

THE NEWS GAZETTE

Official County, City and School Newspaper

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2025

NUMBER FORTY-SEVEN

USPS 045-820

BAYARD, IOWA 50029

VOLUME 142

In Tune: Three AC/GC Students Make 2025 Iowa All-State Chorus

By Dustin Teays

AC/GC has continued its tradition of excellence by having three members heading to the All-State Music Festival this week.

This year, three AC/GC students earned the title of All-Stater in the 2025 Iowa All-State Chorus: Rhonin Grasty as bass alternate, Natalie Dinkla, outright alto, and Carter Dinkla, tenor. All-State auditions can be truly grueling, but for these members, it helps that their director has an immense love for the All-State Music Festival, which began 23 years ago at a familiar small school in western Iowa.

“I was a seventh grader at CR-B the year that the then Vocal Director, Deb Kult, had eight students selected for the All-State Music Festival in 2002. I remember sitting in a friend’s living room one evening, and a rerun of that year’s All-State Music Festival was playing on PBS. I was mesmerized by the rich, choral sound and the sea of choir robes on the screen,” 7-12 Vocal Director Kelsey Dinkla said. “Watching the concert that night, I knew that

I wanted to be a part of that, and that someday, I would be. Four years later, I found myself on the other side of the television, standing proudly in my red robe and black stole.”

For one member, this year was extra special. Natalie Dinkla had the distinct honor of being selected outright, meaning she didn’t have to battle her way through a recall. “I was honestly really nervous - especially when I didn’t see my name on the recall list. Seeing my name on the ACCEPTED list and knowing that I was selected outright was an incredible moment. The long rehearsals and hard work paid off. I’m grateful to my director and everyone who supported me along the way,” Natalie said.

Receiving the title of All-Stater is quite the honor, and for Carter Dinkla, this isn’t his first time getting it, but that doesn’t make the honor any less memorable to him.

“It feels really good to be a two-time All-Stater. I had the best recall audition I’ve ever had. Last year’s Festival was a bunch of fun, and I am really looking forward to going back to Ames this year,” Carter said.

Countless hours of practice and preparation are poured into getting ready for All-State auditions, and while the audition process may not have been his favorite part, Grasty still made some great memories.

“The air mattress we brought was probably the funniest, but the best part was sitting in the gym, playing Monopoly with friends. I am happy that I was deemed good enough to be an Iowa All-State Chorus Member two years in a row,” Grasty said.

While some may see the All-State audition process as just another facet of being involved in school extracurricular activities, the life skills learned through it will benefit these students long after they graduate from high school.

“We choose to put ourselves out there and willingly accept criticism and scrutiny. We learn the art of perseverance and work to overcome our nerves. Eventually, we realize that our worth is so much more than a judge’s opinion of a seven-minute audition on a given day,” Kelsey added.

There is also one extremely

important distinction to make about the All-State audition process. There is no different pool for students to compete in based on school size. These students were competing against every other student in the entire state for the same All-State distinction.

“We rejoice and cry happy tears for those who are selected. The validation of this accomplishment - particularly in an event where there are no school size distinctions and the percentage of students selected is very small - truly makes the small, rural school stand a little taller and a little prouder,” Kelsey said.

As Kelsey continues her time with the AC/GC Community School District, she will remain dedicated to instilling the sense of pride she has carried with her all these years for the All-State Music Festival and continue to preach that it doesn’t matter what size school you come from, it’s all about how hard you work.

“When I consider the standard of excellence and success, and the many opportunities I grew up with at CR-B, I just thought that that was normal and part of the small school

experience. We worked hard, we had dedicated teachers, coaches, and directors, and as kids, we threw ourselves into doing everything - and doing it well. Now, as an educator in a small, rural district myself, I owe it to my students to instill in them a sense of pride and a commitment to excellence - regardless of school size,” Dinkla concluded.

While making it to the All-State Music Festival is always a memorable experience, this year will be an even better one for Kelsey, as she gets to share this experience with a few people with the same last name as her.

“This year is extra sweet for the Dinkla family, and I am thrilled to be able to share this once-in-a-lifetime experience with Carter and Natalie,” Kelsey concluded.

This year’s All-State Music Festival is scheduled to take place from November 20-22 at Hilton Coliseum at Iowa State University in Ames. The first two days are expected to be rehearsal days. The final performance will take place on November 22, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at Hilton Coliseum.

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Area Happenings

Guthrie County Sheriff Sees Recent Responses To Multiple Accidents

By Dustin Teays

The Guthrie County Sheriff’s Office has been busy responding to accidents recently.

According to the sheriff’s office, they responded to a call for a grain trailer that rolled over at approximately 7:49 p.m. on October 26 on Sycamore Avenue and 160th Road.

The report states that a 1996 Freightliner semi with a trailer, driven by 34-year-old Dustin Woods of Guthrie Center, was traveling north on Sycamore Avenue when he made a left turn onto 160th Road.

Woods reportedly dropped the trailer off into the east ditch, rolling the grain trailer, and came to rest in the roadway, dumping grain into the ditch and the road.

The semi sustained roughly \$35,000 in damage, and the grain trailer owned by Austin Smith of Yale sustained approximately \$20,000 in damage.

Then, the sheriff’s office reported they responded to a call for a car-versus-deer accident at approximately 6 p.m. on November 4 on White Pole Road.

