



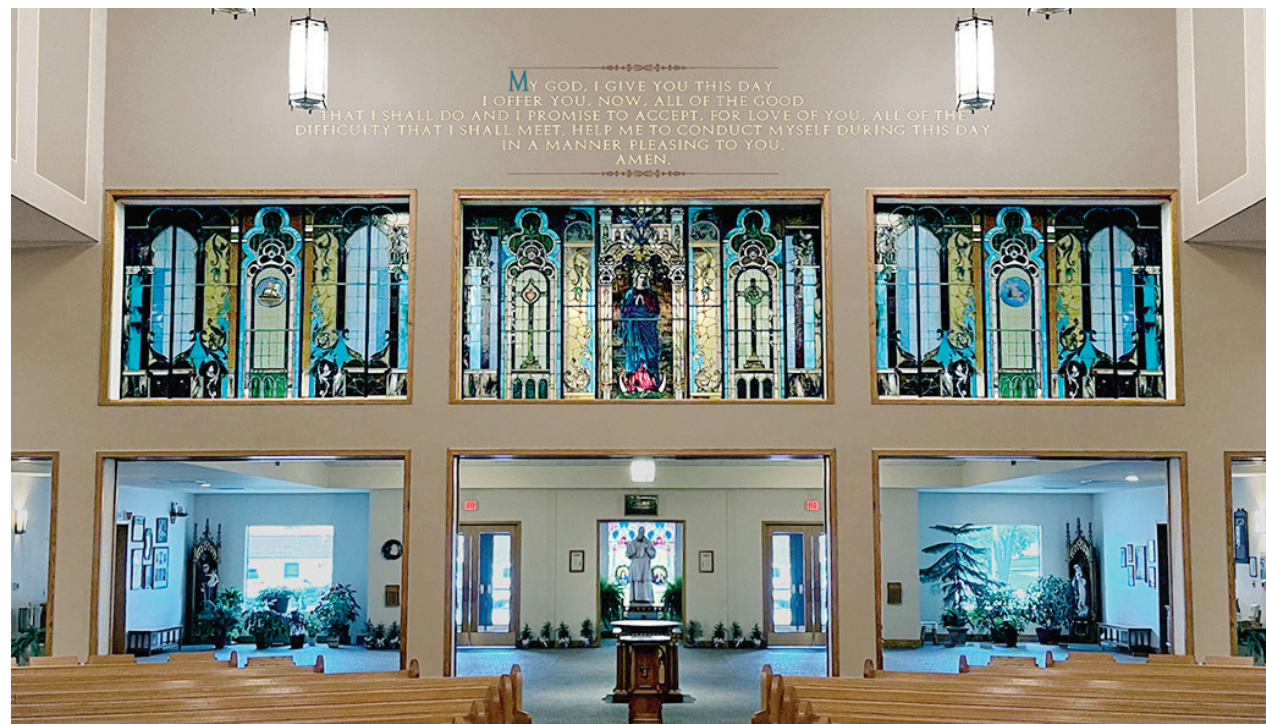
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Community News. Community Service.

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An artist's conception of the completed work at St. Francis de Sale in Ossian can be seen here.

Restoration Project Begun

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

OSSIAN - An area parish is undergoing restoration work with a big grand opening set in the coming weeks.

Daily and Sunday Mass has moved from St. Francis de Sales over to the Ossian campus of St. Teresa of Calcutta for the next several weeks as a major project is going on.

Key points include painting the ceiling, gold detail around the crucifix with verses in the gathering and from the gathering area heading into the church.

The former verse will be "Walk very simply with the Cross of the Lord and be at peace with



Rev. Henry Huber

yourself" by St. Francis de Sales with the latter being "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" from Matthew XVIII, 20.

It's an ambitious effort that will see the appearance of the parish upgraded.

Work got started recently and is set to be completed in late February, according to the Rev. Henry Huber, pastor of St. Francis de Sales.

Fundraising and planning have been going on for a while now with the Rev. Humber coming onboard in media res.

It's an impressive effort with an estimated price of \$95,000.

"Something like this is a sign of a thriving parish," said the Rev. Huber. "They want it to look nice."

