Now self-insuring deductible at $5,000 to keep premiums down

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE - County employees won't see an increase in their health insurance rates this year, but just barely.

At Tuesday’s Lee County Board of Supervisors’ meeting, Justin Pieper of Group Benefit Partners outlined the options for the county after Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield indicated that premiums for county employees would increase more than 11 percent with the upcoming contract. Currently, county employees pay $20 per month for an individual policy and $95 for a family policy. The county picks up the rest of the premiums, about $1,700 on the family plan, but also self insures the deductible after the employee meets $750. The current contract has a $3,000 deductible per county employee, so the county pays the remaining $2,250 of each employee’s deductible before the Wellmark plan kicks outside of copays. Pieper told supervisors Matt Pflug, Don Hunold, and Gary Folluo that the self insurance plan gives them some options to reduce the increase including moving the self-insurance portion to $5,000, which reduces the impact on the premiums to less than 2%. Supervisors Ron Fedler and Rick Larkin were absent.

Siemens bringing back half of layoffs

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - After revealing that the Siemens, Dresser-Rand facility in Burlington will be closing at the year’s end, officials confirmed today that the company is recalling some employees laid off in January in Fort Madison.

According to a spokesperson from Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy division, more than 100 employees are currently being recalled to Fort Madison’s wind blade facility.

“Fort Madison is a central part of our strategy moving forward,” said spokesperson Kaile Gurney. “We are continuing to invest in this facility by making capital improvements to install additional blade molds for new wind turbine models. We are now building 53-meter blades for the SWT-2.3-108 turbine, 59-meter blades for the SG 2.7-129 turbine, and 64-meter blades for the SG 3.4-132 turbine. To meet the increased production demands, we are in the process of recalling more than 100 employees.”

Company officials said in January that the business climate at the time was not strong enough to support staffing levels at that time and laid off 202 employees. However, Gurney said at the time that the plant was looking at doing some retrofitting to enable different blades to be manufactured at the facility and they hoped some of the staff would be able to be recalled.

The plant opened in September of 2007 on Fort Madison’s southwest industrial tract with 311,000 square feet of production and warehouse space. It underwent an expansion in 2008 nearly doubling its size to 650,000 square feet and nearly 500 employees at its peak production. Company officials hinted in February that setting the facility up to handle different blades could allow some of the workforce to be rehired, but didn't offer any specifics on how many.
Mendez honored with Masonic Teacher of the Year

BY PCC STAFF
FORT MADISON - Fort Madison Masons have nominated Brian Mendez, a teacher at Fort Madison Middle School, for the Iowa Masonic Teacher of the Year. Masons are strong supporters of education and each year nominate a local public school teacher for this honor. Currently, there are nearly 100 members of Fort Madison Lodge #13. Randy Sissel, also a local educator, is the Worshipful Master of the Lodge and was able to visit Mr. Mendez’s class to present him with a classroom grant from local masons to help contribute to a few of his many endeavors.

Mr. Mendez was select-ed due to his activism in the community, the great energy that he brings to the classroom everyday, and the enthusiasm he demonstrates in teaching his students social skills that will help them be successful in life. Mr. Mendez is the Foundations teacher at FMMS and has taught for nearly 30 years. He has impacted the lives of students both in the classroom and through extra-curricular activities as a coach and supporter of all things Bloodhound.

His positivity is contagious and those that come in contact with him know of the deep compassion and care that he has for the development of local youth.

Brian Mendez receives a grant for his classroom from Randy Sissel, the leader of Fort Madison #13 Masonic Lodge, after being nominated for the Iowa Masonic Teacher of the Year Award. Also featured from left to right in the back row are Anna Lynk, Katelyn Dennis, Cassanova Maeestro, Tyler Horn, Christian Rains, Shelby Penrod, and Principal Todd Dirth. Middle row from left to right are Kyle Kemper, Katie Brennan, Olivia Puga-Vass, and Maggie Lurvey.

