# **Pocahontas BECORD-DEMOCRAT** \$100 Official County Newspaper Wednesday, October 12, 2022 • Volume 142, Number 41

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DAY	HI	LOW	PRCP.	SNOW
Oct. 3	75	48		
Oct. 4	79	46	0.05	
Oct. 5	70	50	0.13	
Oct. 6	57	36		
Oct. 7	53	25		
Oct. 8	63	37		
Oct. 9	70	30		



## 'Selfless service' takes **Christians from Iowa** to Europe this fall

#### **By Erin Sommers** pokyrdnews@gmail.com

For Neil Christians, law enforcement and military service go hand in hand.

"For me, it's a lot hand in understand quite as well the scope hand with the military — selfless of the upcoming deployment. service," Christians, a Pocahontas County Sheriff's deputy, said of going into law enforcement. time," Christians said. "We'll see "Whether that be serving the citizens of Pocahontas County or go. Little kids are very resilient. the United States of America."

This fall, Christians will that service to the next level with his second overseas deployment with the Iowa National Guard. He's headed to Europe — he can't be more specific than that with Operation Assure, Deter and Reinforce. As an active, athletic kid growing up in Belmond, Christians watched as his older siblings, joined the military. As a junior in high school, he did the same, picking the same unit, the 1133rd Transportation Company out of Mason City. The unit handles the big trucks with flatbed trailers that move the heavy equipment to wherever other military units need that equipment to be. In 2008 and 2009, Christians, then studying Criminal Justice at North Iowa Area Community College, was deployed to Iraq. There's been a big change in Christians' life between that deployment and this one.

# EMS tax is a 'long-term commitment' to maintaining service here

#### **By Erin Sommers** pokyrdnews@gmail.com

Editor's note: This article is the first in a four-part series about the proposed EMS essential service tax, which will be on the Nov. 8 ballot.

If you call 911 in Pocahontas County, you can expect an ambulance to arrive in about 20 minutes.

That's not the case elsewhere in Iowa, Pocahontas Community Hospital CEO James Roetman said.

"When we were researching service areas across the state, (some areas are) 35 to 40 minutes away from getting a service," Roetman said. "That was an eye opener for our legislators. There's many areas that are over 20 minutes (for an ambulance to arrive).' in

Response times northeastern and southeastern Iowa are among the highest in the state, a combination of lack of volunteers and difficult to traverse terrain, Roetman said.

Pocahontas County, even with its shrinking volunteer forces, isn't there yet. Someone who dials 911 within the county limits can expect to see an ambulance arrive in about 20 minutes.

"Even though we've lost some services in our communities, we should feel lucky," Roetman

What's that kind of response time worth? That's the question that goes before Pocahontas County voters next month. The proposed tax ask comes out to about \$250,000 a year here, a sum far lower than the \$900,000 or more Calhoun County officials are hoping to raise there.

That \$250,000 will be collected in two ways. First, people who live in Pocahontas County will pay a new, 1 percent income tax. The average annual income tax filing in Pocahontas County in 2020 was \$31,945; that person would pay another \$18.63 annually income taxes to cover their share of the EMS fund. For a married couple filing jointly, the average annual state income tax filing for 2020 was \$53,573. That couple would pay another \$43 a year toward EMS services.

Property owners are being asked to pitch in, too, Roetman said, at a rate of 21 cents per 1,000 of property tax valuation. The 2019 median assessment of residential property in Pocahontas County was \$76,000; the owner would pay another \$15.96 for that property. The owner of a \$100,000 property would pay \$21 a year more in taxes. For farm land, based \$1,527 per acre, landowners a different and arduous process.

would pay another \$13 for every 40 acres of farm land they had.

"This is a commitment to the future," Roetman said. "We live in a society that wants to see immediate results on things. This is a long-term commitment to, at the very least, maintaining the services we have."

Between the response time averages, the longer response times in other parts of the state and those tax figures, Roetman has a lot of numbers to educate Pocahontas County voters on.

But there's one more piece to the puzzle that most Iowans didn't realize until about five years ago. If someone had asked Roetman back in 2017 if emergency medical services were considered to be essential in Iowa, he would have said yes.

