



TAKING ROOT

Area chapters celebrate National FFA Week, including Harley-Melvin-Sanborn's new adviser. See ACCENT Section B

THE N'WEST IOWA

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Feenstra preps launch for his Agriculture Tour

Will meet with ag producers as a central Farm Bill figure

BY ELIJAH HELTON
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HULL.—Sowing a new variety of constituent visit, N'West Iowa's congressman is set to launch the Feenstra Agriculture Tour on Wednesday, Feb. 22.

Randy Feenstra said the string of stops focusing on farming policy will bolster his work in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Republican from Hull sits on the Agriculture and Ways and Means committees, making him one of the key players for this year's Farm Bill.

"I am working every day to defend rural America from out-of-touch attacks from D.C. bureaucrats," Feenstra said. "As the second-largest agriculture-producing district in the nation, I will continue to be a strong voice for Iowa agriculture and our family farmers who feed and fuel our country and the world."

See FEENSTRA on page A7



U.S. Rep. Randy Feenstra speaks Jan. 16 in Orange City. The Republican from Hull plans to announce the Feenstra Agriculture Tour on Wednesday. It is a series of visits with farmers, producers and agribusinesses about the upcoming Farm Bill. Photo by Elijah Helton

More federal funding rushes in for Lewis & Clark water project

Will receive almost \$80 million in 2023

BY JUSTIN RUST
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REGIONAL.—After receiving \$18.6 million from the 2023 Appropriations Bill, the Lewis & Clark Regional Water System officially got its second round of funding for the year

when it was given \$60 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law on Monday.

The \$78.6 million Lewis & Clark is receiving is slightly less than the about \$90 million it received in 2022, but the 2023 amount still is significant and helps the water system get closer to its end goal of being fully connected to all 20 communities by 2025.

Lewis & Clark executive director Troy Larson was more than happy with the amount the water system is getting since there were some years it received \$5 million-\$7 million in funding.

"With the appropriations funding, what we got this year is 10 years of funding in one

See FUNDS on A7

Lyon rescinds Summit pipeline permit

Board looks to wait to OK right of way

BY ELIJAH HELTON
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ROCK RAPIDS.—Lyon County repealed the right-of-way permit for Summit Carbon Solutions on Tuesday, arguing the CO2 pipeline company should get state approval before cooperating



Lyon County engineer Daryl Albertson speaks during the board of supervisors meeting Tuesday in Rock Rapids. Supervisors revoked the right-of-way permit it granted Summit Carbon Solutions for a planned CO2 pipeline. Photo by Elijah Helton

locally. The board of supervisors originally granted right of way for the pending pipeline Dec. 27 — which would have

allowed Summit to cross county-controlled roads — but changed its mind after

See REPEAL on A10

PART 2 OF A SERIES



They all need some sort of concerned adult that connected them to me in the first place, or that will step up and help them.

Amanda Bahena SIOUX CENTER ATTORNEY



Lisa Wilcox and her 4-year-old son, Lincoln, play soccer with Alexander Ramirez Martin at the American State Bank Sports Complex in Sioux Center. Wilcox is the organizer for Amigos, which held the outing in the new domed complex. Photo by Aleisa Schat

HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING

BY ALEISA SCHAT
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This is the second in a series of articles about homelessness and housing issues in N'West Iowa. Adequate housing — housing that is accessible, safe and affordable — is more than simply a matter of physical shelter. It is a matter of safety and stability. It also is an important measure of the health of a community.

A broad coalition of nonprofit organizations, social services agencies and city governments in N'West Iowa are working to address issues related to housing and homelessness in the region's communities. This series is highlighting that work — as well as the work that remains to be done.

REGIONAL.—Around 10 years ago, Sioux Center attorney Amanda Bahena encountered her first legal case involving a child who had crossed the southern border and was living without a parent or guardian in Iowa.

"This person came to me from outside — Storm Lake — so I still was not aware that we had any unaccompanied minors

living here," she said.

Bahena, who specializes in immigration law, is a shareholder attorney at the Sioux Center branch of Woods Fuller Shultz & Smith.

In the years since that first case, Bahena's practice has been overwhelmed by the demand for legal assistance in cases

See CHILDREN on page A10



ASSISTING UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

INSIDE:

Church..... B7 People..... B8-9
Classifieds... D1-6 Sports..... C1-16
Opinion..... A8-9 TV..... B10



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LOW: 17
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LOW: 17
CHANCE OF PREC: 13%

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NEWS

Attorney tries to help migrant kids

CHILDREN

Continued from page A1

involving unaccompanied migrant children living — often in unstable housing situations — in N'West Iowa.