The report states that a 2018 Toyota Rav4 driven by 51-year-old Laurie Welsch of Dexter was traveling west on White Pole Road when she struck a deer, causing roughly \$3,000 in damage.

Then, on November 7 at approximately 6:43 p.m., the sheriff’s office reports they responded to another car-versus-deer accident on Highway 44 near Quince Lane.

The report states that a 2020 Buick Encore, driven by 20-year-old Dannielle Peters of Newell, was traveling west on Highway 44 near Quince Avenue when she encountered multiple deer in the roadway and was unable to slow down. The vehicle received roughly \$5,500 in damage.

Main Street Coon Rapids Receives Rural Business Initiative Grant

By Dustin Teays

Main Street Coon Rapids (MSCR) recently announced it had received a grant that will help local businesses through an upcoming project.

The organization shared that it was one of just five recipients of a Rural Business Initiative Grant from the Iowa Rural Development Council, which is made possible through support from the Wells Fargo Foundation. The grant is in the amount of \$30,000.

This grant funding will be used toward the project titled “Surviving Streetscaping: Supporting Small Businesses During Main Street Reconstruction”.

The City of Coon Rapids will be bidding a downtown streetscape project in January, which aims to replace underground water utilities, improve stormwater drainage, enhance ADA accessibility, add lighting, and upgrade sidewalks and pedestrian spaces. That project poses some roadblocks for local businesses.

“We have 44 small businesses employing more than 170 people downtown. We wanted to be proactive, not reactive. This grant gives us the ability to prepare early, provide structured support, and ensure businesses have the training, tools, and communication

systems they need to stay visible, accessible, and financially stable throughout construction. It’s an opportunity to protect local jobs, maintain customer traffic, and safeguard the momentum our downtown has built in recent years,” MSCR Executive Director Katie Mason said.

MSCR shares the different facets of this initiative, including: training and technical assistance, like workshops, business check-ins, and mini-grants for signage and communication tools; a communication and coordination hub, including updates through TextMyGov and email, printed notices, and a construction central webpage; an open for business marketing campaign which features unified branding, social media support, video storytelling, and themed promotions; beautification and alley access matching grants to improve back entrances and directional signage when front door access is limited; and dumpster art project with help from students, artists, and volunteers.

While this grant will help businesses get through a disruptive project, the benefits will be long-term.

“This project is designed to help businesses survive construction—but also to

after the last cone is gone,” Mason added.

Mason shares that MSCR is extremely grateful for the collaboration between the City of Coon Rapids, MSCR, local businesses, volunteers, the Iowa Rural Development Council, and Wells Fargo. Together, everyone recognizes just how important it is to keep downtown thriving.

“Our downtown is made up of family-owned businesses that have anchored Coon Rapids for generations. They provide jobs, services, gathering spaces, and the personality that defines our community. If even one business struggles or closes because of construction, the ripple effects touch employees, families, residents, and the overall vitality of Main Street,” Mason concluded.

The anticipated construction date and timeline for impacts are from spring to fall 2026. Coon Rapids joins Clarence, Corning, Greenfield, and Iowa’s West Coast Initiative as the five winners of the Rural Business Initiative awards this year.

If you would like any more information regarding the Surviving Streetscaping project, or if you would like to be involved, MSCR encourages those people to reach out.

10 Squared Women Of Guthrie County Announces Recent Donation



Pictured from left to right: Kristen Crouthamel, 10 Squared organizing committee member, Tandem Eischeid, Guthrie Center Elementary Principal, Devan Seeck, GCPTG Board Member, Lindsay Gilland, GCPTG Board Member, Shelby Lewis, GCPTG Board Member, Jamie Tervilliger, GCPTG Board Member

By Dustin Teays

An organization in Guthrie County recently announced a donation to support local students and teachers.

10 Squared Women of Guthrie County recently announced a \$14,400 donation to the Guthrie Center Parent Teacher Group (GCPTG). 10 Squared shares that GCPTG is a group of roughly 8-10 parents and teachers who work hard to bring experiences to students that may be outside

the normal budget.

They shared some of those endeavors, including helping to send kindergartners to the zoo, sending third graders to the Hitchcock House, and more. 10 Squared Women felt this was an extremely worthy cause.

“Every nominated organization has a positive impact on the residents of Guthrie County. In the third quarter, we were thrilled to support the Guthrie Center

(GCPTG) with this donation to help them pour even more love into our local students and teachers,” said organizing member Kristen Crouthamel.

The next big project for GCPTG is improvements to the preschool/kindergarten playground, which needs a safer and more engaging play space. The estimated cost for that is roughly \$15,000 to \$30,000. GCPTG is also applying for grants that require matching funds.

- Photo Credits 10 Squared Women of Guthrie County is able to donate, volunteer, or simply help spread the word to get involved. Every dollar given goes straight to supporting our kids and their amazing teachers,” said GCPTG board member Devan Seeck.

10 Squared Women of Guthrie County recently shared that the group has donated \$415,300 back to Guthrie County organizations since the group’s inception back in 2017.



We are deeply thankful for our amazing customers and the continued support you give us. Wishing you and your loved ones a warm, joyful, and Happy Thanksgiving!

Chris, Emily, Julie P, Nathan, Julie K, Shelley



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