Brian Mendez receives a grant for his classroom from Randy Sissel, the leader of Fort Madison #13 Masonic Lodge, after being nominated for the Iowa Masonic Teacher of the Year Award. Also featured from left to right in the back row are Anna Lynk, Katelyn Dennis, Cassanova Maeestro, Tyler Horn, Christian Rains, Shelby Penrod, and Principal Todd Dirth. Middle row from left to right are Kyle Kemper, Katie Brennan, Olivia Puga-Vass, and Maggie Lurvey.

Commission to fill another judge’s seat

By PCC Staff

OTTUMWA - The District 8B Judicial Nominating Commission comprised of five lawyers and five non-lawyer citizens and the senior Judge in the District, will be interviewing candidates to replace Judge John Linn, who retired in December.

Commission members who will be conducting the interviews include Judge Mary Ann Brown - Chairperson; Aila Cook of Wapello; Daniel Culp of Ft. Madison; Larry Kruse of Davenport; Sara Titus of Mt. Pleasant; Daniel Wiedemeier of Burlington. The commission also includes attorneys Stephanie Kozlowski of Burlington; Nicholas Pothitakis of Burlington; Scott Schroeder of Burlington; Steven Sents of Columbus Junction and Reyna Wilkens of Ft. Madison.

The Judicial Nominating Commission has established procedures for filling the position of District Court Judge in Judicial District 8B and the Supreme Court of Iowa has adopted an application to be completed by each person who wishes to apply for nomination to be a District Court Judge. Copies of the application can be obtained from the District Court Administrator’s Office for the Eighth Judicial District, 333 North Court Street, Ottumwa, IA 52501, by emailing cathy.reck@iowacourts.gov, or by calling 1-641-684-6502, ext. 110.

All applications must be received by the Court Administrator’s office no later than 12:00 p.m. May 25, 2018. No late applications will be accepted. The names of the applicants will be made available to the public after the deadline for filing applications.

Applicants must be members of the Bar of Iowa, a resident of the sub-district of the court to which they are nominated, and shall be of such age that they will be able to serve an initial and one regular term of office before

See JUDGE, page 3

Spring Cleaning

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This year, do your part to keep our environment clean, too! Here are just a few of the ways you can help:

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• Use environmentally-safe cleaning products
• Reduce • Reuse • Recycle
• Check our website for proper disposal methods, acceptable materials, & more

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- 1st Five
- HOPES
- I-Smile Silver®
- Emergency Preparedness
- Touching the Community with Care

Lee County Health Department is Promoting Health Throughout the Lifespan

Sub-District 8B includes Des Moines, Henry, Lee, and Louisa Counties.

Interviews for new judge May 30-31

reaching the age of seventy-two (72) years.

All applications will be considered; however, if there are more applicants than can be effectively interviewed, the commission may elect to screen the applicants and interview fewer than all. The selected applicants will be given an opportunity to appear before the entire Judicial Nominating Commission for a personal interview. The applicants’ submissions and materials shall be open to the public. Applicant interviews shall also be open. The public will be allowed to observe and listen but not interact. It is expected interviews will be conducted May 30 and 31, 2018.

The Commission will submit the names of two nominees to Governor Reynolds who will then appoint one to fill the vacancy.

Sub-District 8B includes Des Moines, Henry, Lee, and Louisa Counties.

JUDGE - Continued from Page 2

FM students take advantage of some STEM activities by programming some robots in a maze at the Little Theater at Fort Madison High School. The students were there as part of the elementary schools’ Fun Fest at FMCH.

Volunteer Alan Lair, mesmerizes a Fort Madison School district student during Saturday’s annual Fun Fest. The event was held to raise funds for the Richardson and Lincoln Elementary schools. Below two students try out the miniature golf station just north of the band room.

Photos by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Volunteer Alan Lair, mesmerizes a Fort Madison School district student during Saturday’s annual Fun Fest.
FORT MADISON - Despite facing some very tough high seed tennis, the FMHS girls were able to avenge a lost last week to Fairfield with a 5-4 win at home Tuesday.