Bahena, who is bilingual, found there were concrete legal steps she could take to put an unaccompanied child on the path to stability and, in some cases, permanent legal status.

"I found that case to be very fulfilling, and in reaching out to other attorneys who had experiences with cases like this, I learned a lot about how unaccompanied minors may get here," Bahena said. "But we're still very much in the dark about the scope of the issue."

Southern surge

In recent years, the southern border has witnessed a surge of immigrant arrivals, overwhelming detention facilities, separating families and contributing to a humanitarian crisis that only continues to worsen. Among those new arrivals are unaccompanied migrant children.

The Joe Biden administration was caught unprepared for a sharp increase in child migration in 2021, which led to severe overcrowding in border facilities. The crisis worsened in fiscal year 2022, when nearly 130,000 children entered the U.S. government's shelter system, including a record number of unaccompanied children, according to the Department of Human Services.

"I became someone that people would seek out in those situations," Bahena said. "In talking to hundreds of clients over the last 10 years, I feel I've gotten a good grasp of the wide variety of ways someone could end up being an unaccompanied minor, either because they came this way, or because their parent was deported or abandoned them here."

When unaccompanied children are apprehended at the border, or at some point after crossing, they are placed in the temporary care and custody of the Office of Refugee and Resettlement. The office secures temporary housing for each child until a sponsor living in the United States — often a relative — can be vetted and secured and the child can await immigration proceedings.

However, many unaccompanied children are never processed by the system.

"The ones that are least likely to get assistance are the ones that came in without ever being apprehended — there are no deadlines for them. They were never placed with a relative. They came in, nobody saw them, and they're completely under the radar," Bahena said.

Many of those children do not attend school, and some go straight into the workforce, where they may be paid under the table. They are in survival mode and may be unaware of how to seek help.

"They're worried about, 'What am I going to eat? Where are we going to sleep?' Going into an attorney's office is not even a teenager's radar," she said.

Outside the system

Once minors enter the child welfare system, their cases are aggressively docu-

mented, creating a written record that can be used by judges in court to make further rulings regarding their care.

Many unaccompanied children, on the other hand, exist outside the system.

There is no record of their existence, no caregiver to ensure they go to school, no adult who can sign for them at the doctor.

According to Bahena, it takes one interested adult to change an unaccompanied child's trajectory.

"If they come to me, there's at least an interested adult in their life — I think this is really important," Bahena said. "They all need some sort of concerned adult that connected them to me in the first place, or that will step up and help them."

Sometimes, the person who steps in to help is a relative of the child. Other times, it's a coach at school, or a teacher. It may be an older sibling, or simply a concerned community member who takes an interest.

Once that child gets connected to Bahena, she puts the wheels in motion, and someone — either the adult that brought the child into the office in the first place or someone else — typically steps forward to assume the responsibilities that come along with legal guardianship.

"It formalizes that care relationship, and the legal obligations come with it," Bahena said.

As awareness of Bahena's services has grown in the region, her practice has prioritized cases that have the best chance of ending in permanent legal status — a green card — for the unaccompanied child.

If a history of parental abandonment, abuse or neglect can be established, an application can be made on behalf of the child for Special Immigrant Juvenile status, which must be granted by a judge.

"That can be a route, if they continue through, to lawful permanent residency," Bahena said.

Other cases, including asylum cases, are harder to win, and they require regular trips to immigration court in Omaha, NE, or Minneapolis.

In these cases, Bahena typically refers clients to other attorneys.

"Just because of lack of capacity, we're trying to focus on the cases where we can have the most impact," she said.

Even when special status is granted, however, the process may be sluggish and cumbersome, especially for children fleeing Central America's turbulent northern triangle, which includes Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

"For kids from the northern triangle, that is a very long route. Probably, right now, that is a four- to six-year process," Bahena said.

However long it takes, though, Bahena said once a child is put back on the map, appointed a guardian and plugged into community resources, that child's future is bright.

"I have a lot of long-term relationships with those kids — they have a lot of things they have to accomplish to be able to finalize their status," she said. "But most of them who do come in become more plugged into the area, and there's very few that have started with me and then fallen off along the way."

AMIGOS:

Good Shepherd Church in Sioux Center has been active in Ukrainian refugee resettlement efforts in its community; however, the congregation has turned its sights toward another group of new arrivals in N'West Iowa: Unaccompanied migrant children and other young newcomers who crossed the southern border and are living, working and going to school in Sioux Center.

"They are in essence doing a resettlement effort on their own, without any support," said Pastor Travis Else.

Volunteers from his congregation, including several who speak Spanish, formed a group called Amigos.

