

The Iowa County



Anhydrous Tank Thefts Still A
Concern in Iowa

May 2003

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Iowa State Association of Counties



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ISAC's Mission:

To promote effective and responsible county government for the people of Iowa.

ISAC's Vision:

To be the principal, authoritative source of representation, information and services for and about county government in Iowa.

The Lock Down of Anhydrous Tanks

Who'd have ever thought that Farmer Brown's tank of anhydrous would be of interest to drug dealers? Anhydrous thefts for the process of making the drug, methamphetamine has been of concern for sheriffs since 1997. Iowa agriculture depends on anhydrous ammonia as a low-cost form of nitrogen fertilizer on 61% of Iowa's 12.3 million acres of corn. Now Iowa has found a threat to that source of nutrient.

Needing Anhydrous Ammonia for Meth

In 2002, there were 1,009 meth lab seizures, which directly relates to anhydrous theft, since anhydrous ammonia is a key ingredient for making meth. Van Haaften said this figure is not accurate due to co-ops and farmers not reporting the crimes in a timely fashion, or not reporting the crimes at all. "Anhydrous thefts have become too common for many people in Iowa," said Van Haaften. Counties that reported the highest number of meth lab seizures included Polk, Black Hawk, Wapello, Buchanan and Jasper counties. More meth labs are showing up in rural Iowa because contact with law enforcement is minimal and the un-monitored areas provide for easy production of the drug and disposal of toxic by-products. In Iowa, ingredients are readily available and inexpensive; smells associated with cooking meth are easily masked in rural areas; low income levels and high welfare levels are common which contribute to drug usage. An upsurge of meth production in the early 1990s in the San Joaquin Valley of California quickly spread to the Midwest. Van Haaften said the wave of meth labs have come from southern states and are now increasing in northern Iowa and into Minnesota.

Drug dealers are paying large sums of money for liquid anhydrous. Drug dealers typically will pay \$100 for a gallon of anhydrous ammonia, said Van Haaften. "Though when Black Hawk County started using locks on co-op tanks the cost of a gallon of anhydrous ammonia in that area went up to \$1,000." In order to steal the product, usually some type of hose is used to remove the anhydrous from the tank and routing it into a bucket. They then typically funnel it from the bucket into a more secure container, such as a cooler, thermos container, or fire extinguisher. Threats of throwing the liquid anhydrous into officers' faces have been made if the thieves are stopped.

Leaks Threaten Citizens

The theft of anhydrous ammonia not only threatens Iowa's agriculture, but also the safety of Iowa's citizens. A Fort Dodge newspaper recently ran a story regarding an ammonia leak in Gulfport, Mississippi that forced tourists to evacuate eight hotels along the Gulf Coast. A cloud of ammonia leaked from a chemical plant and authorities said it appeared someone was trying to steal to the chemical to make illegal drugs. Marvin Van Haaften, Director of the Office of Drug Control Policy, said anhydrous tanks are a threat to citizens because many co-ops are located in towns. "If someone wanted to do a terrorist act they could open

the valves on 10 tanks which could cause the evacuation of a whole town and surrounding area."

Van Haaften said, "Anhydrous is more dangerous than tear gas because of the long term effects." Anhydrous ammonia gas or liquid is very corrosive to body tissues, reacting with body moisture on contact. Effects of exposure to anhydrous ammonia include: upper airway obstruction if inhaled, eye irritation and impaired vision, burns, severe skin irritation (redness and blisters), nausea, and dizziness.

New Tank-Lock Initiative

"Anhydrous thefts are still a problem in many counties across Iowa, however, a federal grant was approved that has allowed approximately 20 counties in Iowa to place a lock on anhydrous storage tanks at the local co-ops," said Gary Anderson, Appanoose County Sheriff. U.S. Senator Tom Harkin joined law enforcement from the 18 county South Central Iowa Clan Lab Task Force on October 25, 2002 to launch a new tank-lock initiative. Harkin secured \$200,000 in federal funds from the US Department of Justice for the project. The lock prevents a person from opening the valves on the tanks and stealing anhydrous to manufacture methamphetamine. The locks are \$43 each and with the grant the state has been able to lock 4,605 tanks.

There are 750 licensed dealers in Iowa resulting in somewhere between 25,000-29,000 tanks in the state, said Dennis Wiggins, Assistant Director of Programs for the Office of Drug Control Policy. "To get the most bang for our buck, we decided to lock contiguous counties as opposed to locking a few sites here and there," said Wiggins. The state has secured the following counties with locks on anhydrous tanks: Adams, Appanoose, Benton, Black Hawk, Boone, Clarke, Dallas, Davis, Decatur, Jasper, Lucas, Madison, Mahaska, Marion, Marshall, Monroe, Polk, Ringgold, Story, Tama, Taylor, Union, Wapello, Warren and Wayne. Black Hawk raised funds themselves and have had anhydrous tanks locked for over two years. Pottawattamie, Harrison and Mills counties received a grant from a casino to purchase locks. Wiggins said within the next five years the state would like to secure all of the counties between the areas already secured with locks, mainly southwest Iowa.

Anderson said, "Unfortunately, these locks are only installed at the co-ops, so when a farmer rents a tank the lock is taken off and the farmer is responsible for security of the tank while they have it in their possession. The locks have not been accompanying the tanks when rented due to security issues of the keys." Van Haaften said the state is focusing their efforts of putting locks on anhydrous tanks at co-ops, since the tanks are stored up to nine months at these sites. "It would really be inconvenient for a co-op to give a farmer a lock because the tanks are in transition so much of the time," said Van Haaften. Wiggins said that a lock has not been defeated thus far. "The locks are comprised of hardened steel and cannot be cut by saws, torches, bolt cutters or drills," said Wiggins. The locks are manufactured and purchased from a family business, C&K Mfg., Inc., located

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continued from page 6

in Humboldt, Iowa.

