



# COACH OF THE YEAR BEN GERLEMAN

The reveal: Members of the 2022-23 All-REVIEW Boys Basketball Team.  
See SPORTS Section C

# REVIEW

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O'Brien County emergency management agency director Jared Johnson spoke to the O'Brien County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday to pitch the idea of an emergency medical services levy to help address rising cost of providing those services in the county. Photo by Eric Harrold

## Johnson makes another EMS pitch

### Asks O'Brien supervisors to make service essential

BY ERIC HARROLD  
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PRIMGHAR—Citing a continuing trend of staffing problems coupled with rising costs with city ambulance services, O'Brien County emergency management agency coordinator Jared Johnson pitched the idea of an emergency medical services levy to the county board of supervisors on Tuesday. The board took no action on the matter.

Johnson said he is seeing the same pattern throughout the county with some ambulance teams bringing in few new members while others are losing staffers.

He noted some counties in the state approved a levy recently approved by Gov. Kim Reynolds to benefit EMS teams.

The bill lets counties deem EMS to be essential services and therefore receive county tax funds, which Johnson approached the supervisors about in June.

After a county passes a resolution calling EMS essential, it would work with EMS agencies to establish a countywide advisory council to research and assess the services'

needs and determine a funding amount to meet those needs.

County voters then would have to approve the EMS tax proposal by at least 60 percent for it to pass.

The supervisors required more information before moving forward with deeming EMS an essential service to start the process.

Johnson is trying again nine months later. "It would be beneficial to try to go for the EMS levy and start the process within a month to see if we could potentially go

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PART 2 OF A TWO-PART SERIES

Sibley-Ocheyedan eighth-grader Salomé Ruano works through an assignment with Lisa Wiersma, who serves as a substitute teacher for the district. Photo by Aleisa Schat

# SUBSTITUTE SHORTAGE

BY ALEISA SCHAT  
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REGIONAL—Unless there is no way around it, third-grade teacher Josene Salazar thinks twice before taking a day off during the school year. "There are days and weeks that we as teachers are very aware of the shortage of subs," said Salazar, who teaches at Kinsey Elementary in Sioux Center. Sometimes, administrators are called upon to step in and

cover for missing teachers. Other times, a Talented and Gifted class — or another class taught by a member of the support staff — might be canceled because no substitute can be found. "We often feel a natural pressure of not taking days off that we want to and only taking days off that we need to," Salazar said. Rather than take a day off to pursue a professional develop-

ment opportunity off campus or support an athletic team at a game in the state tournament, teachers may opt to do their part to minimize the strain on a system already facing challenging staffing shortages. "If we do take a personal day, we know we need to plan well in advance. Things like our athletic teams making it to state throw

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COVID, STRESS, LACK OF INSTRUCTORS LISTED AMONG REASONS

## Anti-pipeline limit passes Iowa House

### Eminent domain bill still has hurdles

BY ELIJAH HELTON  
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DES MOINES—A bill that would restrain eminent domain for CO2 pipelines passed Wednesday in the Iowa House of Representatives, but the road remains rough as it moves to the Senate.

A bipartisan majority of 73-20 voted in favor of House File 565. The legislation would require pipeline companies such as Summit Carbon Solutions and Navigator CO2 Ventures to secure 90 percent of their routes in Iowa before

getting permits to build. "Yeah, it's a win," said Rep. Zach Dieken (R-Granville). "But it's not enough of a win in my opinion. It could have been a stronger bill."

The legislation has been stripped down mainly to the 90 percent threshold. Previous measures were amended out, including a moratorium on all CO2 lines until new federal safety standards are set and expanded local control.

The threshold still will put a massive obstacle in the way of Summit and Navigator but will allow the companies to seek eminent domain on the

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The current Northwest Area Education Agency building in Sioux Center will be the location of the upcoming Northwest Iowa Community College career academy. NCC purchased the AEA property on Monday for \$1.9 million. Photo by Aleisa Schat

## NCC academy gets Sioux Center base

### College buys AEA's site for \$1.9 million

BY ELIJAH HELTON  
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SHELDON—The home is official for the new Northwest Iowa Community College career academy.

