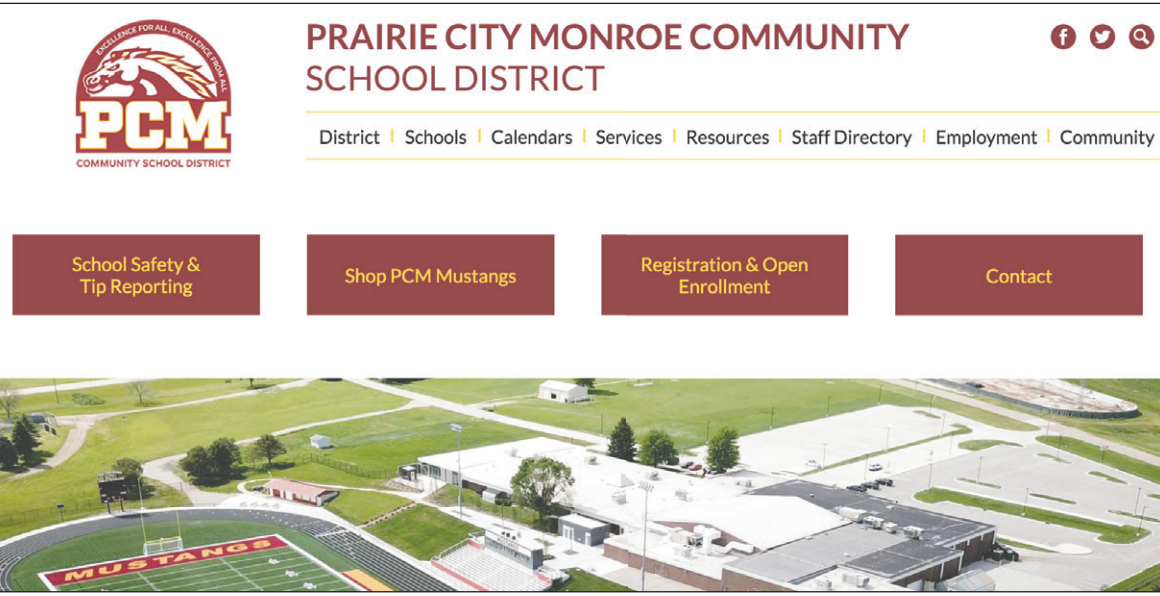


Local People. Local Stories.

PCME EXPLORER

PCM



Registration is now open for the 2023-2024 school year at PCM. File Photo

Registration open at PCM for 2023-24 school year

Online registration form can be found on district website

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Registration for the 2023-2024 school year is now open for the PCM Community

School District. Available on the school's website, www.pcmschools.org, parents or guardians can click the registration button to get started. "Registration has historically always started July 1, which is not good practice," district communications director Cathy DeHaai said. "(Because) then we are waiting until July to really start

planning our classes and what resources are needed." With the bumped up registration date, fees will not be available to pay until later in the year. Notification will be sent out at that time with instructions on how to pay the associated fees. "We really want parents to

REGISTRATION • 3

PRAIRIE CITY

Coffee with the Mayor back in Prairie City

First event planned for Feb. 25

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A popular event is back with Chad Alleger once again serving as mayor of Prairie City. Coffee with the Mayor will start up again at 9 a.m. Feb. 25 at the Prairie City Public Library where Alleger will be on-hand, along with a few friends, to talk about issues within the city, county and state.

"I look at it as another avenue for residents to come and ask questions," Alleger said. "I started this because sometimes it's difficult to attend or residents might feel uncomfortable to ask questions during a regular council meeting. I thought a laid-back atmosphere would be more inviting. Plus there are donuts."

With Alleger for the first coffee is new city administrator Jerry Moore, chief of police Kevin Gott and Jasper County Supervisor Brandon

Talsma, among other guests. "I try my best to get not only other local officials but state and county officials, too," Alleger said. Alleger previously held Coffee with the Mayor gatherings during his first run as the mayor of Prairie City. He wanted to bring them back to keep the transparency with the local government.

"For the most part, but it really depends what is currently going on. When there are or might be controversial issues, the attendance is usually higher," Alleger said. "It's easier to explain what is going on rather than reading it ... on social media. I do this to be as transparent as possible."