Meth Affecting Communities

Methamphetamine, also known as crystal meth, crank, speed, go-fast, zip, or cristy, is a powerful central nervous system stimulant with a high potential for abuse and dependence. It is illegally produced and sold in pill form, capsules, powder or chunks. One simple recipe for making meth requires commonly available precursors, such as starter fluid, lantern fuel, cold medicines, antifreeze, lye and anhydrous ammonia. The drug can be made in a make shift "lab" that can fit into a suitcase.

Methamphetamine accounts for up to 90% of all drug cases in many Midwest communities. With meth use there is increased criminal activity and domestic violence that affects communities. There is a threat of fire and explosions triggered by manufacturing meth, car accidents, environmental contamination from the waste, lost worker productivity, an increase in the spread of diseases (such as HIV/AIDS and hepatitis), and economic costs that fall on governments, which must allocate additional resources for social services and law enforcement. The typical Midwestern meth "cooker" is a white male between 15 and 30 years old, with little education and living in poverty, often unemployed.

Education The Key

The organization Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI) has been addressing the problem of meth in rural Iowa since 1998 after local residents were finding abandoned meth labs in their fields, in ditches and along road sides. The organization has started a campaign to reduce the number of anhydrous ammonia thefts by educating farmers and local law enforcement officials on ways to prevent the theft. CCI has run ads in papers, distributed fliers to farmers, and held public meetings with local law enforcement and local businesses. They have also developed a card for individuals to fill out and report back to the organization anonymously if they see suspected drug dealers, suspected meth lab locations, abandoned meth labs, or drug related crimes. The organization has focused on Davis County and has seen results from their efforts. The local sheriff recently installed alarms at co-ops in the county which have made people aware of the issue. "What we have found is anhydrous thefts have moved out of Davis County but are now in other areas," said Kari Carney, CCI staff. The organization would like to expand their efforts.

Methamphetamine use is a national, state, and local concern. The state providing locks to co-ops is a positive step in stopping anhydrous thefts in Iowa. County officials need to help in the process by providing education to their citizens on the prevention of drug use.

NACo news

Visiting Congressional Delegates at NACo Conference

County officials from Iowa took time during the 2003 National Association of Counties Legislative Conference, held at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington D.C. on February 28 – March 4, to visit with Iowa congressional delegates. County officials met with Rep. James Leach, Rep. Tom Latham, Rep. Steve King, Sen. Charles Grassley, and Sen. Tom Harkin. Iowa county officials also met with the staff from the offices of Rep. Jim Nussle and Rep. Leonard Boswell. County officials visited with the congressional delegates at their offices in Washington D.C. for 15-30 minutes to discuss issues such as: local funding for homestead security initiatives, funding for election reform, reauthorization of TEA-21, remote sales tax and sales tax simplification, Medicaid reform and Medicare reimbursement.

NACo's 2004 Legislative Conference was held February 27 - March 2 at the Hilton Washington & Towers in Washington, DC. NACo members from Iowa are encouraged to attend future NACo Legislative Conferences in order to hear presentations by key national leaders, receive legislative updates, discuss legislative priorities, network with other county officials and exchange information in a national forum in the nation's capital.



Winnebago County Auditor Robert Paulson and Story County Auditor Mary Mosiman met with Iowa Congressman Tom Latham in Washington, DC, on behalf of ISAC.

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counties in the spotlight

National County Government Week was held April 6-12 in order to educate citizens in the area of county government. **Grundy County** invited the 5th and 6th grade classes in their county to visit the courthouse April 22. They began the tour with saying the pledge to the flag at the entrance of the courthouse. Then they toured the courthouse and meet the elected officials. They also spend time in the courtroom where the Judge let them experience a mock trial. Stations were set up at the Law Center where they were given a tour by the sheriff and his deputies. Also, the public health nurse gave a brief presentation on their services. The county conservation director planned a presentation at the landfill to tell the students about preserving the environment and what it means to recycle materials. They were also given the opportunity to vote on a paper ballot and experience an election set up just for them.

Boone County set up a booth at the Boone High School career Fair and the Boone Area Home Show. County officials were on-site promoting careers in county government, conducting a GIS demonstration, and having students participate in a mock election using a real voting booth.

Tama County celebrated its annual County Government Day on April 9th. Activities included tours of the Court-house-courtroom, Administration Building, County Museum, County Jail, Conservation Department-Extension, and Health Services/Sanitarian - Legion Hall. This is the 49th year that the American Legion and Legion Auxiliary have sponsored County Government Day for Tama County.

Buena Vista County received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) designated for community facilities, services, and infrastructure improvement. The county was awarded \$828,000 in funding for connection to the rural water system and construction of an elevated water storage facility. Buena Vista County was one of 65 communities awarded a CDBG by the Iowa Department of Economic Development. "Services such as child care and a healthy water supply are critical to the future of every Iowa community," remarked Hank Manning, CDBG program manager. IDED received 152 pre-applications for grant funds. The CDBG program is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

(Taken from the Daily Reporter, March 5)

Adair, Adams, Madison, Ringgold, and Union counties have been awarded federal funds under the Emergency Food and Shelter National Board program. These counties have received the following amounts to supplement emergency food and shelter programs: Adair, Adams and Ringgold, \$2,000 each; Madison, \$2,544; and Union, \$3,107. The selection was made by a national board chaired by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and was charged to distribute funds to help expand the capacity of food and shelter programs in high-need areas.

