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2023 Fall Sports previews

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Area football teams open 2023 season on Friday

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READY FOR TAKEOFF

at the Estherville Airport

New concrete will span the space between the taxiway and the entry to the Estherville Airport shop.

Photo courtesy Paul Slaughter

Emmet County Board of Supervisors

Supervisors look at shaving Courthouse addition costs

Discussion to continue Tuesday

By MICHAEL TIDEMANN

The Emmet County Board of Supervisors at its Tuesday, Aug. 22 meeting discussed how to cut costs on the proposed Courthouse west addition.

The initial reason for the addition was to improve handicap access. Currently, Courthouse users with disabilities must

access the building through the law center then go down a ramp to the basement where an elevator is located. CMBA Architects of Spencer originally provided a \$1.4 million estimate for the building. However, Christensen Construction of Estherville, submitted the only bid of \$1,979,400, more than \$500,000 over the architect's estimate. The county has \$1.4 million remaining in American Rescue Plan Act Money.

Supervisor Jeff Quastad said he had met with Steve Christensen of Christensen Construction who found \$400,000 in possible savings. However, significant construction changes would require rebidding the project.

"We're stuck between a rock and a hard spot," said Quastad.

Supervisor Tim Schumacher suggested the county ask the City of Estherville for

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While the Estherville Lincoln Central School Board met in the middle school library Monday, incoming fifth graders and their parents met in the gathering area for middle school orientation.

Photo by David Swartz

Estherville Lincoln Central School Board

Final hires OK'd for 2023-24 school year

By DAVID SWARTZ
MANAGING EDITOR

The Estherville Lincoln Central School Board didn't have much to do in preparation for the 2023-2024 school year on Monday.

The board updated its "Wellness Policy" and approved 2023-24 handbooks for 3-year-old preschool, 4-year-old preschool, Demoney Elementary and the middle school.

The board did approve several hires that included Paige Vedder as the Demoney office secretary as well as Demoney teacher associates Emily Northrup, Melissa Gatten, Lynzie Burton, Jaydan Nitchals, Brittany Rodriguez, Alex Sheridan, Gabby West, Debbie Torres, Emily Bethune, Kailin Lyman, and Kelsey Schell. Cassidy Hatland was a hire at the middle school. Several hires were made for activities—Annie Kalous,

assistant cross country; Nick Leonard, middle school football; Jaydan Nitchals, middle school volleyball and middle school track; Alex Jensen, volunteer football coach and middle school boys track coach; Jacob Heinrichs, high school assistant girls track coach; Joe Winge, volunteer high school football coach; Scott Stokes, volunteer high school girls basketball coach;

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Estherville City Council

Realty office approved in black and white

Council approves variance on exterior finish for former quilt shop turned real estate office with an apartment on Central Ave.

By AMY H. PETERSON
STAFF WRITER

Monday night's city council meeting included an appointment by mayor Kenny Billings to the Estherville Area Growth Partnership. Billings appointed council member Dave Seylar to the Partnership board.

The council also approved a commercial exterior remodel request from real estate agent Tammy Fredericksen to 202

Central Ave., a residential home that was most recently Homespun Quilt and Gifts, located east of the Sinclair gas station on the city's main thoroughfare. The structure includes an apartment, and Fredericksen will locate her office in the building. Shane Molacek of Molacek Construction will be the contractor to add LP smart-side and LP trim.

"Grey is kind of going out, so I chose a midnight shadow hue," Fredericksen said. The midnight shadow, white, black, and light wood accents will change the look of the exterior. The remodel also includes adding gutters, removing shutters, addressing old windows, replacing an east window after the siding is finished for storm and laundry

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Iowa Lakes Aviation Program growing; concrete addition improves traffic flow

By DAVID SWARTZ
MANAGING EDITOR

Visitors to the Estherville Airport will notice some key changes this year.

The biggest change is due to growth of the Iowa Lakes Community College Aviation Program. In addition to the 30 returning students this fall, 63 first-year students are expected to join the program this week.

Meanwhile, some additional and replaced concrete will make it easier for aircraft to move around the airfield.

College program expands

Tim Busch, Director of the Aviation Program and Chief

Flight Instructor, said a lot of "guerilla marketing" and the programs' visibility is what led to the increase of flight students this fall.

