

News Briefs

Lighting Contest Winners for Calmar Announced

The Calmar Community Club Christmas Lighting Contest winners have been announced. Winners for 2022 included:
 1st place - Brady and Chelsea Severson
 2nd place - Gary Barnes and Nicholas Wallin
 3rd place - Alan "Doc" and Pam Severson

Winter Bird Feeding Program Scheduled

A Winter Bird Feeding program is set for Sunday, Jan. 8 from 2 to 3:30 p.m. at the Calmar Public Library.

Snow Birds Program is Set in Fort Atkinson

Snow Birds will be the focus of an event for kids kindergarten to eighth grade. The event begins at 1 p.m. Monday, Jan. 16 at the Fort Atkinson Public Library. No RSVP is needed.

Holiday Hours Planned

With New Years, the Calmar Courier will be closed Friday, Dec. 30 during the day.

CHANGES FROM PAGE 1

Postville CSD had seen considerable discussion of the idea at its school board meetings in recent months. For that district, the issue came down to what was on paper substantial enrollment, but in practice the reality is more complex. With many students enrolled in the district coming not just to the district but to the country for the first time, going out for extracurricular activities was not always a high priority as students adjusted to a new language et al. Considering those students as ready to play was not accurate, district officials argued.

Rather, for districts a model like Minnesota with balancing free and reduced price lunch participation was suggested. With 263 schools, out of 365, voting, 211 schools (80% of those voting) said to go ahead with a change as 52 schools voted against a change.

As a result, change might now go ahead. "IHSAA legal counsel Brian Humke will develop an updated version of the IHSAA Articles of Incorporation that we will submit to the Iowa State Board of Education for consideration," said Tom Keating, IHSAA executive director. "I am preparing a summary of the process used to get us to where we currently are."

Keating was working to get this on the agenda for the Jan. 12 State Board of Education meeting. "Should the Iowa State Board of Education approve the amendment, the new model for classification in football will be implemented for the 2023 and 2024 football scheduling cycle," said Keating. That has area districts excited.

"This is going to level the playing field for Postville," said Superintendent Tim Dugger. "We are very excited to be in a smaller division which will make our programs more competitive. The connection between social economics and winning percentages have been proven over and over again. We appreciate the Iowa High School Athletic Association being responsive the needs of Iowa's student athletes." Eight-man football could also be affected.

"Pending that approval, the IHSAA Board of Control will review, discuss, and consider IHSAA administrative staff recommendations concerning the Eight-Player enrollment cap, currently at 120 or permitted by exception," said Keating.



Work of Mercy

Trinity Catholic School students wore pajamas and undertook a Work of Mercy ahead of the holiday as they made colorful pillowcases to donate to area hospitals. The pillowcases are designed to cheer up any children who have to stay at the hospital to give them something special. Pictured are Evie Bessler, Kyson Jestrab, and Brayden Einck. Photo courtesy Trinity Catholic School

STORM FROM PAGE 1



Frozen water and snow coats the exterior of a building in Spring Grove, Minnesota Thursday evening. Photo by Rick Aske

conditions. Coming up, a warming trend looks to be on its way with the mercury reaching above freezing for a few days, perhaps hitting as high as 40 before the week's end as Monday night's predicted low of -7 was set to be followed by mid-20s Tuesday and then continuing to warm in the next few days.

Northeast Iowa Farmland Values Hit Record Highs

By John Jensen
 Mid-America Publishing

As food prices soar on the shelves, so does the price of farmland used to raise it.

The annual survey of farmland prices by the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and the Center for Agriculture and Rural Development found a double-digit statewide increase for the second straight year and increases between 15 and 19 percent in rural northeast Iowa.

