Pro-life advocates take to FM streets

March sees more than 100 participants downtown

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - They may have missed the freezing temps with their march on Saturday, but there was no missing their message as hundreds from around the area, walked through Fort Madison.

The March for Life, which began at the intersection of 10th and Avenue at 10:30, attracted more than 100 people from Fort Madison, Lee County, and Illinois. The event was put on by the North Lee County Right to Life.

The throng carried signs with sayings such as “Today’s kids are tomorrow’s future. Don’t kill the future”, and “Life is Good”.

Madeline Taylor, of Fort Madison carried a sign that read, “All Things Grow with Love”. She said this was her first time at the march.

“Life is good. I just want to be out here and say that all lives are good no matter what the circumstances. It doesn’t matter how old they are, we should protect that.”

Taylor walked with David Zaczekski of Illinois who said he was marching in support of all people of all ages.

Very few seats were empty on Saturday at the LULAC Club where a benefit was held to help raise money for Jesse Burgher who was attacked by an inmate at the Iowa State Penitentiary back in October.

Throngs show up for Burgher benefit

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - It was standing room only at the LULAC club as ISP workers, family, and friends turned out to help raise money to help support one of their own who currently is still deciding his future.

Jesse Burgher, a 50-year-old corrections officer at the Iowa State Penitentiary, was stabbed multiple times on Wednesday, Oct. 18 while working a hall to escort a prisoner.

Burgher was originally taken to Fort Madison Community Hospital following the incident but was later transferred to University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics and then returned home on Friday of that week.

Burgher said he had a very clear memory of the incident.

“I was walking down to a cell and the guy I was working with was already down there letting him out,” Burgher said. “He didn't have any cuffs on and I didn't realize that because I don't work that hall very much and I didn't know they could come out without cuffs. So I'm walking down there and all of a sudden I see this guy running at me. I didn't know what was going on, but I saw that he had two shanks on him and then I just went into defensive mode and tried to block as much as I could,” Burgher said.

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Sports

HTC girls win, FMHS boys win in cross town doubleheader

SPORTS:

See pages 3-4,7

Pro-Choice advocates urged to participate in march

See MARCH, page 2

aney Smith

See past the sticker shock in city manager’s raise

We all had a bit of sticker shock when the Fort Madison City Council approved an immediate 8 percent increase for City Manager David Varley.

It was big enough news that I sent it out from Council Chambers on our social media platforms. We had responses before I even left the meeting.

Eight percent! I sat in a Lee County Supervisors budget meeting Friday afternoon, and they’re talking about potential wage freezes if department heads can’t bring expenses more in line. The suggestions were just part of many tossed around as possible solutions to a $3 million fiscal year shortfall, but Varley’s boost seemed lofty considering the economies of Lee County.

But we would encourage you to take a closer look at that number. It takes Varley’s salary to just over $110,000 from $101,920. That may seem a bit hard to swallow, and considering the agenda listed a 5 percent increase, which was quickly amended by Councilman Chris Greenwald to 8 percent, it became a bigger gulp.

I heard a really cool guy once say, “if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys”. Obviously $101,920 isn’t peanuts compared to some of the salaries in the county’s private sector. But in the world of municipal administration the bar’s set pretty high.

Let’s take a little bit closer look at what city officials
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**Participants walking to promote life at all levels**

**MARCH - Continued from Page 1**

“I wanted to march to promote pro life causes and everything and show we care about babies and all kinds of people, the old and the young and everybody,”

Sue Abel bundled up and walked with her granddaughter Xandra, 13, who carried a sign that read, ‘Who’ll speak for the little ones’.

“We’re out here because we respect all life from conception to a natural death,” Sue Abel said.

Sue, who makes the annual march each year, said she was impressed by the turnout for the event.

“This is the about the usual size, but it’s a bit warmer today so we may have had a few more.

Her granddaughter Xandra, 13, was out to spend time with grandma and be part of something.

“I like just coming here and coming out with my grandma and I enjoy being here,” she said.

The marchers worked their way down Avenue G to 6th Street and then north to Avenue F and headed west back to 10th Street. From there they walked up to McAleer Hall for refreshments and to warm up.

**Burgher undecided on return**

**BENEFIT - Continued from Page 1**

He hasn’t been back to work since the day of the incident and said he’s still under a doctor’s care and doesn’t know whether he will return to work. He also said he’s unsure of what the financial hardship will be.

“At this time I don’t know about the medical bills because I’m still seeing a doctor. But this is to basically help me to get through until I decide if I’m going back to work or not.”