Turns out that wasn't exactly true. While community members would agree that the services of an Emergency Medical Service program are essential, conceptually, Iowa communities didn't have the legal authority to levy taxes specifically for EMS programs until last year. Until 2021, only law enforcement and fire were considered to be essential services; that designation allowed local governing bodies to levy taxes to pay for those services. To tax for on the 2019 assessed value of an EMS program would require

Roetman has spent the past several years lobbying state legislators to designate EMS as an essential service and give taxing authority to local communities to support ambulance crews. Along the way, he's gotten a good look at what it looks like when a community doesn't have an ambulance and crew at the ready.

It's the kind of future he doesn't want for Pocahontas County. That has kept him focused as he's worked first with state legislators and now with local officials to create a countywide plan to provide emergency medical services here.

"Our plan is more than our hospital service," Roetman said. "It's a plan to keep all of our services alive. It's a plan to benefit all of our county.' Pocahontas County has a

few advantages, including PCH itself.

See EMS TAX, Page 08

Scheider, Robert Shaw, and Richard Dreyfuss. When a killer shark unleashes chaos on a beach community off Cape Cod, it's up to a local sheriff, a marine biologist, and an old seafarer to hunt the beast down. Schedule subject to change.

> **COMING SOON:** "Barbarian" — R "Don't Worry Darling" — R "Lyle Lyle Crocodile" — PG "Amsterdam" — R

At the Rialto Playing Oct. 14-20 is

"Jaws (1975 Re-release)" Rated PG, Running time: 2 hr. 4 min. Starring: Roy

**AUCTIONS** 

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**Deidre DeJear** visits Pocahontas

#### **By Erin Sommers**

pokyrdnews@gmail.com Iowa, under Gov. Kim Reynolds, is heading the wrong direction, Democratic gubernatorial challenger Deidre DeJear says.

DeJear visited Pocahontas Saturday evening, meeting with voters at Pizza Ranch. She spoke with the newspaper Tuesday afternoon ahead of her visit.

"We cannot afford to see the something we've always been backwards trajectory of this state," DeJear said. "Freedom is on the ballot." That's freedom to vote, in access to healthcare, to making choices about a person's own body, particularly about whether to have an abortion, she said. This fall's governor's race is also about education. DeJear focuses on education on her website and in her conversations as she travels and campaigns in Iowa.

education dollars with private schools has threatened the state's stellar educational reputation. Up until Reynolds, DeJear said, Iowa's governors were steadfast in their support of public education, no matter which political party they belonged to. That has changed she said.

"Education is the connection to our state," DeJear said. "It's good at."



"I didn't have a family, kid, wife," Christians said. "Up until I had a family, I had been wanting to go on another deployment. I had enjoyed it."

Christians deferred several deployment opportunities and some promotions over the years for family reasons. These days, though, there are only a handful of other company members who went through that previous deployment with him.

"That's another reason I've turned down promotions with the Guard," Christians said. "It's a big family. These five or six guys I'm going with, I've known for over half well." of my life.

young troops — a large number of them younger than 21 —going on this deployment and felt that it

said his law co-workers are another kind of family, one he knows will step up to help his wife, who works long shifts at Pocahontas Community Hospital.

They'll be just fine."

was his time to go along and help.

He and his wife, Sam, have

"I can't say enough about the support I've had," Christians said, referring to his boss, Sheriff Steve Nelson, Chief Deputy Wes Van Donge, Sgt. Steve Henderson and the other county deputies. "I know any of those guys would drop anything to help with the kids."

Christians first met most of those folks when he was still studying criminal justice. He completed an internship with the Pocahontas County Sheriff's Department back in 2011. He looked at Pocahontas County back then because his brother and sister-in-law, Clint and Andrea Christians, were already living in the community. After completing college, Christians worked for the Mason City Police

Department before taking a job with the Pocahontas Police Department, under Chief Al Hinrickson. A few years later, he took a job with the Humboldt Police Department, under the assumption that he and his wife would move there to shorten her commute to a hospital job in Fort Dodge. Just four months later, though, in September 2019, a job opened up with the sheriff's office, and Christians decided to stay in

Pocahontas after all. "We have a good group of guys here," Christians said. "It's fantastic. Everyone gets along very

Those good relationships He looked at the number of aren't just within the sheriff's department. Pocahontas County

See SERVICE, Page 03

Tom Grau, at center, is seen during the ribbon cutting for the Iowa Central Community College Career Academy in Laurens in January 2020. Grau recently retired as the Pocahontas County Economic Development Director and spoke about his career with the newspaper. file photo

## Grau: Partnerships lead to **Pocahontas County successes**

#### **By Erin Sommers** pokyrdnews@gmail.com

It's been a few months since Tom Grau retired from a job he held for 17 years.

