Persistent practice turns objectives into realities

I’ve written about happiness before. In fact, that’s how I met Ginnie. It was from that first article I wrote about happiness. She sent me an email concerning happiness and, quick like Curtis thinks, I asked her if she would like to have lunch. She naively agreed.

Ginnie lived at the time in Os-tumwa (which is where I had fabricated a story for an insurance appointment. You see, I can discern a person’s personality from their writing, even if it is in the form of an email. Call it ESP if you will. Actually, it comes from years of writing and reading—one develops a sense for the person at the other end of the communication. I wasn’t wrong. Ginnie and I have been happily married now for going on three years.

Anywho, the gist of my “Happiness” column was that, “Happiness is the byproduct of living the right kind of life,” which is a direct quote from my daily meditation book. There had been a radio broadcast about how to find happiness. I called in to the broadcast with that quote and was roundedly laughed off the air by the so called “experts,” being told that my formula for happiness was much too simplistic. There had to be a more complicated formula, some cosmic path to follow on the way to everlasting happiness. Fast forward to today, and in that same day I wrote about happiness, and I have been happily married now for going on three years.

Pothitakis close to opening 2nd FM office

By Chuck Vandenberg

FORT MADISON - A local dentist is close to finalizing plans to open a second office in Fort Madison.

Over the past several years, Dr. Mark C. Pothitakis has been in expansion mode and the last phase is close to completion. On April 19, Pothitakis will be opening his west end branch, the former home of Dr. Charles Holmes, who retired at the end of 2017.

Pothitakis has updated the former Holmes Dentistry building on 48th Street, adding a fifth dental room and bringing in digital technology. Each room has an expanded window that looks toward the west end bluffs of Fort Madison, a view that the doctor said hopes provides a sense of peace to his patients.

The dentist of 26 years has added a few new walls here and there, brand new carpeting and LED lighting and has created an efficiency of space, while bringing in the latest in dental technology including digital dental records and x-rays.

He said an open house will be scheduled and then office hours will start the week following.

“I’m going to have an open house. Many of Dr. Holmes’ patients have been seeing me at the other location and they are asking when we are opening out here. They were hoping it would be January, but I just wanted it to be right and I didn’t want to rush it.”

Starting out, Pothitakis said he plans to be in the west end office on Wednesday and Thursday and Dr. Johnathan Dingeldein, one of his associates, will be in the office hours will start the week following.

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OBITUARIES

JEREMY LEE RANCK

Jeremy Lee Ranck, 36 years, of North Liberty and formerly of Fort Madison, Iowa died Thursday, March 29, 2018 in Coralville, Iowa. He was born June 12, 1981 in Fort Madison. He is the son of Ronald Lee Ranck and Patricia Lynn (Jones) Boyd. He was a 1999 graduate of Fort Madison High School. He worked for 12 years as a chef at the Iowa River Power Restaurant in Coralville, Iowa. Most recently he was working for Aldi in Coralville. He loved music and trivia. He was a fan of the Cubs, Hawkeyes, and Steelers.

He is survived by his parents, Patricia and Jeff Boyd of Fort Madison and Ronald Ranck of Burlington, Iowa; one sister, Stacy (Andrew) King of North Liberty; one step-sister, Alex Boyd of Quincy, Illinois; maternal grandparents, Irene and Roger Hoskins of Denmark, Iowa; several aunts, uncles, and cousins; and two cats, Felix and Rebel. He was preceded in death by his paternal grandmother, Margaret Ranck.

His family will greet friends from 5:00 - 7:00 pm Wednesday, April 4, 2018 at the Barr Memorial Chapel, Fort Madison. Private family burial will be at a later date. A memorial has been established and contributions may be left at the Barr Memorial Chapel. Online condolences to the family may be made at www.barrmemorial-chapel.com.

OBITUARIES

DANIEL C. DORN

Daniel C. Dorn, 90 years, of Mt. Pleasant, Iowa and formerly of Fort Madison, Iowa died at 12:58 pm Saturday March 31, 2018 at the Henry County Health Center, Mt. Pleasant. He was born May 22, 1927 in Kellerton, Iowa, a son of Daniel Darius and Mildred Floy (Clark) Dorn.