Sarah Martin, one of the volunteers who helped coordinate the event, said she was happy with the turnout.

“We’ve probably seen 250-300 people already through here,” she said.

“We did this to help Jesse with expenses since he’s been off since October. We’ve done food with free will donations, live auctions, silent auctions, we’re raffling off two guns, and we’re doing a 50/50 drawing at three different times. Then we’ve got a ribeye roll and a bone-in ham for dinner.”

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There was barely a seat to be found and the bar area was six or seven people deep while food was continuing to be brought in from the grill outside.

Burgher said most of the people in attendance were co-workers and he appreciated the outpouring of support.

“I see a lot of friends, co-workers, and some family out here. And a lot of them are my co-workers. I’ve even seen people here today that I went to school with,” he said.

“I think it’s great. I mean we’re all union so they’re all my union brothers and sisters that have come out here to support me.”

He said he hopes in the unfortunate event that something like this would happen to someone else, that the same level of support would be seen for those officers as well.

The event runs until midnight and no numbers on total donations were available as of 3 p.m.

The benefit comes just two days after another officer was assaulted at the prison. On Thursday, an officer who has not been identified, was punched in an assault while searching a cell. The incident was quickly controlled and the officer was back at his post after receiving medical treatment that day. The inmate was taken to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics with injuries.
HTC girls press FMHS to 15th straight loss

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Holy Trinity Catholic's girls basketball team pressed Fort Madison almost the entire game Saturday as the Crusaders evened their season at 8-8 with a 55-24 win over the host Bloodhounds.

The visitors kept the press in at the end of the first to close the gap to 15-8, with a bucket from Eryn Anderson and then sophomore Avery Hopper knocked down a three, and Taylor Shannon, a bucket inside and then both teams went cold from the field until Bernhart scored again with 5:16 left in the half. Brantyn McGhyghy converted both ends of a one-and-one with about a minute left in the half, but HTC got a bucket from Erin Anderson and then sophomore Avery Hopper scored inside and then proceeded to knock down two free shots. Hounds end the 4th period, while the Hounds put up 14 points, and Taylor Boeding with four. Josie Pumphrey and Kylee Cashman each had four, Brandy Walker had six, Nadia Boeding had seven, and Kailyn Wondra with 8 points, Ashlyn Haas had three, and Taylor Boeding converted a free throw to round out the Crusader scoring.

HTC hosts Central Lee on Tuesday before traveling to Danville on Friday night. The Hounds travel to Danville on Tuesday before hosting Mt. Pleasant on Friday. In junior varisty action, HTC won 51-33. Scoring for the Hounds were Da- lyn Wondra with 8 points, Nadia Boeding had seven, Brandy Walker had six, and Kailyn Guzman and Kylee Cashman each had four. Josie Pumphrey and Eleesha Estrada both had two points.

Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Holy Trinity’s Emily Box gets a block on FMHS’s Sarah Bernhart in early action Saturday.
Unbeaten Clark County, Mt. Pleasant loom this week

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON — It was a crosstown rival hoops contest served with a lot of hoops and some cake and ice cream.

The Fort Madison Bloodhounds won their eighth game of the last nine with a 92-67 win over Holy Trinity Catholic on Saturday night on the Hounds’ annual Cake Auction night.

The Hounds’ senior Treavor James-Kokjohn provided a little icing toward the end of the third quarter. The bucket was nullified and James-Kokjohn was assessed a technical when he hung on the rim just long enough for the ball, which bounced on the rim, to go up and back in the hoop.

The Hounds had already put a 23-8 lead on the young Crusaders, as junior Logan Rashid was hitting from everywhere in the first half. Rashid connected on four 3-pointers in the first quarter alone.

Despite the Hounds leading by as many as 21, HTC playing with no seniors and only one junior, kept putting up points and working the ball into sophomore post Matt Hellige, who finished with 17 points on the night in the paint.

Sophomore Reed Fehske also seemed to find another gear for the Crusaders as he put up 16 points in the first half to lead HTC.

In the third period, the Bloodhounds flirted with a 35-point continuous clock, but Holy Trinity kept countering with buckets on the other end to keep the margin under the rule.

Fort Madison pushed the lead to as many as 31 with less than a minute remaining in the third period, but two free throws by Hellige got the margin back under 30. The two teams traded buckets throughout the fourth quarter as Fort Madison Head Coach Ryan Wilson emptied the bench with about five minutes left in the game.

