

ROCK VALLEY



BLOOMING BUSINESS

This is the fourth in a series of Accent specials in which The REVIEW looks at the leaders of industry – those driving business and initiatives – in the communities of N'West Iowa. See ACCENT

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BY TOM LAWRENCE NEWS@NWESTIOWA.COM

VOICING HIS VIEWS

SIOUX CENTER—The graphic and disturbing videos of Tyre Nichols being beaten by Memphis police officers “shocked” Sioux County sheriff Jamie Van Voorst, causing him to express his outrage and sadness in a lengthy Facebook post.

Nichols was stopped by Memphis police on suspicion of reckless driving on Jan. 7. During the encounter, he was beaten, Tased and pepper-sprayed.

Nichols, 29, the father of a 4-year-old son, an avid skateboarder and photographer who worked at FedEx, died on Jan. 10.

Five police officers — Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Justin Smith, Emmitt Martin III and Desmond Mills Jr. — have been fired. They all have been charged with one count of second-degree murder, one count of aggravated assault-acting in

concert, two counts of aggravated kidnapping, two counts of official misconduct and one count of official oppression. They are all out on bail.

Two other officers, Preston Hemphill and an unnamed officer, have been suspended for their role in the tragedy.

Three members of the Memphis Fire Department,

emergency medical technicians Robert Long and Ja Michael Sandridge and Lt. Michelle Whitaker, were fired on Monday for not properly treating Nichols at the scene and failing to comprehend how seriously he was injured.

It's been yet another grim reminder of police misconduct that ended up with the death of an unarmed black man who had been stopped for a reported minor infraction.

Van Voorst, 49, said he “wanted to voice that the

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“I've never seen a **WORSE** example of police brutality.”

Jamie Van Voorst

SIOUX COUNTY SHERIFF

SIOUX COUNTY SHERIFF STRONGLY CHIDES MEMPHIS POLICE ACTIONS



Jesse Huitink, former program director of Foster Grandparents & Senior Companions of Greater Siouxland, offers guidance to Bethany De Ruyter in the organization's Rock Valley office. De Ruyter stepped into the director's position at the beginning of this year. Photo by Aleisa Schat

De Ruyter's passion for elderly leads to top role

Huitink steps down as group's director

BY ALEISA SCHAT ASCHAT@NWESTIOWA.COM

ROCK VALLEY—As of early January, Rock Valley resident Bethany De Ruyter is the new

director of Foster Grandparents & Senior Companions of Greater Siouxland.

“I just have a passion for the elderly population,” the 29-year-old said.

De Ruyter is replacing Jesse Huitink, who served as program director for four years.

Huitink is pursuing her master of social work degree, and she plans to become a licensed independent social worker and clinical therapist.

“Jesse did a very good job of leading the program and

See DE RUYTER on A4

Grant will help upgrade lagoons

Primghar waiting on more funding

BY ERIC HARROLD EHARROLD@NWESTIOWA.COM

PRIMGHAR—Primghar city clerk Carol Chicoine confirmed the Iowa Finance Authority will be providing \$500,000 from the 2022 Waste-



This iced-over wastewater treatment lagoon owned by Primghar is one of three that will be consolidated into a single unit thanks to \$500,000 from a state assistance program grant allocated to water quality infrastructure upgrades. Photo by Eric Harrold

water and Drinking Water Financial Assistance Program Grant Award to cover part of the cost of an upgrade to the city's wastewater treatment facility.

According to Chicoine, plans

are to consolidate three existing lagoons into a single unit and implement what is known as a Submerged Aerated Gravel Reactor or SAGR system,

See FUNDING on A7

Moville's The Record part of Iowa Information's portfolio



Sam Wagner, Myrna Wagner and Jeff Wagner own Iowa Information Media Group in Sheldon, which recently announced the purchase of Moville's paper The Record. Photo by Jeff Grant

Weekly is 'perfect fit' for company

MOVILLE—Iowa Information Media Group has added to its portfolio of publications again as it officially took ownership of The Record based in Moville on Tuesday.

“We are pleased to add The Record to the titles we own and publish,” said Jeff Wagner, the company's president and second generation of the family-owned media company. “The Record, with its proximity to our papers in Le Mars and Remsen and corporate office in Sheldon, is a perfect fit for our operation.”

“We believe in the

See MOVILLE on A3



WEEKEND WEATHER:

SATURDAY

HIGH: 31
LOW: 23
CHANCE OF PRECIP: 0%



SUNDAY

HIGH: 31
LOW: 23
CHANCE OF PRECIP: 0%



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EOE

NEWS

Primghar gets \$500,000 to fix wastewater facility



Primghar city clerk Carol Chicoine points out the way the \$500,000 in grant money will help upgrade the city's wastewater facility. The estimated cost for the upgrades is \$6,721,000 and the city expects to receive more funding for it. Photo by Eric Harrold

FUNDING

Continued from page A1

which would add aeration, polishing, and disinfectant to the processing phase. Additional components include blowers and ultraviolet lights.

