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# Calmar Courier

Community News. Community Service.

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P.O. Box 507, Calmar, IA 52132 | www.calmarcourier.com | USPS: 335-690 | news@calmarcourier.com | Hic sunt dracones



## SW Celebrates Field Day

Students at South Winneshiek headed outside for Field Day for the lower grades. Pictured here, students enjoy a sunny day with a chance to get away from their desks as the school year wrapped up. Photo courtesy South Winneshiek

## CSS Approves NEIBH Funding

By Michael Hohenbrink Editor

Decorah-based North-east Iowa Behavioral Health got the green light on both matching funds for a grant and for expenses to set up a new children's clinic as the mental health provider readies its downtown youth location soon.

The Governing Board for County Social Services voted to authorize a 10-percent match worth just shy of \$60,000 for NEIBH to go with the latter's building grant for its new downtown location.

NEIBH Executive Director Charlie Woodcock briefed the board on the new site.

NEIBH had paid off a loan on the building recently and is looking to open its doors soon for the site that will have a focus on youth services.

In addition to minors, the downtown location also offers proximity to Luther College and will feature clinic space on one level and a drop-in portion of the building on one level for area youth.

The board agreed to fund \$7,420 to help furnish the new building as NEIBH gets ready to open.

### Board Composition Discussed

Additionally, the board discussed a legislative change that will require a change in who serves on the multi-county board, serving much of north-east and a portion of north central Iowa with Allamakee, Black Hawk, Butler, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Floyd, Grundy, Howard, Mitchell, Tama, and Winneshiek counties.

No more than 49 percent of the board can be made of county supervisors, and a presence for both law enforcement personnel and a judicial representative must be made.

Board members discussed how to read the new requirements, including whether administrative personnel serving on the board count in making the determination.

Winneshiek County Sheriff Dan Marx was specifically noted as a possible candidate given his work at addressing mental health issues.

Realignment could be required as soon as July 1 for the board with any changes tabled for now but likely to be discussed next month.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

## Drug Law Change Impact Eyed

By Michael Hohenbrink Editor

With neighboring Minnesota decriminalizing all drug paraphernalia, Winneshiek County is looking on with some trepidation for what this could mean, both for law enforcement and more broadly.

A familiar charge for law enforcement has been Possession of Drug Paraphernalia, the presence of objects ranging from scales to pipes to baggies to syringes, objects used to aid in the use of illicit substances.

Typically, a quick perusal of drug charges for area courts can include multiple instances of the charge, a misdemeanor under Iowa law.

Now, however, a change signed into law in recent days for Minnesota is causing worry here as Iowa counties bordering Minnesota look at just what the impact could be a few miles down the road and with cross border traffic a daily reality for Winneshiek County.

"Since this is the first law of its kind that has gone to this extent of legalization

measures, the short and long-term effects of it in bordering states and Winneshiek County are still somewhat uncertain," said Winneshiek County Sheriff Dan Marx. "With that said, it is my understanding that other states that have taken similar

“ Since this is the first law of its kind that has gone to this extent of legalization measures, the short and long-term effects of it in bordering states and Winneshiek County are still somewhat uncertain.

- Dan Marx, Winneshiek County Sheriff

measures of relaxed drug laws or relaxed drug enforcement have seen a sharp increase in crime, civil unrest, and public health issues. The results of these changes in Minnesota remain to be seen."

The change bodes similar, though to a greater degree, as when Minnesota raised its speed limit, going up to 60 miles per hour on many roadways.

Drivers from Minnesota heading down Highway 52 into Winneshiek County routinely can be observed continuing at that state's speed limit, rather than adjusting to Iowa's speed limit of the traditional 55 mph.