Daniel was a graduate of Fort Madison High School. He was a veteran of the United States Army. He earned his degree in Business from the University of Iowa on the GI Bill. While at college, he met Lois Beverly Moore, and they were married on July 15, 1950 in Maxwell, Iowa. Daniel was a carpenter and worked with his Dad and brother building several houses in Fort Madison. In addition he built, owned, and operated the Americana Motor Lodge and the Americana Bowl in Fort Madison. He and his wife, Lois, spent many years in hotel management in North Carolina, Florida, and Texas before moving back to Iowa. He was a member of the First United Methodist Church in Mt. Pleasant. He enjoyed spending time with his family as well as the many friends he made at Sunnybrook and Park Place in Mt. Pleasant.

He is survived by two sons, Dan (Melissa) Dorn of Dallas, Texas and Michael (Sheryl) Dorn of Mt. Pleasant; three daughters: Linda Dorn (Dennis Baxter) of Sanibel, Florida/Mt. Pleasant; Christy (Mike) Cullen of Windsor Heights, Iowa; and Becky (Ron) Stillwell of Dallas, Texas; 10 grandchildren; eight great grandchildren; one brother, David (SOPHIE) Dorn of Burlington, Iowa; one sister, Norma Calhoun of Cheyenne, Wyoming; nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, Lois, two brothers, David and Daniel, and two sisters, Norma and Linda.

Graveside services and burial, with full military rites, will be at 2:00 pm Tuesday, April 3, 2018 at Hillcrest Cemetery, Fort Madison. Pastor Earl Swigart will officiate. In lieu of flowers, a memorial has been established, contributions may be made at the graveside or the Barr Memorial Chapel, Fort Madison. Online condolences to the Dorn Family may be made from the Barr Memorial Chapel, www.barrmemorial-chapel.com.

Pen City Current obituary policy
The Current runs obituaries at no charge to funeral homes and they run the day they are submitted in most cases. They are also run as submitted by the funeral homes.

5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

MORNING 02 Apr

Light Rain

High – 41.2º F | Low – 39.7º F

TUE 03 Apr

Light Snow

High – 46.8º F | Low – 33.2º F

WED 04 Apr

Light Snow

High– 28.5º F | Low – 22.3º F

THU 05 Apr

Snow

High – 36.8º F | Low – 23.5º F

FRI 06 Apr

Light Snow

High– 38.8º F | Low – 22.2º F

OpenWeatherMap
Kim Cook serves one of her first customers on opening day of Kim's Confections on the west side of the square in West Point behind Hair Etc.

"I had to come back here and see where the wonderful smell was coming from," said one perfectly coiffed customer.

"I love to bake and my mom is a fabulous baker. So we started going down there and quickly realized that it was the same people that were buying the stuff. So that was pretty neat," Kim said.

She said Fort Madison already has two fabulous bakeries at Kelly's Cakes and Sugar Lumps, and they were originally looking to locate in Fort Madison, but the location in West Point just kind of popped up.

"We thought about opening something there, but we found this kind of by happenstance. I normally don't get my hair cut here, but was here getting a haircut and mentioned it and they said they had a space in back," Kim said.

Right now Kim said the main business hours will be Saturday and possibly Fridays, but when she in baking she may try to be open for sales, too. She said the best way for people to check to see if she's open outside of Saturday is to visit her Facebook page.

The hours are going to kind of vary because I'm still a nursing manager," she said. "So my plan is to work during the evenings and then be open on Saturday for sales."

One of the things I'm gonna like is being able to make what I enjoy and what people are asking for. I don't mind if they message me, I'm on Facebook all the time, so they can let me know if they need something."

Friday was opening day for the two and Thursday night was the first round of baking after the kitchen was inspected by the county health department.

"Last night was the first baking we did and when we walked in this morning it really smelled like a bakery," Randy said.

Kim said pastries and baked goods make up the menu, as she brings chocolate-chip caramel butter bars and a cherry bake out of the oven. They joined banana bread brownies already on the cooling rack, waiting for frosting. She said cupcakes and cookies will also be on the menu.

"The display case show-cased strawberry-rhubarb and apple pies, blackber-ries-and-cream coffee cake all on pie pedestals under heavy glass. Two glass cookie jars held frosted sugar cookies. A coffee maker perked off to the side of the counter and a cooler holds juice, milk and other cold drinks to go.

"That way people who want to stop in for a treat and some coffee can do so."

