State offers up 2019 STEM project funding menu

Schools, groups can apply online through March 4 for project resources

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY - With STEM being the action word of educational and economic development officials for the past half a decade, state officials continue to put money toward programs that focus on critical thinking.

A new wave of applications through Governor Kim Reynolds’ Iowa STEM Advisory Council, is now being accepted for area schools and outside organizations interested in helping students of all ages engage in the STEM processes.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) is an interdisciplinary approach that helps students develop technical skills and make connections from the classroom to the world of work,” according to Lee County Economic Development Group’s Dana Millard.

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The Iowa Governor’s STEM Advisory Council began accepting Scale-Up applications for the 2019-2020 school year January 21st. Applications will be accepted through March 4th. For a complete list of 2019-2020 STEM Scale-Up Programs, and to apply please visit https://www.iowastem.gov/scale-up/.

“STEM careers with local business and industry is a major focus of our Grow Lee programming and are a vital economic development driver for the growth of SE Iowa and the state,” said Millard, the group’s economic development project director.

“Helping promote programs such as STEM Scale-ups are a great way for us to leverage our resources in order to benefit local students.”

The STEM Scale-Up programs range from building robots and coding programs, to conducting agricultural field experiences and learning about STEM careers.

Millard said Lee County is leading Southeast Iowa in its participation in receiving STEM Scale-ups with 92 percent of the county’s 13 public school buildings having received STEM Scale-up funding. That funding equates to more than $60,000 in grants over the past four years. This is in addition to Fort Madison High School and Keokuk High School receiving $25,000 each for the STEM BEST (Businesses Engaging Students and Teachers) program. Des Moines County has had 33 percent of their buildings receive a Scale-Up grant over the past four years, Henry County has had 54 percent, and Louisa County has had 50 percent.

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The idea of having another redemption center in Fort Madison is being, well…recycled.

Fort Madison Mayor Brad Randolph, who also serves as chairman of the Great River Regional Waste Authority board, has reopened conversations about the possibility of partnering with local businesses and Hope Haven out of Burlington to establish a functioning redemption center, he said.

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The move coincided with a bill introduced Jan. 17 in the Iowa Senate, that would up the amount of the reimbursement to redemption centers by a penny to two cents per beverage container.

Currently, reimbursement operations are getting one cent over the deposit refund by distributors, making it difficult to sustain operations out of the 1-cent margin.

The bill also cleans up language and would require distributors to pick up recycled containers at least weekly and provide payment within one week following the pick up.

The bill was introduced by State Sen. Mark Segebart (R-Vail) of the 6th District and was moved to a subcommittee on Wednesday.

Randolph said he’d had a few brief conversations with Wade Hamm, the director of GRRWA, as to whether space could be found to house the operations on landfill property.

Hamm said it might be difficult to find room at the landfill now, and he’s not sure how much room the facility would need and what features would be required.

“Brad Randolph brought the idea to our attention,” Hamm said. “We discussed it a little bit but nothing has become of that yet. Without doing some structural changes I don’t think it’s possible.”

Randolph said he would like to see some businesses get behind the effort to help fund the operation. Spe-
ERIC “GIZ” VAJENTIC

Eric “Giz” Vajentic, 70, of Donnellson, Iowa, passed away at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, January 22, 2019, at Great River Medical Center in West Burlington, Iowa.


Survivors include his two children: Eric Matthew (Sharon) Vajentic of Kansas City, Missouri and Lynae (Mark) Scott of Donnellson, Iowa; four grandchildren: Dominic and Benjamin Vajentic and Reegyn and Grayson Scott; two brothers: Joe (Sue) Vajentic of Elyria, Ohio and Tom (Cathy) Vajentic of Apalachin, New York; one sister: Anna Kathryn Vajentic of Mayfield Heights, Ohio; mother-in-law: Mary Laposta of West Point, Pennsylvania; two brothers-in-law: Robert (Barbara) Laposta of Paris, Pennsylvania and Eugen (Diane) Laposta of Grantsville, Maryland and several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents: Joseph and Rose; wife: Judith and father-in-law: Robert Laposta.