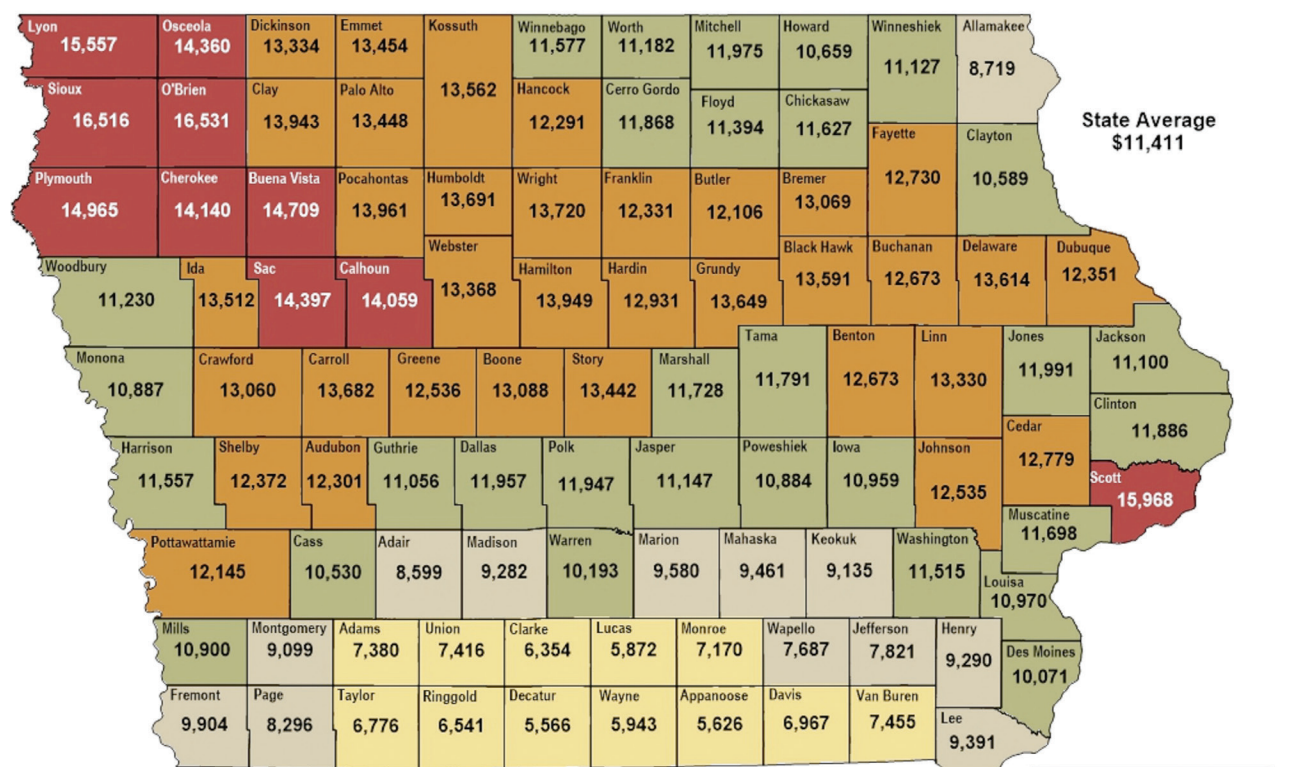
Wendong Zhang, an associate professor of economics and faculty affiliate of the Center for Agriculture and Rural Development, conducts the survey annually. He said, while inflation was a factor in this year's farmland value increases, it was not as much of a factor as a year ago, when values jumped 29 percent statewide. Instead, he said commodity prices, limited land supply and low interest rates this summer were major factors in this year's 17 percent statewide increase.

"The Federal Reserve seems to be determined to keep raising interest rates until they get a firm control on inflation," Zhang said. "This is a tricky balance because larger and quicker interest rate hikes run the risk of slowing down the economy, potentially to a recession."

Northeast Iowa land value rate increases ranged from 18.8 percent in both Allamakee and Clayton Counties to 15.6 percent in Black Hawk County.

Clayton County rural land values jumped from an average of \$8,911 per acre a year ago to \$10,589 this year while Allamakee County rates jumped from \$7,338 to \$8,719. Fayette County rates climbed 17.5 percent, from \$10,833 to \$12,730 while Winneshiek County rates were also up 17.5 percent, from \$9,467 to \$11,127 per acre.

The highest rural land values in northeast Iowa are to the west, with Black Hawk County land averaging \$13,591 per



Farmland values have skyrocketed across the state according to the annual survey of land prices from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

acre and Bremer County land averaging \$13,069. Zhang said this year's higher interest rates are not playing a large role in land purchasing decisions as 81 percent of Iowa Farmland is fully paid for.

A new question on this year's farmland survey was how respondents felt about the prices. Zhang said 70% of respondents felt current land values are either too high or way too high.

"The higher land values do create an even higher entry barrier for beginning farmers, and the following increase in cash rents along with higher input costs could negatively affect producers, especially those with a lot of rented ground," he said.

Statewide, the highest land values are in the northwest reporting district. O'Brien County leads the state with an average value of \$16,531 per acre while Sioux County land averages \$16,516 per acre. Of the 10 counties where rural land values averaged more than \$14,000 per acre, seven were in the northwest district and two others were adjacent

to the northwest reporting district. The lone exception to this is Scott County (far east central Iowa), which has a \$15,968 average for its rural farm land.

The state's lowest land values are the southern two tiers of counties, where eight counties register averages below \$7,000 per acre. The lowest value is in Decatur County, which is along the Missouri border, at \$5,566.

Will the recent rural land value spike continue? That appears to vary based on who is asked. Zhang said 48 percent of respondents forecast an increase in farmland values one year from now while 24 percent forecasted no change and 28 percent expected lower values. He said most respondents expect the next year value to either be the same or increase between 5 and 10 percent.

Looking five years ahead, Zhang said that 60 percent of respondents believe land values will increase 10 to 20 percent from current values while about 24 percent forecast a decline in prices.

NEW YEAR'S EVE SPECIAL

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