hard for a community to turn population numbers around.

"A community cannot change that trajectory, but people's perception of the town, that can change," Zarecor.

Iowa State's rural smart shrinkage project received a three-year, \$1.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to build upon a 2017 pilot study examining whether there were towns in Iowa that have lost population but perception of quality of life has remained stable or improved.

ISU researchers have focused on learning from six rural Iowa towns (Elma, Sac City, Bancroft, Corning, Mount Ayr and Everly) where active, dedicated residents — called "local champions" — are collaborating to maintain and boost quality of life.

The team found that, among other factors, social infrastructure plays a major role in whether residents report greater quality of life.

Rather than looking outward, trying to lure more families and employers to sparsely populated rural areas, communities have a greater shot at success by building a stronger identity and sense of belonging in a community, Zarecor said.

Economic development projects often require significant financial investment and may or may not pan out long-term, whereas quality-of-life initiatives — such as trails, community events, fitness options and child care — are typically low-cost and in local control, Zarecor said.

"It helps those looking to move back to the community if they come back and see people positive about the community. That's the best advertisement of the town," she said.

Getting there, howev-

er, means first accepting that shrinking towns are not seen as problematic or failing, but rather as a reality to be embraced and understood.

"None of these towns have done anything wrong. ... But we've been conditioned to think that growth is a positive and population loss is a sign of something going wrong," Zarecor said. "We're trying to say the population loss is ... outside the control of any one community and something we have to accept."

CHANGE FROM WITHIN

David Peters is a professor of sociology and rural sociologist with ISU Extension and coordinator of the Iowa Small Towns Project.

The rural Midwest has experienced dramatic changes in health and social well-being over the past decade. Peters said there is an immediate need to understand the impacts of COVID-19 in rural communities, especially in hard-hit meatpacking towns dominated by people of color. There also is a need to better understand how rural quality of life is maintained in the face of population loss, and how small towns can promote social integration between longtime residents and new people of color, Peters said.

Immigration and refugees have helped sustain rural areas, while domestic migration has drawn people away.

In 2022, Iowa lost nearly 7,300 people to domestic migration, but gained nearly 7,300 international migrants, according to U.S. census data.

Peters conducts the Iowa Small Town Poll, which tracks quality of life and social conditions in rural Iowa. Data has been collected every 10 years since 1994 to provide insights into changes occurring in small towns and to inform policy decisions at the local, state and national levels.

Among the "shrink smart" communities studied by ISU researchers that have slower population loss and high quality of life, all tend to have high volunteering rates, more people engaged in leadership positions, are welcoming to new ideas and new people, and use existing resources to identify needs, Peters said.



Kimberly Zarecor
ISU professor



David Peters
ISU professor

Other common characteristics of "shrink smart" communities in Iowa include:

- A focus on philanthropy, with multiple foundations and groups raising money locally to pursue projects identified by the community as priorities

- Projects led by members of the community, rather than city government

- A willingness to try new ideas and accept failure

- A muted definition of success, where keeping the grocery store open or having two or three families move into town is considered a win

- A focus on projects that impact people's daily lives — such as a fitness center, child care, transportation for seniors, and opening a medical clinic — rather than focusing on investing in public art or building an industrial park

- An emphasis on mentoring the next generation of volunteers, reaching out to younger people to run with their idea for a community project or event.

"They realize no one is coming to save their town," he said. "If their town was going to survive and have a future it was going to be up to them. Failing towns place a lot of blame on political leaders in D.C. or Des Moines, or an employer leaving. They're very passive ... and feel any solution to save the town is going to have to come from the outside — an employer coming in or the government coming in."

'THE LITTLE THINGS'

Peters gave the example of Grand Mound, a town of a little more than 600 people in Clinton County near the eastern edge of the state.

Grand Mound has experienced setbacks. The local school closed along with the local grocery store, restaurants and bars. Yet, the town has managed to maintain a relatively high quality of life, Peters said.

Grand Mound has seen slower population loss than other small towns in the state, but has higher social capital. Residents surveyed as part of the Iowa Small Town Poll said they felt much more involved in decisions, and feel the town is supportive and trusting of new projects and ideas. Grand Mound, though, had slower quality-of-life gains on jobs, housing and K-12 schools.

"In short, (Grand Mound) is a moderately shrinking place with a high and growing quality of life," Peters said.

Mayor Kurt Crosthwaite said the town has retained its vibrancy thanks to dedicated volunteers.

Led by the Community Club, volunteers support everything, from the local fire department to holiday and children's events

to upgrading the town's community center.

"There's not much to keep people in town for jobs," Crosthwaite said. "People refer to us as a bedroom community.

We have one bar in town that serves food. We have a convenience store in town to get gas and some grocery items. We have an insurance company in town that recently built a new building. We have a local bank. There's not much."

Town officials have focused on "the little things," Crosthwaite said. A new walking path, lighting and improvements at the ball park. A mural painted on the side of an old meat market. And a "major face-lift" to the community center.

Next on the docket is raising money for a splash pad at the park.

Sarah Beuthien moved to Grand Mound from Davenport 20 years ago. What's kept her there is the safety and peace of living in a small town, strong social ties to others in the community, and the opportunity to make a difference in the community.

Beuthien serves on Grand Mound's Hometown Pride Committee and is president of the Grand Mound Community Center board.

"At one point in time I've done just about everything, except for city council," she said.

She started a holiday tree-lighting festival now going into its fifth year. She also helped raise more than \$30,000 to remodel the community center.

"It brought more people from other towns to rent out the center, which brings more people in our town looking around and seeing things," Beuthien said. "It's a steppingstone to deciding to live here or going to the fireman's breakfast. It all trickles down."

REMOVING THE STIGMA

Zarecor, the ISU professor leading the rural "shrink smart" project, said what's missing in Iowa and other Midwestern states is a strategy at the county and regional level to better use public and private resources to strengthen some of the small communities more likely to have long-term success at improving quality of life.

"Right now, we have a piecemeal strategy and communities competing against one another because there's not enough money to go around," Zarecor said. "At the state level it's more about competing (for grants), but we have not seen evidence of a strategy."

Getting there and getting people more positive about their lives in Iowa, though, is going to require removing the "stigma of population loss out of the conversation," Zarecor said.