Eric graduated from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh with a Bachelors Degree. He worked at Climax Molybdenum as an accountant for forty-four years. He attended St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Montrose for many years. He was an avid fan of all Pittsburgh sports teams and loved hosting Sunday football get togethers. Eric was a strong outdoors: golfing, fly fishing and gardening. He was an avid card player, enjoying many games with his many friends, as well as his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He loved all of her family and friends very much but showed no mercy when she was playing cards. Her favorite year was 2017 when the Cubs won the World Series. She was told she would have to wait one-hundred years for that so she did.

Friends may call after 12:00 noon Friday, January 25, 2019, at St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church in West Point where the family will receive friends from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. A Parish Rosary will be recited at 3:30 p.m. and a Christian Wake Service will be held at 6:00 p.m.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, January 26, 2019, at St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church with Father Dennis Hoffman as celebrant. Burial will be at the Calvary Cemetery, West Point, Iowa.

In accordance with his longstanding wishes, his body has been deeded to the University of Iowa Anatomy Department. A Memorial Service will be held at 1:00 p.m. Saturday, February 2, 2019, at Schmitz Funeral Home in Donnellson with Reverend Mark P. Spring officiating. The family will receive friends from 11:00 a.m. until the time of service. A memorial has been made in his memory.

Schmitz Funeral Home of Donnellson is assisting the family with arrangements. On-line condolences to the family may be made at www.schmitzfuneral-homes.com.
Fairfield boys take three from FMMS

FAIRFIELD — Fairfield won all three games against the Little Hounds’ 8th grade boys team on Tuesday.

Nathaniel Swigart led Fort Madison with eight points, two of which came from three-point land in the 54-22 loss in the “A” game.

Xander Wellman had six points and three rebounds, while Aiden Boyer and Jamiah Williams each scored four.

In the “B” game, Fort Madison fell 27-22 with Calviyan Tucker putting in 10 points and hauling in four rebounds for the Hounds. Dane Butler and George Hantzeas each had four points, while Drew Davis and Wellman added two. Nick Fullenkamp led the boys with five boards.

Davis had three points in Fort Madison’s 18-5 “C” game loss. Hantzeas added two to round out the scoring for Fort Madison.

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Lee County has record of success with STEM funding

RECYCLE - Continued from Page 1

Kristine Bullock serves as the hub manager for the Governor’s STEM Council for Southeast Iowa. She said the state has six regions and each region receives $500,000 each year to award programs to area schools and organizations.

“We don’t give money to the schools; we use it for training and programming,” Bullock said. “Schools can apply for as many programs as they want. Potentially every teacher could get that training.”

She said since 2011, the state has been allocating money to increase STEM participation at formal and informal school sessions. Informal school sessions could include scout groups, libraries, after-school programs and with 18 counties in southeast Iowa vying for the programming awards, the application process is very important.

Bullock said that Lee County has been able to take advantage of strong partnerships with the STEM council through the work of Lee County Economic Development Group.

“I believe that southeast Iowa and Lee County are either even, if not ahead of, the rest of the state, especially with the help of Lee County Economic Development Group,” Bullock said.

“Dana is on my advisory board and that’s a really great partnership and collaboration that has helped that area. We’re still trying to make sure that every building has high quality STEM programming and we have pockets of excellence, but we need to make sure they have that programming every year. We don’t want them to have that grade where things drop because they aren’t continually thinking with that critical mindset.”

On the Iowa Assessments, students who participated in the STEM Scale-Up Program scored higher than students statewide with an average of three percentage points higher in mathematics and reading, four higher in science.

“Lee County has a lot of STEM career opportunities, including careers that deal with robotics, engineering, math, and science. It’s important that we prepare our students for these careers” said Millard.

To help shape this, Millard sits on the Governor’s SE Iowa STEM Advisory Council. The council is a public-private partnership of educators, companies, and Iowa students and families addressing policies and programs designed to improve Iowa’s educational system focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The STEM Council works to engage and prepare students for a career-ready workforce path, regain Iowa’s historic leadership position in education, and provide a vital competitive economic advantage now, and for the future, to ensure that every Iowa student has access to world-class STEM education opportunities.