After the work is completed, Mass will be offered in the church, likely the first Sunday in March, during the early part of Lent.

Public Safety

Assaults on Jail Staff Put Spotlight On Risks

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

Multiple attacks on law enforcement staff in recent weeks have put a spotlight on the safety of public officials, but the situation overall looks to be getting better despite some recent high-profile incidents including an attempted murder charge for one area inmate after an attack on a jail staffer.

On the heels of the death of George Floyd, protests against law enforcement followed, along with calls to Defund the Police.

That was accompanied by a spike in attacks on members of law enforcement including in Winneshiek County and Fayette County County.

Incidents included ramming a police vehicle with an officer inside to direct physical attacks in 2020 and 2021, only beginning to ease in 2022.

Today, two years on, attacks on members of law enforcement have eased on the whole.

"I think it's fallen off to a degree," said Winneshiek Coun-



Dan Marx

See ASSAULTS: Page 2

TV Industrial Tech Likely to Break Ground Shortly

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

JACKSON JUNCTION - Turkey Valley Board of Education members had an update on the the district's proposed Industrial Tech project with word on just when shovels will fly.

Superintendent Jay Jurens said he had spoken with the architect about the project.

Waiting until school is out would add to cost versus getting to work as soon as Mother Nature permits.

The difference could be as long as a full quarter, or roughly three months should a mild winter allow work to start March 1 versus early June.

So, a special meeting is likely before the end of the month for the board to give the go-ahead.

Under the superintendent's report, Jurens noted audit results were still not available.

"We're lucky we don't have any bonds," said Jurens. That would add additional pressure for having the audit results.

Next door, New Hampton does have that, creating pressure Turkey Valley does not have.

The start of a new legislative session was also noted by Jurens.

Vouchers could be an item before the legislature this term. The superintendent said he had spoken with legislators already on the issue.

The next meeting of the Turkey Valley Board of Education will be Feb. 13 at 7 p.m.

School choice proposal draws diverse reactions

By Michael Hohenbrink
Mid-America Publishing

A proposal for school choice is drawing sharply diverse reactions across Iowa.

In her State of the State Address, Gov. Kim Reynolds proposed a savings account for families who send their children to a private school with the state contributing the exact amount it would spend per pupil, currently \$7,598, to the account.

The plan would be phased in over three years, starting with the lowest-income children and then expanded to all of Iowa.

For some educators, the proposal is already being termed a non-starter.

"The voucher system will hurt Iowa public schools," said Post-

At A Glance
Proposed: Savings Accounts for families who send their children to private schools
State's Share: \$7,598
Timeframe: Three years to phase in, starting with lowest-income students
Status: Public hearing set for 5 p.m. Tuesday after a Senate panel advanced the bill

See CHOICE: Page 2

Backers Want Hwy. 150 renamed

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

Fayette and Winneshiek county officials both are being asked to come onboard with an effort to honor a slain member of law enforcement with the matter coming before boards of supervisors Monday morning.

Iowa State Patrol Sergeant Jim Smith was murdered April 9, 2021 by a suspect in Grundy Center after Michael Thomas Lang was the subject of a traffic stop gone very wrong. Lang grabbed a police officer in a chokehold, shout-

ed "Come get me" to law enforcement and then barricaded himself in a residence.

Officers attempting to clear out Lang were greeted by gunfire with Smith killed by a pump action shotgun wielded by Lang, who was subsequently convicted of murder, attempted murder and assault on a peace officer with intent, drawing a life sentence.

Smith was a native of Independence. Now, backers are hoping to rename Highway 150 in his honor, linking

See SMITH: Page 7



Sen. Joni Ernst (second from left) hears from stakeholders during a roundtable in Fayette County on agriculture issues. Photo by Michael Hohenbrink

Ernst Hears Hiring Effort Woes

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

FAYETTE - A lack of workers is among the biggest issues right now impacting agriculture in Iowa, according to a roundtable of industry leaders.

