

# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## Bancroft, Burt, Lakota, Ledyard & Titonka



### The hunt was on in Wesley

Hazel Earles picks up a good egg during the Easter Egg Hunt at South Park on Sunday, April 13 hosted by the Wesley Community Center. JoElla Leider photo.



### Burt Presbyterian donates \$1,500

The Burt Presbyterian Church recently donated \$1,500 for supplies used by community liason Marissa Miller. Miller helps individuals referred by local law enforcement officers, connecting them with needed resources. These may include emergency shelter, personal safety assistance or mental health care. The Presbytery of North Central Iowa also provided grant funding for this project. Submitted photo.

## Algona Schools reach agreement with unions

By Molly Montag  
News Correspondent

The Algona Community School District and has agreed to an agreement with the district's teachers' union for the 2025-26 fiscal year. The agreement, which provides a \$2,250 increase in pay for all teachers, was approved unanimously on Monday, April 14, by the Algona Community Schools Board of Education. Officials say it had previously been approved by the Algona Association of Educators, which represents the district's teachers.

The agreement also includes a \$2,500 increase in base pay. Overall, Superintendent Joe Carter said it represents a 3.14% increase over previous agreements. It runs from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.

In addition, the agreement would provide \$22 for each time a teacher covers another teacher's class during their prep period. Teachers would be paid \$33 for each time they cover another teacher for longer than 42 minutes.

In addition to ratifying a contract with teachers, the Board also approved an agreement with the Algona Education Services Association covering teacher associates. The agreement calls for an 80-cent increase in the base hiring pay, from \$13.70/hour to \$14.50/hour. Current teacher associates will receive a 53-cent per-hour pay increase. Associates who work in special education would receive an additional 25-50 cents per hour.

The Board also approved a 3.1 percent salary increase for staff not included in the other approved agreements. This includes building

administrators, food service employees, custodians, bus drivers, secretaries and other employees.

#### Budget Approved

The Board of Education also approved the 2025-26 budget. It includes \$36.6 million in expenditures: \$17 million for instruction, \$10.4 million in support services, \$975,000 in non-instructional programs and \$3.9 million in other expenditures.

The tax levy rates will vary due to the reorganization with the Algona Community Schools and the former Lu Verne and Titonka school districts. Taxpayers who live in the former Algona Community School District prior to the reorganization pay \$9,934 per \$1,000. Taxpayers in the former Titonka school district pay \$11,209 per \$1,000 and those in the former Lu Verne district will pay \$9,763 per \$1,000.

Titonka's rate is higher due to continued payments on a general obligation bond in that district. That bond is expected to be paid off in 2027. Lu Verne and Algona's rates will eventually be the same, per the reorganization process.

#### Graduation List Approved

The Board approved issuing diplomas to 123 seniors this year, pending completion of all their required coursework. Graduation is set for 2 p.m., May 18.

This year's class motto: "How lucky I am to have something to make saying goodbye so hard."

## Facing deportation, Algona residents now in limbo

By Molly Montag  
News Correspondent

Some immigrants living legally in Algona face an uncertain future after a federal judge temporarily blocked officials from ending an immigration program. Without the court order, they would have faced deportation this month.

The order, filed Monday, April 14, temporarily prohibited federal immigration officials from terminating the CHNV Parole Program, which allowed 532,000 Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans to live legally up to two years in the United States while they pursued further legal status.

In March, Homeland Security announced it was ending the program, a move that also revoked the legal status of parolees on April 24. Prior to the judge's stay, temporarily blocking officials from terminating the program, participants were told to self deport by April 24 or face forced deportation.

Jennifer Davis, executive director of the Algona non-profit Community & Culture Connections, estimated 15-20 percent of the roughly 500-600 Cubans living in Algona are here through the CHNV Parole Program. A smaller number are here as part of another program that has been terminated, the CBP One App.

She also knows of a small number of Nicaraguans and Venezuelans living in Algona through these programs.

"Because [the CHNV termination] was paused by a judge, it's still kind of in contention," Davis said. "So, they're just kind of waiting."

Judge Indira Talwani's order blocking termination of the CHNV Parole Program was temporary, pending further court order. "The CBP One App termination has not been blocked and those living here on that program were told to self-deport," Davis said.

She estimated Cubans make up approximately 75 percent of the migrant population in Algona. Many resettled here from larger communities due to the lower cost of living and availability of work. In addition, many had family or friends already living in the area, she said.

Davis has met affected Cubans through Community & Culture Connections, which aims to welcome and integrate new residents into the community. She said the current turmoil over their legal status has many people anxious and scared. They also worry about what awaits them if they are deported back to their home countries.

"No matter which of those four countries they're from, they face persecution or worse," Davis said. "What is there waiting for them?"

However, even with the pressures they face, Davis said many are still able to be hopeful.

"At least with Cubans, and I think this is pretty general as far as any of our Spanish-speaking population, they are just really happy, hopeful people. They've lived through dictatorships; that's why they came here. So, they're just so strong, and they get down, but the next minute, they're able to laugh. They're just a very strong, happy people, and so they kind of, as we would say, 'roll with the punches,' probably more than we would."

The federal lawsuit blocking Homeland Security from terminating the CHNV Parole Program was filed in Massachusetts by the Justice Action Center, an immigrant advocacy group that represents several program participants.

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