Alleger typically holds the event each month. Special guests, including local, county and state officials, are often on-hand to talk about what is happening in their areas.

MONROE

LIVING HIGH ON THE HOG

Changing industry, hard work, reliable income: Conversations with a Monroe pork producer

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It was around 30 degrees by the time I hopped into Thad Nearmyer's pickup for a farm tour and pleasant conversation, but I could barely feel the heat billowing through the vents from my passenger seat. While the two of us were struggling to stay warm in our three-layer outfits, the 4,800 or so pigs in the four confinement buildings of Nearmyer's Monroe farm were living high on the hog.

To keep the pigs comfortable and protect them from the extreme cold of Iowa winters, Nearmyer and his brother Todd have each building outfitted

with climate control functions. We had to wait a few minutes to get the feeling back in our fingers and cheeks, but the pigs were already busy enjoying their summer temperatures, likely unaware of the brisk fall that surrounds them.

Times have changed from the time Nearmyer's grandfather was farming hogs outdoors behind cattle. Heck, the old-timer would even keep them in the same pen. Over time his grandfather did separate the hogs from the cattle, still keeping them in outdoor lots. At most, his grandfather raised about 120 sows. Around that time, Nearmyer said, is when the bottom fell out from beneath the hog market.

"The industry was changing, going



Thad Nearmyer, a Monroe farmer, stands in a pasture with cattle. In addition to raising cows, Nearmyer and his brother also raise close to 4,800 hogs on their farm. Christopher Braunschweig/PCM Explorer

from pigs on every farm to the bigger style buildings, like the custom-feeding operations that we have now," he said. "There was a point where a lot of peo-

ple got out of the hog business. We did, too. And we had lost a lot of money at

FARMING • 2

JASPER COUNTY

VOLUNTEERS KNOW THERE'S A PROBLEM

Small town EMS agencies say county's ALS program has its benefits, but others worry it might not be the best solution

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Editor's note: The following story is the second in a multi-part series about Jasper County's efforts to improve emergency care for rural residents and assist the volunteer teams struggling to keep crews full and find new members, many of which may not have the means or time to be certified for paramedic-level care.

Justine Wyma cares for her community in every way possible. When she is not tending to children's health needs in the classrooms or teaching nursing courses at DMACC, she is responding to ambu-

lance calls in her own community of Sully, a small town populated by less than 900 people.

Prior to working in the schools, Wyma worked in critical care units and intensive care units. And for the past 23 years she has volunteered her time and expertise to the Sully Rural Fire Department and Ambulance. Wyma has been the ambulance director in Sully for about 20 years.

Out of the 20 or so volunteers in Sully Rural Fire Department and Ambulance, Wyma is one of the few certified to provide paramedic-level care. She has a Master of Science in Nursing and is a

registered nurse and certified legal nurse consultant, which more than qualifies her to provide medical assistance.

However, being one of the only paramedics in town to respond to calls has proven difficult for Wyma. If she is able to be on scene during a critical emergency, the Sully EMS crews can function as a semi-advanced life support service, Wyma said. But transportation services are limited.

Patients can be transported to a local hospital in Newton, Grinnell or Pella, but if someone needs to go to Des Moines it can be challenging as it would likely put Sully out of service for up to three hours.

Which is partly why Wyma has embraced the ALS program from the Jasper County Sheriff's Office.

In fall 2022, crews had to report to a big fire south of Lynnvile and required the help of six other departments. Wyma and another staff member were the only two people left in town to cover an ambulance call near Kellogg at the same time as the fire. But Kellogg's fire crew was already helping as mutual aid.

"Luckily (Jasper County) had their fly car out and were able to help us," Wyma said, noting one of the two reserve deputy paramedics was able to assist in that scenario, which she was grateful for.

Other departments are seeing the benefits of the county's program, too, specifically

when it comes to filling in service gaps and providing a higher level of care when needed.

Brock Hansen, the chief of Baxter Rural Fire Department, said the county's program is a "very welcomed" resource for its rescue unit. Baxter and other communities have had issues in the past covering calls. There are times when the town of more than 970 people needs the reserve deputy paramedics.

"Other times we don't need 'em," Hansen said. "I think it's a good, flexible fit for both departments. We work well with each other and complement each other."

Wyma, too, said the ALS program is an excellent

EMS • 3