IN NEED OF RAIN

Iowa's you-pick farms are slammed by this year's drought

Business 380, 1E



140TH

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The Gazette

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Public transit adapts to climate, riders' needs



Wifag Mohammed makes her way to a bus stop after a running errands Wednesday in Cedar Rapids. A trip to buy groceries, a new pair of glasses and visit to the post office had taken the entire afternoon. Mohammed had been planning to visit her bank as well but decided not to, worried she might miss the last bus home. (Nick Rohlman photos/The Gazette)

C.R. and I.C. prioritize vulnerable residents in transportation network

By Marissa Payne, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — On an overcast summer day, as downtown workers began to leave their offices, Wifag Mohammed sat on one of the flat rocks outside the Ground Transportation Center. She looked wearily onto Fourth Avenue SE, waiting for her Route 7 bus to take her to her southwest Cedar Rapids apartment. A couple of plastic Walgreens bags sat beside her. That Wednesday, Mohammed had spent hours — from 8 a.m. until after 4 p.m. — using Cedar Rapids city buses to get around town. Mohammed ventured



Wifag Mohammed checks a printed bus schedule Wednesday in Cedar Rapids.

► TRANSIT, PAGE 6A

In extreme heat, homeless community left vulnerable

They say they need more help to protect against heat-related illnesses

By Brittney J. Miller, The Gazette

After 12 years of being in and out of prison, Brandon Johnson was released July 16. In the two weeks since, he has been hospitalized twice for heat exhaustion. A third

time, he was admitted for third-degree sunburns.

Each time, the 33-year-old man was released back to what put him in danger in the first place: the extreme heat suffocating Cedar Rapids and much of the United States.

"People could die out here," Johnson said as he sat on a bench at Greene Square in downtown Cedar Rapids,

sweat tracing his tattoos as it slid down his red skin. He has been homeless for a total of two years in between his prison sentences.

The National Weather Service's Quad Cities bureau issued an excessive heat warning from noon Thursday until Friday night for a swath of Eastern Iowa, including Linn and Johnson counties. The dangerous

conditions came as Iowa sat on the periphery of a heat dome, which is a very hot air mass that forms when high-pressure conditions in the atmosphere trap warm air from rising.

Heat index values, or "feels like temperatures" that factor in humidity, soared to 109 degrees Friday afternoon in

► HEAT, PAGE 9A

Trump is running 'to stay out of prison'

Republican candidate makes assertion at Iowa fundraiser

By Erin Murphy and Caleb McCullough, Gazette-Lee Des Moines Bureau

DES MOINES — Donald Trump was the target of sharp criticism from some of his fellow Republican candidates for president — albeit from candidates who are hovering around the bottom of the polling ladder — Friday night in Iowa during a state party fundraiser that featured remarks from 13 GOP candidates.

Will Hurd, a former Texas Congressman, told a gathering of more than 1,200 in downtown Des Moines that Trump is not running to make America great again or represent Americans, but that he is running to keep himself out of prison.

The remarks were met with loud boos from the crowd, who paid at least \$150 each to attend. Hurd left the stage with nearly two minutes left in his available speaking time.

Trump has been indicted by a grand jury on charges of mishandling classified documents after he left the White House, and could soon be indicted on charges in a separate investigation into his efforts to convince state elections officials to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election that he lost to Democratic President Joe Biden.

In an effort to display why Republicans need to move in a different direction, Hurd noted that a Republican presidential candidate has not won the popular vote in 20 years, and reminded the crowd that Republicans lost their U.S. House majority in 2018, and the White House and U.S. Senate majority in 2020, and did not grow their numbers in the U.S. House in 2022 as much as historical projections suggest they should have.

"One of the things we need in our elected leaders is for them to tell the truth, even if it's unpopular," Hurd said. "Donald Trump is not running for president to make America great again. Donald Trump is not running for president to represent the people that



Ex-U.S. Rep. Will Hurd R-Texas

INSIDE

• Trump winning battle for delegates, 10A

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MERCY
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Transit/Cities work to boost options

► FROM PAGE 1A

from her home near Kirkwood Community College to the 16th Avenue SW Walgreens and eventually the downtown transportation hub, 450 First St. SE, after a doctor's appointment.

Mohammed, 45, said she is a materials handler at the new FedEx warehouse on Commerce Park Drive SW, but the city buses don't travel there. She takes taxis and requests rides on the Uber and Lyft mobile apps to get to work — but compared to the \$1 fee for a Cedar Rapids Transit bus ride, the cost for these services can add up.

An immigrant from Sudan who's still struggling to navigate the process of becoming a U.S. citizen, Mohammed said she is without a driver's license and needs the bus to shop, go to the library and get elsewhere to meet her daily basic needs. Without a license, she said she's faced barriers to securing full-time employment even though she earned a bachelor's in public health in her home country.

"The bus is taking all my time," Mohammed said. "Every stop I spend an hour to wait for the bus to come ... I pay all my money on taxis, on Uber and Lyft. I just work all the time and I am uncomfortable with my life."

Mohammed is far from the only resident who relies on public transit to access work, health care, grocery stores and key services. For those like her who can't drive, or residents who can't afford a car, the public transportation network is an essential part of life in the Corridor.

And as the effects of climate change worsen, transit-dependent residents are among the most vulnerable to the elements — extreme heat, bone-chilling cold and everything in between.

Acknowledging this threat, Cedar Rapids and Iowa City officials are working to meet ambitious climate action goals to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 with plans that promote equity and prioritize vulnerable residents.

To successfully reduce emissions while addressing the barriers residents face to accessing services, an important piece of the puzzle is continuing to build a multi-modal transportation network and walkable neighborhoods where amenities are located within walking distance.

With that in mind, city officials are working to strengthen their transportation networks, not only to curb carbon emissions but also to best serve residents in under-resourced parts of the community.

"We can't get to our emissions goals without transportation because that's such a huge contributor to emissions not just here, but across the United States," said Darian Nagle-Gamm, Iowa City's transportation director.

CLIMATE, TRANSIT CONNECTION

Ahead of the hottest week of the year, Cedar Rapids and Iowa City volunteers teamed up to work as citizen scientists and map urban heat islands — areas with little tree cover and more pavement that capture heat and create heat pockets, posing a threat to public health.

Volunteers drove around July 22 to gather temperature data from the hottest areas of the communities as part of a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration grant-funded heat island project.

Citizens traversed nine routes in Cedar Rapids and five routes in Iowa City, using sensors on their car to collect temperature information, Cedar Rapids Sustainability Manager Sara Maples said. These routes were chosen to get a mix of residential, farmland and industrial areas, and to include social vulnerabilities in neighborhoods.