In 2022, the Iowa Lakes program was ranked No. 1 for community college aviation programs and third in the nation for all colleges.

"That increased our visibility nationwide. So we're getting some students from outside the Midwest," Busch said. However, he estimated that 80 percent of the college's aviation students still come from Iowa and Minnesota.

Busch arrived at Iowa Lakes

four years ago and the program had about 30 students. He continuously reaches out to area high schools to let students know about Iowa Lakes.

"As we were developing the program, we've made a lot of adjustments," he said. "We're using an online flight school management system, which gives us the infrastructure."

Busch also said the college has a common fleet with 11 planes and two more on the way to increase the number to 13 common single-engine planes plus a twin-engine trainer, making 14 total.

"We currently have 14 instructors; many are earning their time toward their dream career and will be replaced by

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Tim Busch is the Director of the Iowa Lakes Aviation Program and Chief Flight Instructor.

Photo by David Swartz

Spilling the GCOMMUNI-TEA With Amy Peterson

Welcome to the second article in a three-part series about how local people view assets and challenges in this community. For this week, we asked local magistrate David Forsyth, animal shelter director Kristy Henning, and retired funeral home director Craig Christensen to tell their stories of community and share their perspectives.

This series asks members of the Emmet County community several questions that were included on the Survey of Rural Towns this year: what are the assets you see in Emmet County? What are the challenges facing Emmet County? Do you feel in 10 years that Emmet County will be better off or worse off? In this series, we will include several individuals' stories and perspectives each week over the next several weeks, along with a photograph of the person. In September, we interview business owners, influencers, and community volunteers about the present and future of the community in a second series called Rural Revelations. If you would like to be part of the series, contact Amy H. Peterson at 712-330-2593 or apeterson@esthervillenews.net, or call the newspaper office at 712-362-2622.

Hon. David Forsyth

David Forsyth is a magistrate for the Third Judicial District of Iowa and an attorney in private practice in downtown Estherville. Forsyth highlighted the assets of Estherville and Emmet County's natural world, and shared a vision of a destination downtown with a unifying theme in the architecture and fun things to do in the community.

He said the main asset of Estherville is that it has good bones. Forsyth grew up in Estherville; his father was an attorney in the practice David now runs with partner Jim Rosendahl. Forsyth said he enjoyed being a child in Estherville.

"We'd ride our bikes downtown to watch weirdos get off the Greyhound bus that came through four times a day. We'd sit in the lobby of the Gardston where they had these overstuffed leather chairs and couches, and we'd buy bottles of pop and sit in the air conditioning, because you couldn't loiter in there otherwise," Forsyth said.

Estherville and Emmet County present many gifts in the

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David Forsyth took a break on a sunny afternoon last week outside the law offices of Forsyth & Rosendahl in downtown Estherville. Forsyth told the Estherville News he feels the city has good bones.

Photo by Amy H. Peterson

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outdoors, Forsyth said.

"Geographically, we're kind of in a unique spot, because with the Des Moines River Valley coming through here, we've got a community that has fingers of woods that go up through them - on the west side, especially, and Fort Defiance State Park," Forsyth said.

Forsyth said the state park is a unique feature between the Mississippi River and the Black Hills due to the depth of the land formation.

"There are unique plants, animals, everything at Ft. Defiance that you don't find anywhere else around the Midwest. There aren't very many other parks like it, and it's so underutilized," Forsyth said.

Forsyth said he feels Estherville has an attractive downtown with its classic architecture.

"You compare our look to communities around here - Spirit Lake, Spencer, Emmetsburg - we have a lot of cool buildings downtown. When I was a kid, this business district was flourishing: five department stores, drug stores, jewelry stores, and five-and-10-cent stores," Forsyth said.

Estherville also had mom-and-pop hardware stores and grocery stores, and was very walkable with families walking to the grocery store.

"In the early '60s, not everyone had two cars, so Mom could walk to the grocery store where there was a meat market, canned goods, and fresh foods, shopping for one or two days at a time," Forsyth said.

Other assets in today's Estherville include modern school facilities, Iowa Lakes Community College, the splash pad and swimming pool.