**Business News/Lottery Numbers**

**A couple of WP Cooks, open up a bakery**

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

WEST POINT - It's not an uncommon theme where someone takes a hobby they enjoy and turns it into a business.

That's exactly what Kim and Randy Cook have done in West Point. The two popped open a quaint little bakery in a comfy space behind the Hair Etc. salon on the east side of the square.

On opening day Friday the visitors who popped in the back door of Kim's Confections, which was donned with a curtain and horizontal blinds, seemed as though they were stopping by to visit old friends. Customers commenting their hair done in the salon came by to figure out where the warm, sweet smell was coming from, " said one.

"It really smelled when we walked in this morning," Kim said.

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"That way people who want to stop in for a treat and some coffee can do so."

**IOWA LOTTERY WINNING NUMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>Draw Days</th>
<th>Sales Cut Off Time</th>
<th>Approx. Drawing Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucky for Life®</td>
<td>Mon &amp; Thu</td>
<td>8:30 pm</td>
<td>9:08 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mega Millions®</td>
<td>Tues &amp; Fri</td>
<td>8:59 pm</td>
<td>10:00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerball®</td>
<td>Wed &amp; Sat</td>
<td>8:59 pm</td>
<td>9:59 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotto America®</td>
<td>Wed &amp; Sat</td>
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<td>10:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pick 3 - Midday</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>12:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pick 4 - Midday</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>12:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pick 3 - Evening</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>12:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pick 4 - Evening</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>12:00 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

In the health of our community
One Person at a Time

FMCH Hospice Volunteer Training
When: May 1st, 3rd, & 7th at 6:00 - 9:00 PM
Where: FMCH Canella Conference Room

Registration is required by April 20th, 2018 and can be completed online at www.fmchosp.com. For more information or to register for the training program, contact Debbie Green, Director of FMCH Home Health & Hospice at (319) 376-2721. The FMCH Hospice program is funded by the FMCH Foundation.

**Pen City Current encourages you to play responsibly.**

**FORT MADISON COMMUNITY HOSPITAL**

**HOME HEALTH & HOSPICE**
319-376-2721 • www.fmchosp.com
FMHS goes 1-2 at invite, HTC loses in finals

Hounds outscore opponents 11-7 on the day, but only come away with one win.

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The Fort Madison Bloodhound boys soccer team outscored three opponents 11-7 in Saturday’s FMHS Invitational, but came away with just one win.

Sophomore Austin Sexton scored four goals on the day, but the Hounds dropped an early morning 2-1 loss to Holy Trinity Catholic, before shutting out Central Lee 8-0 in the second game and then falling to Burlington Notre Dame 5-1.

The Hounds got behind 1-0 against Holy Trinity when the Crusaders’ Audrae Vincent scored the only first half goal for either team at the 5 minute mark off a corner kick that bounced around and found the net. FMHS Junior Reuben Eid scored at the 10-minute mark in the second half when he lifted a shot over the head and outstretched arm of Crusaders’ sophomore goalkeeper Reed Fehseke. The Crusaders got the lead back quickly when Vincent scored again at the 13-minute mark.

Junior Javier Trejo had an assist from Eid and then just :30 later on an assist from Eid. Freshman Will Larson got in on the scoring at the 7-minute mark to put FMHS up 6-0 with assists by Miguel Trejo and Sexton. The game then went scoreless for a full 18 minutes before Junior Kelly Russell scored unassisted. Junior Miguel Trejo got an assist from Javier Trejo with under a minute left to set the final score.

Senior goalie Carson Donaldson had four saves in the contest. The Hounds had an easier run of things against Central Lee with Sexton getting the first goal of the game on an assist from junior Brody Rung. Then junior AJ Nolting scored unassisted 10 minutes later and followed up with another goal at the 26 minute mark with a double assist from Eid and Sexton, to give FMHS a 3-0 lead at the half.

Sexton then put up two very quick goals in the second half, the first just 1:30 into the half on assists by Miguel Trejo and Eid and then just :30 later on an assist from Eid. Freshman Allie Carson and Sexton, to give FMHS a 3-0 lead at the half.

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Senior goalie Carson Donaldson had four saves in the game.

The Hounds would only get one goal in the last game against the Nikes when Sexton took a pass from Justin Bowker and found the back of the net. Donaldson, who had 13 saves in the match, gave up goals at the 5:30, 7:00, and 20:00 minute marks in the first half and two more in the second half, the first of which came just one minute into action.

