

# Pocahontas RECORD-DEMOCRAT

Official County Newspaper

Wednesday, August 9, 2023 • Volume 143, Number 32

\$1<sup>00</sup>



## WEATHER

**WESSELS OIL COMPANY, INC.**  
Palmer, IA  
1-800-426-0016

DAY	HI	LOW	PRCP.	SNOW
July 31	86	61		
Aug. 1	86	67		
Aug. 2	82	62		
Aug. 3	88	62		
Aug. 4	89	67		
Aug. 5	81	63	0.71	
Aug. 6	74	60	0.69	

## Schmitt immerses himself in Civil War history

By Erin Sommers  
pokyrnews@gmail.com

Kevin Schmitt likes history. That enjoyment of American history in particular has taken Schmitt to Civil War reenactments as a member of the Army of the Southwest.

It also landed Schmitt a bit part in an independent movie that filmed in Iowa. In 2019, Schmitt and the Army of the Southwest, an Iowa-based Civil War re-enactment group, was set up at a show in Winterset, when he was offered a chance to be in the movie, "A Southern Haunting" when a man approached the group.

"We're doing a small movie," Schmitt said the man told him. "We're low-budget. We need somebody that has period correct costumes."

The re-enactors fit the bill. "Four of us appeared in the film," Schmitt said.

Filming took place at Living History Farm in Des Moines and at a farm house in the area. Filming was on a cold October day.

"It snowed that morning," Schmitt said. "All the California people were shaking."

He learned a lot about movie making that day, including how often even the smallest scenes might be shot over and over again.

After it was over, Schmitt returned to Pocahontas and waited. Because of Covid and other delays, he waited until this summer, when suddenly he learned the film was done and available to stream on Amazon.

"We thought we were going to get cut," Schmitt said. Instead, he's on screen for several minutes as a Civil War soldier.

"For a low-budget film it was well put together," Schmitt said. He said he particularly liked this review of the film on IMDB.

"The Southern Haunting is a beautifully shot film that focuses on the history of slavery and racism with a twist," the review said. "This is a well written and produced movie with great performances from the actors, especially the characters of Lulu and Henny. This movie had the right amount of suspense with a plot twist that will keep the

audience on the edge of their seat. ... I hope this film gets to have the opportunity to be shown in more theaters to give a broader audience an opportunity to experience this film. I would certainly recommend that you see this film if you like suspense with a little history lesson."

As of late July, the movie had a 90 percent positive rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

Locals might be familiar with Schmitt and other re-enactors who set up their camps at the Albert City Threshermen and Collector's Show, which is Aug. 11-13 this year, and at Wiegert Prairie on the last Sunday of August each year.

While his time as a re-enactor started about five years ago, it was a childhood trip out west that first showed him how much he enjoyed learning about

history. On a trip to California, Schmitt's family stopped at the site of Gen. George Custer's last stand in Montana.

"That's probably what inspired a lot" of his interest in history, Schmitt said. He was 9 or 10 at the time.

His involvement in the Army of the Southwest has also been an inroad into learning more about local Civil War history.

"According to the 1860 census, Iowa had a population of 674,913 and there were 124,098 households out of that there were 116,000 men eligible for military service," he said. "Iowa sent 76,534 men to fight. (That's) 11 percent of our total population, more per capita than any other state."

See SCHMITT, Page 04



Kevin Schmitt of Pocahontas is seen in a replica Civil War era uniform at an event last year. Schmitt is a part of the Army of the Southwest, an Iowa-based Civil War re-enactment group. Submitted photo



Julie Wurr, at left, talks with Congressman Randy Feenstra Aug. 3 at Heart N Home in Laurens. Photo by Erin Sommers

## Wurr talks credit card fees with Feenstra

By Erin Sommers  
pokyrnews@gmail.com

Heart N Home owner Julie Wurr wanted to demonstrate just how detrimental credit card swipe fees are to local businesses.

Wurr, who has been in business for about 30 years in Laurens, had a chance Thursday to make a pitch for swipe fee reform to U.S. Representative Randy Feenstra. The Congressman was visiting Laurens on a tour through his 39-county district.

