



**COUGARS ADVANCE
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**REDS, LEGENDS MOVE ON
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Regulars Margie Gehl, left, and Katie Hughes discuss stories in the newspaper while hanging out at Grace's Place. *Dave LaBelle • Staff Photos*

City will combat 'vacant' buildings

New ordinance could force owners into action

BY DYLAN KURT
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Following a recommendation derived from its downtown assessment and concerns being brought to light by local property owners, the Cascade City Council approved the first consideration of a new ordinance that will address some of the city's dilapidated vacant buildings.

Ordinance No. 08-23 covers "vacant building registration," which would in effect force certain commercial and industrial buildings meeting the new criteria to register with the city if they wish to remain empty.

This move is part of a statewide trend of municipalities getting more aggressive against neglected and unmaintained properties, according to City Administrator Lisa Kotter.

The process, as Kotter laid it out, is basically as follows: a building meets the city's definition of being vacant, the owner applies for a vacant building permit, the building is then inspected by the city administrator (likely with a building inspector in tow) and a compliance list is generated.

Before issuing a permit to allow the building to essentially remain vacant under the city's definition, owners will need to

"There are situations right now where we have business owners in town that have come to the council and said these buildings that are deteriorating and not being taken care of are affecting our business."

LISA KOTTER
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

remedy any compliance issues identified by the city administrator and building inspector.

Kotter said these repairs would likely include leaking roofs, holes in the structure that allow animals to gain access or anything that could compromise the building's overall structural integrity. Part of the apparent need for such an ordinance came from concerned neighboring property owners, who have little recourse when an adjacent building is falling into disrepair, potentially failing catastrophically and damaging their property.

"There are situations right now where we have business owners in town that have come to the council and said these buildings that are deteriorating and not being taken care of are affecting our business," Kotter said.

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A Place to Heal

Grace's Place is more than a restaurant, it's a refuge

BY DAVE LABELLE
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It started three years ago as a dream, an experiment of sorts.

Karla Strang told her husband, Phil, she wanted to quit her job with the oil company she had been with for 22 years and open a restaurant in Cascade.

"I told him I would try it for six months and if it didn't work out, I would return to a full-time job," she remembers.

Sipping from a 20-ounce coffee cup, she adds, "My husband thought I was nuts."

Joyce Knapp, who has been with Strang from the beginning,



Karla Strang holds a 20-ounce cup of coffee. Strang said she drinks three-to-four of these cups by 3:30 p.m., then turns to Diet Pepsi.

said, "When Karla approached me about opening this place, I said she was crazy because it was during the pandemic."

On Aug. 8, Grace's Place, named after Strang's mother, Grace Roling, who died at 37,

will celebrate its third anniversary on her late mother's birthday, and they have never been busier.

When many businesses closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, Strang stayed

open to serve the community via a drive-thru window. She continues to work seven days a week, and her husband Phil cooks on Sundays, when he is not ordering food or repairing something.

In a day when mega stores and impersonal chain restaurants are the norm, there is still a place where the staff knows your name, your children's and grandchildren's names and maybe even your ailments and heartaches; a place where people sincerely care beyond an artificial "Have a nice day."

"It's home, they smile at you when you come in," said customer Katie Hughes. Sitting in the booth with Hughes, Margie Gehl adds, "Good food, clean, nice, you can kibitz, it's homey and you can look out the window."

"It's a pretty good place,"

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Obituaries

Delaney Kremer

Delaney Kay Kremer, born March 31, 2007, in Dubuque, passed away July 6, 2023, of unknown causes.

Visitation for Delaney was held from 3-8 p.m., Friday, July 14, 2023, at the Reiff Funeral Home in Cascade. A visitation was also held after 9 a.m. Saturday at the funeral home.

Funeral Services for Delaney was held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, July 15, 2023, at St. Martin's Catholic Church with Pastor Matthew Beers presiding, and Rev. Mark Osterhaus assisting. Burial was held in Calvary Cemetery in Cascade.

