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Sioux City's renaissance gathering returns. LOCAL, A6

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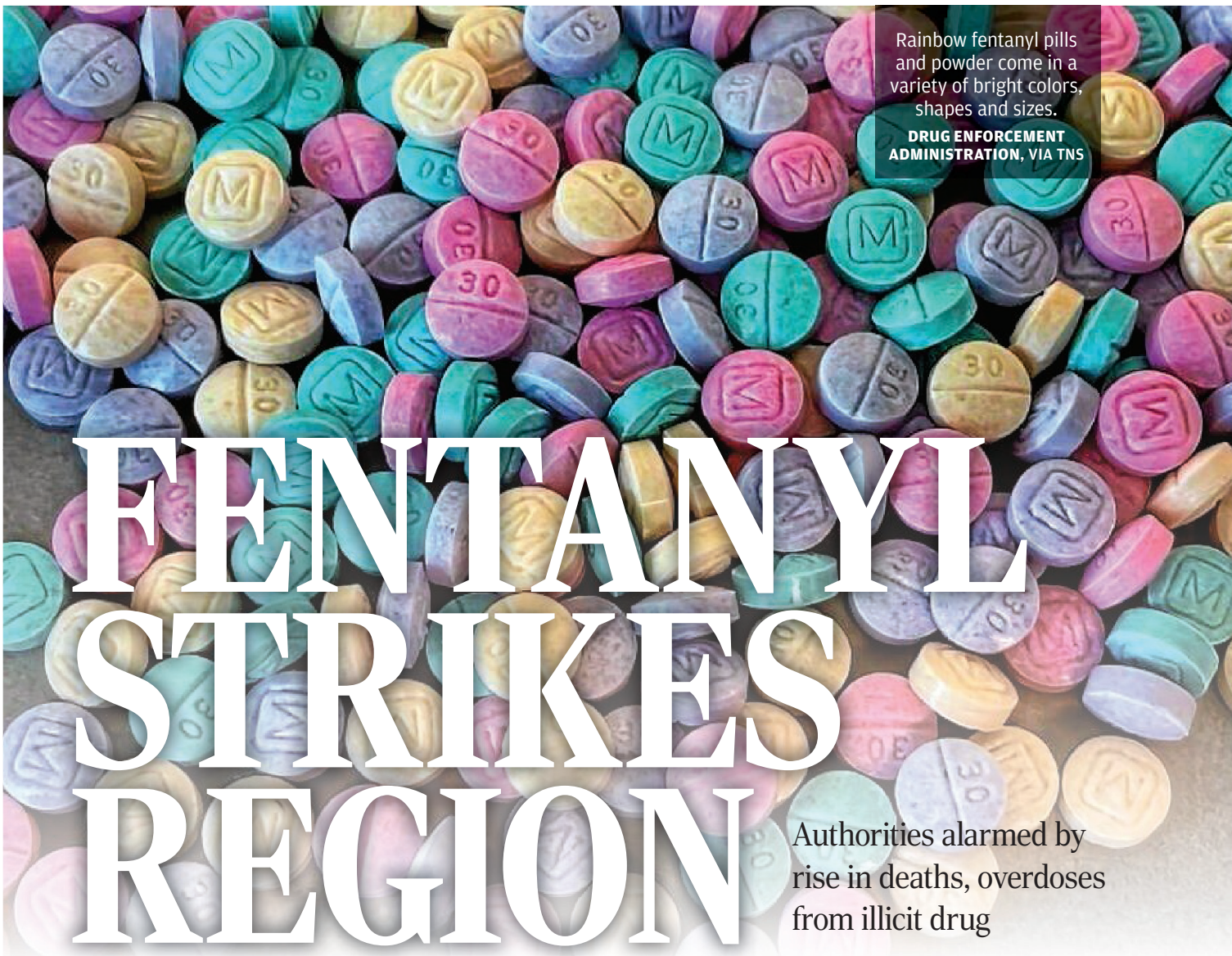
## 'A Cast of Blues' exhibit

Resin-cast masks bring blues legends to life. LIVING D1



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### SPECIAL JOURNAL REPORT



Rainbow fentanyl pills and powder come in a variety of bright colors, shapes and sizes. DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION, VIA TNS

# FENTANYL STRIKES REGION

Authorities alarmed by rise in deaths, overdoses from illicit drug

## Iowa could see unemployment increase from inflation-fighting

CALEB MCCULLOUGH  
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Iowa's unemployment rate may rise through 2023, though it's unclear by how much, as the Federal Reserve attempts to cool the economy and pull the brakes on record-high inflation.