Iowa City Climate Action Coordinator Sarah Gardner said transit routes also influenced routes in the heat mapping campaign.

"We know that with climate change, there are going to be increased extreme heat



Transit users board a bus Wednesday at the ground transportation center in Cedar Rapids. (Nick Rohman photos/The Gazette)



Wifag Mohammed waits for the bus as she runs errands Wednesday in Cedar Rapids. Mohammed relies on the bus for transportation, but is forced to use ride sharing apps for trips outside of the bus systems' operating hours, often spending hundreds of dollars a month.



A sensor is seen July 22 on a volunteer's car as part of the "Spot the Hot" program in Cedar Rapids. The NOAA grant-funded program seeks to map heat islands using data collected by volunteers.

HOW MUCH DOES TRANSPORTATION CONTRIBUTE TO GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IN C.R., I.C.?

In Cedar Rapids' 2019 greenhouse gas inventory, transportation emissions made up 8 percent of overall greenhouse gas emissions — the next largest share of emissions after industrial processes. In Iowa City's 2022 report, transportation emissions made up 20 percent of overall greenhouse gas emissions — the largest source after electricity and natural gas.

events," Maples said. "We know that they're going to be more severe and we also know that they're going to last longer. This is one way that we can identify the spots within our community."

In Cedar Rapids' Community Climate Action Plan, urban heat islands are mapped with the transit route, which shows that "public transit routes have the highest temperatures above average, compounding exposure for transit-dependent residents." Using pre-2020 derecho data, temperatures were shown to be highest particularly in the urban core, in the Westdale area and in several other pockets around the community.

Part of Cedar Rapids' and Iowa City's combined pitch for being one of the 18 communities selected for the heat mapping campaign was the need to gather data after the derecho, to explore how the loss of trees has perhaps contributed to more heat. Temperature data will be available later this year.

Maples said this process will allow the communities to understand how people experience heat on the ground level. It can help dial in on high-traffic pedestrian locations where there's a need to increase shade, share information in extreme heat events, or otherwise inform future city planning.

Transit Manager Brad De-

Brower also said the updated heat map can help identify heat pockets along transit lines and guide strategies for the future.

"From a health perspective, we can help manage that aspect of it to keep our residents safe," Maples said. "It can inform things like where could we potentially have shade structures or more trees or vegetation."

MAKING 'TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM GREATER'

Greg Hanson, 64, a Cedar Rapids resident who said he lives under a highway overpass, qualifies for the city's free-fare program and uses buses to get around the city. This particular morning, he used the bus to access a shower and do laundry with Willis Dady Homeless Services' shelter outreach.

Given the city's population — that it's not a large metropolitan area like New York City or Chicago — Hanson said Cedar Rapids' bus system doesn't have the ridership to support more frequent routes. Buses operate from 5:15 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. on weekdays and 9:15 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Saturdays, with buses coming hourly or every half-hour during peak times, or for some routes and times every 15 minutes.

ARRANGE A RIDE

Riders can call Linn County LIFTS at (319) 892-5170 and NTS at Horizons at (319) 363-1321 to arrange for transportation or find out more information. Details are available at CityofCR.com/Transit.

"They're doing the best they can," Hanson said. "It's about money."

For those experiencing homelessness such as himself, Hanson said the city has done a good job of making it as easy as possible to get Free Fare IDs. The program covers many regular Transit riders, including those age 65 and up, people with disabilities, Medicare passengers and those who meet income-based restrictions.

"The bus system does a pretty good job adjusting to what the needs are," Hanson said. "... You have to be strategic and plan."

Cedar Rapids residents age 12 and under can ride for free as well, and students attending the Cedar Rapids Community School District, Kirkwood and Coe College may ride for free with their school IDs. The city also last fall lowered its full fare from \$1.50 per ride to \$1 when reinstating fares for the first time since COVID-19 prompted staff to stop collecting fares.

"Between our free fares, our student program and our reduced rates, riding the bus is a low- to no-cost option," DeBrower said. "We are excited to see our ridership numbers grow close to pre-COVID levels. People are returning to Transit and boarding the bus for their destinations, and we continue to expand our bike infrastructure and micromobility options for the 'last mile' to our riders' doors."

Ridership still is rebounding from COVID-19. In fiscal 2019 there were 1.25 million Cedar Rapids Transit riders. In fiscal 2023, which ended June 30, the city recorded 982,266 riders.

Each year, DeBrower said the city looks at minor adjustments and does route studies, taking into account ridership and development.

Other services also help fill in the gaps with the transportation system. The city contracts with Linn County LIFTS to provide paratransit service to passengers with qualifying disabilities who are unable to ride the bus. There's also a partnership with Neighborhood Transportation Service at Horizons, which offers weekend and after-hours curbside service for a \$6 fee for critical needs — including rides to hospitals, grocery stores, care facilities and gas stations.

Neighborhood Transportation Service manager Brandon Schulte said the service is busiest in the winter, typically surpassing about 2,400 rides a month when people don't want to be on the roads or stand outside in the cold for long. He said the new FedEx facility and Nordstrom warehouse in Cedar Rapids and CCB Packaging in Hiawatha are some of the higher-demand stops.

In Iowa City, since the Iowa City Area Transit study was approved in 2021, Nagle-

Gamm said the transportation system has been re-imagined with route redesign, different fares and electric buses.

She said residents wanted more frequent, reliable services, so the city stretched hours on some routes or reallocated services in less-used routes. Iowa City buses run at varying times depending on the route, from 5:30 a.m. to 11:20 p.m. on weekdays and 5:30 a.m. to 7:40 p.m. on Saturdays.

In fiscal 2023, the city hit 1.1 million riders for the first time since 2020, but Nagle-Gamm said ridership remains 26 percent below pre-pandemic levels.

City officials on Tuesday are launching a two-year free fare pilot program to boost ridership and make it more convenient and affordable for people to ride the bus.

"The city's role is to create an infrastructure that better enables bicycling, to create an infrastructure and an environment ... that people want to walk and are able to walk and create a transit system that better meets the needs of more Iowa Citizens," Nagle-Gamm said.

MORE WAYS TO GET AROUND

City officials are striving to make walkable neighborhoods filled with housing, sidewalks for pedestrians, bike lanes for cyclists and accessible amenities — whether that's a pharmacy down the street, a coffee shop on the corner or a grocery store on your block.

The vision outlined in both Cedar Rapids and Iowa City's climate action plans calls for a city in which residents can easily find everything they need without a vehicle.

