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— M A Q U O K E T A —
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Branstad stumps for comeback

By KELLY GERLACH

The Comeback Tour stopped in Maquoketa Thursday, bringing former Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad and his ambitious vision for a better Iowa.

Branstad spoke Thursday, March 25, to a larger-than-normal assemblage of the Maquoketa Kiwanis Club at the Decker Hotel & Restaurant.

The bulk of Branstad's 20-minute speech reminded the audience of the prosperous condition in which he left the state following his 16 years as governor (1983-99). With another chance at being governor, he said he could return Iowa to those days.

"I want to get our fiscal house in order. We cannot borrow our way to solidarity... Across-the-board cuts do not solve the problem," Branstad said, referring to statewide budget cuts made last year by Gov. Chet Culver.

Unemployment featured prominently in Branstad's speech. He reminded his audience of how Iowa's unemployment rates were at 8.5 percent when he took office in 1983 and how they dropped to 2.5 percent when he left office in 1999. About 6.7 percent of Iowans are currently jobless, about 10 percent in Jackson County according to Iowa Workforce Development statistics.

Branstad announced his goal to create 200,000 jobs in Iowa. He offered no specific plans as to how this would happen but said he would continue his personal approach to business to draw companies and jobs to the state.

Branstad said he wanted to "eliminate impediments and barriers in the tax and business climate," by reducing tax and regulatory laws. Chief among them, he claimed, is the state's commercial property tax rate, which requires taxes to be paid on the full assessed valuation of



MSP photo by Kelly Gerlach

Former Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad spoke to members of the Maquoketa Kiwanis Club Thursday, March 25. Branstad is seeking a fifth term as governor.

commercial property. Residential and agricultural property tax rates are considerably lower.

If elected, Branstad said he would reduce the commercial property tax rate to 60 or 65 percent of the fair-market value.

As governor, Branstad said he would raise the average family income by 25 percent and streamline government by reducing it 15 percent.

He said he wouldn't necessarily eliminate individual county governments but encourage them to partner with other counties for services.

"There are more creative and less expensive ways to reduce costs and become more efficient," he said.

■ **BRANSTAD, Please turn to page 2**

Easter Egg Hunt had youth scrambling for treats



One year-old Taejon Norles got to meet the Easter Bunny prior to participating in the annual Maquoketa Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday morning, March 27. The event was co-sponsored by the Maquoketa Kiwanis Club and Wal-Mart. Eggs and treats were "hidden" in full view in three plots for age divisions, 0-3; 4-6, and 7-9 year old boys and girls behind the Jackson County Senior Center on East Quarry Street.



Landon Bauer shows the bounty of Easter eggs and assorted goodies he found during Saturday's Easter Egg Hunt in Maquoketa.



Lillian Hayward, accompanied by her mother Michelle, had good luck finding eggs during the annual Kiwanis/Wal-Mart Easter Egg Hunt. One parent was allowed to accompany children under three years old during the hunt. No one went home without finding a good number of eggs and treats.



MSP photos by Jack Marlowe

Heavyn Young, six years old, daughter of Mark and Desiree Blanchard, discovered an orange egg she found during the Maquoketa East Egg Hunt included a certificate for the top prize, a bicycle from Wal-Mart. Heavyn displays the certificate while sitting on the lap of the Easter Bunny. She also was happy to learn another egg she found included a certificate for ice cream.



Eight year old Dawson Hute discovered a pink egg that included a certificate for a special gift during the annual Kiwanis/Wal-Mart sponsored East Egg Hunt on March 27.