



# Cooking up good grades

## Test Kitchen scores high marks for area students

**CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
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Most parents get a special joy from watching their children learn the delicate art of cooking, ever watchful of a flame, the compilation of ingredients...the mess the inevitably follows. But at the Elliott Test Kitchen, a 31 on an ACT seems to be the preferred "icing on the cake."

Last week, Alexis Rehm and Zina Johnstun showcased their cooking talents with Test Kitchen founder Kumar Wickramasingha and frequent volunteer Fred Knoch. Johnstun and Rehm, two Fort Madison Middle School students, took turns manning the black flameless stove and prep area of the kitchen while more than 30 residents watched and applauded their work.

"I like cooking for people...entertaining," said Johnstun after the dinner. "I come every



CHUCK VANDENBERG/MVM NEWS NETWORK

**Fred Knoch, far left, helps Alexis Rehm and Zina Johnstun make his famous Mac & Cheese while Kumar Wickramasingha adds citrus glazed pork loin at a special dinner event last week at the Elliott Test Kitchen. While cooking is a participation bonus, Wickramasingha founded the test kitchen to give area students an academic boost.**

Tuesday to study for tests and stuff, and it's really fun."

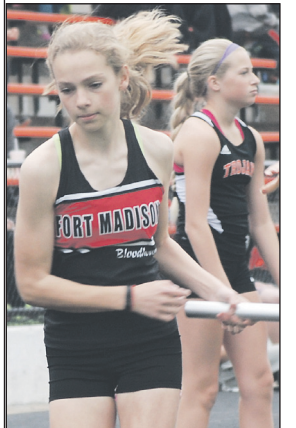
The cooking part is the fun part for the students who also come down to get help with

homework or test prep.

White boards are spaced strategically around the room with quiz questions and mind-teasers such as, "What occurs

once in a year, twice in a week, but never in a day." And teachers from Fort Madison, as well as Central Lee and Holy Trinity

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**GIRL POWER**  
FMHS girls win six titles in meet at Fairfield.

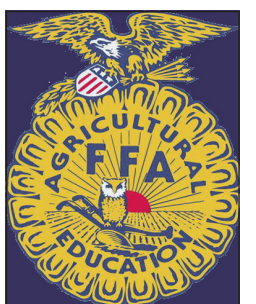
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**RAISING FUNDS**

A series of fundraisers are in the works to pay for this year's fireworks display in Fort Madison. The first of those events is Saturday night at the Eagles Club.

**INSIDE TODAY**



**FFA HONOR**

Several FFA members from Central Lee have received the Iowa FFA Degree — the highest honor from the state association.

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**NOTABLE**



**GAIL KUNCH**, a science teacher at Holy Trinity Jr./Sr. High, has been awarded the Iowa Academy of Science 2016 Excellence in Science Teaching Award for Earth and Space Science Teaching. Full story and photo on Page 2.

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## Another former MWA student tells his story

**CINDY IUTZI**  
MVM News Network

KEOKUK —The investigation into alleged sexual abuse at Midwest Academy in Keokuk has been ongoing for three months, but as of today, no criminal charges have been filed.

A multi-agency force including federal, state and county officers executed two search warrants on Jan. 28 at the self-described therapeutic boarding school just outside of Keokuk. Since then, two civil lawsuits have been filed and former students have come forward to tell about their experience at MWA.

### LUC'S STORY

Luc Michalski of the St. Louis area encountered Midwest Academy 10 years ago.

It was September 2005, and Michalski recalls that he was asleep at his parents' home in the St. Louis area.

"Two very large men showed up in my bedroom at 4 a.m. and said it was time to go to class," he said. "I was kind of confused. I was taking college courses at the time and my class was not until 2 p.m. Mom was there at the time, so I just went."

The men put him in a van and drove him to Keokuk, a city he'd never heard of before. When the van finally reached Midwest Academy, he was stripped, checked for tattoos and had his head shaved.

"Intervention (isolation room) was full when I got there," he said. "It was customary to spend the first night in isolation so you couldn't run or hurt your-

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# Services, clients grow, but space at the center has not

## Open house at Eichacker Center is Friday

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Nobody likes to ask for help, even those who spend their days doling it out. But according to Family Development Specialist Dolly Stancil, sometimes you have to get a little to give a little.

Apparently, the building from which Stancil works, Community Action at the Eichacker Center at 3433 Ave. O, is too small.

"We were too small in 2007 when I first came here," Stancil said.

