



Learning pairs with dining

Elliott Test Kitchen will soon be open for hungry students

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Dinner isn't ready ... yet. The Elliott Test Kitchen is getting closer to opening at 807 Ave. G, but not all the ingredients have been stirred up properly by owner Kumar Wickramasingha (WICK-ruh-muh-SING-uh).

But there's been enough buzz over the work being done downtown, that Wickramasingha will at least reveal what's going to be on the menu.

The food references are not just because Wickramasingha is an accomplished chef (now food preparer at Sunnybrook Assisted Living). Yes, the Kitchen will have a kitchen, with food served to the patrons. But the "Test" in the title



Fort Madison High School teachers Andrew Troxel, left, and Brent Zirkel, center, have teamed up with local chef and education visionary Kumar Wickramasingha to start up the Test Kitchen in downtown Fort Madison. It will be a structured, safe place for students to do homework, get tutoring and add to their knowledge with online resources.

CHRIS FAULKNER/DAILY DEMOCRAT

is a clue as to who will be the patrons.

The Elliott Test Kitchen is named for James T. Elliott IV, successful Chicago business-

man and former math teacher who encouraged Wickramasingha to pursue the unique academic concept: offer a safe place to study in a structured

setting and provide a meal after the after-school session.

The Test Kitchen will be staffed by volunteer educators to help students with their homework or tutor them on a variety of subjects. Additional high-tech resources will be available at no charge.

Wickramasingha said Elliott has a passion for education and, with his ties to rural Iowa communities, wanted to start the program here.

Wickramasingha also has a passion for education. He received his degrees in the United States soon after coming here from his home country of Sri Lanka. The late Fort Madison High School teachers George and Jean Alton took him under their wings.

"They gave me the opportunity to pursue higher education," Wickramasingha said.

Wickramasingha wants to pass that on to the current and future generations of Fort Madison with a unique concept in educational support.

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HAWKS FALL
Central Lee's volleyball team falls to No. 11 New London at home.

P8



BUSY BAND
The Fort Madison High school marching band competes in Ottumwa and Bloomfield this weekend, and in Kahoka, Mo. on Oct. 10.

P16



BIG JOB
Residents near 23rd Street and Avenue E saw some big equipment and a lot of workers Thursday.

P10

REUNION
St. Mary's Class of 1965 hold its 50-year reunion.

P12

NOTABLE



DR. ARTEMIO SANTIAGO has joined the medical staff of FMP&S Internal Medicine at Fort Madison Community Hospital. Details on Page 5.

DEATHS

- Richard Hartweg, 81**, Hamilton, Ill.
- Carl 'Newt' Rea, 82**, Niota, Ill.
- Elizabeth Wilsey, 80**, Keokuk
- Charles A. Petty, 93**, Keokuk

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Duo wants juvenile records sealed

DES MOINES (AP) — Two legal experts are recommending the court records of Iowa's convicted juveniles be confidential and unavailable to the public.

Jerry Foxhoven, the executive director of the Neal & Bea Smith Legal Clinic, and Mike Sorci, head of the Youth Law Center in Des Moines, met Wednesday with a state task force studying justice policy reform. The group is expected to make recommendations within the next month on reforms in a variety of areas, including juvenile court records.

The Des Moines Register reports that the men said confidential juvenile court records would help young people who have completed probation turn their lives around.

Both of them recommended changing state law so juvenile court records remain confidential unless a judge orders them to be public.

Ducks tested for bird flu

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — As the poultry industry braces for a potential return of bird flu this fall, wildlife managers expect the first results next week from tests that could provide an early warning on whether ducks are carrying the disease as they fly south for the winter.

Department of Natural Resources staffers were out last weekend for the opening of Minnesota's waterfowl season. Lou Cornicelli, the DNR's wildlife research manager, says they got more than halfway to their goal of collecting 800 samples from ducks shot by hunters. More sampling is planned.

Those samples will now be tested for highly pathogenic bird flu viruses such as H5N2, the kind that devastated the Midwest poultry industry earlier this year.

Cornicelli says he expects to get the first test results back early next week.



JEFF HUNT/DAILY DEMOCRAT

Blake Tebbs, left, sits with Ashley Adams and their daughter Gwendolyn Tebbs during the Habitat for Humanity open house Thursday night. The two will be living in the house located at 1335 Ave. E in Fort Madison.

Home Sweet Home

Ninth Habitat for Humanity house completed in Fort Madison

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Blake Tebbs and Ashley Adams beamed and baby Gwendolyn looked on as the keys to their new home were given to them Thursday night. At last they were sharing their part of the American Dream.

But getting a house was not as easy as running a credit check and signing papers.

Tebbs said getting a home by using the Habitat for Humanity program was not his first choice.

"I had no idea that I even qualified for Habitat for Humanity," Tebbs said. "A friend of mine suggested that I fill out an application so I decided to do it."

Tebbs said he didn't think he would be picked for the home but was surprised. He said he was amazed at the speed the house went up.