Iowa's unemployment rate sits at 2.6%, the rate it was before the pandemic. Most businesses are having difficulty finding workers to fill open positions, said Joe Murphy executive director of the Iowa Business Council, which represents some of the state's largest employers.

Iowa has around 84,000 open jobs and around 44,700 people unemployed, according to Iowa Workforce Development. Murphy said businesses are working to recruit workers outside Iowa and hoping some people who left the workforce in recent years return.

But the labor market in Iowa could change, as the Fed predicts the national unemployment rate will rise from 3.7% to 4.4% by the end of next year, a consequence of its aggressive interest rate increases hoping to curb inflation.

Please see UNEMPLOYMENT, Page A2

DOLLY A. BUTZ  
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Police Det. Mike Sitzman recalls administering Narcan, a nasal spray that can rapidly reverse an opioid overdose, on two different occasions.

With illicitly manufactured fentanyl spurring a nationwide overdose epidemic, more law enforcement agencies are equipping their officers with Narcan.

Sitzman vividly remembers that call that came into dispatch as a criminal trespass or burglary at a vacant downtown Sioux City business. When he arrived at the scene, he said he and other officers found multiple people who appeared to be under the influence of drugs and alcohol. As they continued to search the building, they stumbled upon a woman who was passed out in a first-floor closet.

"We tried waking her up. She was not coming to," Sitzman said. "I called for uniform officers who were still en route to bring in Narcan. We adminis-



TIM HYNDS PHOTOS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Det. Paul Yaneff holds a dose of Narcan, while talking about the Sioux City Police Department's use of the drug, which can be administered to reverse an opioid overdose, including illicitly manufactured fentanyl. Since he became a detective in 2020, Yaneff said he has seen fentanyl cases "accelerate."

tered one dose. It did not appear to have any effect on her."

A minute or two later, Sitz-

man said they gave the woman a second dose and she began to wake up.



Narcan, a drug administered to reverse an opioid overdose, is shown at the Sioux City Police Department. All officers carry doses of Narcan.

### Deadly overdoses rise

Drug overdose deaths are on the rise in Iowa, increasing 34% over the last two years. The Iowa Department of Public Health recorded 470 overdose deaths in 2021, up from 350 in 2019. Most of the deaths were due to opioids. In 2021, fentanyl was implicated in 83% of the state's 258 opioid deaths.

Please see FENTANYL, Page A2

## Teen interest in long-lasting birth control soars after Roe

HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH  
AND ARLEIGH RODGERS  
Associated Press

Sixteen-year-old Adismarys Abreu had been discussing a long-lasting birth control implant with her mother for about a year as a potential solution to increasing menstrual pain.

Then Roe v. Wade was overturned, and Abreu joined the throng of teens rushing to their doctors as states began to ban or severely limit abortion.

"I'm definitely not ready to be pregnant," said Abreu, who had Nexplanon — a reversible, match-stick-sized contraceptive — implanted in her arm in August. Her home state of Florida bans most abortions after 15 weeks, and not having that option is "such a scary thought," she said.

Please see ROE, Page A4



SEE: For a video about how fentanyl cases are rising in Sioux City, point your smartphone camera at the QR Code and tap the link.

NEWSVU



WATCH: a police officer talk about how Narcan is carried and deployed to combat overdoses, point your smartphone camera at the QR Code and tap the link.