In those months, Grau became Pocahontas County resident, moving to Laurens after selling his rural Buena Vista County home. He visited his grandkids.

And he's reflected on his time as the county's Economic Development director, all while watching to see who will be picked to take up the mantle of promoting business, tourism and quality of life in Pocahontas

County. At only one point in an hourlong conversation about his economic development career did Grau come close to criticizing other county officials. About midway through the interview, he

pulled out a three-page document that laid out the job Pocahontas

County Economic Development economic development. Commission Executive Director. Printed on hunter orange paper, the document was hard to miss as Grau pulled it out.

"I think I fulfilled every one of these duties," he said.

His mission — the PCEDC's mission — for most of the past two decades has been multi-pronged. The organization, and Grau, wanted to foster an environment that lets businesses grow, that attracts new residents and that makes Pocahontas County the best possible place to live, work and play.

"I always kept that at the back of my mind," Grau said.

What really made it possible to strive for that vision? Partnerships and team work.

That, he said, will continue, no matter who is at the helm soon and no matter which direction the county ultimately chooses for

"I look forward to the continued progress as they move forward," Grau said.

A few of those key partners over the years have included Helen and Don Beneke, Nancy Jenson, Gretchen Reichter, Emily Williams, John Pohlman, James Roetman, Cody Bunda and Grant Wells.

He worked to develop partnerships with cities across the county, as well as with businesses. As he started on the job in 2005, though, he was looking at what the county needed and how the contacts and connections he already had could help to address those needs.

We had a lot of choices in Pocahontas County," Grau said. "We had a lot of directions we could go."

See GRAU, Page 02

"Will public education be crumbled in this state?" she asked.

Iowa has a long and proud history of producing well educated citizens, she said. It was one of the first states to desegregate schools, decades before the U.S. Supreme Court ordered states to do so.

But in recent years, Reynolds' push toward sharing public

Education is more than just getting students in the classroom. Having an educated population drove innovation and attracted businesses to Iowa. The workforce was attractive, DeJear said.

"We had a blueprint that worked," she said.

Reynolds, with her outspoken support of private education and less funding and fewer resources for public schools, is an anomaly in Iowa's history, DeJear said.

"We're asking teachers to do more with less," she said.

The problems in schools aren't just strictly about funding. Students come to school with trauma and stress at home, and teachers need to address that before they even start on academic lessons, DeJear

See DEJEAR, Page 02



Democratic gubernatorial candidate Deidre DeJear visited Pocahontas Saturday to speak with voters. photo courtesy of Helen Beneke





# **Sports**

## Indian netters defeat MNW 3-1

Lakes Conference varsity volleyball play, Area Pocahontas defeated Manson-Northwest Webster 3-1 on Senior Night at Pocahontas Thursday, Oct. 6 to improve to 15-13 overall. The Cougars took the opening set 25-23 while PAC rallied for wins in the next three sets as they took them 29-27, 25-22 and 25-19.

Four Indians had double figures in kills, led by Jenna Vonnahme with 12. Both Megan Sump and Amanda Davis had 11 kills each and Paige Melohn added 10 kills.

Maria Hinners led in assists with 19 while Carly Janssen added 13 assists against MNW.

Sump had four blocks against the Cougars while Vonnahme had three and Davis, Melohn, Ava Ford and Jacalyn Sobotka had one block each.