Hosting Sen. Joni Ernst at Upper Iowa University, leaders from Fayette County Economic Development and Tourism, Allamakee-Clayton REC, Northeast Iowa RC&D, Iowa Area Development Group, IEDA, and Western Dubuque Biodiesel were on hand to lay out their concerns as Con-

gress begins to look at a Farm Bill.

Most significant among concerns was the impact of the Great Resignation on a field often forgotten with agriculture taking a pounding.

Ernst was on a tour of Fayette, Buchanan and Dubuque county locations with Upper Iowa University the first stop of the day.

Labor woes in all fields of agriculture are being felt, for

See ERNST: Page 2

Recycling Bins Back Before Council

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

ST LUCAS - The St. Lucas City Council returned to the issue of recycling bin placement during its first meeting of the new year.

It's been a recurring matter for the city going back several months.

A decision for placement temporarily by the church drew some concerns.

That had council discussing the idea of whether the bins needed to be in the city at all.

A rural location could theoretically be possible, for example on county right-of-way.

Council opted to table the matter for now after discussion.

New business incentives were also up for consideration.

The experience of nearby communities such as Calmar and West Union was considered.

Maynard, for example, reimburses taxes paid, keeping the county happy as revenues continue with the city then turning around paying back the individual.

Council will return the issue at its next meeting pending the receipt of additional information.

While the area remains under winter's grip, consideration was given to awarding the city's lawn mowing contract.

Information will be gathered on companies that provide the service.

St. Lucas Fun Day was also up in front of council. Last year's provider of fireworks will not be doing it this year because of the proximity with Spillville's display on the calendar.

Mayor Nick Busta said he would look into options.

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ASSAULTS FROM PAGE 1

ty Sheriff Dan Marx.

For law enforcement, that is a relief, although caution is present.

Recently, a number of attacks against Winneshiek County Jail staff have been on the radar with female jail staff struck in at least two separate incidents.

Separately, a Fayette County incident Wednesday started as routine as a detention officer tried to move a female inmate out of her cell to check to see if she had damaged her sprinkler system.

That quickly escalated with the inmate, identified by the sheriff's office and court records as Jeannie Murphy, 48, of Cedar Rapids, knocked over the detention officer and struck her with her fists in the head, moving on to use the officer's own body camera as a weapon.

After the detention officer used a taser on Murphy, the latter recovered and went for the officer's own taser before a deputy came to the detention officer's rescue and was able to secure the inmate.

Murphy faces an attempted murder charge for the jail assault, a Class "B" felony and a charge of assault on persons in certain occupations with a specification of using/displaying a dangerous weapon, a Class "D" felony, plus a charge of criminal mischief - fifth degree, a simple misdemeanor.

Part of the Job

In part, some degree of physical risk is part of the job, something law enforcement tries to keep in mind.

"Whenever we're moving inmates, we always take basic precautions," said Marx.

Part of that is trying to have two staff members present when direct contact with inmates is required.

Video capacity has also been improved, so video visitation and texting and email capabilities for individuals is available in the cell area, without necessitating moving inmates around.

A padded cell is also a feature in the jail with its most recent renovation project.

The specialized cell came at some extra cost, but the sheriff sees it as a safe area to cool off when an inmate needs to blow off steam or is dealing with some real issues.

The cell also helps with potential liability, lessening risk for the inmate, for jail staff and for the threat of property damage.

"It has been a very good investment," said Marx.

While precautions help, in the end the job carries risks.

"We're always vigilant," said Marx.



TV Receives Grant Funds

Diane Kuehn, Food Service Director at Turkey Valley School, applied for and received \$8,000 in grant money with the funding already making a difference for area students who enjoying the fruit of the efforts.

The Local Food for Schools (LFS) grant was awarded to the Turkey Valley food service program.

Included in the total was a Produce Grant for \$4,000 and a Protein Grant for \$4,000.

Kuehn has used the grant money for local food in the Turkey Valley food service program.

Among examples of the grants' impact, at Thanksgiving Turkey Valley students were offered fresh cheese curds and apple cider.

Students received frozen yogurt from Country View Dairy before Christmas break.

Kuehn has also applied for and received \$11,584.52 in grant money for supply chain assistance funds.