Knoxville won the championship downing Holy Trinity in the title game.

The Hounds are 1-2 on the season and host Notre Dame again on Tuesday at the sports complex. Holy Trinity stands at 2-1 on the young season.

Kiwanis’ Carnation for Kids day set for Friday

FORT MADISON - The Fort Madison Kiwanis Club has been sponsoring Carnations for Kids Day in Fort Madison for more than 20 years. This year, the Kiwanis members will be holding the event on Friday, April 6.

Each year, Kiwanis members gather on Thursday evening to prepare carnations for sale the following day.

Members of the Kiwanis Club will be selling carnations at 9 a.m. on Friday at Hy-Vee & Fareway in Fort Madison until all carnations are sold. More than 80 businesses in Fort Madison have assisted the Kiwanis Club in making this project a success. Over the past years, Fort Madison Kiwanis Club has raised over $35,000 for Children’s Miracle Network at Children’s Hospital at the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

Hundreds of children from Lee County visit the hospital in Iowa City each year. Contributions to Carnations for Kids helps to make their stay at the hospital a little more comfortable. It also helps to supply tutors so they do not fall behind in their school work. It is heartwarming when members that are selling carnations hear people comment that they know someone who has been helped by the program and donate $5, $10 and even $20 for the carnations instead of just the $1 suggested. This year, the Kiwanis Club hopes to raise over $1,500 during Carnations for Kids Day. In addition to the Children’s Miracle Network, this year, Kiwanis will be donating $300 to the Kiwanis Spastic Paralysis Foundation and the club thanks the community for their support.
Happiness in social media world is compartmentalized

**SWARM - Continued from Page 1**

meditation book that I have been faithfully reading every morning now for 28 years, I discovered another passage that I somehow had missed. (It's amazing how someone can slip in and place a passage in my meditation book without me catching them.) It states, “By persistent practice, you can eventually obtain joy, peace, assurance, security, health, happiness, and serenity.”

“By persistent practice.” In other words, happiness is not something you can set as a goal, listing a number of steps necessary to obtain that goal, checking each one off when completed, and at the end of that exercise you will have found “happiness.” First of all, happiness is not a process that you can diagram out, list on flip-chart tear sheets, and hang around the room in different colors of magic marker: red, green, blue. Second, happiness is an individual thing. My definition of happiness may not be your definition. For example: my happiness is contingent upon sobriety first and foremost, and for me, sobriety (which includes serenity) can only be achieved through reliance on a Higher Power, i.e., God.

For someone else, for people with non-addictive personalities, happiness may take a completely different route, a route through family, friends, relationships, service, faith, work, play, etc.

In our modern on-line, social-media crazed, World-Wide-Web, Tweet-filled, nose-in-the-phone world, happiness has been compartmentalized into more of an emotion, or emotion. Someone “likes” my photo, or something I’ve said, or “shared,” therefore I am “happy.”

We want it all and we want it right now.

Once again, from my daily meditation book: “True happiness comes as a result of living in all respects the way you believe God wants you to live, with regard to yourself and to other people.”

This morning, I felt the touch of Ginnie’s soft skin against mine, and the warmth and comfort of a cozy bed. Could I be any more happy? I don’t think so. When asked how I’m doing lately, I’ve been telling people, without sarcasm, “Living the dream,” and comfort of a cozy bed. Could I be any more happy? I don’t think so. When asked how I’m doing lately, I’ve been telling people, without sarcasm, “Living the dream,” and meaning it.

It’s been a long journey. And worth every step.

Have a good story? Call or text Curt Swarm in Mt. Pleasant at 319-217-0526, email him at curtswarm@yahoo.com or find him on Facebook. Curt's stories are also read at 106.3 FM in Farmington.

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

School better fit for disabled students

Dear Editor,

I am a mother of 4 children. 3 of my children have already graduated from Fort Madison and my youngest is disabled. I am hoping that everyone who reads this will at least try to step out of the box and consider looking at this issue from a different angle. We all want what’s best for our kids. So here is what I feel best for mine and other’s like mine. My son is 11 years old and has attended Fort Madison school district his entire school life. He has very mild Cerebral Palsy with left side hemiparesis from a stroke he had at 3 weeks of age. Along with that comes other disabilities such as seizure disorder, hydrocephalus, Adhd, dysgraphia etc. My son attended Lincoln and now the middle school. The elementary schools are extremely hot at the school year end and beginning. My son has hydrocephalus which is fluid on the brain. It causes headaches and confusion and sometimes sends my son into a seizure especially in hot conditions. My son had to be in school to learn regardless of what the heat did to him.