(Taken from the Creston News Advertiser, March 11)

Royce Fichtner, **Marshall County** Engineer, was installed as the president for the National Association of County Engineers (NACE). Royce has been a member of NACE since 1972, serving on the Board of Directors, as NACE's South Central Vice-President and most recently president-elect. NACE has approximately 1,900 members in 50 states and Canada. Royce has worked in Iowa counties over 34 years, serving in his current position since 1978.

Bill Jurgens, former **Franklin County** Supervisor, passed away April 6, due to a long term illness. Bill served as supervisor for 16 years, completing his final term December 31, 2002. "We will remember him as a kind hearted caring person," said Michelle Giddings, Franklin County Auditor.



The number of Iowans who live in one county but work in another had almost doubled in the last 20 years, according to Census 2000 figures that were recently released. Nearly 22 % of Iowans now commute to jobs outside the counties where they live, an increase from almost 14% in 1980. Benton, Butler, Cedar, Dallas, Louisa, Madison, Warren, and Worth counties send more than half of their working residents to other counties for employment. This compares to just two counties in 1990, Dallas and Warren, and only one county in 1980, Warren.

(Taken from the Iowa State Daily, March 7)

Did You Know?

Kossuth County, Iowa's largest at 979 square miles, is more than 20 times smaller than the nation's largest county. San Bernardino County, California covers the 20,160 square miles about an hour east of Los Angeles.

classifieds

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Property Tax Efforts For The Year

“‘Power’ can be defined as the ability to act.” - Saul Alinsky

If there has been a constant in the 15 legislative sessions during which I have represented ISAC, it is that each year property taxes have been on the front burner. There have been other significant issues and legislative proposals which have faced county officials during the 2003 session. These include the “re-design” of MH/MR/DD services, the Iowa Department of Transportation’s proposed transfer of jurisdiction of significant miles of highway from the state to counties, an effort to begin the completion of making enhanced 9-1-1 service compatible with wireless telephones, land use planning, the arguments over the rate of taxation of casinos and tracks, the future of state programs financed with gambling revenue (including environmental programs such as REAP), and the brouhaha over election law legislation and the Help America Vote Act funding.

Property Tax Issues Have Dominated

But over the years, the heavy lifting, furious arguing, the call for county officials to make the case to their legislators in one-on-one meetings, the burning of the midnight oil, even the lawsuits...all have been over some aspect of the ability of local governments to utilize property taxes (with the notable exception of the hot arguments regarding livestock confinement siting). It has been about property tax limitations brought forth by the Iowa Farm Bureau or Iowans for Tax Relief, a Muscatine based institution of considerable influence under the gold dome. It has been about proposals to limit county flexibility in levying or spending property taxes. It has been about tax increment financing (TIF), a tool used by cities and by counties, which has caused counties heartburn when widely, freely used by our local government cousins in city halls. This has been due to the lack of access to increased property tax revenues brought about by commercial activity attributable to the declaration of the TIF district. (After all, one of the attractions of this device is that it enables a political subdivision to use O.P.M.: other peoples’ money.) Every year since at least 1992, when the legislature enacted a property tax freeze, property tax issues have dominated our lobbying efforts.

Efforts Re-Born

As they used to say in radio, our story begins this year when in the early days of the legislative session rumors circulated in the Statehouse rotunda that a variety of past property tax efforts would be re-born. One of the first proposals out of the chute was not what we feared but was Senate File 41, a thoughtful effort by Sen. David Miller (R-Jefferson) to restructure the property tax system, uncoupling residential from agricultural property and basing all assessments on market value. This was actually a repeat since the bill was a rewrite of a bill which he threw in the hopper last year in an effort to see what reaction it would receive. Before long, the retreads began to show up. A “bundle”

By: Robert Mulqueen

ISAC Public Policy Analyst



of House study bills appeared in the bill packet one morning which were covers of earlier tunes. One revisited the moldy oldy “uniformed patrol” issue, which has been passed, vetoed, revisited, brought suit over in Story and Lyon Counties (decision in favor of each county) and now repeated. Another is a variation of a bill from a few years ago which dictates to counties how they should use the local option sales tax revenue earmarked for property tax relief.

The \$2 Billion Plan

No sooner had we prepared for battle over these when the Farm Bureau, with some fanfare, unveiled their ambitious plan for targeting \$2 billion raised by means of a state bond issuance and paying off that debt with a statewide property tax which would replace tax increment financing. This proposal, referred to as STIR (Statewide Tax Increment Renewal), would use the \$2 billion for 1) regional economic development, 2) bringing up to \$500 the per pupil amount raised via the school infrastructure local option sales tax, and 3) for big ticket economic development “incentives,” particularly bio-technology projects. The Iowa League of Cities did not hide their distaste for STIR. They soon rolled out their own big tax and economic development plan, referred to as REV (Re-energizing Economic Vitality). The League’s offering included significant changes in the use of TIF, narrowing the use of this tool along the lines of past ISAC proposals. This suggestion, along with the above-mentioned reintroduction of several previous Farm Bureau property tax study bills, proves the validity of the title of that old song from a Bob Fosse musical: “Everything Old Is New Again.”

Ag Land Values Will Plummet

Next, in short order, came a bill offered by Senator Larry McKibben (R-Marshall) which promised wholesale changes in state income tax law, sales taxes, and property taxes. The latter would be in the form of a new property tax limitation. About the time that this measure was unveiled, county assessors and the Department of Revenue and Finance brought a piece of disturbing news. The scheduled change in the rolling five year average of the productivity values means that revenues to counties from property taxes on agricultural land would plummet next year. This news would or should give warning to legislators about the effect of many of their property tax bills. Then, in early April, Speaker of the House Christopher Rants (R-Woodbury), together with a working group of House Republicans, led by Representative Jamie Van Fossen (R-Scott), introduced a proposal changing the entire property tax structure.