"The main takeaway is to remind everyone that each state has their own set of

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## TCS Students Learn Bike Safety

Sheriff Tim Beckman watches as Carter Vsetecka and Andrea Schmitt navigate through the bike path as Trinity Catholic School students took part in a bike rodeo at the school. Photo courtesy Trinity Catholic School

## NE Iowa Hovers Around State Jobs Average

By Michael Hohenbrink Editor

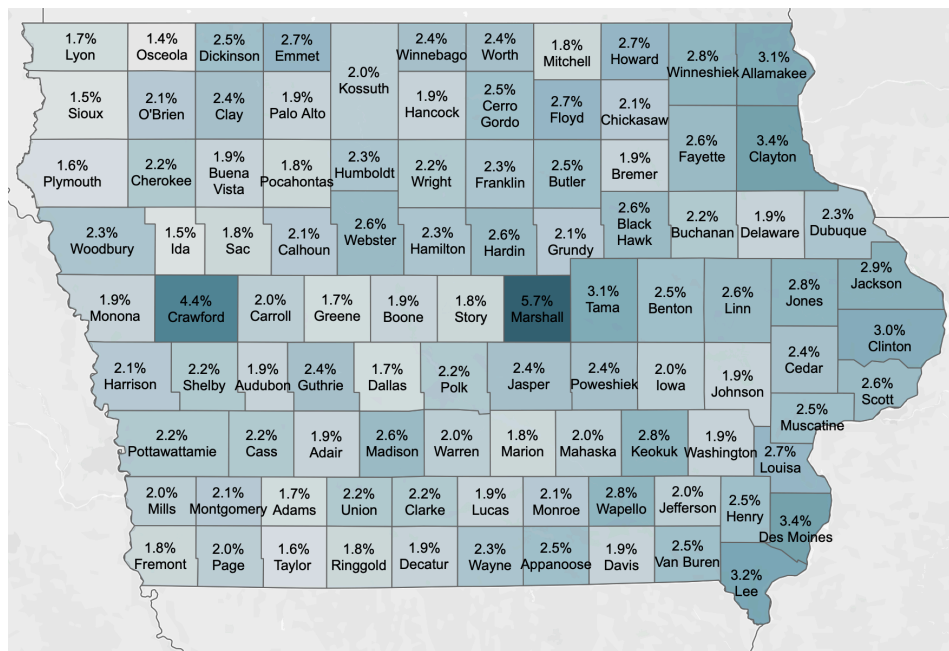
Most of the area was right around the state average as unemployment numbers for Iowa continue to beat the national average.

With Iowa's unemployment rate falling to 2.7 percent in the latest figures made available by Iowa Workforce Development, improvement was seen in many counties.

The state average is a decline of .1 percent from the month before while the national rate was at 3.4 percent.

Chickasaw County continue to be a regional leader, standing at 2.1 percent while Fayette County fell to 2.6 percent to beat the state average and Howard County tied the state average.

Winneshiek County was just slightly above, coming in at 2.8 percent while Allamakee County stood at 3.1 percent and Clayton County



Area counties made big strides in the latest unemployment figures released by Iowa Workforce Development.

was at 3.4 percent in the latest figures.

The numbers are marked

month before, with Allamakee County plunging 1.8 percent from 4.9 percent, Clayton County falling 1.7

percent from 5.1 percent, Howard County seeing a drop of 1.3 percent from four percent, Winneshiek County

dropping 1.2 percent from four percent, Fayette County down .9 percent from 3.5 percent and Chickasaw County down .7 percent from 2.8 percent.

Marshall County was the highest in the state, clocking in at 5.7 percent while Crawford County was second highest at 4.4 percent.

Osceola County led the state at 1.4 percent.

"Iowa continues to have a strong labor market, and fantastic opportunities remain for those seeking jobs," said Beth Townsend, Director of Iowa Workforce Development. "Manufacturing, health care, and retail grew significantly in April despite the external pressures of high inflation and rising interest rates that were felt in other industries. Iowa is the land of opportunity, and IWD can help make connections between workers and employers looking for help."

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# Advanced Foods Class Goes Shopping



The Advance Foods Class from Turkey Valley had the opportunity to enter the real world when they went on a field trip to Fareway in Decorah, purchase food to take back to school to create a meal. The students were given a budget and had to problem solve and make decisions about their purchases. They had to keep a running total to ensure that they would stay within their budget and make wise and healthy choices. It was through funding from the Turkey Valley Education Foundation that the students were able to experience this real world connection to their learning in the classroom. Photo courtesy Turkey Valley

## News Briefs

### TAKO Plans Free Fishing Event

With the annual Iowa DNR free fishing weekend the first weekend in June, Fayette Take A Kid Outdoors (TAKO) chapter is holding a special fishing program. This year it will be held at the popular Big Springs Trout facility north of Elkader. It will run from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, June 3. Attendees will first meet at the facility office near the ponds. There Big Springs Manager Gary Siegwarth will show a video about trout production and the quality water required for raising them. This is a free event and open to interested families.