As I have said he has mild Cerebral Palsy which means he may not be able to have a job with physical demands but we can educate him to have a career someday that uses his mind.

Now imagine the fluid on your brain heating up first to a headache, then confusion, then a seizure. Kids with disabilities should have a right to an education like every other kid and they should not be forced to be in a school that forces them to become physically ill and not get the most of the education being taught because of a small raise in taxes.

Now put yourself in any kids place. How much could you possibly absorb when you are so hot all you can think of is escaping? I invite you to walk into either of the schools on a mild 85 degree day and see how hot it is and how fast you want to escape.

Now put yourself in place of the teachers. They are trying to keep approximately 25 kids focused and some with disabilities in the hot classroom while also trying to keep cool.

If the public wants to know what’s best for the district, ask the kids who deal with it daily or a teacher who has to figure out how to teach in these conditions. Better yet get a pair of crutches and go up and down the steps in Richardson and see how safe you feel getting up and down them. I’m begging you to step outside of the box and see this proposal from ALL sides including the disabled, the teachers, parents, and the community. Please don’t vote on what you think you know! If you have questions ask! Their are plenty of people including the kids willing to talk. We can’t expect to tell our children to “look it up” if we as adult guess what’s best rather than find the facts and look at every angle.

Jennifer Forbes, Fort Madison

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**Spring Cleaning**

Keep it green!

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

- Properly dispose of your household hazardous waste materials, construction debris, & electronic waste
- Use environmentally-safe cleaning products
- Reduce • Reuse • Recycle
- Check our website for proper disposal methods, acceptable materials, & more

---

**Great River Regional Waste Authority**

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Now Hiring Line Mechanics in Ft. Madison

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As the largest provider of metal packaging in the United States, Silgan Containers is trusted by America’s most respected brands. If you have mechanical experience and a willingness to learn, Silgan might be the perfect fit for your new career. Must be able to work rotating 12-hour shifts and mechanical experience in a manufacturing environment is a plus.

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- Competitive benefits package includes 401(k) match, multiple healthcare plan options, dental, vision, educational assistance and much more
- Rotating 12-hour shift schedule allows for generous days off
- High school diploma or equivalency required, trade school preferred
- Quality training provided for those willing to learn but must pass a written and practical mechanical aptitude test

If you are interested in more information about this exciting opportunity visit silgancontainers.com/careers or contact:
Tim Ewing, Plant Human Resources Manager 319-372-8491 x4760 or tewing@silgancontainers.com

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HOSPICE MASSAGE THERAPIST

Lee County Health Department is seeking a Licensed Massage Therapist. This is a contracted position. Massage Therapist will provide the client and caregivers with massage therapy for pain relief and relaxation. Some documentation is required. Licensure is required for Iowa and Illinois, or be willing to obtain the license. Submit resume to Margaret Cook via mail to LCHD P.O. Box 1426 Ft. Madison, IA 52627 or email cook@leechdpub.com. Resume deadline is April 30th, 2018. Lee County Health Department is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Requirements:
- Bachelor’s Degree or equivalent in related field required.
- Previous experience in healthcare, marketing, programming, nursing or related field required.
- Knowledge of the community and available networks.
- Must be detail oriented and accurate.
- Ability to work scheduled hours based on personnel and community needs including possible week-ends and evenings.
- Ability to work independently and/or interact with team members at all levels and promote teamwork.
- Ability to travel periodically for corporate meeting and extensively within the first 8 weeks of hire.

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Lee County Health Department

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Apply online at:
www.agmark.com/careers
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We Operate: Late model equipment. 100% dry van freight. 99% no touch freight. Upper Midwest Lanes. No East or West Coast!

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Silgan Containers is an Equal Opportunity Employer
You're worthless.
DENTIST - Continued from Page 1

Open House for west end office set for April 19

DENTIST

Got a news tip? Call Chuck (319)371.1670

Spring Travel Show
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 2018
RIVERVIEW PARK PAVILLION // FT. MADISON, IA

DOORS OPEN: 4:30PM // PRESENTATION: 5PM

Join us the evening of Wednesday, April 4 for our Spring Travel Show! We've been diligently working on putting some new and exciting tours together for all of our travelers and we're eager to share them with you!