On a table in the back of her flower and decor shop, Wurr had a piece of flat cardboard, on which she drew a pie chart with 500 M&Ms in different colors representing different slices of the money her shop brings in. Off to the side was a pile of change representing the 7 percent she collects in sales tax for the state with each sale. If someone bought something at her store for 500 pieces of candy, half of those would be eaten by the cost of the item, Wurr said.

In Laurens, store owners are lucky because building owners have kept rents low. She's only paying about 2 percent of gross income for rent, she said. Wages for her store, which includes paying one employee and paying for a contracted social media manager, is another 8 percent. Thirty percent of her gross income goes to operating expenses.

That leaves, in good times,

about 10 percent profit, Wurr said.

The increasing swipe fees for credit card usage comes out of that profit, she said. She asked Feenstra to adjust the wording in a bill Congress is considering to protect small business owners from those fees. For one, she said, she's paying sales tax on the credit card fees she collects, even though she's not making money on that amount. Two, she said, if a customer paid with a credit card and returned the item, the credit card processing company doesn't return the fee amount.

The fees vary, but Wurr and Amanda Martz of William and Wesley said they're paying almost 3 percent plus a per-transaction fee of about 30 cents.

Some businesses are switching to a cash-only model — they won't take checks because they've been burned by bad checks, Wurr said.

"If we want to go to a cash-only scenario, how fair would people be reporting to the IRS?" she asked.

On a recent visit to a large candy store in Minnesota, Wurr said she found candy items for sale for \$3 less than what she can charge. A management employee told her they're able to offer the lower prices because they don't take credit or debit cards at all.

Feenstra said he's heard this message from other Iowa small business owners, and he's

noticed the increasing number of "cash only" signs, as well as businesses that outline a cash price versus a card price.

"The problem with big stores like Walmart and Dollar General, you're paying 3 percent (in fees). I bet they're paying 2 percent."

Feenstra said small business owners need to speak up.

"The power is in small businesses collaborating and saying enough's enough," he said. "You're in good company. This is a really big push right now."

Wurr said small businesses can control some of their other expenses — they can negotiate rent or turn the air conditioning a little warmer in the summer to cut their electrical bill.

"There's this expense that we have zero control over," she said. The bill before Congress would help to break up the duopoly held by MasterCard and Visa. CBS News explained the bill's goals in an article online.

"What the bill would do is mandate that merchants can choose from at least two networks for every transaction, and they couldn't both be Visa and Mastercard," Bankrate's Ted Rossman told CBS. "It could be one of those, maybe paired with Discover, or [American Express], or some of these smaller competitors that right now operate in the debit card space, companies like Nice and Star and Shazam."

## Community meeting to discuss nursing home closure set for Aug. 15 at PCH

By Erin Sommers  
pokyrnews@gmail.com

Community members who want to see Pocahontas continue to have a nursing home are invited to a community meeting Aug. 15.

The meeting, hosted by Pocahontas Community Hospital, will be held in the hospital's community room and will begin at 6:30 p.m. The meeting is open to the public.

PCH CEO James Roetman said he's heard a few conversations around the community that don't reflect the facts behind the closure of Pocahontas Manor. Roetman said the meeting will start with a discussion of those facts, to set the record straight.

For example, he said he's heard that state officials were going to come in to close the manor. That isn't true, he said.

Another rumor focused on the company that owned the manor. "To say the owners haven't put any money in that building, that's untrue," Roetman said. "They've put a lot of money into that building. It's just not the things you can see from the outside."

For Roetman, who has had family at the manor, it was more important that the buildings were functioning than that the building had an updated exterior.

More than two dozen Iowa nursing homes have closed in the last few years, including care

centers in Albert City and Newell. Pocahontas isn't alone, Roetman said.

"Really, the pandemic was the final straw," he said. "They were paying for contracted services."

Those services cost so much that nursing home owners across the state didn't have the profits to keep the facilities running, Roetman said. Workforce was the number one cost in those, he added.

Community members should be looking at more than just the loss of their local nursing home, he said.