According to Cedar Rapids' plan, sprawling development costs residents two to three times more in transportation and housing and uses two to three times more energy, water and carbon per development.

In the coming years, the city plans to add eight community gardens where residents can grow their own healthy produce. And to increase tree canopy, the city's ReLeaf reforestation plan uses a system to determine which neighborhoods will see trees planted first based on equity.

When it comes to navigating the city, Maples said the city emphasizes a multipronged approach. Through its vendor VeoRide, residents have micromobility options with electric scooters and bikes. Improvements continue to be made to on-street bikeways and to the trail network.

In Iowa City's plan, officials note that some neighborhoods are not as well-connected as others.

But with a walkable Pedestrian Mall in a vibrant downtown and the presence of the University of Iowa, Nagle-Gamm said Iowa City has a high share of bike riders and public transit users.

Like Cedar Rapids, Gardner said Iowa City has taken a strategy to achieve net zero emissions that works to make all modes of transportation available and promote the usage of electric vehicles.

Joe O'Brien, 54, who recently moved from Cedar Rapids to Center Point, said he relies on a mix of biking and busing to get around the metro after his cars were repossessed.

He said it can take a long time to reach his destination because of road construction and having to carefully share the street with cars, but it also can take hours to navigate the area by bus because of the schedule for some routes. And in the summer, after spending hours outside in the sun to get around, O'Brien said it gets "hot out there."

In larger cities such as Denver, Colo., or Tampa, Fla., where O'Brien said he previously lived, the buses run more often and it's easier to access the services he needed. But he said he understands Iowa lacks the population base to support a more robust transit network.

"They don't run long enough," O'Brien said of Cedar Rapids' buses. "... The city's doing the best they can."

Ready for a fight

Planned Parenthood set for latest abortion battle

Top Stories, 3A



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Teacher's killing by teen baffles family members



Willard Miller, 17, apologizes to the family of Nohema Graber during his Thursday sentencing in Jefferson County District Court. Miller and Jeremy Goodale, 18, pleaded guilty to murdering Graber in November 2021 while she was walking in a Fairfield park. Miller, who was upset by the grades he was getting in Graber's class, was sentenced to life in prison, with the possibility of parole after 35 years. (Jim Slosiarek photos/The Gazette)

Victim's husband died before he could read impact statement

By Trish Mehaffey, The Gazette



FAIRFIELD — One of the two Fairfield teens convicted of killing their high school Spanish teacher was sentenced to life in prison Thursday, with the possibility of parole after 35 years.

None of the 10 family members of Nohema Graber, 66, who spoke at the sentencing of Willard "Chaiden" Miller, 17, could understand why he had committed such a "heinous and brutal" act — beating Graber to death with a baseball bat because she'd given him bad grades.

The other teen convicted

in the slaying, Jeremy Goodale, 18, is scheduled to be sentenced in August, though his attorneys are seeking a delay.

In the family statements, delivered in Jefferson County District Court in Fairfield, they said Graber loved to teach Spanish and always helped and cared for her students.

Tom Graber, Graber's brother-in-law, talked in his victim impact statement about the "enormous" impact of her death

► **MILLER, PAGE 6A**



A family friend (center) holds the hand of Nohema Marie Graber, the daughter of murdered Fairfield High School Spanish teacher Nohema Graber, as they listen to statements Thursday during the sentencing of Willard Miller at the Jefferson County Courthouse in Fairfield.

Drought intensifying, affecting ag, river shipping

El Nino may throw long-term weather projections for loop

By Brittney J. Miller, The Gazette

Drought conditions have rapidly deteriorated across the Midwest over the past few weeks — and it's uncertain how much rain will come the rest of this summer, experts said Thursday during a webinar hosted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and several climate partners.

May and June are historically the rainiest months for Midwestern states, said

Molly Woloszyn, the regional drought information coordinator for NOAA's National Integrated Drought Information System.

Most areas in the region departed from that, though, with much of Eastern Iowa receiving 4 inches less precipitation than normal.

Hotter than normal daytime temperatures also are intensifying dryness in the Midwest. The midday heat encourages water to evaporate from soils, contributing to low moisture levels across Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Kansas and eastern Nebraska.

As a result, conditions have

deteriorated rapidly across the north-central U.S. since May. The worst of the drought has shifted east from the Great Plains to the Midwest.

About 64 percent of the Midwest is now in moderate to extreme drought. Nearly 90 percent of Iowa is in some sort of drought, according to Thursday's U.S. Drought Monitor report.

Agricultural conditions have declined throughout the region, said Dennis Today, director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Midwest Climate Hub.

Pasture and range conditions have deteriorated rap-

idly, causing some Midwest ranchers to sell off cattle. Only 24 percent of Iowa's pastures and ranges are in good or excellent condition.

As corn crops enter their reproductive stage, called tasseling, in the coming weeks, drought conditions could impact their yield.

Time will tell how soybeans fare as they enter their critical growing stages by August. Specialty crops across the region have suffered reduced or no yields.

Drought impacts are spilling into other industries, too.

► **DROUGHT, PAGE 7A**

Over 29K apply for education savings accounts

Majority of 17,500 approved already attend private schools

By Tom Barton, Gazette Des Moines Bureau

More than 29,000 Iowa students applied to receive roughly \$7,600 in state money to be used to pay for private school costs such as tuition and fees. And nearly 17,500 students — the majority of whom already attend private schools — have been approved so far, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds announced Thursday.

The numbers exceed state projections that predicted 14,068 students would be approved to receive education savings accounts in the program's first year.

However, the final cost of the program and the final number of education savings account — or ESA — program participants will not be available until certified school enrollment numbers are finalized in October, Reynolds' office said.

And not every family approved may be able to use the state-funded assistance, as space is limited at Iowa's private schools. Some have wait lists for certain grades and are turning families away, while others say they're nowhere near capacity.

► **ACCOUNTS, PAGE 6A**

UI seeks \$5M more from utilities partner in lawsuit

By Vanessa Miller, The Gazette

IOWA CITY — The day before the University of Iowa's new private utilities partner sued the campus, accusing it of breaching obligations, the university — again — accused the partner of failing to meet performance standards, demanding it pay another \$5 million.

That Jan. 25 claim for \$5 million — stemming from UI's accusations that the private operator was falling below "key performance indicators" — was the latest in a growing list of disputes that prompted the private partner to sue the university Jan. 26.

