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South Winneshiek alumna Alexa Jacobsen (l) addresses a legislative forum Friday at Northeast Iowa Community College with Rep. Mike Bergan, Rep. Jane Bloomingdale, Rep. Chad Ingels, Sen. Mike Klimesh, Rep. Ann Osmundson, Sen. Sandy Salmon and Rep. Charley Thomson along with business and NICC leaders. Photo by Michael Hohenbrink

Forum Draws Legislators

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

CALMAR - A continuing labor shortage has solutions, with some success visible right here in northeast Iowa.

Amidst one of the busiest legislative sessions in memory, northeast Iowa legislators turned out Friday morning for a forum at Northeast Iowa Community College on workforce partnerships and the value of skilled training.

A brisk morning was in store at NICC's Calmar campus as attendees headed to one of the warmest spots on campus, the fireplace room in NICC's Student Center.

Legislators were back from Des Moines for a weekend in their districts before returning to a session that is in full steam already, just two weeks into the new term.

Rep. Mike Bergan, Rep. Jane Bloomingdale, Rep. Chad Ingels, Sen. Mike Klimesh, Rep. Ann Osmundson, Sen. Sandy Salmon and Rep. Charley Thomson heard directly from employers as well as students with South Winneshiek alumna Alexa Jacobsen among those giving legislators a taste of what the labor force holds.

Now 23, Jacobsen is an RN, looking to earn her credentials as a Nurse Practitioner in short order.

While attending South Winneshiek, Jacobsen got an early start on her degree, rapidly plowing through professional training at the same time classmates were picking out prom dresses.

"I was able to take 14 classes," said Jacobsen. "I saved tons of money, lots of money."

By 20, Jacobsen was a full-fledged RN, able to work full time in a well-paying field with high demand before she was even able to legally buy a beer or head to a bar.

While Jacobsen sang the praises of NICC and that opportunity, Larry Leliefeld, an owner of Geothermal Eco Options, Inc., zeroed in on a remark by Jacobsen as she praised NICC but said she originally never wanted to go to NICC. Community college and skilled training were not on the table of options.

For a business that is actively seeking workers, for example in installing geo-thermal loops, that reluctance to head to skilled training is worrisome.

With offices in Decorah and Cresco, the business is hyper local, hiring workers and offering wages and benefits - and having to work hard to find someone to employ.

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Public Safety

Mental Health Registry Unveiled

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

A Mental Health Registry is being rolled out in a joint effort by the Winneshiek County Sheriff's Office, Dispatch Center and Decorah Police Department in an effort to work with the public, particularly with mental health needs.

The voluntary registry service in Winneshiek County is largely aimed at mental health but is also encompassing other special needs.

Confidential in nature, the registry is designed to be shared by law enforcement agencies and the Winneshiek County 9-1-1 Dispatch Center.

"It's a way for people to share information with us that they're willing to share," said Sheriff Dan Marx.

The registry is not intended to be exhaustive. "It's strictly just background information," said Marx.

As an example, Marx pointed to someone being on the Autism Spectrum or to a sensitivity to lights and sirens or certain triggers.

It's part of an ongoing effort the sheriff has undertaken to work to tackle mental health issues in a new way, moving from a more adversarial approach in some places before to treating mental health issues like other health issues, something to be understood.

"What this all comes back to is treating mental health conditions," said Marx.



Dan Marx

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Area Stops Set for Tractorcade

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

The WMT Tractorcade 2023 will see stops in this area.

Ossian, Fort Atkinson, St. Lucas and Waucoma are all on the list.

All four communities will see the event during its first day with the ride route announced Friday.

The event kicks off Monday, June 12.

With the first day of the ride, the event will head north out of West Union to Ossian for a morning stop and then resume by heading west to Fort Atkinson and south to St. Lucas before heading to Waucoma where the community will see the event's lunch stop.

Hawkeye and then back to West Union will conclude the event's first day.

Staging for this year's iteration will center at the Fayette County Fairgrounds, a move from last year's home at the Muscatine County Fairgrounds.

Turkey Valley Hosts District Speech

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

JACKSON JUNCTION - Students from across the area converged on Turkey Valley Saturday for District Speech.

A number of area students won the right to advance on to State.

Waterloo will host the State competition Feb. 4.

"We are fortunate to have a few new students out for speech this year," said South Winneshiek Coach Kurt Straube. "That, coupled with some returning upperclassmen, has produced some outstanding comedy and drama that we hope to refine a bit more before our state level competition in Waterloo in two weeks. I see a lot of promise, commitment, and drive in this group; it's exciting to see where that takes them this season."