She was a Student at IA Virtual Academy, where she embraced learning and pursued her dreams. Her presence brought joy to the lives of those around her, and her memory will forever be treasured. Delaney made an impact as a dedicated member of the Cascade High School cross country team. She pushed her limits and displayed determination in all her endeavors. Beyond her athletic pursuits, Delaney had a deep affection for her cats, who were an integral part of her life.

Her passion for the arts led her to explore various creative outlets. Delaney was an accomplished pianist and vocalist, captivating audiences with her performances in numerous plays for the Road Less Traveled Community Theatre and recitals through Centrally Rooted. She recently had the joy of attending a Taylor Swift concert with her cousins, aunts and Grandma, creating lasting memories of laughter and shared moments.

Delaney had an insatiable thirst for knowledge and was often found engrossed in a book. She possessed a natural talent for sewing and delighted in creating beautiful garments for her sisters. One of her most cherished creations was a special blanket she lovingly made for her mother.

Known for her gentle nature and compassionate heart, Delaney touched the lives of many with her kindness. She exemplified perseverance and determination, always striving for success in everything she pursued. In addition to her studies, Delaney found employment at the River Museum and Brothers Market, where her dedication and hard work were greatly appreciated.

She shared a close bond with her family, and their love and support were always a source of strength for her. Those left to cherish the memories of Delaney are her parents Tom and Leslie Kremer and three wonderful sisters, Elizabeth, Nora and Sierra all of Cascade; her maternal grandparents, John Curwen of Hazel Green, Wis. and Susan Curwen of Dubuque; and her paternal grandmother, Sharon Kremer of Cascade and several aunts, uncles and cousins.

She is preceded in death by her grandfather, John (Jack) H Kremer; her maternal great grandparents, Arthur and Helen Loomis and Eldon "Barney" and Jane Curwen; her paternal great grandparents, Henry and Callista Kremer and Robert and Florence Delaney; three uncles, Mark Curwen, James Kremer and Jim Urbain.

In lieu of flowers, a Delaney K. Kremer memorial fund has been established.

The family extends their heartfelt gratitude to the Cascade EMS for their quick response and compassion.

A video tribute may be viewed and online condolences sent to the family at www.reiffuneralhomeinc.com

Gerald Conrad

Gerald L. Conrad, 78, of Bankston, passed away Friday, July 14, 2023, surrounded by family and loved ones.

A visitation for Gerald will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Thursday, July 20, 2023, at the Reiff Funeral Home in Farley, with services to be held at 1 p.m. Burial will be held in St. Clements Cemetery in Bankston.

Gerald was born Oct. 8, 1944, in Bankston, son of Robert J and Mary Eileen (Hagerty) Conrad. He received his education in the St. Clements School in Bankston. On Sept. 6, 1974 he was united in marriage to his loving and dedicated wife, Jean M. Wilhem at the Basilica of St. Francis Xavier in Dyersville. Gerry had a great passion for farming which he did most of his life and helped raise his children on the farm. When he had free time, he enjoyed fishing and hunting. He also loved spending time with his wife of 48 years, traveling to new destinations and camping once they retired. Gerry had a great love for trains, so much so that he built a huge train layout in the basement of their home and traveled to various train shows with his wife. Gerry was a devoted husband, father and grandfather, who truly loved spending time with his family.

Those left to cherish his memory are his wife, Jean M. Conrad of Bankston; three children, Dwight (Craig) Conrad of Bankston, Dean (Teresa) Conrad of Earlville, and Angie (Jake) Gislain of Dubuque; two grandchildren, Joseph and Emily Conrad; two step grandchildren, Jayden Schwandt and Kiley Wright; three siblings, Patty (John) Kane of Cascade, Mary Sue (Mark) McAllister of New Vienna, and Robert (Ramona) Conrad of Holy Cross; three brothers and sisters-in-laws, James (Norma) Wilhelm, Tom (Judy) Wilhelm, Mary Ann Nachtmann, and Charles (Donna) Wilhelm all of Dyersville, and Ron Benke of Cascade.

He is preceded in death by his daughter, Molly Conrad; his parents; two brothers, Mark Conrad and baby Conrad in infancy; a sister, Linda Benke; his father and mother-in-law, John and Lorine Benke; two brothers-in-law, Norbert Nachtmann and Henry Wilhelm; and a sister-in-law, Judy Wilhelm.