"And every time we add a new program or client, it gets a little tighter in these walls."

So as was done in the past, Stancil is having an open house. The open house will be 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday.

"We want to focus on two things," Stancil said. "We want to show people why we need a new facility and we also want to let people in the area who don't know about us learn who we are and what we do."

Stancil said the organization wants to either get funding to purchase property to construct a new building or to purchase an existing structure.

"We need more room," Stancil said. "We have two part-day classes here. Our all-day classes are at another location."

Stancil said there is a cook



JEFF HUNT/DAILY DEMOCRAT

**Candi Thompson adjusts some of the children's artwork. She has been a teacher with Community Action for two years. Classes for children are just one of many services provided by the organization.**

and kitchen in the basement. The cook has to carry the food up the stairs and then deliver some of the meals to other locations.

"As we get another year added to our lives, this doesn't get easier," Stancil said.

As it stands now, Community Action is starting to save for a new location, but according to Stancil, it's a tricky thing to do.

"We have to be sure we have as much money as we can get

before we apply for a grant," Stancil said. "It is a matching grant so if we only apply for \$10,000 then we cut ourselves short. I think we can match up to \$500,000. That would do a lot of good."

As for what the facility does Stancil said there are groups of people who are considered low income who do not realize they can get help in her office.

SEE CENTER, PAGE 7

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## CENTER: Funds needed to capture a matching grant

(Continued from Page 1)

### COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMS

**LIHEAP** — Low income home energy assistance program; One time per winter (Oct. 1-April 30) payments to heat source; qualification automatically puts home on list for weatherization.

If the client is a home owner and has qualified for LIHEAP and has problems with their furnace (either repair or replacement needed) during the LIHEAP season Community Action may be able to help with the cost.

**Weatherization** — Clients who qualify and are selected will have their homes evaluated for needs. Most homes will have insulation added to the attic and the exterior sidewalls. Due to the house being tightened with the insulation there will be an inspection of the furnace and gas hot water heater to be sure they are venting properly. Unfortunately, with over 5,000 LIHEAP applications taken yearly (many of them new households) some clients are on the list for many years. At this time Community Action does approximately 120 houses per year.

**FaDSS** — Family Development and Self-Sufficiency Program; this is a home-visiting program to assist families that receive FIP to attain their goals.

**Early Head Start** — Care for children from birth to age three for qualified parents who are working and/or in school full time. Classes are Monday – Friday.

There are also services for pregnant women. Education and support is provided for prenatal health, fetal development stages and risks, benefits of breast-feeding, labor and delivery (what to expect) postpartum health.

Applications are taken at any time of the year.

**Head Start** — Classes for children age 3 – 5; There is one all day class for the children of the working/schooling parents (Monday – Friday). There are also two half day classes (Monday – Thursday). New applications start in April for the fall classes.

**ESG** — Emergency Solutions Grant: Money to help stop an eviction or to help a homeless person obtain housing. (If funds are available)

**TBRA** — Tenant Based Rental Assistance: This is for longer term help for families with lower income who may be struggling with their monthly rent payments.

There is also a food pantry.

## KITCHEN: Trio in ACT prep program had amazing results

(Continued from Page 1)

Catholic, volunteer their time at the kitchen periodically throughout the week.

Wickramasingha said a recent group of sophomores and juniors recently participated in the Elliott Test Kitchen ACT test program and three of the students did extremely well scoring 27, 27 and one scored a 31.

“That student just punched their ticket to any college in this world. That was not news, there was no cameras, no news crews,” he said.

“So that’s what this program is about, bringing equal awareness to academics and sports achievements of students. Those are a few of the good things coming out of this program.”

Johnstun said her grades have sparked since coming down to the kitchen.

“Like at the beginning of the school year my grades were ok, not bad but ok...this has helped a lot”

Johnstun said being able to work in the kitchen at times while coming down to study has given her additional avenues to pursue aside from the better grades.

“I’m not quite sure what I want to do, but I might be a Youtuber...like a cooking show,” Johnstun said.

The test kitchen is totally funded through donations, fundraisers and local and state grants.

Guests at the event were treated to bruschetta, southwest egg rolls and quesadillas. Followed by a citrus glazed pork loin, Fred Knoch’s famous Mac & Cheese and a cherry cobbler and vanilla ice cream

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dessert.

