Inside

Data leak shows how the wealthy hide their money

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THE HAWK EYE

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Fate of districts' facilities in voters' hands

Ballots cast today in New London, West Burlington.

By JOEY AGUIRRE
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NEW LONDON — Future improvements for two school districts will be decided by voters today.

The New London and West Burlington School districts seek to improve their facilities and grounds with a bond issue and use of the Physical Plant and Equipment Levy, respectively.

In New London, polls open at noon at the New London Community Center and close at 8 p.m.

The district is seeking approval of a $2.25 million bond issue, which will pay for a new roof for the elementary school, upgrade drainage lines to avoid another backup in the high school basement and make the football complex handicap accessible while adding a separate concession stand.

Football complex upgrades are paired with the addition of an all-weather track paid for with donations from the community. New lights and fencing accompany the track project.

No new taxes will be implemented with the bond, the $17.65 per $1,000 taxable valuation rate will be extended for eight years. If the bond issue were to fail, the rate would be reduced to an estimated $14.96.

A super majority is needed to pass a bond issue.

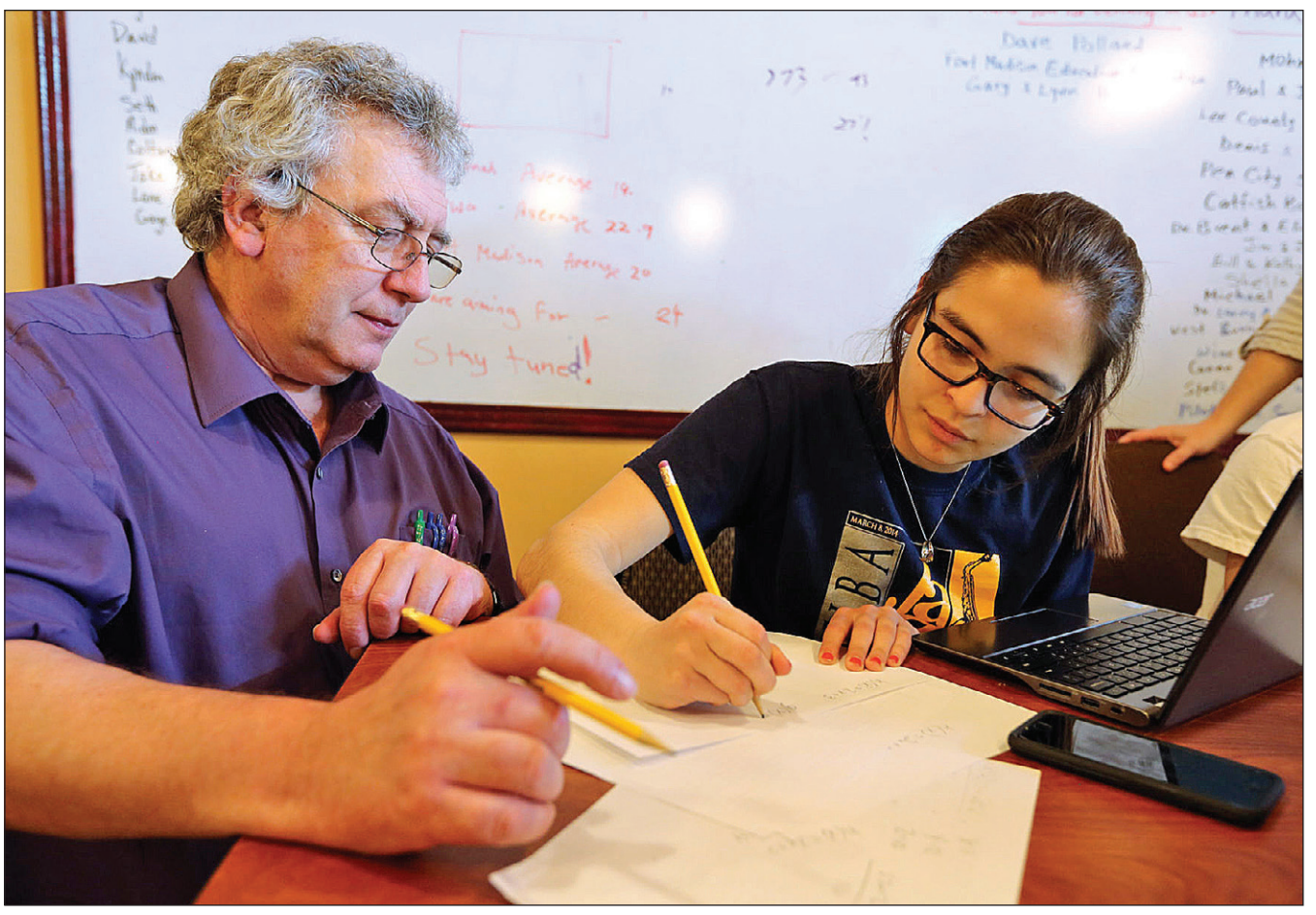
For the third time in two years, the West Burlington School District is asking voters to approve the physical plant and equipment levy for the maximum $1,34 per $1,000 taxable valuation, which would generate more than $200,000 annually for building needs and technology.