The Sioux Center office of the Northwest Area Education Agency will host the space for high school students to receive professional training.

NCC, a Sheldon-based institution, bought the building for \$1.9 million using two streams of state-level funding.

"This site will provide another center from which the college will serve the entire

area's industries better," said NCC president John Hartog.

College trustees approved the purchase at their monthly meeting Monday.

The career academy will start with four courses of study, called "pathways," for pupils at the five public high schools in Sioux County: Boyden-Hull, MOC-Floyd Valley, Rock Valley, Sioux Center and West Sioux.

The pathways are education, engineering, health care and welding.

Hartog said long-standing workforce needs in those fields inspired their selection.

"The goal of the grant is

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**WEEKEND WEATHER:**  
**SATURDAY** HIGH: 40 LOW: 21  
**SUNDAY** HIGH: 36 LOW: 22  
CHANCE OF PRECIP: 1% CHANCE OF PRECIP: 0%

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712-324-5347  
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SHELDON, IOWA \$1.75

# BABYSITTER BASICS

Hegg Community Education's popular Babysitter Basics class is BACK Thursday, June 15 in the Hegg Learning Center in Rock Valley, IA! Enroll your 4th, 5th, or 6th grader for a three-hour class covering in-depth fundamentals of childcare.

Classes fill up FAST! Scan to sign up

## NEWS



Troy Lentell, principal at Kinsey Elementary in Sioux Center, fills in for Jennifer Traver's third-grade classroom. Due to the shortage of substitute teachers in the area, the administrator is called upon to fill in. Photo by Aleisa Schat

## Substitute shortages forces school districts to scramble

### SUBS

Continued from page A1

quite a bit of a wrench in the system," she said.

Despite there being obstacles to taking time off, Salazar said she always felt well-supported by the administration when she needed to take time off to go to appointments with her mother, who was diagnosed with cancer.

"Whether there is a sub available or not — our administration does everything they can to make things work for teachers. It just comes down to there being a lack of subs," she said.

### Causes

A broad survey of administrators conducted by The REVIEW reveals a nationwide substitute teaching crunch has reached N'West Iowa. The shortage — exacerbated by the growing nationwide teacher shortage — affects the region's districts to different degrees, but with few exceptions, public and private schools have faced staffing challenges and declining sub rosters.

Rock Valley High School principal Nicole Roder said the sub shortage in her district has only intensified in the years following the onset of the pandemic.

"We have had a lot of our subs who were retired teachers choose to be completely retired, which we totally understand and support," she said.

Still, it is a major factor that contributes to the shrinking of the sub pool, she said.

Along with Roder, several N'West Iowa administrators mentioned the pandemic as one catalyst for subs deciding to step away from substitute teaching, especially those who were retired teachers and considered part of a higher risk group.

One exception in the region is 70-year-old Cal Hoekema, a retired high school English teacher who subs regularly at Kinsey Elementary in Sioux Center. He did not intend to sub at the elementary level, but he found he loved working with younger students, and he regularly subs three or four days a week.

"I thought, 'Well, I'll give it a whirl' — and I've really enjoyed it," he said.

Once the school reopened after closing in March of 2020, Hoekema kept on subbing; however, other retired teachers did take their names off area sub lists during the pandemic — and many of those subs have not returned.

Along with a pandemic-fueled exodus from subbing, the nationwide teaching shortage also is diverting would-be subs directly into full-time teaching positions. According to Kimberly Dokter, a fourth-grade teacher at Hartley-Melvin-Sanborn Elementary School in Hartley, substitute teaching used to be an avenue to getting hired full time as a teacher.

"I substitute taught prior to being hired full-time for five years — substitute teaching used to be how to get your foot in the door for a full-time job," Dokter said.

Increasingly, she said, those teachers get snapped up by school districts in the market for full-time teachers, and for that reason and others, she has noticed a significant decrease in

the number of substitutes available over her years as a teacher.

Kinsey Elementary principal Troy Lentell, too, stressed the link between the substitute teacher shortage and the nation's growing shortage of full-time educators.