Results included:

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Turkey Valley hosted this year's District Speech competition as students battled for a chance to earn a berth at the State contest coming up in Waterloo. Photo by Nichol Hohenbrink

Wild Nights: Violent

Incidents See Spike Swords, Shotguns Among Weapons Officers Note

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

A domestic disturbance call from Hawkeye took an unusual turn into a charge of attempted murder after responding deputies learned swords were involved while in a separate incident, authorities responded Thursday to a report of an individual armed with at least one shotgun, allegedly threatening "suicide by cop."

A number of violent incidents recently have members of law enforcement concerned.

Weapons, from guns to swords, have been a feature as well as high-speed driving.

Among those recent calls that authorities on edge, the Fayette County Sheriff's Office received a 911 call Wednesday evening about a domestic assault in progress in rural Hawkeye.

Efforts to respond were initially complicated by confusion about two different addresses before authorities located the correct residence, on P Avenue.

When they arrived, authorities found a bloody sight with a 70-year-old man.



Kim Cannon

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Rising Vehicle, Inmate Costs Seen

By Michael Hohenbrink
Editor

Fuel costs have risen for the Winneshiek County Sheriff's Office, a concern for public officials and the private sector alike.

"We're going to well under water in that area by the end of the year," said Sheriff Dan Marx.

The department's budget will be able to hand it, but the costs have definitely increased for the year, greater than had been planned.

The sheriff gave the Winneshiek County Board of Supervisors a budget overview Monday as county officials put together budgets for the new year.

Also on the sheriff's radar is vehicle replacement. An effort

recently to get a used vehicle fell through as the seller realized he was not being able to find a replacement, an issue as the supply chain continues to stagger, making even used vehicles hard to acquire.

The sheriff knows the difficulty first-hand.

"I am very reluctant to trade a vehicle up until I know I've got a vehicle," said Marx.

A couple of prisoner transports across state lines took place during the past year, a unique set of issues.

"I know for sure we brought one up from Brownsville [Texas]," said Marx.

Another came from Arizona.

Within a 10-hour radius, Marx said it is cost effective to

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TV's Musical Theatre group performing "Gee, Officer Krupke" from Westside Story received a Division I and will perform at State competition Feb. 4 at Waterloo West. (L to R: Savannah Solheim, Megan Blong, Jacqlyn Schmitt, Bre Moudry, Olivia Snyder and Aubrey Hoffert)

SPEECH FROM PAGE 1

SW
 Division I:
 Readers theater: Rachel Meyer, Hannah Pahl, Annie Ondrashek, Josie Tieskoetter, Aubrey Willie
 Ensemble: Billie Wagner, Megan Hageman, Quinn Kruckman
 Improv: Maddy Jansen, Hannah Pahl, Aiden Feickert, Autumn Schmitt
 Musical theatre: Quinn Kruckman and Annie Ondrashek
 Improv: Amy Andera, Jordan Peterson, Evan Ellington, Matthew Horstman
 Division II:
 Short film: Henry and Autumn Schmitt
 Ensemble: Amy Andera, Jordan Peterson, Evan Ellington, Matthew Horstman

TV
 Division I:
 Musical theatre: Savannah Solheim, Megan Blong, Jacqlyn Schmitt, Bre Moudry, Olivia Snyder and Aubrey Hoffert
 Division II
 Reader's Theatre: Savannah Solheim, Victor Montiel, Ma-

ria Thrdonson, Halle Weber, Megan Blong, Ella Drilling, Adysen Wurzer, Annika Bodenstener, Addison Steinlage, Jenna Thrdonson, Maici Weber, and Bree Balk.
 Ensemble Acting: Ella Drilling, Annie Raymond, and Emma Brincks.

Conference Results
 South Winneshiek had hosted Upper Iowa Conference Speech recently and saw strong results as well with SW students taking part.
 Results included:
 Division I ratings:
 Improv: Hannah Pahl, Madalin Jansen
 Musical Theatre: Quinn Kruckman, Annie Ondrashek
 Division II ratings:
 Ensemble: Quinn Kruckman, Megan Hageman, Billie Wagner
 Readers Theatre: Annie Ondrashek, Madalin Jansen, Hannah Pahl, Rachel Meyer, Josie Tieskoetter, Aubrey Willey
 Improv: Evan Ellingson, Amy Andera, Jordan Peterson, Matthew Horstman