An online video may be viewed and online condolences left for the family at www.reiffuneralhomeinc.com

The family would like to thank the Holy Cross Fire Department, the staff of Unity Point Health-Finley Hospital, Tri-State Dialysis, Luther manor and Hospice of Dubuque for all their wonderful care.



Owner Karla Strang pats Paul Staner, 88, on the head while his son-in-law Toby Hentges, 63, starts in on his hamburger lunch.

Dave LaBelle • Staff Photos

PLACE: Owner seeks to help young people

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said Paul Staner, 88, who stopped by for a hamburger lunch after cutting trees with his son-in-law Toby Hentges, 63. However, it's the pie, the pecan pie, he loves most and keeps him coming back.

But Grace's Place is more than a restaurant, it is a refuge, a safe place where you can come share and heal; a place where you can sit for hours after your spouse has passed, and where nobody is going to make you move. "Some regulars come in several times a day, and some of the staff play cards with them," Strang said. "It's a way for everybody to know they are appreciated. It's not always about money. One man can sit for hours."

Often when one suffers a traumatic loss or is acquainted with grief at an early age, they are more sensitive to seeing the pain in others. Losing her mother when she was just 14, and remembering how the community wrapped its arms around her family left an indelible mark on Strang's heart and continues moving her to help others. Strang gets emotional when she talks about her mother and how much she taught her. "I miss talking to her," Strang whispered, her eyes pooling. "As a kid, you don't realize what they are really doing for you," Strang said. "Grace's Place is just a way to pay back everything that was given to us, everybody that helped when mom was sick. It's just a way for everyone to know they are appreciated, a way to give back. It's not always about money. I don't want this place to be about me, it's about an 'us.'"

Those who know Strang know hers are not idle words. Beyond funding scholarships in the name of her mother for those attending college, she seeks opportunities to help build skills and confidence for young people. Currently, she and Knapp are teaching Cameron Frasher — who comes in twice a week to wash dishes — how to peel potatoes and learn other cooking-related skills. What began as a school-to-work project last February has turned into an ongoing relationship. "His mother said this is the happiest he has ever been," Strang shared.

Mariah Beechum, Cascade library assistant, said, "Grace's Place is literally the watering hole for everybody of all ages. Where most adults have bars and stuff, there you can have kids, adults, grandparents — everybody is together and everybody is always taking care of each other, especially now with



From left, Cameron Frasher, Karla Strang and Jill Stoll prepare for the lunchtime rush.



Joyce Knapp cleans a table after lunch. Knapp works five days a week and has been with Karla Strang and Grace's Place since the opening three years ago.

Delaney passing away (16-year-old Delaney Kremer), they are doing the donut thing. Karla is a really big help to this community."

Melissa Kane, Cascade Library Director, agrees. "She always steps up. It shows how much she cares."

Strang, who doesn't like talking about herself, did say she has already received pre-orders for 1,100 donuts in a benefit called Donuts for Delaney. "I asked my husband, Phil, what should we do for them? He said let's do something simple."

She sighs, "If one of my children didn't wake up the next day, I can't even imagine."

To handle the orders, she has called all hands on deck. Already, she had to borrow freezer space from Two Gingers, who willingly helped. Strang said 100% of the proceeds are going to the benefit.

On her Facebook page, she posted,

"Can I tell you how much I love our community? What an outpouring of support. 'Doughnuts for Delaney' is already a success."

How long does Strang, who works seven days a week, plan to keep Grace's Place going?

"People would not like it if we closed," Knapp assured. "She gives so much to the community."

But Strang said keeping Grace's Place running smoothly has been difficult of late. "We can't get any busier; we can't get help." Currently, she employs 13 people, but said it would take 18 to be fully staffed.

Knapp said, "Karla wants to hand Grace's Place to some deserving relative, hopefully, her niece, Grace."

Strang, 52, agrees. She hopes to keep running Grace's Place until she is "60ish," and "then I am going to give the keys to them and say it's yours."