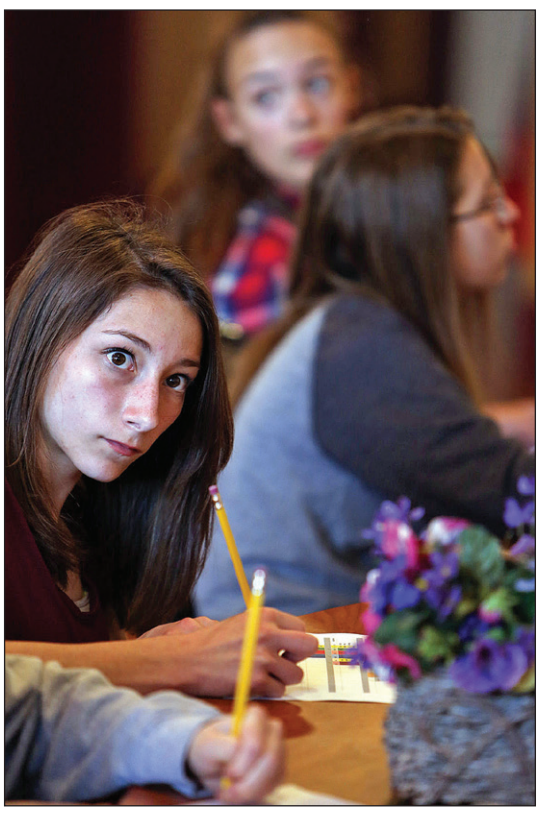
Polls open at noon at St. Mary's Parish Center at 502 W. Mount Pleasant St. and close at 8 p.m.

If the PPEL passes, the plan is to address the elementary school and its pick up/drop off area, playground and kitchen. After the elementary, plans include upgrading flooring and roofing.

A majority plus one is needed to pass the PPEL.

Food for thought





John Lovretta/The Hawk Eye

Fort Madison High School sophomore Claire Mendez, 16, in top photo, gets some help from high school teacher Mike Rieck, while sophomore Sierra Howardson, 16, above, takes notes during an ACT prep class Monday. Seventeen students, with the help of several teachers, were preparing for the four-hour test which is Saturday at Southeastern Community College in West Burlington.

Fort Madison's Elliot Test Kitchen serves up ACT prep for students

By JOEY AGUIRRE
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FORT MADISON — Food can enhance anything, even studying for the ACT.

At the Elliott Test Kitchen in downtown Fort Madison, the former helps the latter.

The Elliott Test Kitchen and The Test Kitchen Education was formed in December 2015 to provide students a place to go after school for help with homework and to learn basic cooking skills.

Kumar Wickramasingha oversees the kitchen and spearheaded the push to host ACT prep courses, while serving fine dining. The ACT (American College Testing) exam is a college readiness assessment for high school achievement and college admissions in the United States.

"My goal was to get 10 kids and one teacher," Kumar said Monday afternoon. "I put the food as bait, so teachers get awesome food, and it's been very successful. I've had about 20 kids and four teachers a day, close to 40 teachers have signed up to volunteer their time."

The idea had legs and students were gathering to study for the ACT when the Spring sports season began.

"Kids around March came to me and said they wouldn't be able to come because they had track practice," Kumar said. "Myself and the track coach have a long history. So he said, 'I'll send those kids to ACT practice every Tuesday but we have to compromise here. And after, they need to go for a run.' "

"All of a sudden, we have kids saying they want to hang with the cool kids studying for the ACT."

Kumar Wickramasingha

And pretty soon, three students became five. Then 17 track athletes show up after school to practice for the ACT. The practice sessions were moved to Mondays because track meets are on Tuesdays.

"All of a sudden, we have kids saying they want to hang with the cool kids studying for the ACT," Kumar said. "So now, I have 17 kids practicing for the ACT test this Saturday."

These students will take the four-hour test Saturday morning at Southeastern Community College in West Burlington.

In Iowa, the average ACT score is 22.1 and the goal of the 17 test kitchen students is to get an average of 24.