Defensively, Hannah Hubbell had 33 digs to lead the Indians while Melohn had 17, Madison Vial had six and both Hinners and Halee Hauswirth had four digs each.

six aces. Janssen led in aces 25 overall. Vial was 11-for-13 with two aces and Hubbell was

The Indians were 80-for- 12-for-14 with an ace. Melohn 91 serving against MNW with finished 15-for-16 on serves while Hinners was 11-for-12 with three as she was 21-for- and Vonnahme was 10-for-11. The Indians opened up last week with a 3-0 loss to Alta-



Sophomore Madison Vial dives for the ball during the second set of the match with Manson Northwest Webster on Thursday, Oct. 6. photo by Sandy Rutherford

Aurelia in Pocahontas Tuesday, Oct. 4. The Warriors won the match by the scores of 25-22, 25-16 and 25-17. Sump led in kills with six

followed by Vonnahme with five, both Davis and Melohn had four. and Sobotka added one kill. Janssen led in assists with 10

while Hinners had nine. Vonnahme had three blocks against the Warriors while Melohn had two and Ford finished with one.

Hubbell had a team-high 17 digs followed by Melohn and Vial with nine digs and Hinners with three.

PAC was 48-for-56 serving against the Warriors with four aces. Vonnahme was 7-for-9 with two ace, Vial was 12-for-15 with an ace, and Janssen went 6-for-6 with one ace. Melohn finished 11-for-12 serving, Hinners was 7-for-8 on serves and Hubbell went 5-for-6.

The Indians wrap up the regular season Thursday, Oct. 13 at West Bend-Mallard. Next week, they host a Class 2A Regional First Round match against Sioux Central Monday, Oct. 17, in Pocahontas at 7 p.m. with the winner traveling Hinton for a Regional to Ouarterfinal round match



Indians Jacob Gerdes (7) and Ethan Behrens (55) team up to bring down Southeast Valley's Eli Johnson during the October 7 home game. photo by Sandy Rutherford

# PAC falls to Jaguars at home

Southeast Valley shut out the Pocahontas Area varsity football team 36-0 in Pocahontas Friday. Oct. 7 as the Indians fell to 3-4 overall and dropped to 0-4 in

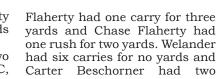
Class 2A, District 2. The Jaguars moved to 3-4 overall and are 1-3 in District 2 play.

The Indians were held to 13 yards rushing and 74 yards passing by the Jaguars' defense. PAC quarterback Lucas Kopriva was 5-for-12 passing for 23 yards and one interception.

Teammate Jackson Flaherty finished 1-for-2 for 51 yards passing

Josiah DeYoung had two receptions for 22 yards for PAC, while Chase Flaherty caught one pass for 51 yards. Alex Welander had a reception for one yard, and both Blake Roberts and Jacob Gerdes finished with a catch for no gain.

Ryan Sommerlot led the PAC ground game with one carry for six yards. Kopriva had two carries for two yards, Jackson



rushes for zero yards. Welander led PAC in tackles with 16, followed by Ryan Panbecker with nine, Gerdes with 8.5 and Brett Johnson, Sommerlot and Ethan Behrens had six total tackles each. Roberts finished with four tackles, Gabe Ehn had three and Ike Vote finished with 2.5 tackles. Joseph Sanders and Kopriva tallied two tackles each and Jacob Lenz finished with

1.5 tackles. In kickoff returns for PAC, Sommerlot had four returns for 14 total yards and Gerdes had two returns for four yards.

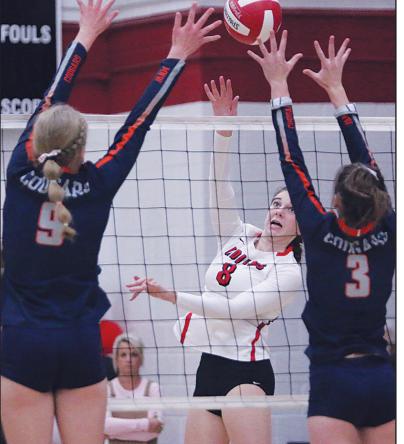
Southeast Valley's Cale 8-for-12 Vansickle was passing for 60 yards and three touchdowns. He connected with Justin Loseke four times for 25 yards and two scores while Eli Johnson caught four passes for 35 yards and a touchdown.

Carl Bergland had 20 carries for 147 yards and a 11-yard touchdown run while Drew Temple had nine carries for yards and a three-yard 23 touchdown run for the Jaguars, who finished with 45 carries for 259 yards rushing as a team.

