



While the Valentine's Day rush was over, Alison Steiner still had some arrangements to put together at The Rustic Rose.

- ▶ **City discusses feral cat problem** Page 2
- ▶ **Board of Appeals meets** Page 3
- ▶ **AGWSR's season ends** Page 10

## Alden Board mulls music department proposal

Plan would include less band instruction for sixth graders

BY JUSTIN ITES | ites@iafalls.com

The Alden School Board and school administrators are mulling a proposal submitted by music department staff that would change how often Alden Elementary sixth graders would receive band instruction on a weekly basis.

During Monday's meeting, Alden Superintendent Tony Neumann informed the board members of the proposal during discussion on programming and staffing for the 2023-24 school year.

Currently, Alden sixth-graders board a bus at 7:45 a.m. five days per week and travel to Iowa Falls for band instruction. Music department teachers also travel to Alden Elementary two days per week. Under the new proposal, the staff would visit Alden two days per week for band instruction for both fifth and sixth graders.

Neumann said there were pros and cons to the plan, but wanted to make the board aware of the proposal so they were not blindsided. He added that, in his opinion, he would like to see Alden Elementary students receive band instruction at a minimum of three days per week rather than two days.

"Are you comfortable with three days per week? The other thing to think about, if our sixth-grade band isn't traveling over there, will students open enrollment? If you don't get every day band, will students leave to get every day band?" Neumann said. "This is not an administrative recommendation, but rather a staff recommendation. They are proposing two days over here (Alden) but we are going to say no. We just want to make sure you are comfortable with three days. That's our bottom recommendation. Our top recommendation would be to keep sending them to Iowa Falls five days per week."

Alden Elementary Principal Jacqui Kooistra said the band students would still combine with Iowa Falls students for concerts, and during days leading up to concert events,

ALDEN BOARD Cont'd ▶ P2

# Put a bow on it

Two reasons Rustic Rose's 2023 Valentine's was 'smoother' than last's

BY SHAWN DIGITY | sdigity@iafalls.com

Alison (Ali) Steiner closed the curtain on another Valentine's Day last week at her floral shop, The Rustic Rose. Unsurprisingly, like at many boutiques, Valentine's Day is a big deal. "It's the biggest floral day, single day, of the year," Steiner stated. And while it might not be her biggest event of the year — she still does weddings and Mother's Day — Valentine's is nothing to scoff at for the New Providence shop.

And 2023's version was a success, simply put. Now 2022 and 2021's Valentine's weren't drastically worse than 2023's by any means, but Steiner stated that a couple of factors made this year's go a little more auspiciously compared to 2022's. "It went very well. Actually, a little bit smoother than last year," she said.

Steiner has worked several Valentine's at this point, and in fact, she opened her doors in February 2017, mere days before her very first one. And last week, the owner and florist of the corner boutique put the finishing touches on her seventh Valentine's Day. And according to her, it was milder, really, for two main reasons.



PHOTOS BY SHAWN DIGITY / TIMES CITIZEN

Alison Steiner explained a brief history of The Rustic Rose building in New Providence. It used to be both a bank and a post office, hence the vault in the background.

First, the weather was better. "This year was a little bit nicer in the fact that it was a little warmer, and so the past two years, it's been like -20 on Valentine's Day, so this year it was in the 30s... The warmer temperatures made it even more enjoyable to be out delivering," she started. "It was a little damp, but it was at least above freezing, so we didn't have to put so much coverage on the flower as far as plastic bags," she

continued. Especially frigid temperatures can suck the life out of the flowers, so if it's that antarctic out, plastic coverings over the arrangements are imperative — "so they stay alive going outside," as Steiner simply stated. In turn, the time spent on extra insurance against the cold last year meant time spared for other preparations. "So that saved a lot of time this year," she confirmed.

Since the elements were

a little more cooperative in 2023, it preserved Rustic Rose's time, but a 2022 sporting event also threw Steiner a curve-ball last year: Super Bowl LVI.

A combination of the Super Bowl being on that Sunday, Feb. 13 and Valentine's being on the following Monday made for havoc, particularly when some customers got caught up in the football excitement.