"The number of students that are going into education as a career has really significantly dropped," he said. "Teaching jobs are getting filled, and there just aren't leftover applicants that didn't get a position where they had hoped. So, we just don't have that pool of recent graduates anymore."

In the past, Lentell said, a handful of December graduates from local colleges were available each year to help cover classrooms in the spring, but that pool, too, has dried up. Those who do graduate midway through the academic year often head straight into full-time positions.

Some would-be educators are deterred by the growing expectation that public school teachers will do more with less, Lentell said.

"The other part of it is pay," he said. "When you can go into the private sector doing just about anything and make more than what you do teaching — that's a hard sell," Lentell said. "And so you do really have to be passionate and driven to be an educator."

Boyden-Hull High School principal Dan Pottebaum said the teacher shortage will only continue to amplify the effects of the substitute teacher shortage in the years to come.

"The need exists across the board, and I think it will continue to grow as the number of graduates coming out of our local universities, or across the state, in the field of education is continually low," he said. "You're going to see more and more schools who can't fill full-time positions, much less find subs — and you could write the same story about bus drivers."

Along with pandemic challenges and a growing teacher shortage, a tight labor market in N'West Iowa has driven up wages in many sectors, luring some workers to better-paying positions, including many substitute teachers, who typically do not receive benefits and are not guaranteed regular work.

MOC-Floyd Valley High School principal Mike Mulder has seen the impact of the labor market on substitute teaching rosters in his district.

"There are several factors, and our low unemployment rate in northwest Iowa is one of them," he said.

### Raising pay

To remain competitive, many N'West Iowa school districts have raised their daily compensation rates for substitute teachers and paraprofessionals.

In the Sibley-Ocheyedan School District, the daily wage for substitute teachers recently was raised from \$120 to \$140 per day, and the hourly wage for support staff was raised from \$11 to \$14.

"We not only have to stay competitive with neighboring school districts, but also businesses," said Sibley-Ocheyedan superintendent James Craig.

Several years ago, to remain competitive, the Sioux Center School District raised its rate to \$130 a day for substitute teachers and \$85 for

paraprofessionals. In 2021, the West Sioux School District Board of Education unanimously approved higher pay for substitute teachers for the 2022-23 school year, raising the rate from \$115 to \$140 a day. Orange City Christian School, a private K-8 school in Orange City, pays \$105 for a day of substitute teaching, but that may change, according to principal Jason Alons, who said his school is feeling the crunch for subs.

"We are looking to raise it again to stay competitive," Alons said.

Another area private school, Western Christian High School in Hull, pays a daily rate of \$120 for a full day of substitute teaching. That is somewhat lower than the rate paid by most public schools in the region, but head administrator Brian Verwolf said Western Christian has several retired teachers who are faithful substitutes, and the school has not had difficulty covering classrooms when teachers are absent.

"We really haven't seen a decline," Verwolf said. "We have three faithfuls, and then we have a list of 12 subs that we'll call if needed — but it's pretty rare that we have to go beyond the three faithfuls."

Most of the region's schools, however, are facing challenges related to staffing, and pay incentives are not always enough to fill the ranks with willing substitutes.

Hull resident Sherry De Wit said she would like to be able to sub more often, but she faces significant barriers. A former teacher with young children, she occasionally subs at Hull Christian School, a K-8 school in Hull, where her family resides. However, the pay rate for subs makes it hard to justify the cost of child care, and she is only able to fill in for absent teachers three or four times a year.

"In my situation, it hardly pays for me to have somebody watch my kids — it just doesn't make sense," she said.

### Burnout

Despite pay incentives and relaxed eligibility requirements, the substitute teacher and paraprofessional shortage in N'West Iowa is ongoing — and it takes a toll. According to Craig, it is often teachers who bear the brunt of it.

"One of the big impacts is that so many teachers have given up prep periods to cover classes for teachers that are gone when we don't have enough subs," he said.

"Every teacher is going to be the first to volunteer to give up that time, but it has happened so often now, and that's where the burnout comes. You lose that — it may only be 45 minutes — but the amount of papers you can get checked, or the phone calls you can make, or just to go to the bathroom? That time goes away. And that is incredibly stressful."

