

THE DAILY Nonpareil

Iowa
Democrats
regrouping
after election
losses

PAGE A3



Family,
community
mourns a
former fire
captain

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Saturday, November 30, 2024

WHERE **YOUR STORY** LIVES

nonpareilonline.com

‘WHEREVER THE NEED IS’



ANDREW SMITH, THE NONPAREIL

Kevin Doncaster listens to Ann Crawford give a speech about Quilts of Valor at The Warehouse Event Venue in Council Bluffs on Friday Nov. 15, 2024.

Veteran honored for serving country, others

ANDREW SMITH
Council Bluffs Nonpareil

Kevin Doncaster believes he organized the largest all-veteran-run relief effort in American history. “I can’t tell you how many thousands of pounds of deliveries we’ve made, but it started off with one social media post,” Doncaster told The Nonpareil. The Council Bluffs veteran, along with

a team of around 100 people, delivered a measurable impact in the southeastern United States after hurricanes Helene and Milton struck a few months ago, he said. Whether it’s truly the largest such effort is unclear, as organizations like Team Rubicon also provide relief using a large number of veteran volunteers. Doncaster measures his charity’s success in donations, service and hugs. His

team has worked with an all-volunteer relief force headquartered in a Bristol Motor Speedway warehouse provided by the company. He said they’ve collected \$30 million in bottled water to distribute and coordinated giving out \$30,000 in Lululemon clothing that was provided from a church in Georgia.

Please see **DONCASTER**, Page A2

Residents urged to support Giving Tuesday 712

TIM ROHWER
Council Bluffs Nonpareil

The holiday season isn’t just about receiving gifts. It’s a time for giving, for thinking of fellow residents in need and organizations dedicated to making the community grow and prosper.

With that in mind, everyone is asked to participate in Giving Tuesday, the largest day of giving in the region. “There is no minimum amount for donating,” said Catrina Trabal, community partnerships manager for the Community Foundation for Western Iowa. “And they can give to a charity of their choice.”

People give to charity for many reasons, according to the Charities Aid Foundation. They include:
■ **Sense of duty:** 96% of donors feel a sense of duty to give back to society and help others.
■ **Belief in a cause:** 75% of donors are passionate about a specific cause.

■ **Faith and religion:** 71% of donors say their religious values are a key motivation for giving.
■ **Personal experiences:** 61% of donors say a personal experience sparked their giving.

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Weather
Mainly cloudy and cold
High 27 • Low 16
FORECAST • A10



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Reynolds to name lieutenant governor ‘really soon’

ERIN MURPHY

Lee-Gazette Des Moines Bureau

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds will name her new lieutenant governor “really soon,” she said Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters after the annual Thanksgiving turkey pardoning ceremony at Terrace Hill, Reynolds said she has finished interviewing candidates and will name a new lieutenant governor soon.

Iowa has been without a lieutenant governor since early September, when former Lt. Gov. Adam Gregg resigned to take a leadership position with the Iowa Bankers Association.

“In the next couple of weeks, probably, we’ll have a decision for you,” Reynolds said Tuesday.

Without a lieutenant governor, next in the state’s line of succession behind the governor is the Iowa Senate President: currently Sen. Amy Sinclair, a Republican from Allerton.

Reynolds declined to say how many people she interviewed for the position, saying only that she talked to “several” people. She said she is done interviewing candidates.

Reynolds said Gregg’s resignation came at the start of a busy stretch for her. Shortly after she went on a trade trip to India, she

was active campaigning for Republican candidates in the 2024 general election, she attended the national Republican Governors Association’s annual conference in Florida, and recently traveled to Washington, D.C., to accept an honor for the state’s conservative tax policies.

“It’s just been a crazy timeline, and we want to do it right,” Reynolds said. “But we’re really close (to an announcement).”

Gregg had been Reynolds’ lieutenant governor throughout her entire tenure. She selected Gregg as her second-in-command when she rose from the same position to become governor in 2017. Reynolds replaced former Gov. Terry Branstad that year when he became U.S. ambassador to China during current President-elect Donald Trump’s first administration.

In that process, a legal question was raised as to whether a lieutenant governor who was appointed but not yet elected was granted the full authority of the position and placed in the line of succession. Then-Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller, a Democrat, delivered a formal opinion that the Iowa Constitution did not grant full authority to an appointed lieutenant governor.

After that, the Iowa Legislature

proposed a constitutional amendment that said the lieutenant governor, when appointed to the position, is granted the full authority of the position, including by being placed in the line of succession. That constitutional amendment was approved by Iowa voters in the 2024 election by a wide margin, 81% to 19%.

Reynolds expands on phones in schools policy

Reynolds during a recent TV interview said she planned to propose a state law that would restrict Iowa students from having phones with them in the classroom.

Reynolds elaborated on that proposal Tuesday, saying she wants to propose something that respects the policies that some schools have already put in place. She said her proposal will “supplement and enhance” those existing policies.