Postville police share concerns about recent increasing violent, drug crimes

By John Jensen
 Mid-America Publishing

POSTVILLE — The Postville Police Department shared concerns with the City Council about increasing violence and drug during the most-recent regular Council meeting.
 Police officer J.T. Cunningham said a recent call had involved a subject violently attacking an individual with a baseball bat.
 "I'm honestly surprised he wasn't killed — it was very, very bad," Cunningham said. "There's two of us looking for that (assailant)."
 He also said there had been incidents with guns, including an incident where a vehicle had been shot twice while near the schools. He said there was a known gang member in the community.
 "It's not just guns, it's dealing dope, it's stuff with kids,"

Cunningham said. "I've been on the phone with San Antonio, Texas trying to get information from them. A lot more of your violent stuff is coming here."
 Cunningham said many of the drug issues around northeast Iowa appear to be centered in Postville.
 "We're at the corner of four counties — this is the central zone," he said. "Even Prairie du Chien's getting people from here."
 "Manufacturing of meth is coming back and they're doing it the old-school way again," Police Chief Matt Ellis said.
 "It's more of your putting it in the Gatorade bottle and throwing it in the ditch," Cunningham said. "And then they come back."
 Cunningham added that calls about weapons are way up. Though many of the weapons are pellet guns, he said many of them are not marked the way pellet guns are supposed to be marked.

News Briefs

TAKO Ice Fishing Coming

The Fayette Take A Kid Outdoors (TAKO) chapter is having its popular annual ice fishing event for kids of all ages.
 It's free and open to families, regardless if they have ice fishing experience or not. The event takes place from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Buelahland Campground, 22473 Abbey Rd., Elgin. It is located east of West Union on Highway 56 and TAKO signs will be posted to mark the road to the event.
 Skilled anglers and staff will be on hand. There will be ice augurs, tents, heaters, ice fishing poles, tackle and bait available for those that do not have their own
 For questions or information contact Fayette TAKO Presi-

dent Leif White at 319-939-1567.

Ice Fishing Derby Scheduled

The annual Lake Meyer Ice Fishing Derby will take place Sunday, Feb. 5, at Lake Meyer Park. Registration begins at noon at the Lake Meyer Campground shop, and fishing runs from noon to 4 p.m.
 Prizes will be awarded for first and second bass, bluegill, crappie, northern pike, and perch. All participants will be eligible for one of many door prizes provided by local businesses. Award ceremonies and prize drawings will be held following the close of fishing.

SHERIFF FROM PAGE 1

send Winneshiek County staff for the transport.
 Beyond that, a transport service, which takes on liability involved, makes more sense.
 Jailor training is notable for a seven-percent increase for next year's budget.
 Putting resources in training beats risking turnover and burning out.
 "It's a high liability job," said Marx. "One mistake can cost a lot".
 Recent incidents of violence against jail staff were

noted during Monday's discussion.
 The sheriff is happy his staff did not see long-term injury, but such incidents do impact hiring and retention.
 "And the jail hiring is continuing to be a problem," said Marx. "And the training is becoming a problem."
 The sheriff continues to keep an eye on filling jail position.
 "It's things like that we don't have a lot of people knocking on the door for the job," said Marx.

The sheriff pointed to his legal responsibility to provide for the well being of inmates, including transporting prisoners for health checks.
 That prompted a question on whether Telehealth offerings could be used to reduce medical visits.
 "It is for mental health," said Marx. "It is not for physical health."
 A trip to the Winneshiek Medical Center for a prisoner, who had already assaulted jail staff, saw that inmate

then turn around and attack a nurse at WMC.
 Not bringing inmates to medical visits, though, simply is not an option, the sheriff said.
 He noted facilities that have tried withholding care risk lawsuits, which is not a prudent risk.
 For Marx, a key point is that year after year, his department takes unused budget funds and refunds these back to the county.
 Over the last several years, Marx said he has refunded roughly \$2 million back to the county rather than taking a use it or lose it approach, for example buying furniture in bulk at the end of the year to use up his remaining budget.

REGISTRY FROM PAGE 1

The sheriff stressed that mental health should be seen similar to other health issues.
 "Mental health is like other conditions - it's not a crime," said Marx. "Most of the time those with mental health [issues] have committed no crime."
 The sheriff stressed that the registry was not an absolute promise.
 "We can't guarantee necessarily that our response is going to be any different," said Marx.
 If there is a threat to the safety of officers, then officers will act appropriately.
 "We absolutely have to put safety...that has to come first," said Marx.
 Still, by having the information available, there is a chance it can be put to good to use.
 "I never feel that we can have too much information," said Marx.