With increasing inflation and food costs, this grant money has been especially beneficial this year.



Top and above, Turkey Valley students enjoy some of the fare served up with support of the grant funding. Photos courtesy TV

ERNST FROM PAGE 1

example in meat processing.

All aspects are affected.

"It comes in the form of being short even in terms of wait staff," said Ernst.

The near breakdown of the meatpacking industry in 2020 has been followed by continuing difficulties.

Nor is it a far-off concern.

"Workforce is a concern for us in Fayette County," said Mallory Hanson, director of Fayette County Economic Development and Tourism

For Benji Nichols, a member of family with generations of experience in raising animals, that is a reality that is easy to comprehend.

"So that long view of meat processing is complicated," said Nichols.

He recalled his own family's experience with a changing labor force over the years leading up to today.

For Ryan Wagner, an executive with Allamakee-Clayton REC, it's a reality that spills over to other aspects of rural life with the electrical cooperative struggling to fill positions.

"These are good jobs, good benefits," said Wagner.

Unfortunately, a model of pushing four-year college is actively a hindrance, leaving students with large debt loads but without employment, while jobs in electrical work, plumbers, et al. go unfilled, even with \$60,000 salaries and benefits.

Just how to alleviate that lack of workers is a multi-faceted issue, from stressing technical education to internships as possibilities.

The Great Resignation is part of the equation, fueled by factors ranging from workers exiting the labor pool to job jumping amid rising wages from inflation and heightened competition, but Iowa's low birthrate is also part of the equation.

"Iowa is just not growing its population enough," said Ernst.

The question of work visas drew discussion with Ernst pointing to Iowa's high threshold for wages for H2A visas, higher than in many other states, complicating a quick fix for the issue.

Another concern for the agriculture industry is rising fuel costs.

Tom Brooks with Western Dubuque Biodiesel voiced concern over efforts at zero-carbon emissions.

This has a direct impact on rising prices, Brooks said.

Voicing concerns, though, gets local voices dismissed as "alarmists," despite the reality on the ground, complained Brooks.

CHOICE FROM PAGE 1

ville Superintendent Tim Dugger.

Heading up one of the most diverse districts in Iowa, Dugger is in an unusual position as an administrator compared to many of his brethren across the state.

With high numbers of students in special needs program, Dugger worries about the financial impact.

"Public schools must take each and every student who shows up at their doorstep," said Dugger.

He also cited school consolidation, a trend for decades across Iowa that has seen merger upon merger as falling birthrates cause havoc for school census numbers.

"There are 44 counties which do not have a private school; therefore, this is a rural vs. urban conflict once again," said Dugger. "This will drain resources from the rural areas which will ultimately lead to more school consolidations."

In northeast Iowa around Postville, private schools operate in Protivin with Trinity Catholic School drawing students from four counties with Howard, Chickasaw, Winneshiek and Fayette while just down the road Ossian has one of two campuses for St. Teresa of Calcutta serving the southern half of Winneshiek County, bordered by St. Benedict to the north serving much of the rest of Winneshiek County and with St. Patrick just north of Postville.

For others, the idea of competition is not immediately a bad one.

"I will share with you the same thing that I shared with our local legislators Mike Sexton and Tim Kraayenbrink when they came this past year to meet with our Board and community this past fall," said South Central Calhoun Superintendent Brad Anderson. "That message was, 'We are not afraid of competition and do believe taxpayers/parents should have a choice where to send their kids to school. We feel that have a choice now?'"

Open enrollment already creates a similar situation in some ways.

"We feel parents have a choice now with no restriction on open enrollment, competent private instruction (homeschool) which has zero student/parent accountability by the state and the current private school system that can currently accept or deny admission to each of their individual systems," said Anderson.

For South Winneshiek's Superintendent Kris Einck, one key area would be accountability.

"I feel public tax dollars should go towards public schools," said Einck. "I would like to know if the nonpublic schools receiving these public funds will be held to the same standards and accountability as the public schools?"

He also pointed to special services.

"I would also like to know if the public schools are going to be required to provide the special education services, ELL services, and Title services to the nonpublic schools as we currently do?" said Einck.