"I think it's better than it was 10 years ago in that regard," Forsyth said.

As far as growing the community, however, Forsyth feels the pursuit of the big fish, large manufacturing employer may be one that won't end in victory.

"Why do we keep chasing the big fish when maybe we should focus our efforts on revitalizing our downtown?" Forsyth wondered.

Forsyth provided some history of economic development in Estherville, including a leader in high-end golf carts, a stained glass company from British Columbia, a stand-up bathtub company, and others over the last approximately 25 years who held out for economic incentives then left town.

Forsyth said focusing the community's efforts on revitalizing the downtown with a coordinating theme, highlighting the features of each building could help make Estherville a weekend or holiday destination, similar to Pella, Iowa, New Ulm, Minnesota, or Galena,



Kristy Henning and Lindsay Rohrbaugh

Illinois. Unique retailers and a restaurant row could have rotating themes throughout the year so that one business owner is not trying to maintain a specialty restaurant or one type of shop year in and year out.

"The attitude that we have to find another John Morrell to come into Estherville and save us - I don't see it from a business perspective. If it's an industry that requires a lot of transportation, you're going to go with something on Interstate 90 like Jackson, Minnesota," Forsyth said.

One asset of Emmet County is its low cost of living. Forsyth said when he administers bankruptcies,

the Internal Revenue Service breaks down the cost of living by county, and in Iowa, Emmet County is second only to Palo Alto County as the state's cheapest place to live.

"We could make the downtown attractive to people; we don't need a Target. We don't need a Wal-Mart; with Amazon, with e-Commerce, I can get around the fact that there is no place for me to buy a dress shirt in this area, but I can lay in bed with my iPad and I can order dress shirts from a company, and I know exactly how they fit. I know exactly what the material is, and I can have it within 48 hours. I'm just as guilty as anyone else as far as that goes

with Amazon boxes coming to my doorstep," Forsyth said.

Forsyth said he is happy to see people using the walking/bicycle trails and taking advantage of the recreational opportunities.

"A lot of recreational stuff here is very accessible - much better than it was 15 or 20 years ago. But the Riverside Park area is so underutilized. I'd like to see someone put on a festival or something every month - not something huge like Sweet Corn Days, but one night of a bluegrass festival or musicians from the area-put up a simple stage and, though I'm not a big proponent of alcohol, relax the rules about

alcohol and let them sell beer or wine or bring a cooler. Have food vendors available and just some fun under the stars," Forsyth said.

It wouldn't compete with the green space in Arnolds Park, but it would be something local and relaxed for people from all backgrounds to enjoy.

Forsyth also recalled a time when a softball league would attract players from multiple communities to Thoreson Park. Members of the adult league brought beer, and to Forsyth's recollection no one was injured or got drunk at the park when alcohol was allowed.

"I was city attorney at one time,

and the only place you could actually drink in public was the courthouse lawn because the county didn't have an ordinance," Forsyth said with a sly grin.

Making Estherville a beautiful place to live would serve people who work out of town.

Earlier this year, the Iowa Lakes Corridor released its laborshed study that showed workers in the Corridor's four-county area come from a much larger geographic area, with workers willing to commute up to an hour, but more often around 20 minutes to get to work.

"We see people from the Lakes living here because they can't afford a house over there if they're working at Polaris or Pure Fishing or Wal-Mart. They need a place to live, too," Forsyth said.

Forsyth wondered what was wrong with being a bedroom community, perhaps a college town, and creating a great place to live for the people who are here.

"We need to do a better job of letting people know that this is a nice place to live. It's cleaned up somewhat, believe it or not, over what it was 10 and 20 years ago," Forsyth said.

Forsyth said he had a favorable opinion of how local government is run, with superintendent Tara Paul providing solid leadership for the school, city administrator Penny Clayton leading the city of Estherville, and other public agencies seeming to work together for the common good - on the whole.

Public safety is another area Forsyth said Estherville could promote more fully.

"You can walk down the street at night and you don't have to look over your shoulder. We have law enforcement. We have a very nice hospital - we need help staffing it, but we also have a very nice heli-pad so they can send you to Sioux Falls if they can't fix you here," Forsyth said.