The National average score is 20.9.

See ACT on page 4A

'1 person, 1 vote' upheld

Supreme Court justices turned back a challenge that could have dramatically altered political district boundaries.

By MARK SHERMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A unanimous Supreme Court ruled Monday states can count everyone, not only eligible voters, in deciding how to draw electoral districts.

The justices turned back a challenge from Texas voters that could have dramatically altered political district boundaries and disproportionately affected the nation's growing Latino population.

The court ruled Texas' challenged state Senate districting map, using total population, complied with the principle of "one person, one vote," the requirement laid out by the Supreme Court in 1964 political districts be roughly equal in population.

The issue, though, was what population to consider: everyone or only eligible voters.

The challengers said the districts had different numbers when looking at eligible voters, in violation of the Constitution.

*See **Court** on page 4A*

Trains delayed after RR bridge stayed elevated

By ANDY HOFFMAN
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Authorities have not determined why the Burlington railroad bridge over the Mississippi River remained elevated for more than two hours early Monday, preventing several trains, including an already delayed westbound Amtrak train, from crossing.

Burlington Fire Chief Matt Trexel said the fire department was dispatched to the bridge shortly before midnight after BNSF officials called 911 requesting a welfare check on the bridge operator.

When police and fire officials responded, the liftspan bridge was elevated, preventing trains from crossing the river. Trexel said police and fire crews tried contacting the bridge operator, but were unsuccessful. He said a rescue boat was sent to the bridge and three harnessed firefighters climbed to the bridge house, located above the rails.

*See **Bridge** on page 4A*

INSIDE

Gas prices remain low

Gasoline prices in Burlington are helping drive down the average retail price of gasoline in Iowa. GasBuddy.com reported the average price fell 2.3 cents per gallon last week, but the average per gallon cost exceeds what local motorists are seeing.

See page 4A for full story.

A month after teen was murdered, police confident case will be solved

Police lieutenant: Detectives have narrowed the investigation's scope.

By ANDY HOFFMAN
ahoffman@thehawkeye.com

One month after a 16-year-old Burlington boy was found shot to death in an alley on South Hill, police said they are certain the killer will be found.

"We are absolutely confident the killing of Kedarie Johnson will be solved," Lt. Jeff Klein, commander of Burlington's criminal investigations' division, said Monday afternoon.

While Klein said detectives have greatly narrowed the investigation's scope, he would not disclose what detectives believe is the motive for the Burlington High School student's death March 2.

"We have been able to sift through fact and fiction," he said. "Based on our investigation, we are confident we have narrowed the possible motives down to a couple. We are not ready to release what we believe those motives are at this time."

Klein said investigators still have not received the official report from the forensic pathologist conducting Johnson's autopsy at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City.

*See **Murder** on page 4A*

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FROM THE FRONT

Local gas prices below average

Rate at pump jumped about 30 cents in March.

The Hawk Eye

Gasoline prices in Burlington are helping drive down the average retail price of gasoline in Iowa.

GasBuddy.com reported the average price fell 2.3 cents per gallon last week, but the average per gallon cost exceeds what local motorists are seeing.

Using a daily survey of 2,036 gas outlets, the web-based reporting service said the average pump price was $2.05 per gallon.

The highest price in Burlington Monday — Circle K, 333 N. Roosevelt Ave., was $2.02 per gallon.

It was 16 cents higher than BP at Roosevelt and Agency streets, which was charging $1.86 per gallon.

Other stations in town were in between the two outlets.

Nationwide, GasBuddy said gas prices were heading north and had increased 2.1 cents per gallon to $2.06 per gallon.

"The end of March last week capped a 30.5-cent per gallon jump in the national retail gasoline price average for the month," said Will Speer, senior petroleum analyst at GasBuddy. "As prices now sit at the highest since November 2015, April brings the final phase of the transition to the more expensive summer-blend gasoline."

Southern California was the first region in the United States to complete the summer-blend switchover Friday, while the rest of the United States follows suit at the end of the month. Although gas prices are expected to continue to increase this week, improving refinery utilization has helped cool March's feverish rise

Putting the numbers into perspective, prices in Iowa are 36 cents per gallon lower than a year ago and are 6.5 cents per gallon higher than a month ago.

The national average increased 24.7 cents per gallon during March and stand 33.6 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

According to GasBuddys' historical data, state gasoline prices April 4 varied widely over the past five years:

- $2.41 per gallon in 2015;
- $3.57 per gallon in 2014;
- $3.58 per gallon in 2013;
- $3.83 per gallon in 2012; and
- $3.58 per gallon in 2011.