Significant changes in our property tax system are warranted. This is a point to which county officials have agreed. But the devil, as the overused phrase goes, is in the details.

legal briefs

Discretionary Immunity Narrowed By Supreme Court

Tort Immunity

There were two cases decided recently by the Iowa Supreme Court on the issue of discretionary immunity. These cases, read together, narrow the circumstances in which counties are going to be able to use discretionary immunity to avoid tort liability.

In *Ette v. Linn-Marr Community School District*, 656 N.W.2d 62 (Iowa 2003), Tony Ette was a ninth grade student on a school band trip to San Antonio, Texas. While in San Antonio, Ette was caught with cigarettes, in violation of school rules. Incredibly, school officials sent Ette home alone, via a cross-county 1,100 mile bus trip.

Ette sued the school district for negligent endangerment and false imprisonment. One of the school district's defenses was the discretionary function immunity of Iowa Code §670.4 (3), which provides that local governments are immune from claims based upon "the exercise or performance or the failure to exercise or perform a discretionary function or duty..."

The district court found that the discretionary function exception shielded the school district from liability. On appeal, the Iowa Supreme Court said that discretionary judgment was involved in the decision to put Ette on a bus, so the deciding question was whether that decision was "driven by public policy concerns grounded on social, economic or political considerations." The Court held that the trip directors' decision to send Ette home on a bus "was not one driven by public policy implications uniquely within the purview of the school officials," and held that the discretionary function immunity was not applicable.

The Court said that the discretionary function exception was not designed shield school officials from an alleged breach of its duty of care towards students in its charge. The Court reversed the district court decision and remanded the case for a new trial.

In *Graber v. Ankeny*, 656 NW2d 157 (Iowa 2003), Judith Graber's car was struck at an intersection and she brought a negligence action against the city for failing to set the timing of its traffic signals properly. The district court granted summary judgment for the city, and Graber appealed. The Iowa Supreme Court held that the city's timing of traffic lights was a matter of discretion, but held that the city did not have discretionary function immunity because its judgment was based on traffic safety factors, and did not involve legitimate policy-based considerations.

According to the Court, policy judgments are immune from liability only if they involve the balancing of social, political or economic factors. "Here," said the Court, "the city judgment was based on nothing more than a generic safety consideration." The Court reversed the granting of the city's motion for summary judgment.

These cases demonstrate that counties are not going to succeed with claims of discretionary immunity unless they can

By: David Vestal

ISAC Deputy Director



clearly show that county's actions involved policy-making and legitimate consideration of policy-based issues.

Approving Contracts

What are the formal steps that have to be taken for a county to approve a contract? The Iowa Supreme Court handed down a decision in April that explains how this is supposed to work. The case was *City of Akron v. Akron-Westfield Community School District* (02-0058). It obviously involved a city, but the legal principles are exactly the same. In the case, the city and the school district entered into a contract under which the city agreed to buy electricity generated by the school district's wind turbine. The school superintendent signed the contract for the school district. The city administrator signed for the city. The contract was never approved by the city council. When a new mayor was elected, he challenged the validity of the contract under Iowa Code §364.3 (1) which says that a city council shall exercise a power only by the passage of a motion, a resolution, an amendment or an ordinance. The county counterpart of that statute is 331.302 (1). The Iowa Supreme Court held that a city's compliance with 364.3 (1) is "crucial," and concluded that any contract with a city entered into without a formal motion, resolution, amendment or ordinance is void. The same would hold true for counties under 331.302 (1). Who signs your county's contracts?

Duty to Arrest

It is always troublesome to read about lawsuits where juries hold law enforcement officers civilly liable for failure to protect a specific person. In February a Montana jury found a county and its sheriff liable for failing to arrest a man with a history of domestic abuse who killed his wife. The jury found the sheriff negligent for not making an arrest. This is one of only about a dozen such verdicts in the country over the last 15 years. The jury awarded the three sons of the murdered woman \$358,000. The plaintiffs were able to establish a special relationship between the sheriff and the battered woman which created the duty to arrest the abuser. The verdict came despite the defendants' contention that Montana law created no such duty. It sets a dangerous precedent to let juries with 20/20 hindsight award civil damages against law enforcement officers in these situations.

Parting Ponderable: "You don't know what to believe in anymore. The number one golfer in the world is black. The number one rapper in the county is white. The Swiss won the America's Cup. France is accusing the United States of being arrogant. And Germany is criticizing the Americans for being warmongers." Jim Walden, WHO Radio personality

Rising Cost of Health Insurance

Are you amazed at the high cost of health insurance? If you aren't impacted by it, you are very lucky! Employers and employees all over the United States are trying to find alternatives to the rising cost of health insurance. There are many things that we as employees can do to impact costs and rates.

1. Know Your Benefits: It is important for you to know what is covered and what isn't. You need to know if preventative care such as physicals and mammograms are covered to prevent illness. It is also important to know which doctors are in your provider network.

2. Choose Generic Drugs: Generics are FDA-approved and high quality equivalents to the more costly name brand drugs and generic drugs cost one-third the price. Since the percentage of prescription costs in our health care dollar is rising, using generics makes a big difference.

3. Lifestyle Choices: Staying healthy is *the* most cost-effective way to lower medical costs. Believe it or not, getting daily exercise remains one of the most effective lifestyle changes we can make. The Center for Disease Control estimates that if the 88 million inactive Americans over 15 get regular, moderate exer-

By: Sandy Longfellow

ISAC Administrative Assistant

cise, health care costs could decrease by as much as \$76.6 billion.