The estimate cost for the total upgrade is \$6,721,000.

Currently, waste is transferred among the lagoons to accomplish physical breakup of solid waste.

"We are at capacity with our lagoons," Chicoine said. "The Iowa Department of Natural Resources suggested that the city consider an upgrade."

One option was to purchase adjacent land but that would create a bigger footprint.

"We're right beside a creek, and we just want to be precautionary," Chicoine said. "We're keeping our footprint the same size without having to expand."

Chicoine described the city's approach as a proactive one and said it has been able to operate its existing facility without violations, adding the upgrade will allow Primghar to have a cushion for growth.

In the last couple of years, urban revitalization has added nine homes and Chicoine said she knows of two more will be coming in to the community. This residential growth is in addition to the growth of the industrial park.

"The existing facility has a permitted capacity of 122,400 gal-

lons of wastewater flow per day," Chicoine said. "This figure will increase to 517,000 gallons with the proposed upgrade. Biological oxygen demand or BOD will increase 163 pounds per day to 760 with the new design."

The city is excited to see the grant funding come in and is hopeful it will be receiving a Community Development Block Grant for \$300,000 through Iowa Economic Development. They plan to use a state revolving fund loan to cover any remaining balance.

Chicoine said bidding the project would be sometime in late April or early May. The contract would be drawn up by June with the project anticipated to start this fall.

Van Voorst explains cops in Nichols' death do not represent local police

POLICE

Continued from page A1

actions of a few rogue officers do not reflect the actions, integrity and values of the majority of law enforcement," so he decided to create the Facebook post.

In it, he wrote:

"What I saw was a desperate attempt by Nichols to survive. There was never shown any acts that warranted hand strikes, baton strikes to head, punches, kicks to face and torso, use of Taser and use of pepper spray. I've never seen a worse example of police brutality. The five officers who did this deserve the maximum penalty for the crime of murder."

"This wasn't even about a lack of training. None of these officers can claim they felt threatened so that their training would have to be used in the first place. This was pure, rage-filled officers who were completely out of control. And just as alarming, none of them made even one attempt to stop it; no one spoke against it, all five are responsible for his death."

"My thoughts and prayers continue for the Nichols family. No parent should ever have to witness what Nichols' parents had to watch happen to their son. No human being should have to ever endure this."

Van Voorst told The N'West Iowa REVIEW he felt "compelled to write it" after several people asked him what he thought about the incident, which has received widespread media coverage.

"Law enforcement is a profession that I have worked in for nearly 30 years and is not just a job, but also a calling," he said. "It's something I never thought I'd have to think about, but ever since the Los Angeles police officers who senselessly beat Rodney King in 1991, it seems to be a more frequent occurrence. The brutality of this instance was not only shocking, it was vicious. It was stunningly somber."

"How did some law enforcement officers in the greatest nation on Earth become this out of control? That those who take an oath to protect and serve, would stoop to a level

of beating another human being to death, for no apparent reason? I was truly shocked," Van Voorst said.

"I wanted to voice that the actions of a few rogue officers do not reflect the actions, integrity and values of the majority of law enforcement. There are many men and women that each day put the badge on with honor and respect and work hard to live out their oath each and every shift," he said. "All law enforcement should not be labeled evil for the actions of a few. That does not diminish the atrocity of this recent event."

He said it is apparent there is a need for change and accountability for such moments.

"But honorable, ethical law enforcement also needs support from those they serve. Community support is invaluable," the sheriff said. "This is a difficult profession where lives are at risk, decisions are made in seconds and high stress moments are a daily occurrence."

Is there a police violence problem in America? Van Voorst said that is difficult to ascertain and answer.

"I think as a whole, yes; locally, no. What I mean by that is that we in the Midwest are blessed with enough quality law enforcement officers, with high moral and ethical standards, who want to replace retiring quality law enforcement officers," he said. "But, in other parts of our country, many agencies have had to lower standards to hire police officers, largely because of negative media attention that has been precipitated by acts of police violence, occurring in metropolitan areas. This was the case in the Nichols incident."

That has made it increasingly difficult to entice youth to enter into this profession because these events have made communities lose trust in law enforcement officers and then causing them to cease supporting them as a whole, in his view.

"I believe that this becomes a cycle of uncalled-for police brutality, loss of trust by the public; less respect for those wearing the badge, less interest for this vocation, lowered hiring standards and so-on," Van Voorst said. "We need to increase training, increase mental health options for officers, be aware of the stressors of the job and have higher expectations of those we hire. We need young men and women with high moral and ethical standards who honor God and

country and want to protect those who cannot protect themselves, to apply and be willing to put their lives on the line for their fellow humans."

He has been in law enforcement since 1993, and has had his share of dangerous encounters, so he understands the risks inherent in the job.