Not three years into the March 10, 2020, 50-year, \$1.165 billion public-private partnership agreement that created an endowment for the UI to support its strategic plan,

► **UI LAWSUIT, PAGE 7A**



Miller/Finally realizing ‘magnitude’ of actions

► FROM PAGE 1A

on the family, students, the school and community. It also deprived her husband, Paul Graber, 68, of her love and contributed to his death June 29, he said.

Tom Graber said his brother was deeply depressed and wasn't taking care of himself as his wife would have insisted. He had cancer and his condition worsened after Miller and Goodale killed his sister-in-law in Fairfield's Chautauqua Park on Nov. 2, 2021.

Christian Graber, Nohema's son, told the court he feels sorry for Miller and his mother and grandmother, "who seem like decent people."

He said he thinks Miller may have "potential" to be a decent person someday — though he doesn't see it right now — and offered to help him.

Deanne Graber, Nohema's sister-in-law, said in her victim impact statement that Nohema had a "rock solid faith" and had encouraging, positive words in any situation.

Marilyn Fuest, another sister-in-law, said in her statement, read by another person, that every person Nohema met became her friend.

"People called her an angel," Fuest said. "She loved people and prayed for them earnestly."

Jim Graber, a brother-in-law, said Nohema had a lot of impact on a lot of people, but it only took two — Miller and Goodale — to impact so many more in a much different way.

"Killing someone over a grade is just insane," he said.

He called Miller a "cold blooded, premeditated murderer" and said he didn't believe Miller was remorseful. He said he hoped Miller would open his soul to God because, otherwise, he was on a "spiral straight to hell."

Other family members also doubted Miller's remorse.

TEEN APOLOGIZES

During the hearing, Miller said he accepted responsibility in Graber's death and apologized to the Graber family. He also said he was sorry about Paul Graber's death.

Miller told his family he was sorry and that he "loves them so much."

He also apologized to the community, to Graber's church, to Goodale's family and to law enforcement for lying to them. He said he is just now realizing the "magnitude" of his actions.

Eighth Judicial District Judge Shawn Showers considered all the juvenile factors in making his sentencing but noted the "heinous and brutal" nature of the crime and how Miller planned the fatal attack and recruited Goodale to help him.

He also noted that "evil doesn't have a birthday" and the years in prison will give him time to rehabilitate, receive an education and grow and mature.

Miller's lawyer argued against any mandatory minimum and the prosecution argued for a mandatory minimum of 30 years. The judge settled on a minimum of 35 years.

DETAILS REVEALED

Two Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation special agents testified about the slaying and revealed more details of evidence against Miller and Goodale.



Christian Graber, the eldest son of slain Spanish teacher Nohema Graber, looks at Willard Miller on Thursday as Graber makes his victim impact statement during Miller's sentencing in Jefferson County District Court in Fairfield. Miller was sentenced to life in prison, with the possibility of parole after 35 years. (Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette)

"People called her an angel. She loved people and prayed for them earnestly."

Marilyn Fuest, sister-in-law of murder victim Nohema Graber

Video recordings of Miller and Goodale's interviews with police were played during sentencing.

In their April pleas, Miller and Goodale admitted to striking Graber, Miller's Spanish teacher and Goodale's teacher the previous year, or aiding and abetting the other in striking her with a baseball bat on Nov. 2, 2021.

Goodale said Miller struck her more than once; Miller denied striking her. Miller said he was the "lookout" for Goodale who struck her with the bat, which he admitted during the interview.

Special Agent Ryan Kedley said Miller told several different versions of what happened during his interview, including that a band of masked individuals had attacked Graber in the park and he saw them carry away what he thought was her body.

Miller planned the killing about 10 days to two weeks before Nov. 2. Miller started asking others to help.

Investigators found an email with a list of items on his phone, which Goodale told them about. The list included a baseball bat, hammer, knife, garden gloves, plastic gloves, trash bags and wet wipes, which were found at the crime scene in the park. The email also laid out "prep" for the attack and a procedure on how to carry it out.

Special Agent Trent Vileta said Miller also admitted to watching Graber to track her habits, such as her walk in the park after school.

Investigators also found Google searches on Miller's phone, including one from Oct. 24, 2021, which stated "Do students receive credit for class if professor is seriously injured or dies during course."

Graber's body was found in the park after her husband reported her missing Nov. 2, Vileta said. Her body was wrapped in a tarp with a wheelbarrow and railroad ties over it.

Vileta said Graber's shirts had been removed, and a turtleneck and another shirt were found in the trees where the body was found.

She didn't have any injuries on her arms and legs, except for a scratch of two. She did have severe head injuries.

Investigators also found the wheelbarrow — used to move the body from where Graber was killed to where her body was hidden — near the railroad tracks.

John Burnett, a close friend of Goodale's, gave police information about what happened to Graber and that she was killed because she gave Miller bad grades, Vileta said.

He also had some Snapchat screenshots of conversations he'd had with Goodale, which implicated Goodale and Miller in Graber's slaying.

Graber's vehicle was found on Middle Glasgow Road, where it dead ends, Vileta said. Burnett told police where to find the van.

Vileta said a baseball bat was found in Miller's bedroom in a corner against the wall. The bat didn't have DNA on it, but Vileta said it could have easily been cleaned.

Other teens who were interviewed said Miller told them that if Graber came up missing, not to contact police.

Fairfield police Lt. Julie Kinsella said investigators discovered Miller wanted to study abroad in Spain and needed a good grade in Spanish — the possible motive.

They also discovered he had bragged to another friend about killing Graber. And they found Snapchat messages from Miller to Burnett and other gaming friends about striking Graber with a bat.

Mike Heinrich, warden at the Iowa Medical and Classification Center at Oakdale, testified about the youthful offender program where Miller will be placed until he's 18.

Once he turns 18, he will likely be sent to the Iowa State Penitentiary based on his murder conviction.

Youthful offenders are kept separate from the adult inmates and they have the opportunity to finish their high school education, learn life skills and receive one-on-one counseling and other mental health services.

Comments: (319) 398-8318; trish.mehaffey@thegazette.com

Accounts/Only 9,000 private school spots are available

► FROM PAGE 1A

The governor's office said accredited private schools have reported there are roughly 9,000 slots available across the state for new private school students, meaning there could be more students approved than seats available in private schools.

"The tremendous response from Iowa families demonstrates there's both a need and a strong desire for school choice in our state," Reynolds said in a statement. "Allowing parents to choose the education that's best for their children levels the playing field and creates equal opportunities for Iowa's students."

Opponents argue the new law will pull critical resources from public schools, which serve more than 90 percent of Iowa students, and will disproportionately benefit higher-income families.