4. Practice Prevention: Schedule routine check-ups and physical exams. Get a flu shot. Buckle your seatbelt. Wear a bike helmet. Be aware of ways in which you can prevent illness and injury.

5. Use the Emergency Room Wisely: There are millions of visits each year to emergency rooms for things that could be handled in a doctor's office. Certainly, in an emergency, don't hesitate, but using self-care books can help you determine what is urgent and what can wait until the next day.

6. Become Cost Conscious: Be aware of the actual costs of your medical care. Most people seldom recognize that the drug they pay \$10 or \$20 for actually costs \$150 or more. If you are hospitalized, you might want to go over your bill and make sure that everything you are paying for you received. Errors are made that no one catches.

For tips on all these items go to www.wellmark.com.



technology center

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Q. I have noticed many of the documents that I want to download from the Internet require Adobe Acrobat Reader. How can I obtain this?

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By: Tammy Norman

ISAC Technical
Administrative Assistant

ity to search Adobe PDF files, accessibility support*, secure Internet eBook purchase support and Acrobat Reader Help (PDF format). It will default to be "unchecked"; you will need to click on the box if you desire these features. Once completed, click on the red button titled "Download." A popup window will appear, asking if you want to open the file or save it to your computer. You will want to "Open" the file. Once opened, the "Acrobat Reader Setup" Wizard will be displayed and you will be given a "Welcome" prompt, click on "Next." It will now prompt you to save it. Usually it defaults to the "Program Files" on your hard drive. If it does not, click on "Browse" and change it to the "Program" directory. Click on "Next." It will take a few moments, depending on your Internet speed to complete the download process. Once completed, it will prompt you with "Thank you for choosing Acrobat Reader." Click "Ok." The first time you use this software, you will need to agree to their license agreement, just click on "Accept." Once done, you will now be able to open and view .pdf files. Until next month, keep clicking!



case management

Relief From The Overload

In April I was assisting Dan at the Northeast Support Group meeting for case managers. On the wall near where we were enjoying lunch was a picture of a train wreck. Granted it was a historical picture of an actual train wreck that should have evoked a sense of wonderment at an event from many years ago. But I could not get beyond a sense of the symbolism it represented for me. A train wreck—a huge machine out of control and people totally helpless.

We have ARO, we have HIPAA, we have pre-authorization, we have MBC's perspective, we have staff turnover, we have no money, and on it seems to go. It seems like all the topics of current interest are all topics either we are tired of hearing about or just don't want to hear about because we seem so helpless.

Case managers have always had the dubious responsibility to know something about everything in order to effectively have resources available to people. This can be overwhelming especially in the face of constant change. Supervisors need to be aware that the overwhelming factors in the job can have a paralyzing effect and in order to get moving again we sometimes need a little relief. We need to know we have value and that we are people first.

Lifting Spirits In The Office

I asked a few folks to tell me what they do to lift the spirits in their offices. Food seemed to be a theme repeated often. Several agencies go out to eat for lunch after monthly staffing meetings, or order pizza in and spend the lunch hour talking about fun things going on in their lives—anything except work. One agency created a picnic in the office complete with flowers from their gardens for a fun summer lunch. Holiday time is often an opportunity to share food and conversation during a time set aside from the work day, again often lunch so as not to interfere with work. They also celebrate birthdays in the office through decorations and again, good food!

Here is a list from one group as to what they do together: bowling, scavenger hunt, Christmas Party, secret pal, weekly Friday morning breakfast meeting at a local restaurant, banana splits at meetings, garage/bake sales to raise money for social work fund which is controlled by social workers themselves and used to meet emergency needs of the consumers.

Teambuilding

When addressing teambuilding, the responses included quarterly team building activities, use of a specific feedback process, creating a work zone (defined as two hour time periods with no interruptions), and setting goals as a team with a reward when accomplished. An overriding theme for team building was the scheduled, regular all-staff meetings at which brainstorming, planning, sharing of ideas to make the work, forms or whatever better.

By: Linda Kemp Gethmann

ISAC Case Management
Specialist



Those who responded to my question obviously were aware of the need to use time wisely and were willing to have the valuable time involved in recognizing employees as people first during some off hours (such as lunch, evening meal or a breakfast together). I know these agencies to be ones that create an atmosphere of openness where members feel valued, appreciated, and listened to.

Worry

If your team is focused on worry in the face of the demands of the job, it can have significant side effects. Here is a sample from Paul J. Meyer in "Unlocking Your Legacy."

Self-Doubt - It is a downward spiral that focuses on the negative and why things cannot be done versus why things can be done. It is a sinkhole, a debilitating attitude, and a terrible habit.

Mediocrity - Capable people who worry are rendered incapable of accomplishing their intended goal. Worry makes you peck around on the ground like a chicken when you were intended to soar like an eagle.

Fright - People who worry are not being cautious or thinking things over; they are simply scared. Running scared is the enemy of success, peace, contentment, happiness, joy, laughter, etc.

No Spark - The excitement is gone. Worry lets the air out of all you do, draining the fun and excitement from everything.

No Creativity - The freedom to be creative is squelched by worry. You simply cannot excel to your full potential when worry controls your thoughts.

Wasted Time - Over 90 % of what you worry about never comes to pass. To worry is to waste time; therefore, the more you worry, the less you accomplish.

Physical Ailments - The body reacts adversely to internal worries. John Haggai insightfully stated, "A distraught mind inevitably leads to a deteriorated body."

If a picture of a train wreck has a deeper response in you than just being a curiosity, try some of the positive activities of renewal and refocusing others find effective. We sometimes need to step back, set work aside, laugh a while, and enjoy the company of the people with whom we spend so much time just to be able to face the work again.