Craig said the biggest worry, when it comes to addressing staffing shortages, is that it ultimately could imperil the quality of instruction in the region's schools.

Lisa Wiersma, a former Sioux Center High School English teacher, is a regular substitute teacher in the Sibley-Ocheyedan School District, and she has seen the creeping effect of lost instructional time in the schools.

### SUB SNAPSHOTS:

#### LISA WIERSMA

Subbing for: Sibley-Ocheyedan Middle School and High School

Time subbing: One-and-a-half years

Age: 36

Residence: Sibley

When Lisa Wiersma's husband, the Rev. Ben Wiersma, took the call to become pastor of Sibley Christian Reformed Church a year and a half ago, she left her full-time position as instructional coach at Sioux Center High School where she had spent the previous nine years as an English teacher.

"My husband was going to seminary, and I was teaching, and then when he graduated from seminary and got a job as a pastor, we wanted one of us to stay home," Wiersma said.

The Wiersmas' two daughters are in the third and fifth grades at Hull Christian School, and on top of being a parent, Lisa volunteers her time to the church, where she is the worship coordinator and unofficial social media strategist.

Wiersma still teaches, though. Sometimes she walks into a high school history classroom for the day; other times, she has taken long-term subbing positions, filling in for as many as 12 weeks at a time for teachers gone on maternity leave.

Sometimes, the work is irregular, but she is glad for the flexibility to be able to meet a need in her local public high school.

"It's a way I can serve a need in the community — and it fits with my background and skill set," she said.

#### TED DE HOOGH

Subbing for: Sioux Center High School

Time subbing: 21 years

Age: 81

Residence: Sioux Center

Around 20 years ago, Ted De Hoogh thought he was retiring. He had spent most of his long career as a junior high and high school art teacher in the Sioux Center School District.

"I did that up until 2001, when I supposedly retired. I've been a substitute teacher here since," the 81-year-old said.

He said subbing in the high school keeps him connected to teachers and students, many of whom are the children or grandchildren of his former students.

"Some people say, 'Subbing — that's like babysitting, isn't it?' And I kiddingly say, 'No, it's more like crowd control,'" De Hoogh said. "That might be the case for the first minute or two, but I think the overall picture is more about building relationships with the kids."

De Hoogh subs two or three days during a typical week, although recently, when the girls basketball team made it to the state tournament, he subbed for five days in a row.

Some days are a scramble, he said. In a district facing a worsening substitute teacher shortage, De Hoogh may be called to fill in for a couple of different teachers for stretches during a single day. He said he especially enjoys subbing in classes for newcomer students, many of whom speak limited English.

The work can be demanding, but even at 81, De Hoogh is sticking with it.

"I'm still enjoying it. I'm still having fun," he said. "Kids will see me in the hall and say, 'Mr. De Hoogh, who are you today?' And I'll say, 'I'm so and so.' And they'll say, 'Good, I'll see you in class.'"

#### SHERRY DE WIT

Subbing for: Hull Christian School

Time subbing: 5 years

Age: 33

Residence: Hull

When Sherry De Wit graduated from Northwestern College in Orange City in 2012, she took a job as a special-education teacher at Hull Christian School. However, as her young family grew, she decided to stay home to care for her kids.

Occasionally, though, she will put her teacher hat back on and fill in for a missing teacher at Hull Christian.

"Just a few times here and there — like two or three times a year," De Wit said. "That's because I'm home with my kids, and I have to find child care."

De Wit's children are 5, 3 and 1, and while she is glad to pitch in and help a handful of days during the year, the inherent instability of substitute teaching makes arranging for child care difficult. Many calls for subs come in during the early hours of the morning, and subs may get calls every day for a week, then no calls for several weeks.

"My biggest challenges would just be finding child care, and just needing to know ahead of time — to make arrangements," she said.

De Wit said once her children are older, she may return to teaching, or she may sub more often. She wants to do her part because she knows many schools are facing staffing challenges, including a national shortage of new teachers.