RUSTIC ROSE Cont'd ▶ P2

# 46-Year Career

Kappel retires from Scenic Manor

BY ELAINE LORING | eloring@iafalls.com

Forty-six years ago, Rose Kappel took a job at Scenic Manor in Iowa Falls, and on Feb. 17, she began the next chapter in her life - retirement. "I plan to relax," she said on her last day of work, "I'm looking forward to taking a breath and relaxing."

When Kappel began her career at Scenic Manor, she liked what she saw. "I started in 1977, I came straight from high school," she said. "My first day here was actually my first day of college on Aug. 22, 1977."

The Iowa Falls High School graduate went to Ellsworth Community College for a year and be-

gan to study Health and Human Services, "But then I dropped out of college for a while," she said, adding that she became a CNA instead, and in 1989, she returned to school and took some business courses, all while continuing to work at Scenic Manor.

"In 1990, I moved into the business office as Business Office Manager," a position she had held ever since, where she did accounts receivables and payables, among other office-related duties. Marilyn Inman has been hired as Kappel's replacement. "You have to have a good memory... that's the biggest trick."

Working in the business office at Scenic Manor was some-

thing Kappel had always wanted to do. "It was my goal," she said. "I didn't know if I'd ever get there, but I did. I already knew the building and I knew the people. I just had to figure out what I learned and put it to paper."

Growing up, Kappel learned that "not all families are normal, and they all have a story," she said. "I got over myself really quick. That was a good lesson to learn at a young age."

The residents at Scenic Manor became her family, and Kappel said they know so much, and she spent many hours sitting with them and letting them tell her their stories.

ROSE KAPPEL Cont'd ▶ P2



ELAINE LORING / TIMES CITIZEN

Rose Kappel ended her career as Scenic Manor's Business Office Manager on Feb. 17. After working there 46 years, she is looking forward to retirement.





SHAWN DIGITY / TIMES CITIZEN

Walking into The Rustic Rose, there's an ornate drop ceiling, something that also harkens back to its days as a bank and post office.

► **RUSTIC ROSE**

CONTINUED FROM P1

"Last year was a lot more chaotic," she shared. "On Monday was just steady. There was one to two people in here almost all day. And then, Tuesday morning — I typically don't open until 10 — and I got here early on Tuesday morning, and there was somebody here at 7:45... 'I forgot it was Valentine's Day,'" Steiner impersonated.

Big-ticket holidays can get crazy for Rustic Rose, especially when it's early in the week, coming out of a weekend. Last year's Super Bowl timing proved to be its own battle, but there was a whirlwind still in 2023.

"Especially this year... I got here Monday [Feb. 13] at 7 in the morning, and I left at 10 p.m.," she shared.

Steiner started on Valentine's orders the week before and worked a full Saturday on Feb. 11 just to knock out the preorders. She had put in the 15-hour shift last Monday to make it work for Valentine's this year. But Steiner said she "had really good walk-in traffic on Monday and Tuesday."

But now that the holiday is over, there's a calmer stretch, and Steiner stated that the day after Valentine's, "usually it's the deadest day because pretty much

everybody gets flowers the day before." But at the time, evidence of the aftermath was still displayed in fits and starts within the boutique. "It's just a mess," Steiner explained, gesturing toward a pile of snipped and clipped greenery lying on the floor. "That's the last thing that you take the time to do — is clean."

While it can be hectic, Steiner added that it's rewarding to see the husbands, boyfriends, and fiancées come in to buy flowers for the women in their lives and show their love and appreciation. "It's just kind of fun watching men... making their wives or their girlfriends or whatever feel special. So it's kind of neat to be a part of that, whether it's flowers or chocolates or plants."

Steiner usually keeps it within Hardin County; she mostly keeps day-to-day deliveries Hardin-local, but she added that she sometimes goes into Marshall County as well. "But for Valentine's, we went to St. Anthony, Zearing, Hubbard, Radcliffe, Iowa Falls, Eldora, Union, and, you know, places in between," she added.