NEWSVU

THE MINI: The Sioux City public schools operate on a \$227 million budget. Is it too much to ask that all kids get free breakfast and lunch? I think having kids ready to learn should be priority #1. — Steve Shadle, South Sioux City

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## Unemployment

From A1

In August, Iowa's unemployment rate ticked up by 0.1% to 2.6%. An additional 1,300 Iowans left the workforce, with the largest reason being a desire to attend school, according to Iowa Workforce Development.

The Fed raised the target federal funds interest rate by another 0.75 percentage points last week, and rates are expected to rise more throughout the year. The benchmark rate affects interest rates on credit cards, mortgages, and other types of loans.

Higher interest rates increase the cost of doing business, which leads to a slowdown in all aspects of business, including hiring and sometimes leading to layoffs. That's part of the goal: In remarks last week, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said the rate increase will lead to a "softening of the labor market" which is intended to bring demand in line with supply, putting a damper on inflation.

John Winters, an economist at Iowa State University, said the extent to which unemployment increases depends on the severity of the Fed's interest rate increases.

"If it's hard to reduce inflation and they keep having to raise more and more, more than they currently expect, then that will lead to more job losses, potentially, than they expect," he said.

## Iowa bucks national trends

Murphy said Iowa will probably see "a little bit of an uptick" in unemployment, but the state and businesses are well situated to withstand the worst effects of a potential recession.

"We think we can be hopefully insulated enough from some of those [national] and even international events that are causing economic headwinds to blow our way," he said. "We'll certainly be impacted, but to what level, I think, is the ultimate question."

Murphy and other experts pointed to Iowa's resilience during other national recessions, including the 2008-2009 recession. During that time, the national unemployment rate peaked at 10% in October of 2009. Iowa's rate stayed below national rates over those two years and peaked at 6.6% between May and August of 2009.

Iowa's unemployment rate reached 10.5% in April 2020, the worst month of the early pandemic-fueled layoffs, while the national rate shot up to 14.7%.

"Coming out of the financial crises in 2008-2009 Iowa had an unemployment rate lower than 40 other states and well below the national level," Iowa Association of Businesses Vice President for Public Policy JD Davis said in an email. "This is due in part to the efforts of policy makers in Iowa to diversify our economy and insulate Iowans from economic downturns."

## Lending industries hit first

Jeff Eckhoff, a spokesperson for Iowa Workforce Development, said in an email the department is paying close attention to interest rates' effect on employment, especially in industries that lend or depend on lending. Winters said banking, real estate and con-

struction will be potential areas of contraction.

The credit industry has already been impacted as demand decreases or companies expect demand to decrease, Eckhoff said.

Mortgages are one area where the rate increases are being felt starkly: As interest rates on mortgages reach a 30-year high, demand nationally dropped 29% since last year, according to CNBC.

"There's less mortgage loans, but also other loans," Winters said. "Think about businesses. Some businesses if they can borrow at 3.5% maybe they do it, if they've got to borrow at 6.5% maybe they don't."

Wells Fargo has cut nearly 400 jobs since the beginning of this year, with many in the home lending sector, according to reports. The financial services company said in a statement to KCCI earlier this year the layoffs in its home mortgage sector were the result of natural changes to the home lending environment.

"We regularly review and adjust staffing levels to align with market conditions and the needs of our businesses," Wells Fargo spokesperson Mike Slusark said in a statement. "We work hard to identify opportunities for employees in other parts of the company so we can retain as many employees as possible."

## Reemployment process

Under a new Iowa law passed this year by the Republican-led Legislature, Iowans who are eligible for unemployment benefits can only receive them for 16 weeks, down from the previous 26 weeks.

Gov. Kim Reynolds said the change would help bolster Iowa's workforce and fill the thousands of open jobs in the state. Democrats said the law was bad for workers and hurt unemployed Iowans.

Iowa Workforce Development ramped up its efforts to match unemployed Iowans with open jobs this year, Eckhoff said, through its Reemployment Case Management system. The agency reaches out to new jobless claimants within the first week and requires meetings with career advisors. The agency also connects Iowans with apprenticeship and training programs and apprenticeships.

For employers, Iowa Workforce Development offers a program that allows employers to spread hour reduction among multiple employees, and the employees can use unemployment insurance to make up some of those lost wages.