For private schools, the possibility is raising hopes.

"ESAs would be a great thing for families," said Tyler Hoelscher, administrator for Timothy Christian School. "It would give families more opportunities to choose what school is best for their children. The state gives about \$7500 to public schools for each student. With this school choice bill, that \$7500 would be available to be used by families to send their children to whatever school they choose, public or private. In other words, that \$7500 would follow the student to whatever school they attend. Many people may not be aware that if a family decides to open enroll from one public school to another public school, that \$7500 already follows the student from the district they live in to the district they open enroll to. This school choice bill just allows that money to follow the student to any school they attend, public or private. Another thing to mention is that the school choice bill does not take all funding from the public schools. Public schools in Iowa receive additional money for each child from federal funding and local property taxes. That money would stay with the public schools no matter what school a student attends. The bottom line is that tax-payer money for education is just that, for education. The education of students. We should not be so concerned about money staying with a certain school district. We should be focused on ensuring that the funding follows the child, supporting school students not school systems."

SW Okays Amended Member Boundaries

Amended descriptions of school board boundaries were approved by the South Winneshiek Board of Education during its January meeting as the board also turned an eye to resignations.

Resignations were approved by the board including Jami Hollinrake, South Winneshiek's Human Resource director as well as Noah Tieskoetter and Kody Kleve as assistant varsity baseball coaches.

Additionally as approved by the board, districts boundaries included:

District 1: All of the area within the school district in Springfield Township, Winneshiek County that is west of Trout Creek; all of the area within the school district in Decorah Township, Winneshiek County; all of the area within the school district in Washington Township, Winneshiek County (excluding the city of Calmar); all of the area in Calmar Township, Winneshiek County including the city of Spillville, excluding the city of Calmar and excluding the area south and east of a line beginning at the east township line and 180th Street: thence westerly on 180th Street to 227th Avenue, thence southerly on 227th Avenue to 175th Street, thence westerly on 175th Street to the corporate limits of the city of Calmar, thence southerly and westerly along the corporate limits to the south township line (also 155th Street); all of the area within the school district in Madison Township, Sumner Township, and Lincoln Township, Winneshiek County.

b. Director District 2: All of the area within the school district in Bloomfield Township, Winneshiek County that is north and east of a line beginning at the west township line and Sand Road: thence easterly along Sand Road to Centennial Road (also known as County Road W46), thence southeasterly along Centennial Road to its intersection with the Yellow River, thence easterly along the Yellow River to the school district boundary; all of the area within the school district in Frankville Township, Winneshiek County; all of the area within the school district in Springfield Township, Winneshiek County that is east of Trout Creek; all of the city of Calmar (2020 corporate limits); all of the area within Calmar Township that is south and east of a line beginning at the east township line and 180th Street: thence westerly on 180th Street to 227th Avenue, thence southerly on 227th Avenue to 175th Street, thence westerly on 175th Street to the corporate limits of the city of Calmar, thence southerly and westerly along the corporate limits to the south township line (also 155th Street).

c. Director District 3: All of the area within the school district in Bloomfield Township, Winneshiek County that is south of a line beginning at the west township line and Sand Road: thence easterly along Sand Road to Centennial Road (also known as County Road W46), thence southeasterly along Centennial Road to its intersection with the Yellow River, thence easterly along the Yellow River to the school district boundary, includes the city of Castalia; all of the area within Military Township, including the city of Ossian.

News Briefs

WMC Auxiliary Scholarship Applications Available

The Winneshiek Medical Center Auxiliary is offering it annual Health Career Scholarship to residents of Winneshiek County interested in pursuing a health care profession.

The applicant must be accepted into an accredited health career program to be eligible. Anyone interested in applying should visit <https://www.winmedical.org/donate/wmc-auxiliary> for the application or contact Winneshiek Medical Center at 563-387-3036. The deadline for applications is April 1, 2023.

Calmar Community Meal Returns

Calmar Community Meals will be starting up this January. These meals will be held on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Calmar Lutheran Church from 5 to 6:30 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend and have a nice meal and make new friends. There is no charge for this event.

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