But 2024's Valentine's is a thing, so sooner or later, Steiner will take the little lessons from this year and last, and likely use them to formulate her plan for next year. "So I always take at the end of Valentine's an inventory of what I ordered

for flowers and write that down and take good notes on what worked well and what didn't work well," she explained. That auditing was something Steiner did after the 2022's, and she believed it was helpful last week navigating the seventh Valentine's and something that should prove useful looking toward 2024 — and luckily, next year's Super Bowl LVIII is on Feb. 11.

**Rustic Rose classes**

The Rustic Rose has a secondary building now, which is right next door and is used for overflow work — like with Valentine's-level holidays — but Steiner also uses the satellite Rose to hold classes, where she's taught around 250 people to make ornate evergreen decorations. The secondary building is almost brand new, too, Steiner stated; the building was completed last September. While the second site can be used for extra storage, refrigeration, and workforce for those busier holidays, Steiner has also been using it to teach classes, some of her biggest courses usually come around the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, and she's had "over 250 people doing classes making what we call porch pots, but the post with evergreen and berries, and fresh Christmas wreathes," she explained. ■

► **ROSE KAPPEL**

CONTINUED FROM P1

She has also taken care of a lot of her former schoolteachers throughout the years. "One time a teacher came up to me and she said, 'you know, I kind of worried about you when you were a kid, but you turned out OK,'" Kappel said, continuing. "A school bus driver, too. He said, 'I was about to throw you off the bus, but you turned out OK.' I didn't think I was that bad of a kid!" she laughed. "That's one thing about growing up in a small community... everyone knows you. It takes a village."

Kappel said Scenic Manor also has a great board to work with, but the residents are her favorite part. "People say, 'why do you stay?' and I never really had an answer for them, but when I think about it, when I come to work, I have one lady who always tells me I look so pretty, and I have another lady who says I'm her angel," Kappel began. "You always hear that positive reinforcement every day. And you make a difference in their lives every day, but actually, they make a difference in mine. It goes both ways. That's why I've stayed all these years."

Kappel said in the beginning, people would come and live at Scenic Manor for up to 10 years, "You don't see that as much," she said. "It's more of a rehab-to-home." However, if a resident starts out at their apartments, then moves to assisted living, prior to Scenic Manor, "they could be on the campus for years, sometimes," she said.

Kappel says there's also a lot more rules and regulations in the nursing home industry than there were when she first began. "Believe it or not, this has been a very stressful job," she said. "Just trying to keep up with all the rules that we have to go by."

Now all that work stress will be gone, as Kappel has a daughter and two granddaughters, and her husband has children from a previous marriage, so she plans to be very busy with their activities. The Kappels also like to camp, garden and ride motorcycles, something she is looking forward to doing more of.

"I've met some of the sweetest people in the world working here," Kappel smiled while looking back at the last 46 years at Scenic Manor, "It's just been my home. I don't know how else to explain it. I walked in and it was instant family... But I have to get out of here before they check me into a room!" she laughed. ■

► **ALDEN BOARD**

CONTINUED FROM P1

there would likely be days they would bus over to Iowa Falls to rehearse with the entire group.

Kooistra said under the current plan, Alden sixth-graders depart Iowa Falls to return to the building around 9 a.m. and return by 9:15 a.m.

"I think it needs to be three days (at minimum). If you were 100-percent a 'no' then we would tell them. There's benefits and cons to both. Just a reminder that they don't get to dictate the schedule, that's our job," Neumann said. "But there could be a huge uproar if we say yes."

Alden Board Member Heather Vierkandt said she would be fine with the new plan because there is lost time due to the bus ride to and back from Iowa Falls.

Neumann said instructional time lost due to the travel back and forth is likely one of the reasons the music department staff offered the new proposal for 2023-24. He indicated more info on the matter would be shared with the board during future meetings.



JUSTIN ITES / TIMES CITIZEN

Alden Superintendent Tony Neumann (on laptop) informed Alden Board members of a music department proposal that would change how often Alden Elementary sixth-graders received band instruction.