If you are a case manager and have an address, phone, staff, or e-mail change please contact Sandy Longfellow at 515-244-7181 or slongfellow@iowacounties.org

Short Takes on

Governor Vilsack's Administration



John Pederson

Senate Legislative Liaison to Gov. Vilsack



John Pederson is the Iowa Senate Legislative Liaison for Governor Tom Vilsack and Lt. Governor Sally Pederson. John works with the leadership and the committee chairs to forward the Governor's leadership agenda. He also assists department liaisons throughout state government

with their legislative proposals.

John started in the Governor's Office in January of 2003 after spending 12 years as a liaison in the Attorney General's Office. While with the Attorney General's Office he also worked on budget, consumer and agriculture issues.

After graduation from Lake Mills Community High School in Lake Mills, Iowa. John attended North Iowa Area Community College in Mason City before receiving a degree in elementary education at Iowa State University. He was hired by the Des Moines Fire Department as a Paramedic/Firefighter where he worked for 8 years before starting to lobby for the professional firefighters in 1988.

Steve Falck

House Legislative Liaison to Gov. Vilsack

Steve Falck was elected to the Iowa House of Representatives, District 28 in 1996 and re-elected in 1998 & 2000. He served as an Assistant Minority Leader in 2001. Steve resigned from the House in 2002 to work in the Governor & Lt. Governor's Office.



Steve grew up on a family farm in the Fayette and Buchanan counties area. He graduated from Oelwein Community Schools in 1976 and received a BA degree in Political Science from Upper Iowa University in Fayette in 1980. Steve joined the family farming operation in 1984 and also was an associate Real Estate Appraiser. Steve was elected to the Oelwein School Board in 1992 and served until 1996.

Meet Your Board Members

Denise Dolan has been the Dubuque County Auditor for 15 years. Her past employment was at John Deere Waterloo Tractor Works for five years. "As a new ISAC board member, I'm still learning. It's a great way to learn about the other affiliates and their issues, and to find ways to collaborate to further the goals of ISAC and county government." Denise's hope for the future of ISAC is to be proactive in planning and preparing for future changes, so that ISAC is always able to provide the services needed by our constituents.



Denise is on the Board of Directors for the Dupaco Community Credit Union. She is also a member of the Dubuque County Firefighters Assn. Regional Emergency Responder Training Facility Task Force, Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce, Dubuque County Historical Society, Iowa Firemen's Association, and the Dubuque County Democrats. Denise is single and enjoys reading, traveling, genealogy, and politics.

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Review of Alumni Meeting

The ISAC Alumni Association met March 20 at the Spring School. The 11 members present determined that the membership dues for the association will be raised to \$25, with the extra \$5 to go for a scholarship from the alumni association. The members discussed having someone from the association with computer knowledge help out at registration for ISAC conferences. Jerri Noboa reported that the panel of former officers for the session "Ask the Expert" at the New County Officers training school in January was very successful. Jerri also mentioned that there will be an IPERS rep at the ISAC Fall School of Instruction. The group discussed ways to get more alumni to join the association. One idea was to have a program for the alumni meetings. The association will be meeting prior to the fall school, September 16 at the ISAC office.

Will you be retiring soon? Think about becoming an ISAC Alumni Member. Visit ISAC's website (www.iowacounties.org) and click on 'About ISAC,' then 'Alumni Association' for further information.

ISAC brief

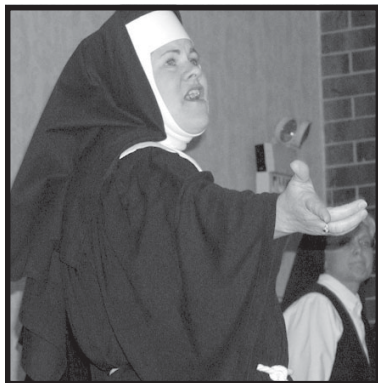
Education at ISAC's Spring School

More than 900 county officials traveled to Des Moines for education, skills training and networking. ISAC held its 60th Spring School of Instruction & Business Meeting March 19-21 at the Holiday Inn Airport in Des Moines.

"This conference offered county officials the opportunity to discuss the issues directly affecting counties this legislative session, such as economic development, voting system standards, mental health and property tax plans," said Bill Peterson, ISAC Executive Director. The Honorable Governor Tom Vilsack attended the



County officials in the exhibit area for ISAC's Ice Cream Social.



"Nuns on the Run" singing at the President's Banquet.

conference Wednesday, March 19 and discussed the spirit of cooperation between the state of Iowa and county government. He will also discussed economic development, the state's budget and election reform.

ISAC's President Banquet was held Wednesday evening in the Holiday Inn Ballrooms. A delightful time was had by all attending with Woodbury

County Treasurer Bob Knowler as MC and the evening entertainment "Nuns on the Run." The ecumenical group of Methodist, Lutheran and Catholic ladies left attendees with a light heart, a good feeling, and a smile on their face.



Keynote speaker Patrick Lee describing Thomas Jefferson's life.

members always wanted to know. ISAC awarded scholarships to seven outstanding high school students during the general session. The winner of the top scholarship, in the amount of \$3,000, was Jessica Koschmeder from Iowa County. Six other students received scholarships in the amount of \$1,500: Sara Moeller (Calhoun County), Erin Grandgenett (Kossuth County), Jennifer Voss (Cherokee County), Ingrid Frisk (Harrison County), Gretchen Spies (Muscatine County), and Tyler Bobenmoyer (Audubon County).



Jennifer Voss receiving an ISAC scholarship from ISAC President Dick Heidloff.