In the Quad Cities, gasoline was averaging $1.97 per gallon, down 0.5 cents per gallon from last week. In Des Moines, it was $2.27 per gallon, down 1.9 cents per gallon. And in Omaha, the price was $2.06 per gallon, down 0.6 cents per gallon from last week's $2.07 per gallon.

A motorist fuels up at the BP Jet Stop gas station Monday on Roosevelt Avenue in Burlington. Low gasoline prices in Burlington are helping drive down the average retail price of gasoline in Iowa.

John Lovretta/ The Hawk Eye

Murder

Continued from page 1A

Until the report is received, Klein said he will not comment on the manner and cause of death. He reiterated once it becomes official, the results will be released to the public.

Klein said investigators are confident Johnson knew his killer or killers, indicating investigators do not believe it was not a random act of violence.

He said investigators, in his department and two special agents with the Department of Criminal Investigation assigned to the case, believe the murder was not a hate crime. The DCI agents still are in Burlington.

"We have explored a lot of possible (scenarios) and nothing has been brought to light from an evidentiary perspective to link it to a hate crime," he said. "We just don't believe it is a hate crime."

Klein declined to say what has led investigators to discount Johnson's murder as a hate crime. He said he didn't want to get into specific evidence police developed because of the risk of jeopardizing the investigation.

"At this point, we have no information that leads us to believe Kedarie was targeted by his killer or killers because of his gender or sexual orientation," he said. "Every murder has a component of hate. Any murder is hateful in and of itself."

Klein said about "50 to 60" people have been interviewed during the investigation, with some of them being interviewed more than once.

"The number of interviews we have conducted are well over 100, but many of those included people we have interviewed two, three or four times," he said.

He also said police have obtained several pieces of evidence.

"We have secured in excess of 200 pieces of evidence we feel are germane to the investigation," he said. "Some of that evidence has been forwarded to the DCI lab for forensic examination.

"When that testing is completed, we believe it will provide us with a more definitive (opportunity) in identifying the suspect or suspects in Kedarie Johnson's murder."

Johnson's body was found at 11:36 p.m. March 2 in some bushes by police officers responding to shots being fired in the area of Fifth and Walnut streets in Burlington. The teen had multiple gunshot wounds in the torso.

In developing a specific motive and suspects, Klein said detectives are using a multitude of investigative techniques.

"We are continuing to rely on evidence obtained at the crime scene," he said. "We are comparing that evidence with information we have received through the dozens of interviews we have conducted so far."

Klein declined to say if any search warrants have been executed in connection with the investigation. But he said detectives have worked "well into the night" at different locations in Burlington during the investigation.

"We are still seeking assistance from the public about the victim's whereabouts the night of the incident," Klein said.

Klein said detectives are continuing to welcome assistance from the public.

"It is our hope someone with information about the killing would care more about Kedarie as a human being than they would about hiding information they have that would be helpful to us in solving the crime," Klein said.

This is the year's first homicide in Burlington and the seventh during the past two years. Most of the killings have occurred in the South Hill neighborhood.

Anyone with information about the killing to contact the Burlington Police Department at (319) 753-8362 or (319) 753-8370. If they wish to remain anonymous, they can call the Burlington Area Crime Stoppers at (319) 753-8365.

A reward of up to $1,000 is being offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for the crime.

ACT

Continued from page 1A

The Fort Madison average score is 20.

Kumar said of the 173 kids graduating from Fort Madison High School this year, only 43 have taken the exam.

"That is 27 percent, while the state average is 66 percent," Kumar said. "And of the 17 kids practicing here, 10 of them are sophomores. The foundation has paid for all 17 of them to take the test."

On Mondays, students arrive after school between 3:30 and 4 p.m. receive a snack (Monday was chips and salsa). Then, a team of teachers discuss aspects of the test from what to do on the nights leading up to the test, to what type of questions are on the test and what percentage of questions are based on certain subjects.

"We're trying to alleviate as much tension and anxiety that you guys have by just talking about what that day is going to be like," Fort Madison High School teacher Andrew Troxel told the students. "So, all you will have to worry about is your performance on those four exams."

Each student has taken a diagnostic practice test and they received their results Monday afternoon showing their practice scores in each of the four sections — math, reading, science and English.

Paige Munson is a sophomore sprinter on the track team who was the first to sign up for the ACT of the group. She is relying on her grades to help pay for college and currently has a 4.0 grade point average.

"I had been trying to study for the ACT but it was pretty unguided. I was just kind of reading over material, not sure of what I was doing," Munson, 16, said.