They are building relationships with students in Sioux Center High School's newcomer program for English language learners. Some of the students are in the country without a parent or guardian.

"The heart behind it is just starting relationships with the students," said Amigos organizer Alex Vasquez.

Vasquez, who gives newcomers regular rides to school, is director of diversity initiatives at Dordt University in Sioux Center. When he immigrated to the United States from Columbia as a child, he said he never dreamed he might one day go to college.

"Starting relationships with the students has reminded me of how it was when I first got to the United States. They're not even thinking about college," Vasquez said. "My hope is that at some point they would, but right now, it's just the basic things."

Instead of making assumptions about what would be most helpful to the students, the Amigos group has prioritized listening and learning from the students about what they actually need.

Sometimes, Vasquez said, well-meaning people will give students warm coats or winter gear.

"And then we get to know them, and we're like, 'Hey, why don't you use the jacket?' And they're like, 'Well, we didn't ask for that.' So we asked them, 'What is it that you do want?' And it was like, 'I just want a friend,' or 'I just want to learn how to swim or ride a bike.'"

Along with providing regular rides to school, group members organize monthly activities like ice skating and swimming, introducing the students to spaces that might otherwise remain inaccessible to them due to language and cultural barriers. Interested students will have a chance to take swimming lessons this spring and summer.

Chapis Bahena, who attends Good Shepherd Church, makes regular visits to Sioux Center High School to teach classes on health-related topics to students in the newcomer program. The classes are part of her role with Community Health Partners, Sioux County's public health agency. Bahena is bilingual and serves as a liaison between the Amigos group and newcomers at the school.

On Feb. 8, Amigos organized a recent activity — an outing to the new American State Bank Sports Complex. Seven newcomers, church members and their families played a game of pickup soccer on the turf, one game among many during the highly-attended open-gym hours at the facility.

"Many of these students go to school during the day, then work through the night," said Amigos organizer Lisa Wilcox. "They have had to grow up very quickly, and some need to be given time to just have fun and to be a kid. Our goal is just to build relationships with the students. We are trying to know them better and meet them where they are at."



Doug Bergold of TurnKey Logistics speaks in favor of the Summit Carbon Solutions during Tuesday's Lyon County Board of Supervisors meeting. The board repealed the CO2 pipeline's right-of-way permit it previously granted in December. Photo by Elijah Helton

Lyon County board revokes right of way for CO2 pipeline

REPEAL

Continued from page A1

hearing disapproval with constituents and speaking with county engineer Daryl Albertson.

"They're not considered a utility. They're considered a pipeline that's a different definition in code," Albertson said.

The utility designation is central to the broader political fight over the CO2 pipeline. Summit needs approval from the Iowa Utilities Board to construct Iowa's portion of its five-state route. With the utility designation, there also would come the ability for Summit to seek eminent domain, the top objection of many anti-pipeline Iowans.

Summit has routinely said it does not want to use eminent domain, something Doug Bergold repeated at Tuesday's meeting. Bergold works for TurnKey Logistics and works for Summit to secure the company's non-environmental permitting.

He clarified that the right-of-way permit, formally called Permit Number 703, would have had nothing to do with eminent domain.

"If you were to take a look at the size of the Iowa project, how many different permits we have to achieve, if every county were to say 'No, you need IUB approval,' that could put us a year to a year and a half out further," Bergold said.

Regardless, supervisors — who have voiced apprehension about the CO2 pipelines in general — said they were not comfortable proceeding while the IUB has yet to allow construction. The unanimous resolution that revoked the permit called the original decision "premature."

Bergold indicated Summit will likely reach back out to the board in the future as the issue will remain live at least for the rest of the year. The company still has about a third of its route to secure in Iowa.

"It is what it is," Bergold said. "If you don't mind, we're still going to keep on coming in with our quarterly updates at the supervisor meetings. This way, you know how many people we have signed, what's the percentage — because we're going to do business in the future. We're just going to keep lines of communication open."

Based in Ames, Summit is one of companies seeking to build a CO2 pipeline in Iowa.

Using a process known as carbon capture, Summit's system would take the CO2 byproduct from 30 ethanol plants in the Midwest and transport it to be stored underground in North Dakota. The project is marketed as lowering the carbon footprint of biofuels and therefore making them more marketable.

Opponents say the Summit's project and others like it are essentially profiteering schemes with little environmental or financial benefit for regular farmers. Another objection has been the threat of eminent domain for landowners on the pipeline route who are opposed to the 2,000-mile project.

Legislation and litigation about CO2 pipelines are pending in Iowa on multiple fronts, including surveying practices, financial and political affiliations, project safety and the eminent domain issue.