**Class sizes**

In other business, the board received class size projections for the 2023-24 school year. Those numbers include 4-year-old PreK: 17 students; K: 15; 1st grade: 18; 2nd grade: 18; 3rd grade: 19; 4th grade:

17; 5th grade: 20; 6th grade: 11.

Alden Elementary hosted Kindergarten Round-up Monday evening, and Kooistra said based on that, she was still expecting 15 kindergarten students this fall. Earlier in the meeting, the res-

ignation of Kindergarten teacher Samantha McGrane was accepted.

"With 15 students and one of our Kindergarten teachers leaving, we probably would not replace. It doesn't mean we couldn't shift (staff members) internally, but 15

is probably a number you don't want to split in half," Neumann said. "We've talked about as we need to make cuts...as people leave we may not replace them. If you want to look at any kind of research, 25 is the magic number for lower elementary (class sizes). If you have a high quality teacher in there, 25 is just as effective as 17."

Alden Board President Greg Lascheid asked Kooistra what feedback the teaching staff would provide regarding class sizes.

"I do think they (staff) realize too small also has its own hindrances, but obviously, they prefer to have smaller class sizes," Kooistra said.

**Budget public hearing set**

Lastly, the board decided to move its April meeting up one week to 1 p.m. Monday, April 10. The change was made because school districts must submit their 2023-24 school budgets to the Hardin County Courthouse by 5 p.m. on April 17. ■

**Council hears feral cat concern**

BY ELAINE LORING  
eloring@iafalls.com

The Iowa Falls City Council met Tuesday and heard concerns about an ever-growing feral cat problem in Iowa Falls. During the public comment portion of the meeting, residents addressed the council with their frustrations.

Sylvia Schultz, a resident on the east side of Iowa Falls, spoke first stating the feral cat situation "is out of control. We can provide documentation as well as potential solutions to this problem," she said.

Iowa Falls City Manager Jody Anderson said he has talked to Greenbelt Humane Society, a no-

kill cat shelter in Iowa Falls, and said he will be "contacting some of you folks to help alleviate the problem."

Jane Kugel, a resident who lives on the corner of Rocksylvania and East First Street said there has always been a stray cat problem, but in the past few years the population has greatly increased.

"I have complained in the past," Kugel began. "I realize this is a situation that no one wants to deal with, but there are regulations in the city code detailing that something can, and should be done."

Last fall, Kugel said she talked to Anderson and had counted 13 fe-

ral cats at that time. She said the cats use her property as a litter box, spray on and sit on her outdoor furniture, as well as spray on her home. She even had to treat her home and her indoor cats for fleas when she inadvertently brought them in from the outdoor cushions that the feral cats had been sitting on.

"We have a cat-hording situation and the humane society was full at the time," Anderson explained, adding that he was aware of a rural farmer who would take some of the cats.

The council will be revisiting the feral cat problem and contacting residents. ■



All photos, design, text, graphics, the selection and arrangement thereof are Copyright by Times Citizen Communications, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Any use of materials including reproduction, modification, distribution or republication, without the prior written consent of TCC, is strictly prohibited. Times Citizen (USPS 235-180) is published semi-weekly by Times Citizen Communications, Inc.: 406 Stevens Street, Iowa Falls, Iowa 50126. Periodicals postage paid at Iowa Falls, Iowa and additional entry offices. Subscription: \$75.00 per year in Hardin and surrounding counties; \$90.00 in all other Iowa counties and outside Iowa (U.S.). Postmaster: Send address changes to Times Citizen, Co.: Box 640, Iowa Falls, Iowa 50126-0640.

**SHOWING FEB. 24 - MARCH 2**

**Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania**  
RATED PG-13  
TUES. - FRI. 7 p.m.  
SAT. & SUN. 3 & 7 p.m.

**80 FOR BRADY**  
RATED PG-13  
TUES. - FRI. 7 p.m.  
SAT. & SUN. 3 & 7 p.m.

515 Washington Ave., Iowa Falls  
641-648-0099  
www.iowafallsmet.com