“We had four guys in double figures. I was really happy with the way these boys played against a very-well coached, disciplined 10-4 Class 3A school,” said HTC coach John Hellige.

“This is a crosstown rival and these kids all know each other and have played together. I’m just super proud of the way these kids played all the way to the end.”

Wilson said the rivalry wasn’t lost on his team either.

“The kids said in the lockerroom that they wanted to win this game and let the town see how good we can play,” he said.

Rashid’s first-half performance wasn’t unexpected.

“He played well,” Wilson said. “It was his night to step up and he got some open looks.”

Fehske led the Crusaders with 21 points, followed by Hellige’s 17.

John Hellige

Hound senior Treavor-James Kokjohn finishes off a dunk in Saturday’s game with Holy Trinity. James-Kokjohn was called for a technical on the play for hanging on the rim and the basket was waived off.
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FM city manager pay still below smaller cities

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are up against when the salaries of other communi- ties’ city managers are stacked up against Fort Madison.

As part of the discussion on the increase, several tables were intro- duced that compared Fort Madison data on taxable property valuations, per capita property tax, and revenue per capita to 10 other cities in Iowa between populations of 10,000 and 15,000. That table included the cities of Altoona and North Liberty with city manager salaries at $195,585 for Altoona and $140,642 for Liberty with city manager of Altoona and $116,050, a full $6,000 per year over Varley’s new pay rate.

The most telling in- formation came when comparing Keokuk to Fort Madison. Accord- ing to the Iowa Demo- graphic data, Keokuk and Fort Madison are only 166 residents apart in population with Fort Madison slightly larger.

The data presented to the council, showed Keokuk with a taxable valuation of $300.2 million and Fort Madison at $282.3 million, roughly 94% of Keokuk’s.

The same table showed Keokuk’s property tax per capita at $390 while Fort Madison’s is $381, 98%. Expenditures by the city on its residents was roughly 26% higher in Fort Madison but Varley’s pay rate was 85% of Burnett’s, who did get bumped to his current rate in the second half of 2017. Varley’s increase now puts his salary at 92% of Burnett’s.

Another chart pre- sented at the meeting showed Varley’s pay 14 places below comparable positions of cities in Iowa with less than 10,000 in population.

Greenwald compared Varley to a plant manager with 96 employees. “What would that plant manager make?” And then figure in that Varley has to be an expert all things municipal.

But the largest con- sideration has to be the future of Fort Madison. Varley has said he has about eight years left in his career work, but if and when he does go, is Fort Madison positioned to be competitive in attracting the successor we need.

It’s a rarity to find even a coffee group, or card party, let alone a board, commission, council or city that agrees on every decision. But it has to be at least observed that this city is making progress under Varley’s leadership, along with the depart- ment heads at the city’s and the council’s direc- tion. As a community, we may be divided on what we think are good and bad investments, but progress is being made nonetheless. Roads are being repaired, we’re setting ourselves up for growth with water and sewer, rebuilding our highways, building new parks, and bringing in new business.

Yeah, it was sticker shock to me, too. I just think, in very simple terms, if we want to attract top quality peo- ple to lead our city we, at the very least, need to be competitive in that market. We’re not there at $110,000, but we’re a bit closer.

Take a closer look folks, this city’s just startin’ to percolate - but that’s Beside the Point.
for HTC, and Brant Holtkamp had 11. Rounding out the scoring for the visitors was Jake Eaves with three and Blake Crabtree with two.

James-Kokjohn and Rashid each had 23 for Fort Madison, Kaleb Cresswell had 16 on the night followed by Brandon Keester and Lorenzo Riles who each had eight, Parker Denning had seven points, AJ Nolting had three, and Romeo Maestro and Jayden Fedler each had two.

Last year through 14 games the Hounds were 9-5. Wilson said with this year’s 10-4 mark his squad may be playing a little better.

"I really hope so. We’ve had a pretty good start, but we had a couple mistakes in the early going that cost us some games," Wilson said. "But we’ve got a slough of tough games coming up this week."

Tuesday starts the madness when 14-0 Clark County, ranked in top 20 in the state of Missouri according to MaxPreps, comes to town on Tuesday night. They bring with them 6’7” Chandler Bevans.

"Kaleb and Treavor have seen him in club ball and he’s a pretty tough player," Wilson said.

The week doesn’t get any better when the Bloodhounds travel to 5th-ranked Mt. Pleasant on Friday, and then travel to Central Lee on Saturday. The Hounds are currently ranked 24th in Class 3A according to MaxPreps.com.