

Area churches	6B
Classified advertising	8A
Community calendar	6B
Courthouse news	4A
Obituaries	8A
Sports	1B



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School board approves computer purchase

Approve sharing amendment

By Phil Monson

After thorough research the last few years, the Humboldt School District has settled on a one-to-one computer purchase.

During Monday night's regular monthly meeting, the Humboldt School Board approved the purchase of 440 Chromebook laptop computers from CDW at a purchase

price of \$179,387. Tiger Direct (\$180,191) and Sterling Computers (\$182,410) submitted the other bids.

The individual computer program will be undertaken on a three-year rotation basis with middle school students receiving the computers the first year, fall 2014, the high school in fall 2015 and the elementary level for fall 2016. Every three years each group will receive new, updated computers. An additional 10-15 computers will be purchased for repairs.

The price does not include the purchase of computer bags, expected to cost roughly \$40 per bag.

"One thing I want to add is that this is a tool. This is not a takeover. This is a tool that we will use and it will help reduce carrying of textbooks and enhance opportunities," Humboldt School Superintendent Greg Darling said.

"Students will still have to draw and write. These computers will be an added tool to help in the classroom and at home," Darling said.

"We're looking at a purchase price of \$200,000 for everything. That is the amount we have budgeted for this," Darling said.

Board member Brody Clark asked why Chromebooks were

selected.

"Chromebooks were by far the top choice of teachers and our technology people. Chromebooks are more rigid and are Internet quick. Also, the battery is 10 hours," Darling said. "One district we talked to said they spent almost \$2 million on ipads and ended up dropping that program."

Clark also asked about installation of software such as Microsoft Word.

"I hope we don't have to purchase 440 license agreements to get these," Clark said.

"Word is already in our district's technology infrastructure," Darling said. "We have to purchase an agreement, but it will be cheaper. If we have a problem with it, we only have

one computer to look at. And we only have to upgrade one time."

"Tony Richardson and the technology department did a great job researching this. Our infrastructure is set up now that we can handle that," Darling said.

"So these are basically a way to connect to our infrastructure?" Board president Randy Hildreth said.

"Yes, basically. Students will have access to their homework from home," Darling said.

"In reality, we spend upwards of \$120,000 every year on technology with computers (laptops) on carts. We're going to take the carts out and put them in the hands of students,"

Darling said.

Sharing amendment

The board approved a one-year amendment to its whole grade sharing agreement with the Twin Rivers School District.

Last week TR approved a one-year amendment in which TR would give \$1,868 per student from the TR Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) and SILO (Sales Infrastructure Local Option Sales tax) accounts for the 2013-14 school year.

TR has experienced a vastly improved financial position as a result of its sharing agreement in which middle school and high school students from

See School Board, 3A



Patriotic Essay and Art banquet

The Sathers-Odgaard VFW and Auxiliary hosted its annual Patriotic Essay and Art recognition banquet last Saturday at the VFW Hall in Dakota City. There were almost 300 essays from local third through fifth graders and another 78 middle school students who participated. Local fourth grader Kaitlyn Harms not only won the local contest, but also captured first place in the district and second in the state. It was the first time a local student had placed at the state level. Her essay was about her favorite freedom. Lauren Erickson, a Humboldt Middle School sixth grader won the district competition for the Patriot's Pen Award with her 300-400-word essay on what patriotism means to me.

High school students were encouraged to submit original artwork that displays a patriotic idea or theme. Pictured from left: three Humboldt High School seniors, Sadie Carver with her child hugging a soldier drawing, earned first place, \$40, a pin and a backpack. Carley Downing received second place for her soldier's torso in uniform, a \$35 cash award and patriotic lapel pin. Allix Kirchoff was third place with her facial study in the colors of the flag, symbolizing that the flag and what it stands for represents all Americans. Look for more information and photos inside this issue. Humboldt Independent photo.

GC-B embracing STEM

By Phil Monson

Teaching students to become more innovative and creative are among the main objectives of the Gilmore City-Bradgate School District as they implement STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) into their curriculum at their elementary school in Gilmore City.

During a work session last week, staff members funneled their knowledge of the new offerings. The district has created *Makerspaces* in the building to facilitate the program.

Val Jergens, elementary principal, says they are looking to increase student innovation and creativity.

"We have computers called Raspberry Pi's which are for students to learn programming, Lego Mindstorms robots, KNex building kits and we'll be using iPad APPS such

as iMovie as well," Jergens said.

"This is more of a trial and error for the adults so they can figure things out before they teach the students," Jergens said.

"Next week we will receive a 3-D printer called a maker box. We will be working with that before we instruct the kids. We are also experimenting with apps on ipads to help them become more creative," Jergens said. "What we're after is a little more creativity and invention."

Makerspaces are community centers with tools. They combine manufacturing equipment, community and education for the purposes of enabling community members to design, prototype and create manufactured works that wouldn't be possible to create with the resources available to individuals working alone.

Teachers at one table were working with a laptop computer to program a robot's movement.

"The robots are programmed with software to get them to do whatever we like," Jergens said. "We have a maize set up on the floor for the teachers to test out the programs."

Jergens also displayed a kit that helps students learn about electric circuits and computer chips. The kit includes battery powered modules, motors, dimmer switch and LED light, along with an on/off button, buzzer and light sensor.

"Kids can build flashlights with these kits, or put lights on their bicycle. They can build Popsicle stick houses with a lithium battery inside that will run a motor to turn a windmill. It's a starter kit that you

See GC-B, 10A



Gilmore City-Bradgate staff members work on programming a robot with computer software as they prepare to implement new curriculum in the classroom. Pictured, from left: Candy Burger, Leslie Pralle-Keehn, Megan Moser and Nancy Berte. Independent photo.