Bergland, Temple and Loseke each had a two-point conversion for the Jaguars.

The Jaguars led 6-0 after the first period and were up 22-0 at the half while leading 36-0 after three quarters.

The Indians conclude the regular season Friday, Oct. 14, home against Estherville-



PAC's Jenna Vonnahme splits the Cougar defense during the third set of the Indians home match on Thursday, Oct. 6. photo by Sandy Rutherford

Wednesday, Oct. 19, at 7 p.m.

PAC's Ryan Sommerlot finds a hole in the Jaguar defense to run for positive won the girls team title with 80 points. Kristin Axman led PAC with a ninth place finish in 21 minutes, 18.12 seconds. Kaitlynn Schuler was 12th overall in 21:42.0 while teammate Akaysa Duitscher was 13th in 22:04.48. PAC's

Natalie Point finished in 25th place in 23:43.24 and teammate Abby Oberhelman was 38th in 25:12.86. In the varsity boys race, PAC's

PAC girls second at

**SCC** Invite

Freshman Kristin Axman

girls

finished in 9th place at the

meet in Lake City. photo by

varsity cross country team

took second place overall at the

SCC Invitational in Lake City

Tuesday, Oct. 4 as they scored

90 points while Alta-Aurelia

Sandy Rutherford

Pocahontas Area's

**By Doug Dornath** 

Dominic Aljets was 50th overall in 21:02.14.

The Indians will run at Ida Grove Monday, Oct. 10, and then head to the 2022 Twin Lakes Conference Meet Saturday, Oct. 15, at Gowrie beginning at 9:30 a.m



PAC's Dean Mowry races to the finish line. photo by Sandy Rutherford



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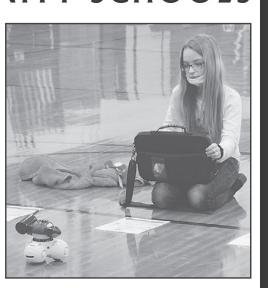


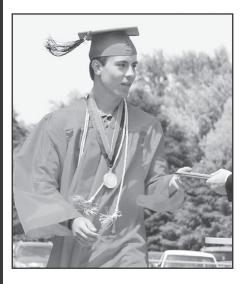
By Doug Dornath



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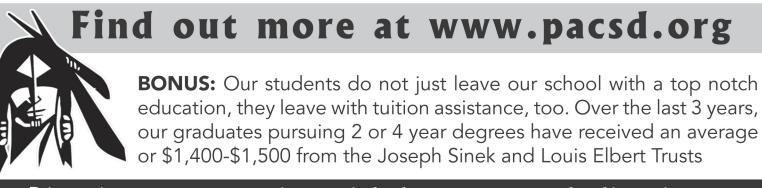
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### Big city opportunity with hometown dedication... That's Pocahontas Area Community School District

yardage during the Friday, Oct. 7 game in Pocahontas. photo by Sandy Rutherford

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"Because of how we can do things in our hospital, there's efficiencies that can be gained, Roetman said.

Specifically, if the hospital has an EMS crew working, those paramedics can work in the hospital's emergency room until there's an emergency call out in the community. That lowers the salary costs for the EMS budget, Roetman said.

There are still a number of costs that EMS programs can't avoid, though, particularly the cost of availability.

"You can't just fund something when you need it," Roetman said. "Much like insurance, there's a cost of having something available."

Health insurance payments don't always cover the cost of the ambulance trip itself, let alone that cost of availability, Roetman said. To put it into perspective, imagine if a police department could only fund itself with the tickets that officers write, or a fire department was only funded by payments for responding to fires

Most health insurers pay the EMS program 35 to 40 cents for every \$1 billed, Roetman added. Other costs have gone up, too

"The technology we have now

is not the technology of 10 years ago," Roetman said. "The stuff we can do in the field is saving lives.

If at least 60 percent of Pocahontas County voters say yes to paying the additional taxes to fund EMS as an essential service, they won't see their taxes increase for about 18 months, Roetman said.

committee, with А representatives from every city in Pocahontas County, as well as county officials and some hospital officials, will set a budget each year for the use of the EMS tax funds. The Pocahontas County Board of Supervisors will approve that budget before the money can be spent.