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IOWA TODAY®

CEDAR RAPIDS

EAST IOWA JOURNAL NEWS ROUNDUP**CEDAR RAPIDS****Store fire ruled arson**

A quick-acting employee put out a fire set by an arsonist this week in a hardware store.

Fire investigator Capt. Alan Brockhohn on Tuesday said the fire at Carver Hardware, 2200 Bowling St. SW, was arson.

He said the arsonist started the fire under a counter at the store about 7:20 p.m. Monday. An employee at a cash register saw the fire and doused it with a fire extinguisher, the investigator said.

Firefighters helped vent smoke. Damage was slight and did not prevent the store from opening Tuesday, Manager Tom Worsfold said.

School facilities closed

The Cedar Rapids school district's Educational Service Center (school board building), Annex Building, district warehouse and stadium will be closed to the public from noon through the end of the day today for a staff meeting. The facilities will reopen Thursday morning.

EASTERN IOWA**5 areas OK option tax**

A 1 percent local option sales tax was approved in five of eight areas in Muscatine and Fayette counties Tuesday.

According to unofficial results from the Fayette County Auditor's Office, vote totals were:

- Rural areas — 630-128.
- West Union — 361-261.
- Fayette — 152-53.

None of the residents of Stanley or Summer voted, and the people of Fairbank defeated the proposal 50-5.

The tax will go into effect July 1 and continue through the end of 1999. Funds will go toward different projects in each area.

In Muscatine County, West Liberty and Durant voted for the proposal, 103-49 and 2-0, respectively, the Muscatine County Auditor's Office reported.

Funds generated in West Liberty will be allocated equally for cemetery maintenance, park maintenance, a community center project and property tax relief. Funds in Durant will be used for property tax relief.

IOWA CITY**2 held in beating, robbery**

An Iowa City man is charged with first-degree robbery and a male juvenile is in detention in connection with the alleged beating and robbery of a 15-year-old male under the guise of a gang initiation.

Kevin Harris, 24, of 4616 Lakeside Dr., and Willie C. Wilder, 15, of 2601 Lakeside Manor, are accused of assaulting and robbing Joseph C. Mendez, 15, of 2203 Lakeside Dr., at 3:30 a.m. April 30 at 601 S. Gilbert St.

In a statement given to Iowa City police officer Sid Jackson, Mendez said he, Harris, Wilder and several other people met at the Gilbert Street address the evening of April 29. Talk turned to gangs, and someone began to question Mendez's gang membership. He was told his previous membership did not mean anything because he was accepted by people who were not gang members.

A group of people left, then returned around 1:45 a.m., Mendez continued. Someone asked him to "spit me some lit," which means to recite certain gang phrases or knowledge, Jackson said. When Mendez was unable to do so, Harris, Wilder and two other people started beating him, Mendez told police.

When the beating stopped some 10 to 15 minutes later, Harris demanded that Mendez give up his Nike basketball shoes and his beeper, court records show.

On May 1, Mendez was told by one of the unidentified people who had participated in the beating that he was now a "folk," or gang member.

Mendez suffered a broken nose, bruises, swelling and other injuries to his face, head and body, records show.

Harris is in the Johnson County Jail on \$25,000 bond. A preliminary hearing is set for May 19 at 4 p.m. Wilder is being detained at the Lee County Detention Facility while awaiting a pretrial hearing scheduled for May 19 at 2:30 p.m.

NEWS TIPS

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Study: Low-fat is OK for children

By Lyle Muller

Gazette Johnson County Bureau

IOWA CITY — Children who eat less fat and cholesterol can reduce their risk for heart disease without harming their normal growth, a University of Iowa-based study says.

The finding is important because it answered questions researchers had about how a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet affects children.

The research, headed by Dr. Ronald Lauer, U of I professor of pediatrics and preventive medi-

cine, showed that children on the low-fat, low-cholesterol diet had a modest reduction in the levels of bad cholesterol, called lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C).

However, after being on the diet for three years, the children continued to grow adequately, store iron and get enough good nutrition to grow normally, the study showed.

Additionally, the students' psychological scores remained strong.

Cedar Rapids was one of six sites where children ages 8 to 10

and with higher-than-desired LDL-C levels were studied. There were 102 children in the study.

The findings were published in this week's Journal of the American Medical Association. The Gazette reported on the initial findings last November, when preliminary results of the study were revealed at an American Heart Association meeting in Dallas.

Scientists said the study suggests a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet could reduce a child's risk of atherosclerosis and subsequent

coronary heart in later life without harming a child's normal growth.

The researchers reached their conclusions studying 663 children nationally — 334 who were on the diet and 329 who were in a usual-care comparison group.