Featured Tours:
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It was a mad dash for the colored eggs left behind by the Lee County Conservation District on Saturday. Children of different ages hunted for eggs in the cold, windy conditions.

Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

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DENTIST

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Board member opens up on why new school is needed

Letter to the Editor:

I was elected to the Fort Madison Community School District Board of Directors in 2015. I moved into the district in 1976 and my three children attended and graduated from our school district over a period of 28 years.

Along with so many parents and students, I have seen three school buildings in the district removed from use and demolished or sold. It was disheartening to see these neighborhood schools disappear. However, I recognized that those neighborhood schools were beginning to no longer be able to meet needs of all students. Those needs have changed drastically over the past hundred years to meet education needs of all students along with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

I don’t believe that renovating our current elementary schools would be fiscally responsible. We might be able to “band-aid” security, improve some access and upgrade heating and air conditioning, however, we would be drastically reducing the outdoor play spaces. During renovations, the need to move students into other spaces for more than one school year (not sure where this space would even be) would certainly not be conducive to education. In the end, we would still have the major traffic concerns at the beginning and end of each day due to traffic on surrounding streets and Business Highway 61 with an even larger amount of bond money to be repaid than with a new facility.

I was a member of the voting public when the community turned down a bond referendum to build a new middle school. I, too, questioned the ability of the school board to move ahead with building a new school after the voters turned down the new construction plans.

I need to understand the process to build a new middle school by talking with FMCSD school board directors. I learned that the SAVE (Secure and Advanced Vision for Education) fund dollars legislated in 2008 were enacted to provide better equity across all school districts to build new or improve existing school buildings, upgrade technology and fund other equipment needs. I learned how the district was able to bond against those newly legislated funds to build the new middle school with no additional property tax to the district taxpayers. As a result of those funds that are legislated through 2029, we have a wonderful facility to serve our community for many years. Those SAVE and technologically improved learning facility that provide our fourth through eighth grades a safe, secure and legislated through 2029, we have a wonderful facility to serve our district taxpayers. As a result of those funds that are legislated through 2029, we have a wonderful facility to serve our community for many years.

Many rumors have persisted about the Middle School location and building integrity, however, I would challenge anyone to tour the facility to see that those rumors are not true and not intruding on or in the facility. Property taxes did not increase to pay for the new Middle School. Any increase to property taxes since 2009 has been a result of lowered state funding allocated for each student which has not kept up with inflation, increased utility costs, and other general budget needs that are compensated through property taxes within the district. I also believe that the FMCSD has experienced and learned about pitfalls to avoid with separate playground equipment for the age different students who will attend this school.

As a result of passing the bond referendum, we do know that we are not authorized to spend more than $30 million on a completed and much improved secure school facility, equipment, parking and access from Bluff Road (which will require upgrades and a turning lane), a baseball and a softball field.

Over the past several months as many have worked to pass a bond to build a new pre-kindergarten through third grade school, several “myths” have surfaced and hopefully many have now been answered. Requests to see final blueprints, line item costs, breakdowns of facility vs furniture and equipment have been made. As a Board, we cannot provide all of these exact details because as stewards of public monies, we can’t and won’t spend money on final blueprints until we have money to spend. Taking money from current school funds would most probably mean less money for much needed maintenance to continue to keep our buildings operating.

Public meetings over the past two years to discuss the bond issue have been sparsely and disappointingly attended. In many cases, individuals most adamantly and publicly opposed to passing the school bond have not attended a meeting nor offered opinion at any school board meeting or workshop. Some of the individuals that attended those meetings did not agree with information and answers provided and are now stating that questions are going unanswered. The school board has not provided any untrue or false information concerning the bond details and tax impact. We have tried to ensure that property owners understand the yearly tax impact from the bond referendum. We have consulted with a professional and industry respected asset management firm concerning ability to meet this bond’s financial impact, suitability and propriety.