Fairfield sports two of the best girls players in the state with Yana Gaskell and Anatta Charoenkul, who lived up to the hype again. Last week, top-ranked Yana Gaskell shut out senior Katie Larson, but on Tuesday, she played at No. 2 to face FMHS sophomore Miho Shirai. Shirai took the first game of the first set off Gaskell, which was the first game she's dropped all year, coming into the match 40-0. But then Gaskell turned up the pace and won the next eight games for an 8-1 win.

Larson lost to Charoenkul 8-0, but then the Hounds would start getting in the win column, winning all the matches in Nos. 3-6.

Senior Kearstyn Johnson, top ranked in the state at No. 3 singles, knocked off Camielle Schaefer 8-5 to start the streak. Junior Larissa Ferrill downed Hermela Gabremariam 8-4.

At No. 5 singles, Mercedee Doty had to go to 9 games and a 7-4 tiebreaker to down Anna Beasley 9-8 (7-4). Lanie Kuntz came up with another big win for the Hounds at No. 6 with an 8-6 win over Nellie Higdon.

Carrying a 4-2 lead going into doubles play, Larson and Shirai fell 2-8 to Charoenkul and Gebremariam and then Johnson and Ferrill fell to Gaskell and Schaeffer 1-8 setting up a close No. 3 doubles match to win the match. Doty and Kuntz wiggled out an 8-6 win in that match to give the Hounds the win.

"I had told the girls going into the match that the top of their lineup was going to be tough to beat, so in order to win, 3-6 we're really going to have to step it up and, by God, they did," head coach Amy Doherty said.

"It came down to the No. 3 doubles match where Lanie and Mercedee battled nerves for a little while getting down 1-4, but they fought through it and turned the tables! I am so proud of this group of girls."

In junior varsity action, Zoe Ramatowski and Alyse Schmidt tied in their doubles match 7-7, Lilli Scott and Lauren Bailey won 6-2, Deanna Warner and Abbee Kelly lost 2-6, Taylor Ann McGee and Aniah Ross won 9-7, Kelsey Penrod and Shyanne Hoening fell 3-6 and Jamie Folks and Kirklynn Nafziger lost 1-6.

On Monday, Larson fell at No. 1 singles to Quinn Whaley, but the Hounds won all the remaining singles matches to down Mt. Pleasant 7-2.

Shirai won 8-3 at No. 2 singles, Kearstyn Johnson stayed unbeaten with an 8-1 win at No. 3 singles, Larissa Ferrill won 8-4, and Lanie Kuntz downed Sierra Barton in a 9-7 affair. Sophomore Zoe Ramatowski got a shot at a varsity match with a No. 6 singles win over Breana Runyon 8-3.

In doubles action, Larson and Shirai won 8-5, Johnson and Ferrill won easily at 8-1, and Kuntz and Ramatowski fell 4-6.

The Bloodhounds take their 6-1 record against Burlington Notre Dame Thursday in Burlington.
Sports

HTC girls start season at 4-1
BY PCC STAFF

COLUMBUS JUNCTION - The Holy Trinity Catholic girls soccer team got four goals from Elle Rashid en route to a 4-2 win over Columbus Junction on the road.

Rashid was assisted on the goals by Maya Rashid, Katie Scoville, and Taylor Boeding. Boeding scored on a tap in from Maya Rashid’s diagonal pass, then Rashid scored on an assist from Scoville.

Head Coach Michael Sheerin said he got solid play from the Crusader defense including Ashlynn Haas and Maille Sheerin who kept breaking up attacks from Keokuk. Sam Pothitakis recorded her third shutout of the year.

The junior varsity girls team won 2-0 behind two goals from Taylor Crabtree.

The girls are now 4-1 and will play again Thursday, April 26th at the Burlington Rec Plex in the Adidas Tournament of Champions at 4:00 PM vs. Moline High School.

Bloodhounds beat Trojans on road
BY PCC STAFF

FAIRFIELD - The Fort Madison boys tennis team won their second match in two days and are now over .500 for the season at 4-3 with a 5-4 win over Fairfield on the road Tuesday night.

The two teams split the singles competition with three wins each, highlighted by Sam Avery’s three wins each, high-lighted by Sam Avery’s wins over Gannon Court-

fmhs boys no. 2 singles player Austin Krueger served up a point in earlier action this year. The Hounds are 4-3 after Tuesday night’s win over Fairfie-
ld on the road.