Also during ISAC's General Session, more than 250 county officials were honored with Years of Service Awards to acknowledge their dedication to serving citizens through county government.



ISAC staff member Sandy Longfellow (above) was recognized for 15 years of service during the General Session. Also recognized, was ISAC staff member Jerri Noboa for 25 years of service.

Years of Service Awards were given to county officials with 15 years of service or more (in five-year increments). Charles Smith, Crawford County Community Services, was recognized for 45 years of service and Gloria Barker, Fayette County Deputy Treasurer, for 40 years of service.

Once again, the ISAC staff wishes to express thanks to the Alumni Association members that volunteered during the Spring School. Those who helped behind the ISAC registration desk or at the information table were: Sheldon Kongable, Bev Dickerson, Jack Foresman, Darwin Hall, Marvin Andersen, Marilyn Rubner, Jim Wright and Warren Richart.

Special thanks goes to Bob Knowler, Woodbury County Treasurer, for being the Master of Ceremonies at the President's Banquet. We can truthfully say Bob was as entertaining as the evening's entertainment of "Nuns on the Run."

Mark your calendars for ISAC's Fall School of Instruction & Policy Setting Conference: **November 19-21, 2003.** Community Services (GA and CPC's) and Emergency Management will be meeting at the Four Points Sheraton. Look forward to seeing you there!

Moments captured at ISAC's Spring School



ISAC President Dick Heidloff posing with Governor Tom Vilsack.



ISAC scholarship winners: Ingrid Frisk, Jessica Koschmeder, Gretchen Spies, ISAC President Dick Heidloff, Sara Moeller, Jennifer Voss, and Erin Grandgenett. Absent from the awards ceremony was Tyler Bobenmoyer.



Governor Vilsack talking to county officials after his speech Wednesday morning.



Left: Lance Hedquist, City Administrator for the City of South Sioux City, NE, proposed paperless initiatives for county government during the seminar "Technology Applications for Communities." Center: William Brauch, Special Assistant Attorney General and Director of the Consumer Protection Division of the Iowa Attorney General's Office, conducting the seminar "How to Avoid Identity Theft." Right: David Yanke, of Reed, Stowe, and Yanke, presented the seminar "Preventing Illegal Dumping."

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ISAC brief

Ag Land Values Projected to Decrease Sharply

By: Jay Syverson, Fiscal Policy Analyst

As I imagine most of you know, agricultural land is assessed and taxed according to its productivity value, not according to its market value as is the case for all other classes of property. The formula for determining productivity value is based on a rolling five-year average of crop prices, crop yields, and operating expenses. Recently, projections on those factors were released by the Iowa Department of Revenue and Finance. The Iowa County Assessors' Association used those figures to project the taxable value of agricultural land for calendar year 2003, fiscal year 2005.

The results are quite startling:

- The average value of agricultural land is projected to decrease from \$776.99 per acre in 2001 to \$628.70 per acre in 2003, a decline of nearly 18.0%.
- The total loss in taxable valuation is projected to reach nearly \$5 billion statewide.
- Greene County's agricultural land value is projected to decrease nearly \$300 per acre, a decline of 33.5%.
- Only one of the 99 counties expects to see an increase in agricultural land value; Taylor County is projected to see a minimal increase of 1.9%.

Current Code stipulates that growth in residential property valuation is tied to the growth in agricultural property valuation. In this case, because agricultural valuation growth is negative, residential valuation growth will be zeroed out. Because market values have been increasing, this will likely have the effect of reducing the rollback to less than 50%; current estimates set the rollback at approximately 47%. The decline in agricultural valuation and stagnancy of residential valuation combine to provide some drastic implications.

Consider:

- Counties, cities, schools and other local taxing districts will experience tremendous revenue shortfalls; assuming constant levy rates, county governments will see a decline in revenue of nearly \$40 million from agricultural value alone.
- The State's contribution to the school aid formula will increase dramatically.
- Commercial and industrial property owners will see increased taxes as the tax burden is shifted due to the loss in agricultural land valuation; in a period of heated competition for economic development, this does not bode well for Iowa.

County officials, especially those in counties that have a high concentration of agricultural value, have good reason to be concerned. As a partial solution to this looming crisis, ISAC has suggested uncoupling residential valuation from agricul-

tural valuation. While the decline in ag land values would still occur, it would be partially offset by a statewide four percent increase in the value of residential property. This would prevent the entire tax shift from being borne by commercial property owners.

As I write this in early April, the House has just unveiled a property tax reform plan that, among many other things, calls for uncoupling. ISAC encourages the legislature to pass a bill that uncouples agricultural and residential property with an effective date of January 1, 2003. Doing so will ease the tax burden on business across the state and help to prevent a local budget nightmare.

Auditors Raise HAVA Concerns

The Iowa State Association of County Auditors, ISAC, and the Iowa League of Women Voters held a press conference April 4 at the Capitol to voice their concern over the manner in which the proposed legislation to meet the state of Iowa's requirements for the implementation of the Help America Vote Act is being handled in the Iowa legislature. The auditors stated they respectfully favor legislation that fully meets the necessary requirements for compliance with the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) separate from any other election legislation. The current pending legislation put \$30 million of federal funds needlessly at risk and urged legislators to strip the non-required provisions from the bill, add the needed appropriation to it, and send it to the Governor in an acceptable form.

ISAC Legislative Workshops: Register Today at www.iowacounties.org!

The ISAC Legislative District Workshops are set for June. The registration form and agenda can be found on the ISAC website: www.iowacounties.org under "Upcoming Events."