"Imagine what an unlimited budget like the one for Gov. Reynolds' private school voucher program would mean for Iowa's public school students," said a statement from Mike Beranek, president of the Iowa State Education Association, the state's largest teachers union. "State-of-the-art labs and equipment, up-to-date technology, and laptops (to) give every student an equal chance for success. We could have nurses and counselors in every building, one-to-one assistance for any child who needs it, music, art, and shop supplies to develop new talent and skills, and the list goes on. Unfortunately for Iowans, the governor and the majority party in the statehouse have decided that unlimited budgets are reserved for just a select few Iowans."

Nearly 486,500 K-12 students attended Iowa public schools during the 2022-23 school year, according to state certified enrollment numbers.

The law provides \$1,205 in state money to public schools for every private school student receiving an education savings account within the public school district's boundaries. The district, though, would lose the \$7,600 in per-pupil funding from the state for every student who switches from public to private school.

Funding every application that has already been approved would cost the state \$133.5 million. And that number could increase as more applications are approved. The state has until July 31 to complete its review and approve or deny all pending applications.

The Iowa Legislature allocated \$107.4 million to fund the program in its first year. And as with public school funding, it is a standing unlimited appropriation, meaning all approved education savings accounts will be funded, state officials said.

State Rep. John Wills, a Republican from Spirit Lake who floor managed the bill — House File 68 — in the Iowa House, told The Gazette last week there is plenty of money in the state's rainy day fund to pay for additional scholarships beyond what was budgeted.

By the end of the new fiscal year on June 30, 2024, Iowa is projected to have a \$2 billion general fund budget surplus and nearly \$962 million in cash reserves.

Wills said more money also could be budgeted if needed by lawmakers when the next regular legislative session begins in January.

The nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency estimated the new law would cost the state \$345 million annually by 2027, when fully implemented. In total, over the course of four years, the program would cost the state an estimated \$879 million, according to the fiscal analysis.

PROCESS STARTS WITH STATE APPLICATION

All incoming kindergartners and all K-12 students currently attending a public school who choose to enroll in an accredited non-public school for the 2023-24 school year are eligible for the ESA program, regardless of income. Also eligible are students who attended an accredited non-public school this past school year, if their household income is at or below 300 percent of the 2023 federal poverty level. That equates to \$90,000 or less for a family of four.

Eligibility expands in the 2024-25 school year to include households at or below 400 percent of the federal poverty, currently \$120,000 or less for a family of four.

Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, all K-12 students statewide become eligible regardless of income.

In addition to applying for an ESA, families apply to the accredited non-public school of their choice and, if accepted, will later update their ESA account indicating the school their child plans to attend. Accounts will be funded beginning July 15.

The school then sends an invoice for tuition and fees to the ESA account. Once parents approve the payment, funds are transferred from the state-owned bank account in Iowa to the school and the student is considered enrolled, according to the governor's office.

If a student's ESA has been funded, but he or she does not attend an accredited non-public school by Sept. 30, the ESA will be closed and the funds will be retained by the state and returned to the general fund, according to the governor's staff.

CURRENT PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENTS

The state began accepting ESA applications May 31 and families had until 11:59 p.m. June 30 to apply.

As of Thursday, 40 percent — or nearly 7,000 — of the 17,500 applications approved were students planning to move from a public to an accredited private school in Iowa, according to numbers released by the governor's office, and includes incoming kindergartners. That's more than the 4,841 students the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency predicted would transfer in the first year.

The remaining 60 percent were students already attending accredited private schools who met the income eligibility.

The average net household income for applicants moving from public to private schools is \$128,500, while the average net household income for current private school applicants is \$62,200, the governor's office said.

Comments: (319) 398-8499; tom.barton@thegazette.com

I.C. police seek public's help with investigation

By Emily Andersen, The Gazette

Iowa City police are asking for the public's help identifying the owners of a car that authorities believe to be involved in a shooting Sunday.

The Iowa City Police Department and Johnson County Sheriff's Office responded to a report of a shooting at 2:16 p.m. Sunday at Mile Marker 93 on southbound Highway 218. Police found a man on the side of the road suffering from a gunshot

wound. He was taken to a hospital with non-life threatening injuries, police said.

Iowa City police have identified a black Nissan Altima that they believe was associated with the shooting. They are asking the public for information about the car or any people associated with it. Anyone with information can email Detective Alec Fjelstul at AFjelstul@iowa-city.org or call him at (319) 356-5275.

Comments: (319) 398-8328; emily.andersen@thegazette.com



Iowa City police are seeking information from the public about this Nissan Altima and anyone associated with it. Police believe it was involved in a shooting Sunday. (Iowa City Police Department)



Caitlin Clark speaks openly in exclusive Q&A session, **1B**

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The Gazette

The Gazette

Eastern Iowa's independent, employee-owned newspaper

Sunday, August 6, 2023



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\$4.00

Volunteer officers boost police force capacity



Linn County Sheriff's Office Deputy Jason Loftsgard gives advice to reserve deputies July 15 before a drill during annual firearms training at the Matsell Bridge Shooting Range in rural Central City. The special deputy program consists of 21 reserve officers who donate over 3,000 hours annually. The special deputies provide public relations, crime prevention and patrol activities, including operation of the Cedar River boat patrol, and assist during large community gatherings. (Jim Slosiarek photos/The Gazette)

Reliance on reserve officers inches up as vacancies are hard to fill

By Emily Andersen, The Gazette

Josh Gersten has been a deputy with the Johnson County Sheriff's Office for 20 years, but he started getting paid for the job only last year, and then just for some of his law enforcement tasks. This is because he is a reserve deputy. Reserve deputies and reserve police officers are certified law enforcement officers who work

with agencies on a part-time — often volunteer — basis to supplement the full-time force.

While state law limits the responsibilities of reserve officers and says agencies should not substitute full-time officers with them, Iowa's reliance on reserve officers has grown at a time agencies say they're getting fewer applications

► OFFICERS, PAGE 4A



Linn County Sheriff's Office Deputy Alan Johnson goes over the course of firearms training July 15 for reserve deputies at the Matsell Bridge Shooting Range in rural Central City.

More public records cases going to court

Iowa Governor's Office, school boards told in recent cases to follow the law

By Erin Jordan, The Gazette

Iowa judges recently have sided with open government advocates trying to gain access to public records and attend public meetings — with the latest ruling requiring the state to pay \$135,000 in legal fees for three media organizations denied records by Gov. Kim Reynolds.