“I don’t want to really step on anything that they’ve done,” Reynolds said. “So it’ll probably be more of a floor, is what we’re looking at — just to encourage people to really move in that direction.”

Proponents of such bans say they prevent students from being distracted during school instruction time and also help address concerns about students’ mental health.



ERIN MURPHY, THE GAZETTE

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds fields questions from reporters at the governor’s mansion on Terrace Hill in Des Moines on Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2024.

Eight states had banned cellphones in classrooms as of Nov. 4, according to KFF, a nonprofit health care news and advocacy organization. The states with statewide bans on phones in the classroom are Minnesota, Florida, Indiana, Ohio, Virginia, South Carolina, Louisiana and California, according to KFF.

Another 12 states — including Iowa — have introduced legislation that would ban or restrict cellphone use in classrooms, and education departments in nine more states have recommended policies or pilot programs designed to ban or restrict cellphones in schools, ac-

cording to KFF.

“We want to make sure that when they’re in the classroom, when they’re in school, that they are fully there to learn and not to be distracted,” Reynolds said. “And you know, the stories that I’ve heard from the different school districts that have implemented (similar policies) are really encouraging. Parents are very, very supportive of this.”

The 2023 session of the Iowa Legislature begins Jan. 13, and Reynolds likely will give her annual Condition of the State address on Jan. 14.

Doncaster

From A1

“He did take a lot of nice stuff out and help many people that needed help,” said Brian Delp, warehouse manager at the Northeast Tennessee Relief Center.

The warehouse was started by a three person administration team and Bristol Motor Speedway staff after Tennessee Emergency Management Agency saw a regional need for a distribution center.

Delp and his wife Amanda, who now leads the center, said Doncaster mainly dealt with distributing goods and generators to the area.

Doncaster said coordination and logistics are second nature for his team of veterans.

“We all know the logistics that are involved in getting Marines to a location — the bombs, the bullets, the food, the sleeping bags, all those things,” Doncaster said.

By air, land and sea, the veteran force helped rebuild roads and deliver thousands of pounds of aid supplies, Doncaster said.

Providing service dogs

Disaster relief wasn’t the

original mission for WarHawk PTSD Service Dogs, Doncaster’s charity.

So far, WarHawk has trained and provided 57 service dogs to veterans and first responders. The organization’s main facility is in Oklahoma, but trainers and recipients live across the country.

“Just like the military, we’re going to go wherever the need is,” Doncaster said. “If I can have a veteran train a dog, I do.”

The dogs are trained to alleviate post-traumatic stress disorder related symptoms. Their training can sometimes get quite specialized.

“Our dogs are trained to pick up on emotional distress, and so they’ll distract you, get you to pay attention to them and get you out of that mental moment that is taking you back to maybe a flashback or something stressful,” Doncaster said.

In one scenario, as Doncaster explained, a dog was trained to pull a blanket off its owner and turn on the lights when he suffered night terrors. The dog would then comfort its owner after he woke.

The dogs also create safe bubbles for their companions in public.

Doncaster himself strug-

gled after serving around 13 years in the U.S. Marine Corps between 1997 and 2014, he said. Some of his service was in Afghanistan and he says he got “blown up” three times. After serving he found himself back home on copious amounts of medications, some for his PTSD.

“Those 12 medications sedated my lungs so bad I was getting less than 80% oxygen, and that’s called brain damage,” Doncaster said. “I really needed to change my life.”

He received his own service dog, Lacy, who critically helped him manage his stress, mental health and curb weight gain caused by medications he was able to quit.

The charity started one of Doncaster’s friends from the service died by suicide.

“I called the provider of my dog and I said, ‘How do I do what you did for me for a lot of people?’” Doncaster recalled.

The name of his organization originates from a wartime nickname.

“In Afghanistan I wore a mohawk, and everybody called me ‘mohawk man.’ I said, ‘it’s not a mohawk, it’s a war hawk. We’re at war. We’ve got to win this thing,’”

Doncaster said.

Shifting his focus

Doncaster recently quit what he called his “corporate” job and started working full time at his charity.

He currently balances the service dog and relief effort sides of the organization. He’s lived in Council Bluffs for four years where he manages most of the organization remotely.

“The relief effort, at some point, has to transition to somebody else because I miss my daughter,” Doncaster said.

His 9-year-old daughter, Isabel, has raised \$400 for WarHawk by making bracelets, Doncaster said.

“She takes after her daddy and she has a big heart,” Doncaster said.

Earning recognition

The Quilts of Valor Foundation was founded in 2003 by the mother of a military service member.

According to the foundation, she had a dream in which quilts equaled healing, and she pushed to get them to service members. Since then, more than 401,000 quilts have been awarded, said Ann Crawford, the foundation’s western Iowa coordinator.

Doncaster was honored last Friday with a quilt of his own. U.S. Marine Corps Honor Guard members from Omaha’s Miguel Keith Detachment attended the brief ceremony at The Warehouse Event Venue in Council Bluffs.