"When layoffs are necessary, IWD uses a rapid response team to help streamline the unemployment process as much as possible for departing workers."

As Iowa businesses and workers look to the future, the prevailing theme is uncertainty about the economy and labor market. Charlie Wishman, president of the Iowa Federation of Labor, said the economic trends of the last two years have not been in line with expectations.

"I think if anything we have learned in the last two years, and especially when it comes to things like the economy, the supply chains, you can go on and on, is to expect the unexpected," he said. "It's really difficult to predict what's going to happen on unemployment, on wages, on a whole host of things."

## Fentanyl

From A1

These counterfeit pills are often light-blue and marked with "30" in an effort to imitate oxycodone. However, last month, the Drug Enforcement Administration warned the public about brightly-colored or "rainbow" fentanyl. DEA Administrator Anne Milgram called the fentanyl pills and powder "a deliberate effort by drug traffickers to drive addiction amongst kids and young adults."

Sioux City Police Chief Rex Mueller expressed dire concerns about illicit fentanyl at a March Sioux City Rotary Club meeting, telling those in attendance that the drug is flowing into Sioux City at "alarming rates" and that it's "guaranteed" that more people in the community will die of fentanyl overdoses. Like other opioids, fentanyl depresses the central nervous system and respiratory function, which can lead to death.



Mueller

Rachel Wurth, assistant medical director for Rosecrance Jackson Centers, said people are using illicit fentanyl any way they can get it into their bodies, including snorting and injecting it. She said some patients seeking treatment in Sioux City are now even identifying fentanyl as their drug of choice.

"For the first time this year, we had a referral of someone who was on a Narcan drip. She actually had to be on a drip in the hospital because she did try one of the blue 30s," she said.

Mueller discussed the ongoing fentanyl crisis with U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, and other law enforcement officials in Primghar on Monday.

"The flow of deadly illegal drugs across our borders created a public health crisis and a national security emergency. Iowa law enforcement is dedicated to working with our elected officials to stem these deadly drugs and ensure the safety of Iowans," he said during the routable discussion.

## High potency

The Sioux City Police Department tallied five confirmed fentanyl overdose deaths in 2021 and two so far in 2022. Another death this year is suspected of being caused by a fentanyl overdose.

According to the department, 16 or 17 non-fatal overdoses in 2022 could be related to fentanyl. The department must send any substance thought to be fentanyl to the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation Crime Laboratory for testing.

Sioux City Police Det. Paul Yanneff said the drug is so deadly that investigators have to wear additional latex gloves and N95 masks when handling a substance that they suspect could be fentanyl.

"Any little residue that touches your skin could kill you instantly. It's very crucial that you have the protective gear when you handle this stuff," he said.

Linda Kalin, executive director of the Sioux City-based Iowa Poison Control Center, stressed that illicit fentanyl is not the same fentanyl that's in a patch prescribed by an ER physician.

"We don't know who made it, as opposed to the drug companies' fentanyl that is not in an illicit market," she said. "Can medical fentanyl be abused? Yes. But, that's not commonly what we're seeing."

Kalin said illicit fentanyl, which doesn't rely on the opium poppy for production, was originally used as an adulterant in heroin. Now, she said it's taking



TIM HYNDS PHOTOS, SIoux City JOURNAL

Mike Sitzman, a Sioux City Police Department detective, talks about the times he has had to administer Narcan, a drug used to reverse an opioid overdose, during an interview at police headquarters.



Narcan, a drug administered to reverse an opioid overdose, is shown at the Sioux City Police Department. All officers carry doses of Narcan.

the place of heroin. She said drug traffickers like the synthetic opioid because of its high potency. They can make a greater amount of product more easily at a reduced cost and rake in higher profits.

"Those counterfeit pills are in Iowa; and they resemble Percocet or Oxycodone. They resemble alprazolam or Xanax — other prescription drugs. That's very alarming," she said.

The Iowa Poison Control Center (IPCC) recorded 24 human fentanyl exposure calls from January to August. In 2021, the IPCC tallied 35 of those calls, a 191% increase from 2020, when 12 calls were recorded.