Amanda Bahena chases after Alexander Ramirez Martin as he has the ball during an outing for the group Amigos at the new American State Bank Sports Complex in Sioux Center. Bahena is an immigration lawyer who tries to help migrant kids. Photo by Aleisa Schat

LAW & ORDER

CITED FOR SUPPLYING ALCOHOL TO MINORS

LARCHWOOD—A 32-year-old Sioux Falls, SD, woman was cited Friday, Feb. 10, on charges of supplying alcohol to person under legal age, gathering where marijuana is used, three counts of contributing to the delinquency of a minor and first-offense permitting a person under 18 to consume or possess an alcoholic beverage on property.

The citing of **Brittany Lee King** stemmed from a Jan. 29 report of underage drinking supervised by her at Grand Falls Casino & Golf Resort northwest of Larchwood, according to the Lyon County Sheriff's Office.

An investigation discovered King had rented a hotel room Sunday and Monday, Jan. 29-30, at the casino. In her company were a 16-year-old male and two 15-year-old females. There was another 18-year-old male who had been drinking also.

The two 15-year-old females

were found to be under the influence of alcohol that had been consumed in the hotel room. Only one of the females was King's daughter.

The 16-year-old male was found to be in possession of marijuana in addition to being a runaway/missing juvenile out of South Dakota since 2021.

While speaking with the occupants of the room, the moderate odor of raw marijuana was emitting from the room, according to the incident report.

A search warrant was executed on the hotel room that revealed a significant quantity of marijuana as well as alcohol had been consumed by the minors.

One of the bottles of alcohol was a bottle of Crown Royal Regal Apple Canadian Whisky.

King was observed buying Crown Royal at about 9:40 p.m. Jan. 29 at a Kum & Go in Sioux Falls.

The 16-year-old male was cited on charges of first-offense possession of a controlled substance

— marijuana and interference with official acts.

One of the 15-year-old females was cited on charges of first-offense possession of a controlled substance — marijuana and first-offense possession of alcohol under legal age.

The other 15-year-old female was cited for first-offense possession of alcohol under legal age and providing false identification information.

SIBLEY MAN ARRESTED FOR SITTING ON WOMAN

SIBLEY—A 67-year-old Sibley man was arrested 7:20 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 5, on charges of willful injury — causing bodily injury and assault.

The arrest of **David Dewayne Highsmith** stemmed from the investigation of a domestic disturbance call at a residence at 530 Fifth Ave. in Sibley, according to the Osceola County Sheriff's Office.

A female showed the deputies injuries she said she had received.

She said she and Highsmith had gotten into an argument over the use of a vehicle, and when she stepped toward him, he knocked her to the ground, sat on her chest and began to choke her.

GEORGE MAN CHARGED FOR METH IN SHELDON

SHELDON—A 31-year-old rural George man was arrested about 10:25 a.m. Friday, Feb. 10, in Sheldon on charges of second-offense possession of a controlled substance — methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

The arrest of **Kent Douglas Vink** stemmed from him being found in possession of a black magnetic storage box containing several small baggies, two glass pipes with burnt residue, a red tooter straw, and one small baggy containing methamphetamine at the Iowa Department of Corrections Field Office in Sheldon, according to the incident report from the Sheldon Police Department.

PRIDE RESIDENT CITED FOR HITTING STAFFER

PRIMGHAR—A resident of the Pride Group facility east of Primghar was arrested about 6:45 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 5, on a charge of assault.

The arrest of 26-year-old **William Matthew Parker** stemmed from him punching a Pride Group female staff member in the face after being told he could not crush up his medication, according to the O'Brien County Sheriff's Office.

Parker admitted to punching the woman in the face.

He was arrested again about 6:50 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 14, on charges of assault and second-degree harassment.

The arrest of Parker stemmed from two incidents with Pride Group female staff members, according to the sheriff's office.

Parker allegedly threatened to punch a staff member in the face and threatened another staff member, causing her to run into an office and lock the door. The

two women were in fear for their well-being, according to the incident report.

OCHEYEDAN MAN JAILED ON WARRANT FOR METH

SHELDON—A 59-year-old Ocheyedana man was arrested about 7 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 9, on an O'Brien County warrant for possession of a controlled substance — methamphetamine — third or subsequent offense.

The arrest of **Glen Allen Dowdy** stemmed from the stop of a 2000 Chevrolet Silverado pickup about 11:45 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 29, at the intersection of Ninth Street and Washington Avenue in Sheldon, according to the Sheldon Police Department.

A small bag containing a white crystalline substance that field tested positive for methamphetamine was found on the floor of the passenger seat where Dowdy was sitting, according to the incident report.

A warrant for his arrest was issued Jan. 30.