VIOLENT FROM PAGE 1

"Upon arrival, a witness had advised me that the victim and defendant were still inside," said Deputy Joshua Barker in a sworn statement. "When I made entry, I saw the defendant sitting on the floor in the kitchen covered in blood (on her face and sweatshirt). I noticed two bloody swords lying next to her. I advised for the defendant to go outside so I could render aid to the victim, but she was not compliant. I then located the victim on the bathroom floor. When I was tending to the victim's injuries, I saw at least 3 large lacerations to his face. 1 laceration had cut through the eye socket. There were also several lacerations on the back of his head."
 The defendant, Kim Renee Cannon, 58, of Hawkeye, gave her side of the story.
 "After speaking to the witness, she stated that the defendant and victim had gotten into an altercation," said Barker. "The defendant then left the room, came back into the room where the victim and witness were, and began striking the victim several times in the back of the head until he fell to the floor. After the victim fell to the floor, the defendant then left the room, came back in with another sword, and began striking the victim several times in the face while he was on the floor. At that point, the witness left the house and called 911."
 The accused now faces a Class "B" felony charge for attempted murder while the victim was taken up to Gundersen in La Crosse during the snowstorm with life-threatening injuries.

On top of that incident, the department found itself the very next night responding to report in Waucoma with a man allegedly in a home on its bottom floor armed with a shotgun with a juvenile upstairs in the home as well.
 Responding deputies were warned the subject was allegedly threatening "suicide by cop," a phenomenon of individuals attempting to provoke officers to use lethal force as a means of taking one's own life.
 While officers were working to respond, law enforcement was summoned clear across the entire county down in Oelwein for a report of a dispute with one of the parties roaring away at high speed up North Frederick, a major thoroughfare in the city.
 The incidents were approximately 37 miles apart.
 With the Waucoma incident, authorities over the line in Chickasaw County were alerted in the hopes of a faster response.

FORUM FROM PAGE 1

Liefeld pointed to a model, present in the minds of many parents, that a four-year degree at a university is being perceived as the only model to get ahead in the world.
 While that comes from a place of well-meaning desire for children to get ahead, it's producing graduates for jobs that don't exist and coming up empty for jobs that do exist.
 It's a model that arose in the 1960s, stressing a B.A. at a four-year college means success, while anything else is secondary, leaving big college debts but nothing to show for it.
 For Shay Gaunitz, that model is not one he followed.
 Right away at 17, he enrolled in a training program at the school that culminated in a job at JB Holland in short order with construction skills, highlighted by a 40-hour, one week culmination that was hands on and helped him land a good job.
 Gaunitz likewise praised that kind of an option for young people.
 NICC officials showcased success stories like Gaunitz and Jacobsen at Friday's forum and stressed what they say is a need for legislative support - and funding - for programs that do yield concrete results.

The day made a mark on legislators.
 "NICC is a leader in finding solutions for businesses and communities in customized training and workforce development," said Rep. Michael Bergan. "NICC has built networks of stakeholders and collaboration to provide educational programs with on-the-job experience with a variety of state, federal, foundational and private funds to augment tuition and student grants. Each program is focused to meet the needs in northeast Iowa for our trades, manufacturers, healthcare, and other industries. Today's presentation was effective in highlighting the success NICC has achieved with current state funding options supporting workforce development and made the case for continued funding."
 Community colleges, four-year colleges and the state's Regent universities alike are vying for funding while stressing very different approaches to training the next generation of Iowa workers.

While Iowa's hiring juggernaut has slowed some in the last couple months, the state remains one of the best in the nation in terms of low unemployment.
 That is a reality fueling a heady field of competition for employers as they seek to fill jobs amid uncertainty.
 Indeed, in the late numbers released Friday by Iowa Workforce Development, the state's unemployment remained steady at 3.1 percent from the previous month, down from 3.9 percent a year before and besting the national rate at 3.5 percent.
 Roughly 2,400 jobs were added in December with over 34,000 payroll positions recorded from December 2021, according to a release by IWD.

Jobs highlighted at Friday's forum, from healthcare to business services, are expected to be pacesetters for Iowa coming up.
 "Iowa ended 2022 in a much stronger position than where we were a year ago," said Beth Townsend, IWD director. "Individual industries certainly continue to feel shocks from high inflation and the ripples of a difficult business cycle. But overall, Iowa is now much stronger heading into 2023. Moving forward, IWD's focus will be on continuing our momentum by connecting Iowans to the new jobs created in health care, business services, and other growing sectors."

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