All of these assets: the attractive architecture downtown, the collaborative attitude, the safe neighborhoods, the welcoming of people from all walks of life, the schools, attractions, and natural world - all come together to give Estherville good bones, Forsyth said.

Animal care getting better, according to shelter founder

Kristy Henning was just finishing up the adoption of perhaps the most famous cat in Emmet County right now. Barney, the light grey tabby, had lived at Emmet County Animal Shelter for nine years with little interest shown by humans until one compassionate reader placed Barney's picture and story

on Reddit.

The Reddit post led to a flood of applications to adopt Barney, and Newsweek called the shelter. Henning told the national outlet that shelter staff had chosen a family they felt Barney would most enjoy.

Friday afternoon, a family living six hours away completed their adoption, placed Barney in a carrier with a treat-toy for the road, and drove toward home and new adventures with their new pet.

Henning said one asset of the Emmet County community is its people.

"I will tell you that whenever we put out a post about a lost animal or found animal, everybody is really on top of that. Whenever we put out a post about, 'Hey, everybody, we're running out of paper towels,' we will come in to an entire entryway full of paper towels," Henning said.

Henning said the shelter's volunteer base has always been strong, too. "Obviously that's an asset of our local people, too," Henning said.

Henning said the Estherville Police Department has also been helpful with concerns the shelter has had.

Roy Gage, neighbor to the animal shelter, provided the land on which the shelter built its infrastructure, and has been supportive throughout.

Lindsay Rohrbaugh said she feels the community has always shown its great love of animals. She said the dog park is one asset that allows dog owners to have their pets off-leash within the town sometimes.

"A lot of people in the community do love animals. They look out for their neighbor's animals, and if they see a lost animal, they reach out to us to try to get those animals back home.

Henning said one challenge in the Emmet County/Estherville community is that there is not a licensing process for the city. A license and identification tag would help the shelter reunite lost animals with their humans more efficiently.

Rohrbaugh said one improvement in the community would be further education about the shelter's TNR (Trap, Neuter, Release) efforts, part of a region-and-nation-wide effort to control the feral cat population.

The Estherville News reported on a class Henning gave on TNR throughout northwest Iowa last spring at the Estherville Public Library. Henning said she and Rohrbaugh would be happy to talk to anyone who's curious about the effort or needs more information.

Henning said the current program in neighborhoods around Estherville is like a neighborhood watch program for cats. The basics of TNR is a

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10th Annual BACK TO SCHOOL Bash

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News

COMMUNI-TEA, Continued from Page 2A

reduction in the population of feral cats in an area through spaying females and neutering males. As the population becomes manageable, it keeps new cat colonies out of that area. Capturing and moving or otherwise eliminating all feral cats doesn't work, because as an area is cleared, another group will move in.

"We would like people to really know the benefits of TNR programs. We do everything we can to keep stray cat numbers down, but we also do need the help of the community to make it happen. We hope in the future to connect the community to more information about TNR efforts," Rohrbaugh said.

"TNR is an important program for people who love cats, and also for people who don't love cats because it's the only way to effective control the cat population," Henning said.

TNR is also how the shelter controls its cat intake population - many times the census at the shelter shoots up because someone has found a litter of kittens struggling because something has happened to the mother cat. TNR prevents a significant number of new births to outside cats. Incidents of kittens who are abandoned or lost, hungry or sick, or cats who are alone and injured can also be reduced by TNR, Henning said.

"We'd like to educate the younger generation on caring for animals and how to treat animals so that all of the animals in our community live long, happy lives," Rohrbaugh said.

Children are the future of the animal shelter. In the last few days, a group of children had a garage sale and donated the proceeds to the animal shelter, while another child had a lemonade stand and dropped off a donation.

"If you look back through the decades, animal care and relationship with humans has only become better and better. It's increased in popularity, the quality of care has gone up, people are viewing their animals as extensions of their human family - that has only ever gotten better," Henning said.

In ten years, Henning hopes that the TNR will be rolled out and shelter staff and volunteers would do extensive work



Craig Christensen

throughout the region, that if people see something wrong with the treatment of animals, that they'd say something.

Rohrbaugh said she hopes Iowa law regarding animal care would improve.