### Neuzil Awarded Phi Kappa Phi Study Abroad Grant

Celia Neuzil, of Calmar, recently was awarded a Study Abroad Grant worth \$1,000 from The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi—the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Neuzil is one of 125 students nationwide to receive the award.

The grants are designed to support undergraduates, both members and nonmembers from campuses that have Phi Kappa Phi chapters, as they seek expanded knowledge and experience in their academic fields by studying abroad.

Currently majoring in animal ecology and environmental science at Iowa State University, Neuzil will use the grant to study abroad in Paro, Bhutan at the School for Field Studies Center for Climate and Sustainable Futures.

The selection process for a study abroad grant is based on the applicant's academic achievement, campus and community service, relation of travel to academic preparation and career goals, a personal statement, letters of recommendation, and acceptance into a study abroad program. Each recipient receives \$1,000 to be applied toward travel abroad.

Established in 2001, the Study Abroad Grant Program is part of the Society's robust portfolio of award and grant programs, which gives \$1.3 million each year to outstanding students and members through graduate and dissertation fellowships, funding for post-baccalaureate development, and grants for local, national and international literacy initiatives.

### Privacy Concerns Will Mean Voter List Requests Impacted

Beginning July 1, the Winneshiek County Auditor's Office will no longer be producing Voter Lists requested by the public.

Due to the increasing sensitivity to the appropriate use of the information, application will need to be submitted to the Secretary of State, who will determine if the request is allowed and fulfill the request. The Secretary of State has list request guidelines, pricing and application available on its website at: <https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/voterreg/voterlistrequests.html>

Questions about this or any other election related matter should be directed to the County Auditor at [auditor@co.winneshiek.ia.us](mailto:auditor@co.winneshiek.ia.us) or 563-382-5085.

## N.B. Hic Sunt Davenportes!



EDITOR'S NOTES  
Michael Hohenbrink

unsure what kind of umbrella would work when it's a full-size couch descending.

I'm thinking fabric and thin metal stays would offer scant protection against such a dangerous foe.

Hic sunt dracones, as the old map makers might have noted. Here, there be dragons! Be warned, traveler.

That rivals a headline from India as white worms rained down on unhappy villagers.

Mother Nature's sense of humor leaves something to be desired.

Now, admittedly the umbrella might offer some protection in the latter instance, better at least than with a fusillade of flying furniture funnels, but the instant the worms get upgraded to frogs or other slightly larger creatures, I'm back to Square Unum.

No, I'm thinking I would be better off taking lessons from the Comics with Calvin and Hobbes as the former would work to evade his pouncing tiger, resorting to a dummy in his clothing or by flinging himself down to let the feline soar overhead.

A little flexibility would probably be better than my fallback option — a full suit of armor and shield, ready to battle the elements and any foes.

It might be difficult to explain, though, as I walk in the door to the office in the morning.

"I though it might rain," would likely not satisfy the curious as to why I'm garbed thusly.

Let them scoff. When the next La-Z-Boy comes calling, hurtling through the gray sky, I'll be ready to slay the dragon.

But I might have some trouble with the rust if the armor gets wet.

Maybe I could pack an oil can in sack lunch.

## Acquitted in Rape Case, Man Loses Malicious-Prosecution Claim Against Police

By Clark Kauffman  
Iowa Capital Dispatch

The Iowa Supreme Court has affirmed a lower court decision rejecting a lawsuit against a police detective who pursued charges against a man later acquitted of sexual assault.

Joshua Venckus sued the City of Iowa City and Police Detective Andrew Rich for their role in his criminal prosecution in a rape case. Venckus alleged the case was pursued against him although he had what he described as an airtight alibi.

Ruling that Venckus' malicious-prosecution claim could not succeed because the sexual assault charge was supported by probable cause throughout the proceedings, the justices affirmed the district court's decision to grant the city and the detective summary judgment in their favor.