But advocates would like to see courts and the Iowa Public Information Board use penalties already in Iowa law to discourage repeat offenses.

When a District Court judge ruled in June the Central DeWitt superintendent and school board violated Iowa law by holding closed meetings under false pretenses, school board members were unapologetic, according to Rep. Norlin Mommsen, R-DeWitt, who was one of 75 residents who attended a July 13 school board meeting.

"The school board's response to this is was 'we did nothing wrong,'" Mommsen told The Gazette. "It's this defiance. And maybe it is because there's no penalty."



Rep. Norlin Mommsen R-DeWitt

RECENT COURT WINS FOR OPEN RECORDS ADVOCATES

Iowa Code Chapter 22 requires government bodies — which include any state, county, city or school group supported with taxes — to allow people to view or copy public records in a reasonable amount of time for a reasonable cost, if not for free.

► RECORDS, PAGE 3A

Iowa schools navigate library book law without state guidance

New law bans books with descriptions of sex acts from school library shelves

By Caleb McCullough and Tom Barton, Gazette-Lee Des Moines Bureau

DES MOINES — Library restrictions in an Iowa law passed this year are causing headaches for

school librarians and administrators as they prepare for the new school year, and many have said they want to see more guidance from the Department of Education to clear up uncertainties about the policy.

The law, passed by Statehouse Republicans and signed by Gov. Kim Reynolds, makes a raft of changes to education policies in Iowa, including a provision that

requires school libraries to only include "age-appropriate" material, and specifically bans any book that describes or depicts any of a list of defined sex acts.

Darwin Lehmann, the superintendent of both the Central Springs and Forest City school districts, said the districts have begun reviewing some of the books in their libraries and have set some aside for review. The districts are wait-

ing for further guidance from the Department of Education, though, to make the final call.

Lehmann said the districts are setting aside books if there is any doubt about whether they comply with the law. District officials did not provide a list of titles set aside before publication.

"We're going to take an

► LAW, PAGE 2A



Darwin Lehmann Forest City schools superintendent

VOL. 141 NO. 209 **INSIDE:** Books **8L** | Business **380 1D** | Comics **INSIDE** | Crosswords **4J, 9L** | Dear Abby **4J** | Deaths **7C** | Home+Garden **5L** | Horoscopes **4J** | Insight **7A** | Iowa Today **1C** | Living **1L** | Milestones **10L** | Puzzles **4J** | Sports **1B** | TV **3J** | Weather **3J**





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Gazette changing Sunday print configuration

Moves focus on preserving locally-produced reporting and making better use of space

You've probably noticed by now that this Sunday's Gazette includes some rearranging in the Sunday edition.

While this may require you to refer to the index a bit more than usual, we've made the adjustments to keep us on the strongest financial footing possible, while also preserving local reporting resources. We needed to reduce the number of pages in the pa-

per and make the very best use of the space we have.

A quick rundown of the changes that are being introduced this week: Insights content moves to the back of the front section, which mirrors its positioning through the week. The section remains at four pages of content.

We'll be putting Classifieds and Help Wanted into the back of the Business 380 section. We're reducing the number of wire stories that run in this section and will be introducing additional content features here in coming weeks.

We've moved the weather and daily TV grid along with games onto a sec-

ond spadea — the industry term for the half-page section covers — which should make it easier to pull out and use. The New York Times Crossword puzzle will remain on the Books pages, which move into the Living section.

We're adding a four-page Nation & World section to the Green Gazette, which is free to all Gazette subscribers. This section will appear in the Green Gazette only and will feature national and international news.

We are discontinuing a stand-alone Home & Garden section and will be blending this content with the existing Living section.

We've also adjusted the number

and size of ads promoting Gazette programs and events. We expect this will also increase the amount of space to share locally produced stories.

While we understand these changes may take some getting used to, we're focused on putting out the best possible news product for our readers. On behalf of the entire team, we appreciate your continued support of local, independent journalism. If you have comments or feedback about the changes, please email me directly at zack.kucharski@thegazette.com or (319) 398-8219.

**Thanks for reading,
Zack Kucharski, executive editor**

Law/Republicans stand by their language

► FROM PAGE 1A

approach that if it's in doubt, we're going to do that until we get further guidance," he said. "I would rather take that end because you got penalties in (2024). If you leave it out there, and then you happen to miss something then you get penalties on the other side. So we'll probably take the conservative approach and the safe approach until we get further guidance coming out of Des Moines in regards to that."

The law took effect July 1, but the Department of Education will only be able to penalize educators or administrators for violating the library restrictions starting Jan. 1.

Among the bill's other provisions are:

- Instruction related to sexual orientation or gender identity will be barred in kindergarten through sixth grade;
- Schools will need to notify parents if a student requests changing their name or pronouns;
- Schools must put their library catalog online and allow parents to review certain instructional materials, providing a policy to request removal of any classroom materials;
- The bill codifies parents' rights and requires parents' permission before a student takes a survey that asks about political affiliation and mental health problems, among other things.

Lehmann said he hopes guidance provides further distinction of the definition of "age-appropriate," beyond the depiction of sex acts. He also said the department or legislators should clear up what exactly constitutes the instruction of sexual orientation and gender identity.

"I think schools will probably need to align with the values of their community, and make the best decisions based on where their community values have been and are," he said, noting those policies need to be "still in compliance with the law."

In the Aplington-Parkersburg school district, leadership has held an initial meeting to review the legislation and update board policies on libraries, said district superintendent Travis Fleschner, but they have not developed a list of books to remove.

"If slightly more guidance was available and available a little sooner that would have been helpful," Fleschner said in an email.

The Iowa City Community School District

said it is working with legal counsel to "get questions answered and ensure we are moving forward with a complete understanding of the new requirements," it said in a statement provided to The Gazette on Thursday.

Iowa City schools' teachers will return to work on Aug. 17. "At that time, we will provide them with guidance on reviewing classroom and library materials to ensure compliance with the law," according to the district statement.

Clear Creek-Amana Community Schools Superintendent Corey Seymour said the district also was consulting with attorneys and seeking clarification from state education officials before moving forward.



Corey Seymour
Clear Creek-Amana superintendent

Iowa Department of Education officials have not promised more guidance around the law.

"As we get that feedback we'll review it on a case-by-case basis and determine how to appropriately respond," the department's legislative liaison Eric St Clair told the Iowa Board of Education on Thursday.

Board President John Robbins told St Clair he has heard from school districts there is confusion about implementing the law, and anything the department could do to address that would be "more than welcome."

