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SUPPLEMENTS

■ Eastern Iowa
Bizzzy Bee

■ Menard's

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- HSBC Mortgage vs.
Lisa Kalmes et al

■ Original Notice
- PHH Mortgage Corp. vs.
A. Scholbrook et al

■ Maxine M. Countryman probate

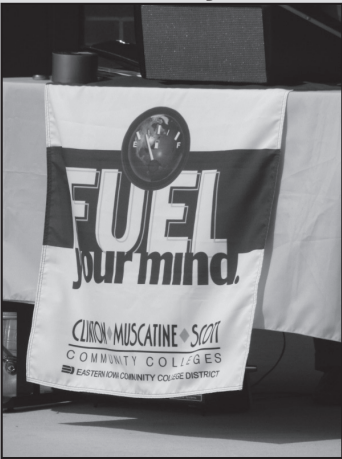
■ Mary J. Lancaster probate

■ Neta H. Poole probate



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OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

■ Jackson County

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■ Maquoketa School District



Contributed Photo

Bridgette Gray (Urleen) leads the cast in rehearsal for this weekend's production of "Footloose." The musical will be performed at the Ohnward Fine Arts Center, Maquoketa.

PPP to perform
"Footloose"
this weekend

Peace Pipe Players Community Theatre presents "Footloose the Musical" Aug. 7 and 8 at 7 p.m. and Aug. 9 at 2 p.m. at the Ohnward Fine Arts Center in Maquoketa.

One of the most explosive movie musicals in history bursts onto the live stage with exhilarating results.

When Ren (Evan Collister) and his mother Ethel (Janet Burrow) move from Chicago to a small farming town, Ren is prepared for the adjustment period at his new high school. But he isn't prepared for the rigorous local edicts, including a ban on dancing, instituted by the local preacher, the Rev. Shaw (Bill Davison).

The heartfelt story that emerges is one of a father longing for the son he lost and of a young man aching for the father who walked out on him.

"Footloose" is directed and choreographed by Erica Barker, with Joel Davidson as assistant director and musical direction by Shawn Vazquez.

Tickets are available at the door.

Note: "Footloose the Musical" is rated PG13. Adult language is used onstage.

Peace Pipe Players' production of "Footloose" is presented through special arrangement with R & H Theatricals.

Supervisors respond to hospital cutbacks

By DOUGLAS MELVOLD

The Jackson County Board of Supervisors said this week they would like to meet with the Jackson County Regional Health Center Board of Trustees to discuss service reductions that will be made at the Maquoketa hospital.

The supervisors on Tuesday, Aug. 4, discussed the hospital board's decision of a week earlier to close the hospital's skilled nursing facility-long-term care unit and the dialysis unit and to cease preparing food for Maquoketa's Meals on Wheels program as of Nov. 1.

Supervisors said they have received many comments from constituents concerned about the budget cuts.

Supervisor Jack Willey said some people have wondered why the supervisors wouldn't increase the property tax rate to raise more money for the hospital.

Willey and Supervisor Steve Flynn said some people they talked with had the misconception that the supervisors oversee the operation of the hospital.

They noted that the hospital has its own governing board that makes decisions and sets policy for the hospital, including approving the budget and setting the tax levy.

"We really have no oversight over that," Flynn noted.

The seven-member hospital board is elected by Jackson County voters.

Flynn noted that the supervisors' relationship to the hospital board is similar to that with the county Conservation Board, which has its own board that sets policy and oversees that department.

"They make their own decisions, as do the hospital trustees," Flynn said. "We have nothing to say about the policies up there."

Flynn said he saw the hospital's budget problems as "basically a Medicare reimbursement issue because that's where they have their biggest shortfall in their funding."

A major complaint of rural hospitals for years is that Medicare, the federal health care insurance program for senior citizens and the disabled, reimburses smaller rural hospitals less for given procedures than it reimburses larger hospitals, even though the costs of providing those services are comparable.

Hospitals are forbidden by law from billing patients or other sources to make up the difference.

"In the medical field that's exactly what's happening and until the federal government raises the reimbursement rates, it's a disaster," Willey said.

He said the Medicare reimbursement issue is the reason the Gannon Center for Community Mental Health, which had an outlet in Maquoketa, was forced to close.

Flynn asked why the federal government wouldn't pay a higher Medicare reimbursement rate to rural hospitals, which would help them attract physicians.

"It costs the same to do a procedure in a smaller hospital as it does in a larger hospital. (Equal reimbursement rates) would attract physicians to rural hospitals if they have these."

"You'll never have a level playing field until they do that," Willey said. "Unless the physicians and the hospital get adequate funding, it's scary. The future is really scary."

Flynn said he understood that U.S. Rep. Bruce Braley, D-Iowa, or a representative from his office, will be visiting the hospital on Aug. 18.

He suggested that the supervisors also meet with Braley to show support for the hospital and

to discuss Medicare reimbursement rates. As an alternative, he suggested that the supervisors meet jointly with the hospital board for a round-table discussion.

Willey and Supervisor Larry "Buck" Koos said they would support such a meeting. Flynn said he would contact hospital officials about the proposal and report back to the board.

"It's the main focus of the community right now," Flynn said, adding that the supervisors also should send letters of support for the hospital and concern about Medicare reimbursement to Braley and to Iowa's U.S. senators, Charles Grassley and Tom Harkin.

Koos said he respects the decisions the hospital board and administration made and said he understands the problems.

"They made a lot of tough choices," Koos said.

Flynn said the hospital trustees "do an excellent job. They're on top of it." He said he sympathizes with the "difficult cuts they've had to make" and said there's not enough money to go around.

Willey noted that the service reductions mean that 35 to 40 hospital employees will lose their jobs at a time when the county is making the transition to a new emphasis on economic development that creates jobs.

"When you lose 35 to 40 jobs in Jackson County, that's a lot," Willey said. "It's going to touch a lot of people."

He noted that closing the skilled nursing facility will be difficult for patients who are bedridden and will have to be moved to another facility.

"They'll get good care, but will they get the same kind of care?" Willey asked. "It's terribly, terribly sad for everyone."