"Take Pocahontas Manor out of play — what's the overall philosophy for the state of Iowa?" Roetman asked. "You haven't read about a lot of laws going off at the state level."

State officials are looking at the number of nursing home beds available in the state, still, and arguing that Iowa has plenty of space for its oldest residents. Roetman said that assessment misses a big factor — of the licensed number of beds in a nursing home, how many are actually open and available? Because of staffing, nursing homes are not able to make every bed in the building available.

Iowa legislators previously enacted state rules that required a company closing a nursing home to find a placement for residents within 20 to 30 miles of the closing

## At the Rialto

Showing Aug. 11-24 is "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem" Rated PG, Running time: 1 hr. 36 min. Starring the voices of: Micah Abbey, Shamon Brown Jr., and Nicolas Cantu.

The film follows the Turtle brothers as they work to earn the love of New York City while facing down an army of mutants.  
Schedule subject to change.

**COMING SOON:**  
"Barbie" — PG-13  
"Oppenheimer" — R  
"The Creator" — PG-13  
"Kraven The Hunter"  
"Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie" — PG

## AUCTIONS

Pocahontas Machinery Consignment Auction  
Wednesday, Aug. 9 @ 8 a.m.  
Located at 401 1/2 East Elm, Pocahontas, IA  
Sale Barn Realty & Auction  
401 1/2 East Elm, Pocahontas, IA  
712-335-3117  
www.salebarn.ncn.net

Farm Machinery Retirement Auction  
Thursday, Aug. 17 • 10:30 a.m.  
2455 280th, Spencer, IA  
Owners: Dean & Sue Schoning  
712-330-4166  
Sale Barn Realty & Auction  
401 1/2 East Elm, Pocahontas, IA  
712-335-3117  
www.salebarn.ncn.net

Hay Auctions  
First and Third Saturdays of each month  
August 19 @ 10:15 a.m.  
@ the Fonda Sale Barn  
Hammen Auction Company  
Jerry Hammen - 712-299-2523

Premium Iowa Land Auction  
Humboldt County, IA  
Avery Twp., Sec. 5  
87 Acres M/L  
Wednesday, Aug. 30 • 10 a.m.  
Auction Location:  
Rolf Community Building,  
Rolf, IA  
Father Dennis Sefcik Estate,  
Owner  
Sale Barn Realty & Auction  
401 1/2 East Elm, Pocahontas, IA  
712-335-3117  
www.salebarn.ncn.net

## Pocahontas business is the longest-running RAGBRAI vendor

By Erin Sommers  
pokyrnews@gmail.com

RAGBRAI celebrated the half century mark this year.

A Pocahontas institution will make the same anniversary with the bike ride next year.

Chris Cakes, which was born in Pocahontas in the 1960s when the Kiwanis Club was looking for a way to make its annual pancake feed a little easier, has been serving up pancakes and sausages to RAGBRAI riders for 49 years.

"You lose track of that," co-owner Gregg White said last week, a few days after wrapping up the big event. "I don't think the people of Pocahontas realize how big of a deal it is."

The pancake purveyor, originally owned by Lorin Christiansen, has been along for the ride as RAGBRAI has changed over the years. White said Chris Cakes may well have been involved even the first year, but the ride organizers were still working out the kinks of the inaugural event.

Each year, Chris Cakes sets up along the route, often outside

of a pass through town, although occasionally in one of the bigger stops, to serve up breakfast as long as the cyclists are in line.

"We start by 5 a.m. and we go until the line runs out for a consistent amount of time," White said.

This year, "it was like it always was," he added. "It was kind of hot at times. It was fun. Saw a lot of people we've apparently seen before."

Those regulars often come up and tell White and his crew that they've met.

"We try and interact," White said of how his crews serve the pancakes. "We don't rush anybody along."

He said he enjoys talking with the riders. This year, he met people from as far away as Australia.

White also got a lot of consistent feedback on this year's ride.

"When I tell them I'm from Pocahontas, they said (Pocahontas) did the best job (during RAGBRAI 2022)," he

See VENDOR, Page 05



Chris Cakes has been serving up pancakes with RAGBRAI for 49 years.