"And I came here, and they said I wouldn't be able to come anymore because of track. We talked with my coach, and, so, one day a week track kids who wanted to do the ACT could come down here and study for it. Then, go workout and come back to eat food."

Fellow sophomore Brett Schneider is a mid-distance runner who said she is nervous for Saturday's test.

She said the most difficult section for her will be math because she hasn't taken some of the classes included in the ACT.

"Not having all the classes taken in high school yet, so it helps out having these so I know what to study on my own," Schneider, 16, said.

"The Internet resources are so helpful and taking the diagnostic test, I got a composite score of 20, so that's decent. I feel like it will help me in the future. Since I'm a sophomore, I can take it more than once. So, I thought, if I start learning early, why not." Sophomores Elizabeth Miller and Sierra Howardson worked together Monday to study.

Howardson, a distance runner, said it's frustrating at times not knowing a subject because she hasn't taken the class yet.

"I'm sort of nervous for Saturday but not really," Howardson, 16, said. "I'm just going to think of it as another track meet where I need to perform well and do my best."

Court

Continued from page 1A

"Jurisdictions, we hold, may design state and local legislative districts with equal total populations; they are not obliged to equalize voter populations," Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said, summarizing her opinion for the court.

Ginsburg said "history, our decisions and settled practice in all 50 states and countless local jurisdictions point in the same direction."

Two rural Texas voters challenged the use of total population data in drawing state Senate districts because they said it inflates the voting power of city dwellers at their expense.

In Texas, and other states with large immigrant populations, urban districts include many more people who are too young, not citizens or otherwise ineligible to vote. Civil rights groups said forcing states to change their method of constructing districts would have damaged Latino political influence.

The court stopped short of saying that states must use total population. And it also did not rule on whether states are free to use a different measure, as Texas asked.

Ginsburg said the court was not resolving whether states may use voter population.

Richard Hasen, an expert in election law at the University of California at Irvine law school, said, "A contrary ruling would have shifted power to Republican, rural districts, and away from Democratic urban areas."

Edward Blum, whose Project on Fair Representation backed the lawsuit, said he was disappointed in the outcome, but predicted that "the issue of voter equality in the United States is not going to go away."

Though the justices were unanimous in upholding Texas' use of total population, Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito declined to join Ginsburg's opinion.

Thomas said the Constitution gives the states the freedom to draw political lines based on different population counts. Referring to the 1964 case of Reynolds v. Sims, he said the high court "has never provided a sound basis for the one-person, one-vote principle."

Bridge

Continued from page 1A

"We thought we were going up there for a medical emergency," Trexel said. "But when our firefighters got up there they determined there was not a medical emergency. We don't know exactly what the problem was, but he (the bridge operator) said he didn't hear the telephone ring or the train whistle and didn't know anyone was trying to get hold of him."

Trexel said after contacting the operator, the bridge was lowered and the California Zephyr Amtrak train and several other backed-up freight trains resumed operations.

Authorities said the Amtrak engineer blew his train horn several times in an attempt to make contact with the bridge operator. BNSF officials also tried to reach the operator by telephone and radio. When they were unable to do so, they dialed 911.

"It's strange, definitely," Trexel said. "We don't know exactly what happened, but when we determined it wasn't a medical emergency we cleared the scene about 1:25 a.m."

Trexel said there were no injuries nor was anyone taken to Great River Medical Center in West Burlington for treatment. He said further information about the incident would have to come from railroad officials.

Andy Williams, a BNSF spokesman, said Monday afternoon the railroad would have no comment until an investigation is completed.

The California Zephyr, which originated in Chicago, already was running about five hours Sunday behind schedule following a fatal accident. Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari said a 28-year-old man was killed when he drove around a lowered crossing gate in Somonauk, south of Chicago.

The 264 passengers and nine crew members were checked by emergency medical staff, and no injuries were reported. Magliari said the train continued on its way about 8 p.m. Sunday toward its destination in Emeryville, Calif., but was delayed again by the problem in Burlington.

A barge carrying equipment to clear the channel makes its way under the BNSF Railway lift span bridge recently across the Mississippi River. Authorities have not determined exactly why the railroad bridge near the Burlington sewage treatment plant remained elevated for more than two hours early Monday preventing several trains, including a westbound Amtrak train, from crossing over the Mississippi River.

John Lovretta/The Hawk Eye

Baby Name

The deadline to submit baby's names for Sunday's newspaper is noon Thursday. Announcements may be mailed to:

Baby's names
c/o The Hawk Eye
P.O. Box 10
Burlington, Iowa 52601

or sent via email to

news@thehawkeye.com

with "Baby's name" in the subject line.

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