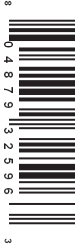




Central NHS and awards nights held, pages 2 & 5

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Hinson surveys flooding impact in Marquette and McGregor

By Audrey Posten

Rep. Ashley Hinson visited Marquette and McGregor May 4 to survey areas impacted by Mississippi River flooding, learn how mitigation efforts worked and what her office can do to help communities protect themselves moving forward.

"We were fortunate it didn't get as high as predicted," said Mc-

Gregor Mayor Lyle Troester.

It was a sentiment Marquette Mayor Steve Weipert echoed. "And now it's dropping a lot quicker than anticipated," he added.

Both cities said action plans developed over time—which outline what duties need to be completed at specific river heights—were important. They also credited having the right equipment and protective mea-

asures, including an automatic sandbagging machine, pumps and HESCO barriers.

"Those sandbagging machines are so helpful. The fire department here has one and, before, we've used one Winneshiek County has," said Clayton County Emergency Management Coordinator Sarah Moser. "We've looked

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Marquette earns 'Bird Friendly' designation

Recognition ties into area's larger bird conservation efforts

By Audrey Posten

An April 29 event at the Driftless Area Wetlands Centre recognized local bird conservation efforts as well as Marquette's recent designation as a "Bird Friendly Community." The musical group Big Blue Sky performed a special concert, with proceeds going toward Driftless Area Bird Conservation.

Bird Friendly Community recognition is given to counties and cities by the organization Bird Friendly Iowa (BFI). Coor-

dinator Annie Fangman, who at the event presented several signs and a flag announcing Marquette's new status, said the program is similar to Tree City USA in that each city or county must meet criteria. Approval is given by the BFI steering committee, which is comprised of conservation professionals.

"We have three criteria: creating habitat for birds, reducing threats to birds—keeping cats indoors and window collision education—and educational events, so stuff like the Wetlands Centre does and

county conservation," Fangman explained. "It is also about networking and bringing communities together. There is a larger effort to make this a nation-wide thing as well, which makes sense with how birds migrate. Our website will have birding hot spots on there, and we're hoping it will help more of the tourism aspect."

The honor is not surprising considering Marquette falls within the Bird Conservation Area of Northeast Iowa, which

See BIRD CITY, page 4



Central BEST students Allison White and Danielle Whittle assemble the dairy display at the Rural Heritage Museum in Elkader. With their help, the display shows the evolution of the dairy industry in northeast Iowa.

Rural Heritage Museum gets new dairy display

By Willis Patenaude

When Central BEST students Danielle Whittle and Allison White first went to the Rural Heritage Center and Museum in Elkader in early March, they were initially tasked with lending a helping hand with the history of veterinary medicine display. But as they toured the museum, they noticed a few things.

First, they saw the veterinary display was "pretty much handled," Whittle said. Others were already tending to it. The second thing they noticed was a collection of old cream separators, which piqued their interest—an interest that stems from their collective childhoods and connections to the dairy industry. That's especially true for Whittle, who was raised on a dairy farm.

As the students surveyed the collection and the museum, it became evident there was no dairy display that showed the evolution of the industry in northeast Iowa, but rather a mishmash of pieces. By the end of the tour, the students offered to create and assemble a dairy display.

Museum representative and

board member Roger Thomas thought this was a great idea, as it would add to the diversity of agriculture equipment already in the museum and provide a sort of history lesson on something indelible to the region.

With full control over the project, Whittle and White began determining what would go into the dairy display. What was important? What was needed to tell the story and history of the industry in rural Iowa?

While they had a few items in mind, Whittle admittedly was not an "expert in the field," nor was White, but they knew someone who was: grandpa Tom Whittle, who has spent his life as a dairy farmer.

Grandpa Whittle provided invaluable assistance throughout the project, starting with a list of items to include, such as the famed three-legged stool, three-gallon pail, butter churn, milk bottler, milking units, cow kicker, tester, straps and a stanchion, along with photos, signs and posters.

With the list in hand, Whittle and White started procuring

See DAIRY DISPLAY, page 3



Marquette has been designated a "Bird Friendly Community." Driftless Area Wetlands Centre Director Alicia Mullarkey and resident Dennis Mason, who's helped establish a thriving purple martin population in Marquette, are pictured with Bird Friendly Iowa Coordinator Annie Fangman at an April 29 event. (Photo by Audrey Posten)

FLOODING, from page 1



Rep. Ashley Hinson surveyed areas impacted by flooding during a visit to Clayton County on May 4. Here, she and Clayton County Emergency Management Coordinator Sarah Moser look at the HESCO barriers erected along the Marquette riverfront. (Photo by Audrey Posten)

at emergency management purchasing one as well, just to have an extra one. With all the flooding in Iowa, it's not a bad idea."

In addition to locally-owned pumps, Moser said state asset pumps from Buchanan County and Elkader were enlisted to fight the Mississippi. HESCO barriers erected along the cities' riverfronts came from Elkader too.

"Their fire department was able to bring them up to communities who needed them. That saves a lot on our backs," Moser shared. "Elkader has put it up and taken it down multiple times, so they showed them how to do it here. You can't beat that."