Cheryl Shafer, one of Doncaster’s friends, nominated him for the award.

Shafer had previously received a quilt honoring her 27 years of service in the U.S. Army Reserve in which she was called up to serve overseas during Operation Desert Storm. She nominated Doncaster to receive a quilt because of his service and social work.

“He works really hard to stop the suicides,” Shafer said.

“I got like this when I got mine,” she said through tears at the event.

The quilts are made by volunteers across the country. Doncaster’s was created by Judy E., Sherri D. and Bill B. from Freedom Stitchers of Iowa.

“It takes anywhere from 20 to 50 hours to piece of quilt, and then it has to be quilted, and then it has to be bound,” Crawford said. “The cost is somewhere between \$250 to \$300 just for materials — that does not include

any labor.”

Doncaster hugged Crawford after an emotional reveal of the quilt’s design.

“I think people have seen my service to my country and my service to my country as a charity,” Doncaster said. “I think it’s OK to sometimes be recognized.”

He said the quilt was going right on top of him when he got home.

Recent brouhaha

Doncaster recently made headlines after an incident happened at the Council Bluffs location of The Salty Dog Bar and Grill.

Doncaster alleged that his service dog Lacy wasn’t allowed to accompany him in the restaurant, and that his dog’s status was questioned.

The story went viral online and soon got out of hand.

Doncaster told The Nonpareil that a man with a gun entered his backyard at night, threatening to kill his service dog. Brian Kev Wallader, owner of The Salty Dog, sat down with Doncaster for a joint social media video in an effort to deescalate the situation.

“I asked the community to calm down,” Doncaster said. “I was trying to educate people, not take down a business.”

Donation

From A1

SHARE Iowa, an initiative of the community foundation, will lead the Giving Tuesday 712 charge on Tuesday, Dec. 3. The fundraising campaign raised \$1.5 million last year, Trabal said.

“We would love to have a similar year this time,” she said.

People can donate ahead of time by visiting sharegoodiowa.org and entering the donation code “GIVINGTUESDAY” at checkout to indicate their early participation for the biggest, local giving day of the year, she said.

Donors will be able to select from more than 260 nonprofit organizations that partner with SHARE Iowa, and which provide a variety of services in nine counties: Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Monona, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie

and Shelby.

This number of organizations has more than doubled from just two years ago, Trabal said.

“They saw this as a free resource for connecting with their community members,” she said.

Donna Dostal, president and CEO of The Community Foundation for Western Iowa, is excited about the impact of Giving Tuesday in the region.

“We are honored to support the great work of our nonprofit partners in our region and are dedicated to help them grow and achieve their philanthropic missions by connecting them to resources and the people that really want to give where they live,” Dostal said.

A recent announcement by the Charles E. Lakin Foundation shows the importance of nonprofits receiving gifts when it recently launched the Revitalize Southwest Iowa Initiative through the Com-

munity Foundation for Western Iowa. This initiative plans to donate \$165 million to 51 area communities.

“The Charles E. Lakin Foundation donation will empower communities for generations,” Dostal said in a news release. “Our nonprofit partners continue to make a significant impact on western Iowa communities and their residents.”

What’s more, the Community Foundation for Western Iowa has once again earmarked \$200,000 for a 20% match on charitable gifts to endowment funds within the foundation.

This special match is a gift from the foundation during Giving Tuesday 712 to its nonprofit partners to amplify the impact of their generous donors.

This 20% match is on gifts up to \$100,000 per fund, which is available through Dec. 13.

Endowment funds are designed to build and grow over time, which

provides income to the nonprofit organization for years. They are an investment into an organization’s future sustainability, so it may continue its work.

“When the Community Foundation for Western Iowa launched SHARE Iowa, it was important to include an easy option for donors to support organizations in a number of ways that include their endowments,” Dostal said. “If an organization has an endowment fund through the Community Foundation for Western Iowa, a donor will see a ‘Donate to Endowment’ button as a giving option to support his or her favorite nonprofit.”

The community nonprofit Macedonia Hamilton Development Corporation, which was founded in 1985, is in its third year as a Giving Tuesday participant with SHARE Iowa.

“We are happy with how it went and can’t wait to see what we can

achieve in the future and how we can continue to support our community,” Macedonia Hamilton Development Corporation Coordinator Rachel Allensworth said.

The foundation also will provide 24 hourly \$1,000 prizes for SHARE Iowa nonprofit organizations that participate in Giving Tuesday 712.

As Giving Tuesday 712 concludes, community members are encouraged to attend a generosity celebration from 5 to 7 p.m. at Full Fledged Brewing Company, 40 Arena Way, Suite 2 in Council Bluffs.

“Giving Tuesday is an important day of giving,” Dostal said. “Every act of generosity matters. Everyone can contribute toward building a better world in which we all want to live.”

Donors are encouraged to visit sharegoodiowa.org to find new nonprofits to support during Giving Tuesday 712 and any day throughout the year.

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