"There are less college students going into education," De Wit said. "I feel like, everywhere you look, there are job openings for teaching."

"Sometimes, I see the sub crunch from the sub's point of view," Wiersma said.

"Sometimes, there are classes that just go to the commons for study hall — because there's nobody. But then I might go for a week, and I don't get a call. It's so day-to-day."

Across the country, some schools facing staffing shortages have been forced into abrupt closures for the day. Others have shifted to regular four-day weeks or to instruction models that incorporate remote learning when staff shortages cannot be covered. In some schools, in-person learning has been shut down for weeks on end due to staffing shortages.

"That's the danger point — to get all the way through to where you can't address the educational needs of the kids," Craig said. "And we haven't gotten to that point ever, which is good."

So far, schools in N'West Iowa have weathered staffing shortages without resorting to closures, but with

diminished sub pools in a number of schools across N'West Iowa, concerned adults like Rosalyn De Koster of Hull are stepping in to do their part.

Subbing for a short time already has led to rich experiences for De Koster, including singing silly songs with elementary students when she was guidance counselor for the day or teaching high school science students about the difference between genotypes and phenotypes. And with De Koster's curly red hair and penchant for dressing in bright or whimsical patterns, she said her students have also taken to calling her, affectionately, "Mrs. Frizzle," the colorful teacher from the "Magic School Bus" series of children's books.

De Koster said teachers, too, have made her feel welcome.

"The teachers I've been chatting with — in them, I'm meeting with exhausted gratitude," she said. "They'll say, 'Thank you for being a sub. This is so helpful. We need people like you.'"

## LAW & ORDER

### ROCK VALLEY DRIVER TO JAIL FOR OWI NEAR HULL

HULL—A 22-year-old Rock Valley man was arrested about 8:45 a.m. Monday, March 20, near Hull on charges of first-offense operating while under the influence, possession of an open container of alcohol as a driver, driving on the wrong side of a two-way highway, failure to yield to an emergency vehicle, no valid driver's license and failure to provide proof of vehicle liability insurance.

The arrest of **Casirimo Gomez Lopez** stemmed from the stop of a 2011 Jeep Liberty for driving left of center and erratic driving on Goldfinch Avenue west of Hull, according to the Iowa State Patrol.

He initially failed to stop for the trooper's lights and sirens. Gomez Lopez had bloodshot/watery eyes, impaired balance, slurred speech and the odor of an alcoholic beverage and failed field sobriety tests.

He also was in possession of an open container of alcohol, accord-

ing to the incident report.

### TEENAGER FOUND WITH DRUG PARAPHERNALIA

SIoux CENTER—A 19-year-old Rock Rapids resident was cited about 2:10 a.m. Thursday, March 16, in Sioux Center on charges of possession of drug paraphernalia and first-offense person under 21 using tobacco/vapor products.

The citing of **Xander John Ditsworth** stemmed from the stop of a 2014 Jeep Patriot for

an equipment violation on the 200 block of Fourth Street Northeast in Sioux Center, according to the Sioux Center Police Department.

The strong odor of marijuana was detected coming from Ditsworth and the vehicle.

During a vehicle search, police located a homemade marijuana shaker with residue along with some straws and other items consistent with drug paraphernalia.

Marijuana residue also was observed scattered on the seat and floor of the vehicle.

Ditsworth admitted to friends smoking marijuana in the vehicle previously, according to the incident report.

### LE MARS WOMAN JAILED FOR OWI, CANNABIDIOL

MAURICE—A 44-year-old Le Mars woman was arrested about 12:15 a.m. Saturday, March 18, near Maurice on charges of first-offense operating while under the influence, first-offense possession of a controlled substance — cannabidiol and possession of drug

paraphernalia.

The arrest of **Brandy Gail Moll** stemmed from the stop of a 2014 Ford Escape for erratic driving on Highway 75 near the 500th Street intersection south of Maurice, according to the Sioux County Sheriff's Office.

She was found to be in the possession of marijuana, a THC vaping device and drug paraphernalia. Moll had bloodshot/watery eyes, admitted to drug use and failed field sobriety tests, according to the incident report.