In McGregor, noted city administrator Lynette McManus, contractors working on the Main Street construction project were also able to help.

"Every city has stuff from somewhere else in northeast Iowa. It's all worked. We're very fortunate," Mos-

er said. "Everything we've done over the years, I think, has proven how much has changed with the river. If we have these things done in advance and change every time we have something happen, there are less impacts."

In this year's appropriations process, Hinson said she's requested a flow study to determine how the Mississippi River has changed.

"The river is an evolving creature. If we can't understand the flows properly, we can't mitigate properly. I see that as all interconnected," she stated.

Moser said that would be helpful. It's one issue she's brought up with the National Weather Service.

"It's been a long time since they changed the impacts listed on their website—what's impacted at what height of the river," she explained. "We can't do anything with the gauges on the Mississippi because they are USGS river gauges, but we can change stuff on

the Turkey River based on what we see."

Hinson said her work with the Iowa Flood Center has included assuring gauges are accurate and that officials have necessary tools.

"This is something I anticipate there will be good bipartisan support for up and down the river. What happens up here impacts what happens in Louisiana. It's one of the most impactful water bodies we have in America," she said. "I'm keenly aware of how important it is to commerce and economic development here. You are a river economy, and I want to make sure that's protected long term and you have what you need to mitigate when things get bad. We can't control what Mother Nature does, but we can control how prepared we are for it."

According to Moser, efforts will now turn toward debris removal and assessing the integrity of

river banks and boat landings. Both Marquette and McGregor have dikes they would like to evaluate.

Said Weipert, "We have one dike that probably needs a lot of attention, but you'd have to get the Army Corps [of Engineers] involved, and they can only do so much. It's also kind of on a private piece of property. But if that dike breaks, the whole downtown is going to be flooded."

Two Corps officials visited Marquette during flood preparation, and city clerk Bonnie Basemann said their input reassured the city it was doing a good job. Marquette would like to see more regular Corps visits, something Hinson noted she could look into.

Troester revealed that, although McGregor's dike was put in by the Corps, it was not certified.

"It's just an earthen dike. That's a little worrisome down the road. It didn't get up to test it that much," he said.

"We also put an agreement in place with the Corps just in case the water would be against that earthen dike for a long time. The concern there

was any weak spots," said McManus.

Unfortunately, added McGregor Deputy City Clerk and Economic Development Lead Brandi Crozier, the Corps couldn't spring into action until the governor issued a disaster proclamation. That left the community in a time crunch.

"We were hitting that high level that day. Had we needed to use them to come in and help secure a levy, it probably would have been too late," Crozier said.

Another entity city officials addressed was the railroad. Moser called Canadian Pacific a great partner. Even before the BNSF derailment across the river, she said CP met with Marquette, McGregor and Clayton to address flooding.

"They said, right off the bat, 'We want to protect your town, but we want to keep going,'" Basemann shared. "They worked really well with the city."

According to Troester, CP raised the tracks between 10 to 14 inches to continue operating as water rose. That affected all three McGregor crossings, but none more so than at

the foot of Main Street, at the boat launch. Now the city is concerned when—or even if—those crossings will be adjusted. Officials have been recording conversations with the railroad to hold them to verbal commitments.

"We're concerned about accessibility across the tracks once we're able to open that back up. Their intention is they would like to leave the tracks raised. We're not sure how that can be possible," Crozier said. "They've been offering a lot of verbal commitments that they will make it right. We're hopeful they do. We have a lot at stake."

Added Troester, "We have new marina owners who have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars into a business, and that's the only access, so it's kind of scary. They kind of do whatever they wish—the railroad. So that's a big question mark."

Hinson vowed to take a look at the situation if there is a federal nexus there.

"I want to make sure we do whatever we can to protect that investment because that is your economy," she said.



McGregor Mayor Lyle Troester shows Hinson the railroad tracks at the foot of Main Street. Canadian Pacific raised tracks in Marquette and McGregor a foot to continue operating during flooding, but McGregor is now concerned crossings will not be readjusted to provide accessibility.



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Registration open for Clayton County Extension summer camps

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach of Clayton County is offering 21 different summer day camp opportunities for youth in kindergarten through third grade for the summer of 2023. There are five different summer adventures for the third through sixth graders. Camps are held in different Clayton County communities: Elkader, Edgewood, Guttenberg, Garnavillo, Marquette, Monona and Strawberry Point. Clayton County Extension also

partnered with Clayton County Conservation to host camps at Osborne Pond and Osborne Park, along with the Driftless Area Wetlands Centre in Marquette.

Summer camps offer fun and educational hands-on learning activities. They give youth the opportunity to explore new things, make new friends while seeing old friends from school. Camps are filling up quickly. Summer camps for kindergarten through third grade kids begin June 6 and

conclude at the Clayton County Fair on Aug. 2. Summer Adventures for youth in third through sixth grades begin July 7 and concludes on July 20.

To sign up for summer camps, go to the Clayton County Iowa State Extension and Outreach page, www.extension.iastate.edu/clayton/, or go to the links below:

- K-3 Camps: tinyurl.com/K-3ClaytonCamps
- 3-6 Summer Adventures: tinyurl.com/4-6ClaytonCamps