TR approves amendment

By Phil Monson

The Twin Rivers School Board approved an amendment to its whole grade sharing agreement with the Humboldt Community School District.

In a regular monthly meeting of the TR board last week (Feb. 13) in Bode, the board approved an addendum in which Twin Rivers will give an additional \$1,868 per student from the TR Physical Plant and Equipment Levy and SILO (Sales Infrastructure Local Option sales tax) accounts, which are not part of the general fund.

The amount listed is per student from TR attending school in Humboldt under the whole grade sharing agreement,

based on the 2013 fall enrollment count. The addendum is only for the 2013-14 school year. After 2013-14, the whole grade sharing agreement will continue as previously written.

The Twin Rivers School District financial fortunes have turned around completely from five years ago when they were facing spending deficits in consecutive years and facing pressure from state officials to remedy the situation. Now, with the financial burden of not having to provide middle school and high school programming, the district is in strong financial position offering a modern-day elementary school in the Bode building. They now boast a solvency

ratio of 59 percent. State officials recommend at least 10 percent.

According to a press release, the rationale for the addendum is stated as follows: *The Twin Rivers School District has made great strides in their finances since the whole grade sharing agreement and would like to continue to be a good partner and help with programs that would aid the TR students who are attending Humboldt.*

Twin Rivers has increased their solvency ratio, has a large surplus in PPEL and SILO and have cash on hand with the spending authority

See TR board, 2A

Dakota Heights project is well below estimate

By Kent Thompson

The Dakota City council met Wednesday, Feb. 12, with several decisions on budgetary expenditures on the agenda.

The council started the meeting with some good news. There was high interest, and bid prices received from contractors for the Dakota Heights Addition infrastructure improvements were below the estimated cost.

The council held a public hearing to review the bids and approve the awarding of the contract.

The work will include just over 1,300 linear feet of six-inch water main, three fire hydrants, a lift station, sanitary sewer and five manholes, over 330 linear feet of 12-inch storm sewer reinforced concrete pipe, as well as excavation, grading and paving of the new Dakota Heights Drive for an approximate length of one-quarter of a mile.

Eight bids were received, with four of the eight coming in under the engineer's estimate.

The low bidder was Denver Underground of Denver, at a cost of \$413,086, almost \$72,000 below the engineer's estimate of \$485,000 for the project.

The other bidders in numerical order (lowest to highest) were: Wunsch Construction of Greene for \$444,212.95; Redding's Gravel and Excavating of Algona for \$463,617.25; Blacktop Service Company of Humboldt for \$466,767.80; Rogness Brothers Excavating of Lake Mills for \$487,314.55; Hovey Construction of Fort Dodge for \$534,656.10; J and K Contracting of Ames for \$566,350.25; and King Construction of Wall Lake for \$592,174.60.

City Clerk Angelique Berry told the council that Schlotfeldt Engineering of Webster City, engineers for the project, reported the insurance and bond financially sound, and recommended granting the project to Denver Underground.

Council member Barb Nelson then moved to pass a resolution accepting the bids and awarding the contract to Denver Underground.

Berry said the anticipated engineering costs for the proj-

ect will be \$75,000, with a \$41,086 contingency.

She said work is expected to take between 30-50 days, with a project deadline of July 31.

City expenditures

The council approved several purchases during the meeting, most in the \$1,000 to \$1,200 price range.

There was one larger ticket item, and that was maintenance required on well 3 and well 1 in the city.

The city solicited two bids for work, one from Schumacher Well Drilling of Algona, and another from Cahoy Well and Pump Service of Sumner.

The city received no bid

See Dakota Heights, 10A

Simon Estes Concert

The Simon Estes concert at the R. Wesley Carlson Auditorium at Humboldt High School on Sunday afternoon, Feb. 23, is completely sold out.

The "Roots & Wings" concert will also include the Humboldt High School Concert Chorus and the Humboldt Community Chorus. The concert will end with the grand finale when Simon Estes, Concert Chorus, and Community Chorus will all join forces to sing the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

After the 2 p.m. concert, there will be a meet and greet in the auditorium lobby where Estes will be available for autographs and photos. CDs will be available for sale as well.

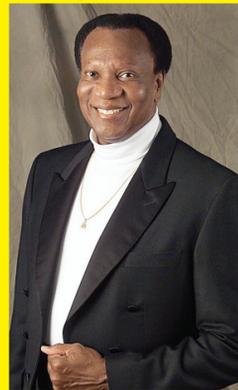
There will be a reception for sponsors at Rustix in the evening.

The next morning (Feb. 24), Estes will appear at the high school as part of his *Roots & Wings* program to give a talk to students. He will talk about his life growing up, what life was like and the obstacles he encountered as an African-American person getting into the opera field in the 1960s.

Humboldt students are eligible for scholarships through the Simon Estes Foundation (half of his \$15,000 performance fee goes towards the scholarship fund). Funds raised above and beyond the performance fee will be returned to the community for use towards a community project.

"I am very proud of the

community of Humboldt for coming together and making this concert a reality. It has taken many hands to put it together. Thanks go to Humboldt Music Boosters, Humboldt Area Arts Council, Community Chorus, Denise Naeve, and many, many others. I know everyone will enjoy the concert. It will be very thrilling indeed to hear Simon Estes sing in our wonderful auditorium on Sunday, and get to meet him personally." Mike Blair, vocal music director at Humboldt High School, said.



Simon Estes will perform before a sold out R. Wesley Carlson Auditorium at Humboldt High School at 2 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, Feb. 23, as part of his "Roots and Wings" concert series. The HHS Concert Chorus and Humboldt Community Chorus will join Estes on stage.