"There's a lot of confusion, people in the field that I've talked to are looking at the (department) or somebody to provide directions," he said. "Because right now people are kind of either guessing what is right or wrong, and not being in violation of the law."

The Urbandale Community School District said last week it would pause its removal of nearly 400 books from shelves that may violate the law, narrowing down the list to 64 titles.

The district attracted attention when the nonprofit Annie's Foundation published a list of titles sent to teachers and librarians for removal from school libraries and classrooms. The list also included books to be removed from elementary and middle school classrooms because they were believed to violate the ban on teaching about gender identity and sexual orientation.

In an email to staff and families on Monday, the district's superintendent

Rosaline Daca said it would not be moving forward with the larger list, and would also pause removing books that reference gender identity and sexual orientation until they receive further guidance from the Department of Education.

'IT COULD NOT BE MORE CLEAR'

Republican lawmakers brought the bill forward this year after saying they heard concerns from parents in Iowa about the books present in some school libraries. The law contains similar provisions to laws passed in Missouri, Texas and Florida in recent years.

Sen. Ken Rozenboom, R-Oskaloosa, the chair of the Senate Education Committee, said he does not believe the wording of the law — Senate File 496 — is unclear, and he does not understand why schools are confused about the prohibitions in the law.

"A sex act is very precisely written in Iowa Code. Any depiction or description of a sex act is prohibited," he said. "It could not be more clear. I know everybody wants to muddy the waters; I do not know how it could be more clear."



Sen. Ken Rozenboom
R-Oskaloosa

Rozenboom mentioned "Gender Queer" by Maia Kobabe, a graphic novel that includes nudity and depictions of sexual activities, as one book that should be removed from schools. On the other hand, he said that George Orwell's "1984," which was initially included on Urbandale's list of books to remove from shelves, would not fall under the law's prohibitions.

He said he hopes the Department of Education provides more guidance, but noted they will be going off the same language in the law that is already available to school administrators.

"I don't know how to make that more clear," he said. "The Bible doesn't do that ... Seems to me like a tempest in a teapot a little bit."

In a newsletter on Friday, Iowa House Speaker Pat Grassley said he believes Urbandale's initial list of books was provided to make a political point.

House Education Committee Chair Skyler Wheeler, R-Orange City, in a statement provided in the newsletter, said the district was "playing a political game" and he does not believe deciding

which books to remove should be hard.

"It's unbelievable to me that some of these school districts are having such a hard time removing sexually explicit material from their library," he said. "This is quite simple to me. Porn doesn't belong in school libraries. Books that don't contain porn can remain on the shelves."



Rep. Skyler Wheeler
R-Orange City

WORRIES ABOUT LACK OF GUIDANCE

Education and library advocates argued an overly broad interpretation of the law will deprive students of the opportunity to read books they otherwise would. They said where to draw the line is not clear, and in trying to avoid repercussions, schools will disqualify books that should not be removed under the law.

The Iowa Library Association and Iowa Association of School Librarians are advising teacher librarians to wait for more guidance from the Department of Education before taking any action on removing books from libraries. The organizations sent a letter to the department's director, McKenzie Snow, last month, with several questions about the law, and have not received a response.

"Without guidance and under pressure license penalties, districts will be forced to make decisions that are most likely more restrictive than the letter of the law intended," said Iowa Association of School Librarians Past President Michelle Kruse.



Michelle Kruse
Iowa Association of School Librarians past president

"Iowa students deserve to be able to go to their school library and find books that are mirrors that reflect themselves and books that are windows that allow themselves to see the world."

Sam Helmick, president of the Iowa Library Association, said they think state officials should provide more guidance, in part, to avoid the possibility of

litigation over book removals. PEN America, an organization that advocates for library freedom, sued a Florida school district this year after it removed several books, citing First Amendment violations.

"I think questions need to be asked and answers need to be given," Helmick said. "I don't know what else could we do, I guess would be the question. Would it be not have directives and then make it up as we go, or try our best to develop criteria and then have that criteria questioned?"

SOME DECISIONS EASY, OTHERS LESS CLEAR

Matt Carver, legal services director for School Administrators of Iowa, said while some have interpreted the law to mean any book with a reference to a sex act must be removed from libraries or classrooms, "that's certainly not the case and I don't believe was the intention of the Legislature."

"The mere reference to sex is not one and the same as a depiction of an act," Carver said. "It's going to be something that is more descriptive that's going to be a violation."

However, school officials still need to evaluate whether the material is age-appropriate.

For example, famous works such as "The Catcher in the Rye" and "The Color Purple" that reference sex and describe sexual violence and the ensuing trauma may be age-appropriate for high school students, but not elementary or middle school.

Even then, Carver said he is advising school administrators to encourage teachers to inform parents and guardians that a book or instructional material contains reference to a sexual act and seek approval to provide it to their child to read.

"There is some value in students reading about (sex and sexuality) and learning about it and how to cope and learn about things related to sexual assault, but leave the determination to parents," he said.

That said, some books specifically discussed by lawmakers, including the memoirs "Gender Queer" and "All Boys Aren't Blue" by George M. Johnson — which contain overt images and

descriptions of sexual activity — clearly must be removed from school library shelves, Carver said.

"For those type of books, that's a no-brainer," he said. "Or, if you have a book not used for a health or human growth and development class that has drawings of sex acts, that's a pretty easy decision to make. That's a good starting point to say these books are not permitted in the school library, but they also need to consider what's available to students" in classrooms and elsewhere in school buildings, and whether they're appropriate for that grade level.

As for the law's provision related to instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in school, Carver said he's offering similar guidance to a state law passed in 2021 that restricts teaching about race and sex discrimination.

Misunderstandings about that bill resulted in what some people believe was a chilling effect on teachings about topics of sexism, slavery, racial oppression, racial segregation and racial discrimination.

Rather than banning such instruction and discussion, the law references "stereotyping" and "scapegoating."

Similarly, Carver said when addressing issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, school officials need to evaluate biases and whether the instruction or material is research-based.

"Is there some bias to one sexual orientation or one gender identity or another considered, in addition to age-appropriateness when it comes to actual instruction," he said.

While the new law has broadened the scope of what's considered obscene under Iowa law, Carver said that should not be interpreted by school districts to restrict access to materials students have traditionally and long had access to that have literary, scientific, artistic and educational value.

"The underlying recommendation is when in doubt ... let the parents and guardians know and make the decision," he said.

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