Knoch said he kicked up the mac & cheese with a little help from down south. “We got a little secret from a lady down south, we won’t mention any names, but you take a whole egg and we’ll take a couple of forks full of french onion dip with the egg and mix it up. And then you put the egg and the dip in with the macaroni while it cooks.”

Knoch and Wickramasingha have been friends since Kumar came to the country in 1986.

“Fred came into my life in a very strange way. My first job was a dishwasher and at the same restaurant we had a bus boy and Fred was that bus boy.”

Rehm, who visits the kitchen for homework and cooking about three times a week, said her favorite part of the evening was making the cobbler, but she had a special smile as Kumar helped her free-flip a spinach-mushroom quesadilla in a non-stick frying pan.

Wickramasingha said more special cooking events with the students will be held throughout the school year and those events will be advertised in the local newspaper.

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# The Mini Page

Issue 18, 2016

Founded by Betty Debnam

**Next Week:**  
Visit Rio de Janeiro

## Planting With Mom



### Mini Fact:

You can also plant herbs, such as basil, and fruits, such as blueberries, in containers.

We celebrate Mother’s Day on Sunday, May 8. Does your mom like to work in the garden? You can work on a gardening project together, and your whole family can enjoy the harvest!

### Container gardening

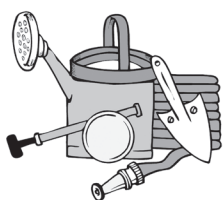
Even if you don’t have space in a yard for a garden, you can use containers of any size to grow edible plants (plants we can eat).

Containers can be found at garden centers, or you can use clay pots, plastic garbage cans, bushel baskets or milk cartons. Choose containers that will hold your plants when they’re fully grown.

### Get ready to plant

After you find a container, you may need:

- gravel or small rocks
- potting soil
- seeds
- fertilizer
- stakes
- a trowel
- a watering can or garden hose



### Next steps

1. Put 1/2 inch of gravel in the bottom of the container and fill to within 1 inch of the top with potting soil.

2. Decide which types of plants you’ll grow according to the space and light you have. Plant the seeds and use fertilizer according to the directions on the seed packet.

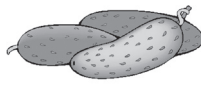
3. Water plants whenever the soil begins to feel dry. It’s best to water early in the morning.

### Get planting!

The Mini Page suggests a few edible plants to get you started.

#### Cucumbers

- Sunlight: full sunlight
- Spacing: large container; space 6 inches apart
- Harvest: when about 5 inches long
- How to use: Cucumbers are a cool, crunchy treat on a hot day. Use a potato peeler to scrape off long strips of the skin, and your cucumber slices will have striped edges!



#### Carrots

- Sunlight: some shade
- Spacing: at least a 12-inch-deep container; space 4 inches apart
- Harvest: when about 1/2 inch in diameter. (Carrots grow underground.)
- How to use: Carrots are great “take-along” vegetables for lunches or picnics. Dip them in ranch dressing. They’re good steamed, too.



#### Tomatoes

- Sunlight: full sunlight
- Spacing: 18 to 24 inches apart; some tomato plants will need cages or stakes so that they can grow upward.
- Harvest: when firm
- How to use: Tomatoes are tasty by themselves, but you can also make spaghetti sauce, salsa for chips, and soup with them. They’re great on sandwiches and salads, too.



### Bell peppers

- Sunlight: full sunlight
- Spacing: 15 to 18 inches apart
- Harvest: at any stage; yellow and red are sweeter than green
- How to use: Bell peppers can change from green to yellow, orange or red. They are a sweet, crunchy addition to pasta dishes or salads, and they’re great to eat by themselves. They’re not spicy.



### Onions

- Sunlight: full sunlight
- Spacing: 4 to 6 inches apart
- Harvest: when tops are about 8 inches tall. (Onions grow underground.)
- How to use: Onions add flavor to many of our favorite foods, including soups, salads, pasta sauces and chili.



### Are you in the zone?

Some plants should be grown at different times in different parts of the country. For example, it’s warmer in Daytona Beach, Florida, in May than it is in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Gardeners use a map of zones of the United States to help them know when to plant. You can find your zone at [garden.org/zipzone](http://garden.org/zipzone). Just type in your ZIP code to find your zone.

## Resources



### On the Web:

- [kidsgardening.org](http://kidsgardening.org)
- [garden.org/plantguide](http://garden.org/plantguide)

### At the library:

- “Kids’ Container Gardening” by Cindy Krezel
- “Super Simple Salad Gardens” by Alex Kuskowski

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