June 13 – District V – Indian Hills Community College, Ottumwa
June 18 – District IV – Holiday Inn at Ameristar, Council Bluffs
June 20 – District I – Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines
June 25 – District VI – University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls
June 26 – District II – Waldorf College, Forest City
June 27 – District III – Buena Vista University, Storm Lake

Steering Committee Chairs Needed

ISAC steering committee chair positions are open for County Administration and Organization; Land Use and Rural Affairs, and Human Services. If you are interested in serving as chair on one of the following ISAC steering committees for two years, please fill out an application and return it to the ISAC office by July 18, 2003. The application can be found on the ISAC website (www.iowacounties.org) under 'Legislative Information.'

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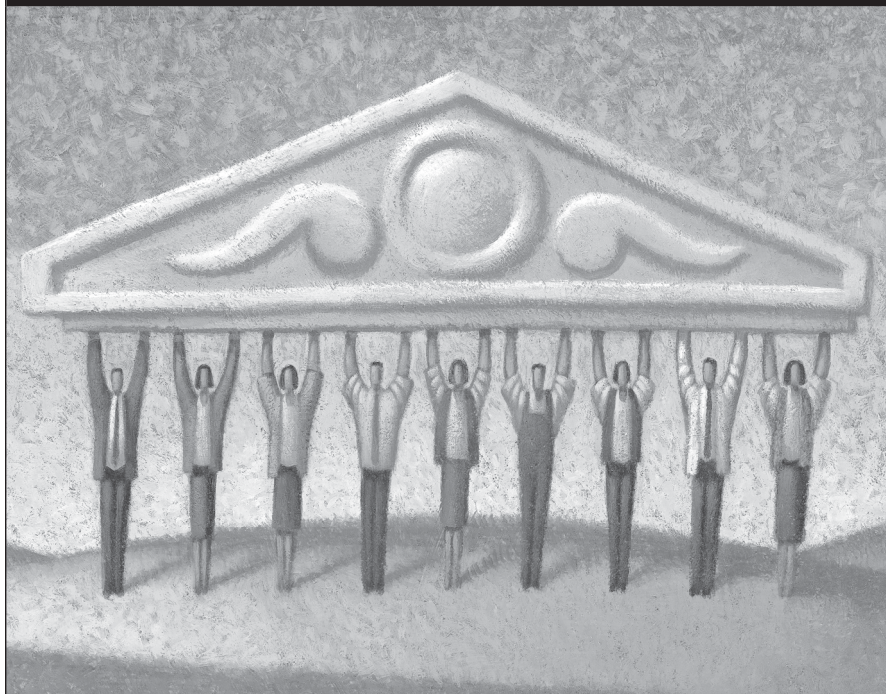
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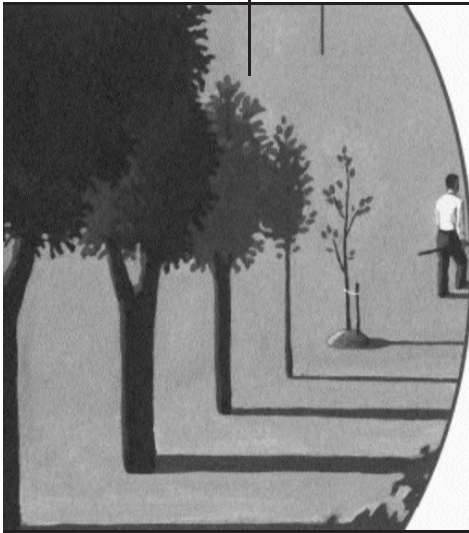
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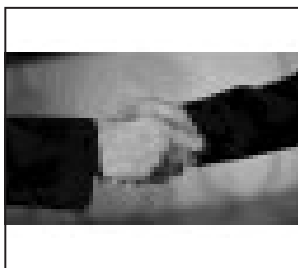
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calendar

MAY

- 6 CCMS New Supervisor Forum
- Baymont Hotel, DM (formerly Best Inns & Suites)
- 7 CCMS Supervisor Training
- Baymont Hotel, DM (formerly Best Inns & Suites)
- 7-9 Treasurer's Statewide Conference - Bos
Landon Golf Resort Conference Center,
Pella

JUNE

- 6 CCMS Board - ISAC Office
- 10-12 ICIT 1st Annual Mid-Year Conference
(Adventureland Inn, Altoona)
- 11 CCMS Central Support Group
- Botanical Center, DM
- 12-13 CCMS Advanced Case Manager
- Holiday Inn University Park, DM
- 13 ISAC District V Legislative Workshop
- Indian Hills, Ottumwa
- 18 ISAC District IV Legislative Workshop
- Holiday Inn at Ameristar, Council Bluffs
- 20 ISAC District I Legislative Workshop
- Holiday Inn Airport, DM
- 25 ISAC District VI Legislative Workshop
- UNI, Cedar Falls
- 26 ISAC District II Legislative Workshop
- Waldorf College, Forest City

- 27 ISAC District III Legislative Workshop
- Buena Vista University, Storm Lake

JULY

- 11-15 NACo Annual Conference - Milwaukee
(Iowa Hotel - Pfister)
- 15 CCMS Administrators - Baymont Hotel, DM
- 30 CRIS Board - ISAC Office
- 30-1 Auditors Summer School - The Inn, Okoboji

AUGUST

- 7-8 Supervisors' Executive Board - Clinton Area
- 11 Records' Legislative Committee
- Council Bluffs Area
- 12-13 Records' Summer Conference
- Council Bluffs Area
- 13-15 CCMS Annual Conference
- Holiday Inn Airport, DM

For agendas or additional information on any of the above listed meetings please visit our website at www.iowacounties.org and click on Upcoming Events! If you have any questions about the meetings listed above, please contact Jerri at (515) 244-7181 or by email at jnoba@iowacounties.org.



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