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ld on the road.

CL’s Isaac Moeller wins Lee county golf tourney
BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON - Central Lee’s Isaac Moeller was medalist at the Lee County Golf Tournament highlighting area high school golf on Tuesday.

Moeller shot a 76 to edge teammate Aaron Wills who carded a 77 for runner-up medalist honors at Sheaffer Memorial Golf Course.

Tommy Wade led FMHS with an 83, followed by Tyler O’Tool with an 87 and Brandon Keester with a 90.

Holy Trinity Catholic was led by Cole and Col-lin Thornton who shot 85 and 90 respectively.

Keokuk was paced by Alex Wolter’s 96.

Central Lee won the event shooting a 312, followed by Fort Madison High School with a 353. Holy Trinity took third with a 366 and Keokuk.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

Classifieds/Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICES

PROCEEDINGS FOR FORT MADISON CITY COUNCIL
4/17/2018

The Fort Madison City Council met in adjourned session at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 17, 2018, at City Hall, 811 Avenue E. Mayor Randolph presided with Council Members Greenwald, Morawitz, Rink, Andrews, Stanley, and Members Greenwald, Morawitz, Rink, Andrews, Stanley, Chairman for construction services for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Renovation Project. At 5:45 p.m. on motion, Council adjourned until May 1, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

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ASPHALT, PORTA POT.... 1,292.80

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BI'S PERFORMANCE,... 2,126.58
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Pen City Current - Wednesday, April 25, 2018 - 7
Premiums may jump for those not on wellness plan

INSURANCE - Continued from Page 1

Pflug said the county has been discussing employee premiums for a long time and said he wants the county to provide the best insurance possible, but keeping the premiums and coverages consistent is becoming more and more difficult.

"I think that this board, or any future board, will eventually have to make a decision that this will have to be increased," Pflug said.

"I think we should continue it if we can do that. However you have to be realistic here, too. You go other places, a family plan is $400 or $500 a month. This is taxpayers' money we're talking about. A lot of times employees, if it's not in their paycheck or hand, they don't understand what that means."

He said the benefit package is a very good package for a very low price.

"This is huge, but I think if we can continue to offer this health insurance we should, but at this price we're practically giving it away," Pflug said.

Pieper said previous renewals have been relatively easy and the county looked at moving the deductible practically giving it away, "Pflug said.

"As long as we can keep it there and not take a huge hit we should, but county employees need to be ready for the increase."

"They don't have to look too far to see what other people are paying. We don't work in a vacuum here."

In other action, the council:

- approved using John Hanson of Midwest Construction Consultants, to put together a package that would allow the county to solicit bids for improvements to the jail kitchen. The county hasn't agreed to make the improvements yet, but wanted to see actual costs associated with the project. The sheriff's department is looking at bringing in a third party to provide meals for inmates at the jail at a reduced cost. Currently, Iowa State Penitentiary provides two meals per day at a cost of $3.25 per meal. Sheriff Stacy Weber said he's looking at a program that would reduce that price to about $1.83 per meal on a sliding scale based on the number of inmates. Preliminary numbers indicate the county could save roughly $25,000 per year under the new program.

- approved renewing employee life insurance coverage with Group Benefit Partners with an increase of .21/$1,000.

Man was arrested within minutes of reported activity

LOCKDOWN - Continued from Page 1

Police Department apprehended the suspect approximately two minutes after the incident occurred, and the lockdown was then lifted.

Students and staff responded efficiently and did great job iduring the lockdown. Once again, all students and staff are safe at Lincoln School today.

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5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

WED 25 Apr Scattered Clouds
High – 62.3º F | Low – 43.2º F

THU 26 Apr Partly Cloudy
High – 68.8º F | Low – 58.7º F

FRI 27 Apr Light Rain
High – 58.1º F | Low – 39.3º F

SAT 28 Apr Clear Skies
High – 62.0º F | Low – 39.8º F

SUN 29 Apr Clear Skies
High – 61.9º F | Low – 52.1º F