We don’t know exactly what a new elementary building will look like upon completion. We do have an artist’s concept, based on input from community members, teachers and students that attended meetings to begin to develop a building plan. We have state and federal mandated directives and regulations to follow and fulfill. Classroom sizes, open spaces for lunchroom and public spaces will be designed and built to all of these requirements. We recognize the need to provide separate playground equipment for the age different students who will attend this school.

We don’t know what final costs will be – construction costs are estimated to increase each year by no less than 4 percent, however, with recent hurricanes, fires and storm damage we are expecting even larger increases. As a result of passing the bond referendum, we do know that we are not authorized to spend more than $30 million on a completed and much improved secure school facility, equipment, parking and access from Bluff Road (which will require upgrades and a turning lane), a baseball and a softball field.

Once a formal request for a school bond referendum is submitted to the county auditor, a school board director can answer questions or provide information. We have tried to answer all questions. We have not been able to provide answers that everyone agrees with. One of the current board members were elected at the time the middle school was proposed or built. We don’t have hidden agendas. We are unpaid volunteers committed to providing our district students with the best education and facilities to support their education.

I urge our voters to put away negative feelings and bias from past opinions and decisions, good and perhaps those not so good or accurate.

I believe that each of us seek improvement and better lives for our own families, so please help to provide that for all of our district’s youngest students.

I am voting YES! I care about and believe in our students, our educators, support staff, school administrators and our community. I believe that a new school will provide a much improved education that is vital for the future vitality of our community and our businesses and industries.

Dianne Hope
Fort Madison
Superintendent addresses new school questions

Editor:

Since I became Superintendent of the Fort Madison Community Public Schools almost 2 years ago, we’ve tried to keep school financial business as transparent as possible. There is nothing about the school bond and new elementary school we are not willing to share or discuss with the community. However, there is still misinformation circulating around and some questions that continue to be asked. I’ve tried to summarize these questions with answers provided below. For more information, please visit www.communitybondissue.org/fortmadison

WHY CAN’T THE TWO OLD ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS JUST BE FIXED AND RENOVATED?
The school district has diligently repaired and maintained these buildings for over 100 years! Lincoln and Richardson have many issues including these major failures: inadequate safety and security, lack of handi-
capped accessibility, no support for current electrical, computer, and technological needs, and outdated or non-existent heating and cooling systems. In other words, school security is compromised, students with special physical needs must be carried up flights of stairs, computers and monitors can’t be used, and when it is hot there is no air conditioning and fans can’t be used because of ancient wiring, and when it is cold the heating is so poor some students wear their coats during class. As to utility cost, it currently costs less to heat the old junior high and Denmark buildings combined. The cost to renovate the two schools is an estimated $42 million. That figure does not include the cost and effort to relocate the students for an entire year nor the increased utility cost over time.

If you are especially concerned about young school-age children’s safety, vote.

WHY IS THE NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SO EXPENSIVE?
We asked the same question and unfortunately the answer is everything is more expensive these days. If you’ve priced a new custom-built home, 2018 pickup truck, or even college tuition, you’ll find that prices have skyrocketed across the board. We are building a nice 21st century elementary school but it is by no means a palace. If you compare the features and price per sq. foot, the cost is similar to the other new public schools being built across Iowa.

MY PROPERTY TAXES ARE HIGH ENOUGH.
The only way a school district can build improved facilities is through a bond referendum. Public schools cannot, by law, fundraise like private schools can. Pub-
lic schools are for everyone, and the only way to build new schools is to ask everyone to chip in. The aver-
age assessed home value in the Fort Madison area is $77,000, and the tax increase would be $2.98 a month. The link to calculate for your home is www.communitybondissue.org/fortmadison-financialinfo. Also, by Iowa law, the proceeds from the bond can only be used for this new construction and furnishings. The money cannot be used for salaries or other budgetary needs. Local property taxes were not used to build the mid-
dle school! It was built with proceeds from a unique sales tax program from the State of Iowa called SAVE.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL WAS BUILT ON A SWAMPY FLOOD PLAIN. WHY BUILD OUT THERE AGAIN?
As with many homes, businesses, and buildings on the west side of Fort Madison, the land owned by the FMCSD on 48th and Bluff Road is within the 500 year flood plain. However, the middle school was built on an elevated area to sit above the flood plain level. The elementary school will also be elevated. We could not hold insurance otherwise. Site changes were engineered for required drainage to the FMMS and are part of the design for the new elementary school. Also, the rumors about foundation and structural issues at FMMS are false. There was an issue with the gym floor several years ago. Just like a wet basement, water seepage from the ground was not properly sealed. The contractor responsible corrected the problem and there have been no water issues in the several years since it was resolved.