"We're really low when it comes to penalties for animal neglect. I'd like to see better laws on how people raise their animals," Rohrbaugh said.

Henning said a new 2021 law has improved the situation of animals, but there is great room for improvement.

Rohrbaugh said, "If you're an animal lover, please contact your representative and look toward improving the state law, because your voice can make a difference."

Craig Christensen: lifelong resident sees people in full circle of life

Retired funeral director Craig Christensen is short in stature but long on ideas about the community he loves. Christensen grew up in Estherville near what was then Lincoln School, where the Lincoln Park playground now stands.

In addition to his long career as a funeral director, Christensen helps his sister and brother in law on the family

farm outside of Gruver, driving tractor during peak farm season.

"In this stage of life I'm in that slowdown. I have time to stop and smell the roses versus my younger days of raising a family that was on the go constantly," Christensen said.

Christensen's dad raised crops and livestock; helping him on the farm is part of what developed the work ethic in Christensen. When a young Craig left Emmet County for mortuary school in Cincinnati, Ohio, he said the Iowa work ethic went with him. Cincinnati, and its adjoining community of northern Kentucky, just across the Ohio River, had its great points. But, Christensen said he missed the connection and caring he experienced back in Emmet County, and found city life isolating.

Trust is also an asset of Emmet County's rural community, Christensen said.

"Your doctor, your lawyer, your other providers, you know each other, and I think we have a greater trust in one another when we know each other. We know that we can depend on them to take care of our particular needs," Christensen said.

Christensen said he's living a great life by simply being fully present in the community.

"I have people that I knew when we were all young. I watch them grow as I have gone through those stages myself. And I have the very distinct honor of helping their family when we lose them. Kind of doing the final thing that I can do for that friendship," Christensen said.

It's not just that death is

inevitable, nor simply that it's part of life. Christensen said it's like the church song, "Borning Cry," in which the narrator is God describing the divine presence during all of the stages of a person's life. Christensen said if the circle of life is a clock (the analog kind), he has reached the hour of 10 p.m.

"We're always thinking about the various stages of our lives: life begins and we're a child experimenting, as we grow into adulthood and start our own family, then we pass middle age and notice that we're growing older. We slow down, maybe experience health issues, and have that circle of life. It's very important to me, now in my age, that I've experienced that circle of life, living in Estherville," Christensen said.

Charmed, privileged, fun, and joyful are four words Christensen used to describe his life, on the whole. His children, Michael and Elizabeth, are grown, and he was divorced a while ago. He lives in north Estherville with his dog, Slick, and Casey's North is his personal corner store. He's retired now from even occasional or substitute work with Henry Olson Funeral Home in Estherville, and with a few funeral homes in Minnesota.

Christensen said he's stopping to smell the roses now, but his life hasn't been without thorns.

Nearly 53 years ago,

Christensen underwent his first of many spinal surgeries. He laid in Mayo Clinic for a month, an angel with a surgical halo holding his head in place, pins in his femurs. The back surgery had him in a body cast, ordered to bed rest for three months. Standing five feet tall and 120 pounds, he said he heard all of the labels others sometimes put on those who stand out in the crowd, from shortly to shrimp.

Christensen said he built his self-confidence on his own, remaining determined that he could do it. He ignored the warnings of his surgeons, the well-meaning advice of those with opinions, and never underestimated his abilities. Christensen said the

community has given him more than he could ever return. People in their worst moments of life have invited him into their lives.

As for whether the community will be better or worse off in ten years?

"I don't have a crystal ball, but I am a firm believer that it will end up being what we all put into it. The effort that we make, if we want to see the community thrive, will be tremendous. It's not going to grow by itself. It takes effort. The answer lies in the future," Christensen said.

Christensen said he has already been a part of many years of Emmet County's history, that many stories will die with him when he finally

goes. "I believe I've lived the history I've been a part of, and one day, I will be part of history. Then one day the page will turn, and the next chapter will go on without me," Christensen said.

It's not the end of the day for Emmet County, but life will continue. Where the story turns will depend upon everyone who's in the story.

"The clock goes to 12 midnight. I'm beginning to enter the sunset of my life, where you can see the sun going down in the west, and you realize that the darkness will come upon you," Christensen said.

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