"There were volunteers from across the community," Tebbs said. "Scott's had a group of



JEFF HUNT/DAILY DEMOCRAT

Habitat for Humanity president Tony Wolfe, left, talks with Chuck Wilkens about the woodwork in the new Habitat for Humanity house. The woodwork was done entirely by workers at the Iowa State Penitentiary. There was an open house on Thursday night displaying the new home.

people working here, and the Iowa Fertilizer Company had a crew for a day or two."

Also working on the house were high school students under the guidance of Fort Madison High School Teacher Clint Kobelt. He said he considered himself to be quality control.

"This year was our first year we could do this full time," Kobelt said in an earlier inter-

view. "Next year we plan to add classes such as an electrical component."

Kobelt said the additional classes will be dual credit classes so they can count toward a college degree.

"And right now we have interest from Holy Trinity Catholic School to send kids to the

SEE HABITAT, PAGE 10

KITCHEN: Elliott's Test Kitchen is designed to feed the mind as well as the stomach

(Continued from Page 1)

PASSION ATTRACTS ...

"Passion attracts passion, and I could see that passion in him," said Fort Madison High School Spanish teacher Brent Zirkel, and that's why he and fellow teacher Andrew Troxel (history) have teamed up to help him get his project going. The two have worked together in other educational endeavors at FMHS.

"We have incredible young people," Zirkel said of Fort Madison students, "but sometimes they don't have the resources. This will give our kids a leg up."

Troxel said the Kitchen will take students wherever they're at on the learning scale and take them farther.

"Education is the vehicle for social mobility," Troxel said. "We're looking at the big picture, to redefine tomorrow's education."

A HUNGER FOR ...

The Test Kitchen is for students hungry to improve their knowledge, but all that after-school studying can



Soon to be open is the Elliott Test Kitchen in the 800 block of Avenue G. It will be a place for middle school and high school students to go improve their education through personal tutors and technology resources.

make a child — and the teacher — hungry.

That's where the "kitchen" part of the Elliott Test Kitchen comes in.

Troxel said he and Zirkel went to a neuroscience convention in Boston to learn more about ... learning.

"The greatest key to academic success," Troxel said, "is the family

atmosphere," especially at the dinner table.

"Kids will be supported emotionally, physically and academically," Troxel said.

As for Wickramasingha's own culinary/education creation, it won't be long now before he announces, "Dinner is served."

Foundation established

The Elliott Test Kitchen has plenty to offer its student patrons but nothing to sell.

The initial financial backing came from James T. Elliott IV, who agreed with owner — and culinary expert — Kumar Wickramasingha that an innovated outlet for education assistance was needed.

But in order to provide more resources and expand as the hoped-for demand increases, the Test Kitchen Education Foundation has been formed. Sources of contributions for the qualified charitable organization are private donations, fundraisers and culinary events.

Joining Wickramasingha on the Foundation's Board of Directors are: School District Superintendent Dr. Ken Marang, Lee County Sheriff Jim Sholl, city councilman Kevin Rink and Donna Peterie, Neal Dodd and Mary Kurtz.



JEFF HUNT/DAILY DEMOCRAT

A big job calls for big equipment

If you were near 23rd Street and Avenue E on Thursday, you probably got tied up in traffic. It was on that day that workers from Jones Contractors Corp., from West Point were rebuilding several blocks of Avenue E. It takes many men to operate this one piece of machinery, so as to pour both sides of the street at one time. This is the first job where Jones, a company owned by Patrick Jones, has had the machine extended its entire 34-foot width.

HABITAT: Tebbs almost missed Habitat house slot

(Continued from Page 1)

program next year," Kobelt said. "The word is out that we are doing good things and we have momentum going."

Kobelt said he has already committed to the next Habitat for Humanity house.

Blake and Ashley will own the Habitat house at 1335 Ave. E, but they were not the first to get a chance at the house. Originally another family had been selected, but they then moved out of the state. Applications were resubmitted. Tebbs and Adams made their way through the forms and interviews and now have a new home.

Habitat for Humanity Greater Keokuk Area president Tony Wolfe said getting a Habitat home is much like getting a home by standard means.

"There are applications to fill out and scores to see, but there are other factors as well," Wolfe said.

Wolfe was not specific but said qualifications depend "on a number of things," and in some instances are "need based."

Wolfe said the Habitat program is currently building a home every two years in Fort Madison.

"It improves the city," Wolfe said.

Wolfe said there is

a misconception that Habitat for Humanity is in the business of building houses and giving them away.

"This is not what we do. People get a no-interest loan," Wolfe said. "But people are asked to put time into the house as well. It's called 'sweat equity.'"

Sweat equity ranges from hands on labor to learning about what it takes to be a homeowner.

Fort Madison Habitat for Humanity has been building in Fort Madison since 1995. It has built nine homes in Fort Madison and has not needed to use government loans. Partnering with the Fort Madison Community School District building trades program and a local contractor, the program currently has enough land to build four additional houses.

Individual and corporate donors and various grants provide the money and materials to build Habitat homes. Volunteers, along with the partner family, provide most of the labor. The partner families invest hundreds of hours of labor into building their homes and the homes of others.

Families in need purchase their home with a nonprofit mortgage that has no interest charges.

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