The rape occurred Feb. 16, 2013, at an Iowa City house rented by Venckus and others. A girl who attended a party there fell asleep on a couch in the main living room, only to be awakened by someone pinning her down and cutting off her breathing. She was eventually able to run out of the house, screaming for help.

Rich, the lead investigator on the case, went to the house where the occupants said Venckus was in Chicago that weekend. Police

found evidence that someone had entered the house through a basement apartment window. Nearby, they found the wallet of a man named Ryan Markley.

Initially, the police focused their investigation on Markley. But DNA testing of the samples taken from the victim and her clothing eventually revealed two different male DNA profiles: that of Markley and Venckus.

Venckus told police he had been in Chicago that weekend with family and offered his bank card and cellphone to the detectives to verify his location. Bank records showed food and a movie ticket had been purchased in the Chicago area on February 15, the day before the attack. Venckus was charged with second-degree sexual abuse, though his claim of being in Chicago was supported by his roommates and family, as well as a Chicago-area lawyer who swore under oath that he had met with Venckus in his law office at about 2 p.m. the day before the assault.

At trial, a defense expert opined that DNA from Venckus' blanket — which had been used to cover the victim when she went to sleep in the living room — had been transferred from Markley to the victim during the attack, saying the quantity of Venckus' DNA on the victim wasn't

consistent with him being the attacker.

The victim's blood had been found on the inside of Markley's jeans, her skin cells had been found in the fly of his jeans, and Markley's skin cells had been found in the victim's cervix, and Detective Rich testified there was no evidence that more than one person committed the crime. Still, Rich testified the evidence leaned more heavily toward Venckus being the perpetrator.

A plea deal was eventually reached with Markley, who entered a guilty plea to second-degree burglary and an Alford plea to a charge of assault with intent to commit sexual abuse without injury, a misdemeanor offense. Rich was present at the meeting where the plea agreement was discussed and supported it, while the lead prosecutor opposed it and was overruled by her superiors.

Venckus' case went to trial and a jury returned a verdict of not guilty. After his acquittal, Venckus sued Rich and the city for defamation, abuse of process and malicious prosecution. After the civil case was dismissed by the court, Venckus appealed, and an Iowa Supreme Court ruling allowed part of the case, alleging malicious prosecution, to move forward. But the district court eventually ruled in favor of the

city and Rich in approving their request for summary judgment, stating the city and Rich had judicial-process immunity from such claims.

In affirming that decision on Friday, the justices noted the "ongoing existence of probable cause" in the case against Venckus.

"DNA evidence linked Venckus directly to the crime; indeed, his DNA was found in the victim's cervix," the court ruled. "Also, other than an attorney whose visit with Venckus occurred more than twelve hours before the sexual assault, the individuals supporting Venckus' Chicago-area alibi defense were exclusively friends and family. Venckus could not definitively say how he got to Chicago that weekend. No record of a bus ticket was found, and the friend who purportedly drove Venckus failed a polygraph test. Notably, Venckus replaced his cell phone the day after the attack."

The court added that "none of this is to question the jury verdict" in the case, but said a malicious-prosecution claim required a lack of probable cause. "Probable cause existed here," the court stated. "This is not a case where Detective Rich knowingly provided false information to the prosecutors or knowingly withheld material information."

### DRUG LAW from page 1

laws," said Marx. "When you travel to another state you are subject to the laws of the state you are in. This is no different than speed limits. We continue to enforce Iowa law, and it is still illegal

here." While the Winneshiek County Sheriff's Office looks to the reality of enforcement, others are eyeing other aspects.

"I agree with [the Sheriff],

that it really is uncertainty what the impact of this new law in Minnesota will have on our region in Iowa," said Charlie Woodcock, executive director for Northeast Iowa Behavioral Health, a

specialist in offering treatment for areas ranging from substance abuse to mental health.

Woodcock pointed to the goal with the law change of making needle use, for example, less risky, but he cautioned about the Law of Unintended Consequences.

"I can say that harm reduction is a tool, but our ultimate goal is a drug-free life," said Woodcock. "We support interventions to get people into treatment as soon as possible, we know that this is the best for the individual, their family and the community as a whole."

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