The study is part of a nationwide Dietary Intervention Study in Children. Children on the diet received 28 percent of their calories from total fat.

The study will follow the children until they reach the age of 18.



Dr. Ronald Lauer
Led U of I study

Anticipation

Gazette photos by Chris Stewart

Sneak peek**C.R. fifth graders tour Franklin Middle School**

If you come in with a positive attitude, life is very, very easy."

Franklin Associate Principal Randy Lagos



Laura Nash (front), a Pierce Elementary fifth grader, tours Franklin Middle School on Tuesday with classmate Jesse Owings (right) and fifth graders from Johnson Elementary.

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Kenwood fire station plan OK'd

By Lonnie Zingula

Gazette City Hall reporter

Plans to build a fire station in Kenwood Park will proceed to the Cedar Rapids City Council with the Planning Commission's seal of approval.

But it was hardly a ringing endorsement.

On a 6-3 vote, the commission voted to recommend approval of the Fire Department's request for a conditional use permit to build a station at 905 35th St. NE. The action came three weeks after the request was tabled in order for fire and engineering officials to address neighbors' concerns.

Neighbors had argued the project shouldn't proceed until steps are taken to fix existing drainage problems. City Engineer Dave Elgin said the station would have no affect on drainage in the area.

"We will concede that there may be some drainage problems out there," he said, "but they are neither improved or worsened by this project."

■ Turn to 3B: Station

Memo policy will improve accessibility

By Lonnie Zingula

More openness in City Council decision-making is the intent of a newly proposed policy on council use of sign-off memos.

Sign-offs are circulated among council members to establish council consensus or determine direction on issues. Typically, they are followed by formal passage of a resolution or ordinance in an open meeting.

The proposed policy, which the council is expected to approve next week, calls for sign-offs to be available for public inspection before, during and after council action.

Under the current informal policy, sign-offs are posted in the City Clerk's Office after circulating among all council members. Hit-and-miss adherence to the policy has drawn criticism.

Mayor's Assistant Matt Paul, who developed the proposed policy in consultation with council members and the city's legal staff, said copies of sign-offs at various stages of completion will be filed in the clerk's office. Sign-offs will also be logged into the city's computer network, which will allow council members to track their progress.

To ensure timely and efficient action, the policy calls for sign-offs to take precedence in council members' schedules. That is meant to address concerns raised by Safety Commissioner J.D. Smith about the time it takes some sign-offs to circulate.

Paul said sign-offs are to be used only for administrative activities and not for policy. The new procedure is meant to ensure openness while allowing the council to continue using sign-offs, he said.

"It's an efficient and expedient way to conduct city business," Paul said.

ger students they'll like the new lunch choices, such as soft pretzels. Another encouraged them to go out for sports because "the coaches are really cool, and they make it a lot of fun."

One student encouraged students to not get into the habits of putting off homework or copying off others. Middle school homework may take more time, another said, but it isn't hard.

SOME PIERCE students said the building tours — given by Franklin sixth graders — was the best part of the orientation.

"It made me feel comfortable that sixth graders who had only been there a year already knew the whole place," said Kristine Sorenson.

"I've never been inside," said Jesse Owings. "I got to know the place a little better."

Brandon Hale said he learned everything from where the gym was to how to order his lunch. He said he didn't realize sixth graders had to be responsible for so many things.

Pierce counselor Paul Hancock, who accompanied the Cedar Rapids' fifth graders to Franklin, said he thinks the spring visits "ease the transition" to middle school. "They feel much more comfortable if they've been there."

This is the fourth year the Cedar Rapids schools have had a district-wide orientation program for middle school, according to Steve Chambliss, the district's middle school and high school executive director.

The orientations build a sense of community and "hopefully relieve some anxiety" about the larger buildings and new environments, Chambliss said.

OTHER ORIENTATION activities include school open houses, conferences in early August and visits with teachers the week before school starts.

For his part, Lagos left the fifth graders with some advice on how to succeed at Franklin.

"If you come in with a positive attitude, life is very, very easy," he said. "Having a chip on your shoulder makes your life difficult."

TOP: Eyeballing the middle school they will attend next year, Pierce Elementary fifth graders (from left) Kristine Sorenson, Laura Nash, Lisa Fuller and Sarah Dole arrive by bus Tuesday morning for an orientation program. **ABOVE:** Pierce Elementary fifth graders enter Franklin Middle School for orientation and a tour.

FYI

- In Iowa City, sixth graders visit their prospective junior high buildings in the spring.
- Also, seventh graders will sometimes visit their former elementary schools and share their experiences in adjusting to junior high life.