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Times-Republican

YOUR LOCAL CONNECTION MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023

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Opening their doors



Halyna, Olya, and Sasha Reznik, front, are pictured with their four boys, Arsenni, Tymur, Mark, and Viacheslav, and Marshalltown hosts Bethany and Alan Talbert, back.

T-R PHOTO BY NICK BAUR

Marshalltown family provides refuge to Ukrainian family displaced by war

By NICK BAUR
TIMES-REPUBLICAN

When Russia launched a massive land invasion of Ukraine almost a year ago to date, many passively watched the heightening conflict with dismay and shock as Russian troops stormed Ukrainian villages and missiles rained indiscriminately down upon the civilian population.

But one local family was not content to sit idly by on the sidelines of the ongoing war, which has already seen thousands of Ukrainians injured or killed along with untold damage to the country in the year since the escalation.

Alan and Bethany Talbert, longtime Marshalltown residents, looked on at the carnage and felt compelled to help in any way

they could.

Dismayed by the inaction of the United States in the past with accepting Jewish refugees during the Holocaust, the Talberts cast a communicative net in Ukraine, searching for those in need of a new home as a result of the war.

"It was really just really in our hearts," said Bethany Talbert. "We knew some people that had lived over there for some time. So we

contacted them to see if they knew anyone that needed a place, and communication was so hard. We didn't get connected that way."

Despite this hurdle, the Talberts preserved in their humanitarian quest, and last July, they learned of the organization and platform Welcome.us, an online site which connects U.S. families with international refugees.

Established in 2021, the organization sprang

to prominence after the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan, and after the Russian offensive in Ukraine, the site also began connecting Ukrainian families with those in the U.S. in the summer of 2022.

The Talberts described the site as something approaching a dating app, where they could fill out a profile with relevant information to match with international families seeking U.S. sponsors.

"You described your town, you described yourself, what the populations were, how many people you could have come," Bethany Talbert said. "That opened in July, and then we started to do it. Then I thought,

UKRAINE | A3



School district, police department investigate alleged photo of student holding weapon

TIMES-REPUBLICAN

The Marshalltown Community School District issued a statement late Thursday afternoon in response to a report from a student that another student was holding a weapon in a picture.

According to the release, the high school administration immediately coordinated with the Marshalltown Police Department to address the reported concern, as a precautionary measure, and there is no danger or threat to students, staff, or the public.

This reported concern is under investigation by the MPD and the school district.

"The District's first priority is student safety, and we take every reported concern very seriously," the statement reads.

Marshalltown Police Chief Mike Tupper said that thus far, a weapon has not been located, and the investigating agencies "have no reason to believe there was ever a threat to students or the school directly." Tupper did not know if the photo in question was taken on school grounds but said it would be part of the larger investigation.

The individuals involved in the incident are all under the age of 18, according to Tupper, and no one has been arrested yet. He added that the MPD has identified all of the people they believe to have been involved either directly or as witnesses.

"The school did a great job, and we will keep the public notified," Tupper said.

Anyone with questions or information about the incident is encouraged to contact Tupper at (641) 754-5771.

Marshalltown man gets suspended sentence for derecho insurance fraud

TIMES-REPUBLICAN

A former insurance producer from Marshalltown was recently sentenced to a pair of five-year suspended prison sentences after pleading guilty to multiple counts of insurance fraud in December following an investigation by the Iowa Insurance Division Fraud Bureau.

An inquiry into the actions of Oscar Sanchez, who pleaded guilty on Dec. 8, began in September of 2020. According to a press release, the investigation concluded that Sanchez provided fictitious insurance documents to multiple individuals in Marshalltown and collected premium payments for insurance policies that did not exist. Following the derecho, Sanchez collected illegitimate cash deductibles from insureds, which he used for his own personal gain.

Sanchez was arrested on July 26, 2021 and released after posting bond, and on Dec. 8, 2022, he pled guilty to three counts of Insurance Fraud — fraudulent submissions and four counts of insurance fraud — fraudulent sales practices (each a Class D felony). On Feb. 3, Sanchez received a five-year suspended prison sentence, two to five years supervised probation and a \$3,075 civil penalty for the fraudulent submissions charges.

Sanchez also received a separate five-year suspended prison sentence, two to five years supervised probation, a \$4,100 civil penalty and \$38,070 in restitution for the fraudulent sales practices offenses.

Lt. Tricia Thein of the Marshalltown Police Department said another individual in the insurance industry caught wind of Sanchez's scam, felt it didn't seem right and encouraged victims to contact law enforcement.

"Those victims were just distraught when they found out. You think of how you operate with your insurance carriers. You have an established trust, and you'd like to believe that should something happen, you're covered. That's what you pay your money for," Thein said. "We hate to see people being victimized, but then you add insult to injury when you victimize after we have some seriously bad (weather) issues... People are already down on their luck. They're already trying to keep it together at the seams if you will, and then you have somebody come in and totally exploit them."

Thein added that the victims — she estimated there were at least eight — were members of all ethnic and socioeconomic groups, and Sanchez, who had worked in the industry for about 10 years, simply looked for individuals who may not have had a clear understanding of how the insurance system works. She stressed the importance of "slowing the process down," thinking and asking questions before handing over money, especially



Sanchez

Tama Co. Pork Producers donate to local food banks

By MARGARET THOMSEN
TIMES-REPUBLICAN

GLADBROOK — The Tama County Pork Producers recently donated \$1,600 to the three food banks in Tama County.

"The ongoing support of individuals, churches, business, and civic organizations is important to us and to those in the communities who count on the food pantry during their time of need," Gladbrook site chairperson Jeanne Paus-tian said.

According to Pork Producer Dennis Gienger, "The Producers agreed that they would match the money the Grand Champion Pie brought during the annual Pie Auction. This amount would be donated to the three food pantries in Tama County."

The Grand Champion Pie brought \$800. It was a two-crust blueberry, made by Megan Gienger of Gladbrook. The pie was pur-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MEGAN GIENGER

Members of the Tama County Pork Producers Board, who recently met for the organization's annual banquet and meeting, include front row, left to right: Sheryl Jesina, Christy Calderwood, Pete Popelka, Monica McKenna, Dean McKenna, Doris Gienger; and back row, left to right: Keith Sash, Dennis Gienger, Samantha DeWitt, Phillip McKenna, Brent Beichley, Jason Gienger, Eric Keller, Matt Kopriva, and Bill Jesina.

chased by the State Bank of Toledo.

The Tama County Pork Producers' annual Banquet and Meeting was held on Jan. 14 at the Gladbrook Memorial Building. The meal was catered by Spanky's Restaurant. The pork loins for the auction were grilled

by Dennis Gienger. The Wolfcreek Whirlwinds 4-H Club helped with clean-up and a donation was made to them.

Tama County Sheriff Dennis Kucera and Deputy Sheriff Casey Schmidt and his K9 Deputy Tyson were presented with a \$1,500 do-

nation. No public funds are used for the support or care of Tyson. The dog is a full service dog and is used in patrol, searches, rescue, apprehension of suspects and drug search.

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