I SUPPORT A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR THE KIDS BUT DON’T WANT TO PAY TO RELOCATE THE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL PUBLIC FACILITIES.
We actually need to make room at the high school by relocating the baseball and softball fields to the campus at 48th and Bluff Road. It would be much less expensive to move the playing fields now during the construction and landscape engineer that must take place here for the new elementary school. The current space be-
hind FMHS is very inefficiently used. By removing the baseball/softball areas we will free up space for current use and future expansion at the high school. In the near future, that space will be turned into dedicated practice fields for the marching band and football teams. And someday, with the plan of public-private financing, the school board hopes to use that space to build a fine arts and music performance auditorium that Fort Madison so desperately needs.

WHY NOT JUST USE THE BAXTER SPORTS COMPLEX BALL FIELDS?
Baxter Sports Complex was designed and created to promote and service youth sports in the area. The softball and baseball fields were specifically built for younger children up to 8th grade. The field dimensions do not meet Iowa High School Athletic Association regulations and cannot be used for official high school games.

WHERE ARE THE BLUEPRINTS? WHAT ARE WE GETTING FOR THE MONEY?
At the start of this process in 2016 there was a commu-

nity group of thirty volunteers that met in four dif-
f erent sections before the first bond vote and consisted of current teachers, former teachers, business owners, administrators and board members. These groups brainstormed needs and features for a new elementary school including a schematic sketch. This “footprint sketch” was used in promotional materials with the fol-
lowing characteristics: a building for 650-700 students, classrooms for each grade, rooms for special needs education and arts, an auxiliary gym, gym for PE, and classrooms for music performances, library, commons spaces, designated space for lunch separate from gym, office space, kitch-
en and bathrooms. The group unanimously voted for a single story building. Based on this input, a budget was drawn up by our experienced and Iowa-based architect firm. After a successful bond referendum vote, further input will be gathered from the community. These final refinements will be given to the project managing ar-
chitects who will draw up the detailed blueprints. These blueprints will be used by bidders and contractors to bid for work on the project. Blueprints are expensive, and also to allow the public further input into the design, the school board decided, like other districts, to not order them until the bond was passed.

MY FAMILY SENDS OUR CHILDREN TO PRI-
vate school. WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS?
In the United States, the overwhelming majority of Catholic children attend public school. The Holy Fam-
ily parish that oversees Fort Madison, West Point, and the surrounding community is filled with very gener-
osous donors. This community has come together to raise money for not only a new private elementary school, but also for large donations to Haiti, Africa, Central America, and the rest of the world through church charities. There are a great many Catholic children at-
tending public school that are in need of your support.

The school bond referendum is an opportunity to help these children right here in Fort Madison, Iowa, USA. FOR THE KIDS BUT DON’T WANT TO PAY TO RELocate the BASEBALL and SOFTBALL PUBLIC FACILITIES.

I DON’T HAVE CHILDREN CURRENTLY IN SCHOOL. WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS?
Fort Madison needs new families. The Fort Madison area population continues to shrink and grow older. That not only means our tax base is getting smaller but also the pool of available skilled blue-collar and white-collar workers is shrinking. The better Fort Madison schools is one of the main criteria families use when choosing where to move and raise children. More fam-

ilies mean more money and services, and also increas-
es the available workforce. A larger number of poten-
tial employees makes Fort Madison more desirable to companies looking to build or relocate. We’ve had several families move to Fort Madison from surround-
ings, wanting the small-town lifestyle here in Fort Madison but keeping their jobs to make the 30 minute commute. A new elementary school will create a more desirable “bedroom community” which will greatly improve Fort Madison’s economic development. Also did you know that the Fort Madison Community School District is one of the largest employers in the area? Our teachers and staff are a vital and sta-

dable economic core to our community. Every student enrolled in the FMCSD adds roughly $7,000 to the budget that pays these salaries. Every student lost costs the district that same amount and forces layoffs and hiring freezes.

If you care about the future of Fort Madison, and one of the largest and most stable employers in the area, please remember on April 3rd that a strong and healthy public school system benefits everyone.

Erin M. Slater Ed.S.
Superintendent, FMCSD