Since people are not required to call poison control centers after every exposure, the data only captures a portion of the fentanyl exposures that are occurring.

According to the IPCC, hospitals are unable to test for new and novel drugs that are being abused, such as synthetic opioids. When providers become comfortable managing patients who have taken the drug, they stop calling poison control centers.

Brenda Iliff, vice president of clinical services for Rosecrance Jackson Centers, said illicit fentanyl is "extremely addictive" and 100 times more potent than morphine. Even after a person has received life-saving Narcan, Iliff said they could die from a fentanyl overdose, since the drug is still in their system.

"People say, 'I feel fine. I'm not going to the hospital,' and 15 minutes later or an hour later..." she said, trailing off. "They overdose. They die."

Jim Haden, Sioux City Fire Rescue EMS director, said his department doesn't really track drug overdoses by substance, since its main objective is treating overdose symptoms, rather than identifying a drug and its origin. However, he said there isn't enough Narcan in town to deal with "the really serious cases" involving fentanyl or carfentanyl, an opioid analgesic 100 times more potent than fentanyl.

Carfentanyl, which is used in veterinary medicine to anesthetize elephants and other large animals, is also present in illicit U.S. drug markets, according to the DEA.

"Not only does someone need

the initial dose of Narcan, but they could potentially have to be on Narcan drips in the hospital for quite some time," Haden said. "The biggest risk is not knowing what you're taking, where it came from and what they might have cut it with."

## Cases jump

Since he became a detective in 2020, Yanneff said he has seen cases involving illicit fentanyl "accelerate" in the metro.

Yanneff said one of those cases involved an individual using marijuana that was laced with fentanyl, while another person died from a fentanyl overdose after purchasing what was thought to be cocaine.

"We're starting to see more and more of it and hear of it," said Yanneff, who said the drug is predominately coming across the U.S.-Mexico border. "It's not solely people buying the actual fentanyl. The problem is it's accidentally being laced or having it being laced with additional drugs."

At around 2:30 p.m. on May 4, "officers did a delivery of what was supposed to be 1.5 pounds of fentanyl laced pills" to a residence in the 900 block of 20th Street, according to documents filed in Woodbury County District Court.

Officers then executed a search warrant on the residence and found Karom Bol, 19, in possession of the "delivered items," along with a separate quantity of fentanyl. The fentanyl was in two bags, with an estimated 40 pills in each bag.

Sioux City police found 18 pills believed to be laced with fentanyl in a purse in the bedroom of 32-year-old Katrina Barnes and 17 grams of marijuana, as they investigated the June 9 shooting death of Dolorean Wade, which Barnes is charged with. A criminal complaint describes the blue pills as showing a "M" and, on the reserve side, a "30."

Wurth said people buying pills off the street can be "tricked pretty easy," thinking they're getting legitimate prescription drugs. Fentanyl test strips have been shown to be effective at detecting the presence of fentanyl in drug samples, but Wurth said some states classify the strips as drug paraphernalia.

Fentanyl test strips are illegal in Iowa and South Dakota. Since Nebraska doesn't include fentanyl test strips or testing kits in its definition of drug paraphernalia, the materials are allowed, according to the Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association, a nonprofit that conducts legal and legislative research and analysis.

Wurth said those struggling with fentanyl addiction shouldn't be afraid to reach out for help. Treatment at Rosecrance Jackson Centers begins with stabilizing the patient and helping them through the withdrawal process, which Wurth described as "very, very uncomfortable."

"We stabilize. We detox. And, then, we start exploring through therapy what's going on and how to think, feel and react differently," she said. "The gold standard for treatment with opiate use disorder includes medication-assisted therapy. We use Suboxone and Vivitrol."

Wurth said some people remain on medication-assisted treatment for the rest of their lives. Currently, she said Rosecrance Jackson Centers has roughly 150 patients on Suboxone, one of the main medications used to treat opioid addiction.

"What can be scary to come to us is that we're going to say you can't have anything. We're going to meet you where you're at, so don't be afraid to reach out if you're struggling," she said.

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