“We wanted to try to get the word out that the application process is now open and we would like to see schools, groups, and non-traditional classrooms at all levels take advantage of these program resources,” Bullock said.

Officials looking to partner with Hope Haven for redemption center

From the Front/Weather

5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

THU 24 Jan
Light Snow
High– 14.9˚ F | Low – 0.7˚ F

FRI 25 Jan
Light Snow
High– 5.7˚ F | Low – 1.3˚ F

SAT 26 Jan
Clear Skies
High– 4.3˚ F | Low – 0.3˚ F

SUN 27 Jan
Light Snow
High– 28.5˚ F | Low – 15.2˚ F

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FORT MADISON – The following is a list of events and happenings going on in Fort Madison as submitted to Pen City Current.

**Budding Artist Exhibit**
The Budding Artist Exhibit is on display now at the Fort Madison Area Arts Association, with a reception taking place Saturday, Jan. 19 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

**Children’s Immunization Clinic**
The Lee County Health Department will be holding a children’s immunization clinic with free lead testing on Thursday, Jan. 24 at the LCHD’s facility at #3 John Bennett Drive in Fort Madison from noon until 5:30 p.m. The clinic is open to children with no insurance, those insured by Medicaid/MCO or those with private insurance that doesn’t cover vaccines. No appointment is necessary.

**Community Blood Drive**
Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center will hold a drive at Lincoln Elementary School on Thursday, Jan. 24 from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. in the school gymnasium. To donate call LeAnn Cashman at 319-372-2896.

**Cake Auction**
The Fort Madison Bloodhound Boosters will hold a cake auction on Saturday, Jan 26 at breaks during the varsity girls and boys basketball games.

**Nerf Wars at FM YMCA**
The Fort Madison YMCA will be the site of another round of Nerf Wars on Sunday, Jan. 27. From 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. boys and girls ages 1 through 6 will compete in Nerf Wars in the gymnasium. Children must bring eye protection, their own Nerf guns, darts/bullets/balls. Cost is $5 for members and $10 for non-members. For more information contact program director Noah Dean or visit the YMCA’s Facebook page for more information.

**Local artist on display at SCC**
Lori Illner Greene will have her art work on display at the Southeastern Community College Art Gallery, 1500 W. Agency Road in West Burlington from Jan. 28-Feb. 15. The gallery showing will feature her “Raptors and Other Birds of Prey” series.

**Evening with Chuck Long**
Former Iowa standout and NFL quarterback Chuck Long will be at Sheaffer Memorial Golf Course on Tuesday, Feb. 12 for presentation, including a social hour and dinner with doors opening at 4:30. The social hour and dinner will be from 5 to 6 and Long will speak at 6 p.m. with a question and answer to follow. For more information, contact Ryan at 319-528-6214 or by email at mcmillan@sheaffergolf.com.

**Ribbon-Cutting**
A ribbon cutting for The Kingsley Inn and River Rocks Bar & Grille will be held on Feb. 15 at 10 a.m.

**Fort Madison Partners Annual Dinner**
The Fort Madison Partners Annual Dinner will be held Feb. 22 at McAleere Hall in Fort Madison. A night of gaming, food and fun has been planned. Contact Partners at 372-5471 for more information.

**Senior Community BINGO at The Kensington**
Each month on the second Wednesday of the month, The Kensington hosts Senior Community BINGO at 2 p.m. in their dining room at 2210 Avenue H in Fort Madison. All seniors are welcome and cash prizes are awarded.

**Caregivers Connection at The Kensington**
The Kensington hosts this monthly gathering to help educate attendees about all dementia types. Held at noon the 4th Tuesday of every month in The Kensington’s private dining room, 2210 Avenue H in Fort Madison. Call 319-372-4233 to RSVP or for more information. The next luncheon will be held January 22, 2019.

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