"There have been several, for me personally, over my years in law enforcement," Van Voorst said. "Every case is different with different outcomes based on many factors: alcohol use. Drug use. Hidden weapons. Mental illness. Other personality disorders."

He was named sheriff on Sept. 1, replacing longtime sheriff Dan Altena, who was running unopposed for a seat on the Sioux County Board of Supervisors. Van Voorst had been a captain in the department, so he had experience in guiding young, impressionable officers. That continues now that he is sheriff.

"One thing that is on the forefront at my office is monthly policy reviews conducted by all departments within the sheriff's office: deputy, jail and dispatchers," Van Voorst said. "My staff supervisors also perform a quality assurance wherein each of the above area supervisors identify and focus on any area marked as needing special attention."

He said that he, along with other supervisors perform, "audit reviews," wherein periodically, officer cases are sampled and reviewed, including viewing of their body worn cameras, or listening to 911 call recordings handled by dispatchers and booking videos by jailers to maintain professional scrutiny.

"Professional law enforcement services stem from constant, repetitive, random review. We have conversations about job stressors and how to cope with stress in healthy ways, and we deal with issues as they occur," Van Voorst said. "We offer and encourage appointments with mental health professionals to provide help processing high-stress calls. Honor of the badge comes from the top with strong leadership, clear expectations and transparency in any interaction."

In the Facebook post, he also made a plea for people to cherish and love their families and help their children grow up with strong morals and good character.

"In closing, parents: please, I plead

THE FACEBOOK POST:

Here is Sioux County sheriff Jamie Van Voorst's complete Facebook post:

From Sioux County sheriff Jamie Van Voorst regarding the release of the Tyre Nichols video footage.

Since the video release, I have been asked by a few people by way of phone calls, e-mail and some in-person conversations, for my reaction to the Tyre Nichols death. Those closest to me know that this tragic event weighs heavily on my heart. Because of these things, I felt moved to issue my own statement on recent events.

Five Memphis, Tennessee, police officers beat Nichols for three minutes, followed by a 22-minute long wait while he was propped against a police vehicle until, an ambulance arrived, on the evening of Jan. 7, 2023, at around 8:30 p.m. The savage encounter made me, along with many others, recall the 1991 police beating of Los Angeles motorist Rodney King. This horrific attack on Tyre Nichols and his subsequent death at the hands of these officers who took an oath to protect was stunning, to say the least. What I watched, along with the rest of this country, showed that there is no justification for any level of force to have been used by the police, beginning with the way they approached the car and then violently pulled Nichols from it. What is worse; these officers were on the then "SCORPION Unit," which is an acronym for: Street Crimes Operations to Restore Peace in Our Neighborhoods; but the exact opposite of that, however, is what actually happened.

There was never resistance put up by Nichols, ever. What I saw was a desperate attempt by Nichols to survive. There was never shown any acts that warranted hand strikes, baton strikes to head, punches, kicks to face and torso, use of Taser and use of pepper spray. I've never seen a worse example of police brutality. The five officers who did this deserve the maximum penalty for the crime of murder.

"This wasn't even about a lack of training. None of these officers can claim they felt threatened so that their training would have to be used in the first place. This was pure, rage-filled officers who were completely out of control. And just as alarming, none of them made even one attempt to stop it; no one spoke against it, all five are responsible for his death."

My thoughts and prayers continue for the Nichols family. No parent should ever have to witness what Nichols' parents had to watch happen to their son. No human being should have to ever endure this.

In closing, parents: please, I plead with you; never underestimate the power of raising your children in a faith filled environment, a home filled with love, integrity, compassion and value for humanity. I sincerely believe these are the greatest, most important things you can give them. Your children, entrusted to you by God, are our nation's future. They are watching; integrity in all situations, is needed now, more than ever. A man is known by how he reacts, responds, owns and learns from his mistakes.

with you; never underestimate the power of raising your children in a faith filled environment, a home filled with love, integrity, compassion and value for humanity," he wrote.

The reaction to his Facebook post was overwhelmingly positive. But Van Voorst said no matter what it had been, he knew he had to share his thoughts in a public manner.

"Since becoming Sioux County sheriff and working as a deputy sheriff for nearly 30 years, I want people to know that my heart is truly focused on the best interest of the public who I took an oath to serve and protect," he said. "Not to exert power and control, but to watch over our communities and provide safety.

That goes far beyond words. It means that whenever I see an officer acting unprofessionally, I must correct it, speak against it and work to hold our deputies to a higher standard. It means living by example, both on and off the clock. It means treating others as I want to be treated. It means living out my faith by truly being a peacemaker and protector."

"We have an amazing group of people involved with our office and I am humbled and honored to be their leader."

Van Voorst and his wife, Gwen, live on an acreage southwest of Hull. They have an adult son, Jake Van Voorst, and two adult daughters, Abbie Jansma and Tasha Hulstein.

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