

Get rid of the clutter! Makenzie Stone will help

BY DOLORES CULLEN

Has your living space become hopelessly cluttered and out of control? Here's an option: call in Makenzie Stone to help.

Considering a side job to her career as a home health nurse, Stone posted this on the Cherokee Unite site: "Offering professional decluttering/organization services to Cherokee and surrounding areas. Message me if interested."

"I love decluttering," Stone told the Chronicle Times. "My house is done so I'm able help someone else who needs assistance."

The Cherokee resident fielded calls right away. One person wanted to book out "after her kid left for college," said Stone. She's been asked to organize a storage unit, to organize a kitchen, to organize an office space.

"People are busy with their jobs," she said. "They collect and accumulate." Stone starts with a consult. "Which area bothers you the most?" She asks.

She offers suggestions. If an item is in the way in the living room, but the client wants to keep it, Stone might say, "Maybe it can go in the bathroom, to make the flow better."

"We do it together," she explains, working alongside a client. "I've seen all those shows, like 'Hoarders.' I've read the book 'The Art of Loving Everything.' In a small town you don't have people you can call in."

Most of all, she says, "I don't want people to think I am judging them." If a person is against throwing things out, Stone suggests organization methods.

She charges by the hour and is amenable to meeting people after hours.

Stop with the trends
"Stop with the trends," says Stone. "Just because you saw it on a show doesn't mean it's practical or a good idea, like when you dump milk into another container [like a pitcher] so your shelves look perfect. We want realistic. Not perfect."

She's against color coding in the closet. "Instead of arranging your clothes by color, it makes more sense to do by seasons. People dress by temperature instead of color," she said. "Don't put away the winter clothes in summer, because you may want to wear a sweater over a tank top on one of these days when it's 70°. If your closet's too full, you may need to downsize."

Stone is against too many totes, except when a person uses them to organize, not "I'll get to this later." "You forget what's in them," she said. Once she discovered she had two tops of the same size and color. "I didn't know I had two of them," she said. Totes are fine, for say Christmas decorations.

If she asks for a pen, "you should know exactly where to find one," she remarks.

Downsizing is hard, but she advises clients to get rid of the clothes that no longer



fit: "Don't try to keep up with the Jones. Then you have too much."

Stone gets a sense of satisfaction seeing a client pleased with a newly organized space. "I grew up in a chaotic household," she says. "A clean home is a clean mind, an organized home is an organized mind. It helps my anxiety." She adds with a laugh, "It's not an OCD thing."

A recent decluttering assignment netted two 40-gallon trash bags-full to throw away plus two or three boxes of items to resell.

Despite her own desire to keep out the clutter, she has reserved a space in her garage to collect clients' unneeded possessions that she will donate to New Leaf in Cherokee, a thrift shop where the proceeds fund programs for survivors of violence.

Do you need to downsize, or declutter, message Makenzie Stone on Facebook.



Above and right, disorganized extra "stuff" made this room almost unusable.

"An organized home is an organized mind."

Below, a client's cluttered room has been turned into an organized office for an LLC by Makenzie Stone.



Blood supply at critically low levels heading into Labor Day weekend

JOHNSTON, IA- Heading into a busy end-of-summer holiday weekend, the blood supply across LifeServe Blood Center's service area has dropped to critically low levels – in some cases just a few days' worth.

Summer is often referred to as "trauma season," and while it is ending with Monday's Labor Day holiday, the need for blood donations is especially high right now for all blood types.

LifeServe Blood Center is asking donors to come out as soon as possible to replenish supply and give the gift of life.

"If you've put off donating blood because it's been such a busy summer, or been thinking about donating but haven't gone through with it yet, now is really the time to do it," said Tim Paluch, LifeServe Blood Center PR/Marketing Director.

"Your communities and hospitals need you. Every two seconds, someone in America needs blood, and just one donation, 30 or 40 minutes of your time, can impact or save up to three

lives."

Patients in hospitals in Iowa, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Illinois are relying on loyal donors to keep a strong and stable blood supply. Without that, patients in serious situations like major accidents and traumas may be at risk. This is especially concerning with increased demand over a busy travel weekend.

To schedule an appointment at one of LifeServe Blood Center's 15 donor centers or at mobile blood drive near you, call 800.287.4903 or visit lifeserve.info/schedule.

As an extra incentive, LifeServe is offering several different promotions right now, several of which are football themed and involve giveaways, depending on when and where you schedule your donation.

The Ultimate Tailgate Giveaway, the We Give Blood drive campaign with Abbott and The Big Ten Conference, and the Iowa-ISU Big Game Blood Drive are all incentivized drives around the holiday weekend.

Plus, donors who give Au-

gust 29-September 3 will also receive double points for their donation for use on products from LifeServe's online store.

For more information, visit lifeserve.info/pickyour-promo.

LifeServe Blood Center is a non-profit, community-based blood center that has served the needs of local hospitals and patients in our regions since 1947. As one of the 15 largest blood centers in the country, LifeServe provides blood products to 175 hospitals primarily in Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Illinois.

LifeServe is committed to saving lives by providing premier service to volunteer blood donors and access to a safe, quality blood supply for hospitals and patients. Your donation with LifeServe will help save your neighbor, a friend or family member or a stranger on the street.

YOU make a difference in YOUR community. For more information about blood donation or to schedule an appointment to donate blood, call 800.287.4903 or visit lifeservebloodcenter.org.

Iowa achieves impressive gains in early literacy, science

Results show notable growth in English language arts and science following statewide early literacy initiatives and inclusion of science in the state's school accountability system; lagging math proficiency, especially in high school.

The Iowa Department of Education today released new spring 2025 assessment results from the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) for students in grades 3-11.

The state-level results show encouraging improvements in student achievement across most grade levels in English language arts and science, while high school math proficiency rates continue to lag behind those of earlier grade levels.

Overall state-level results from the 2024-25 ISASP show gains in student performance over last year, often surpassing pre-pandemic levels across most grades and subjects. Iowa's proficiency rates for English language arts (ELA) ranged from 68 to 80 percent while mathematics ranged between 64 and 76 percent. Science ranged between 64 and 70 percent.

"Iowa made literacy a priority in every classroom and for every student over the past year by implementing proven, evidence-based approaches that we know work," said Governor Kim Reynolds. "By empowering Iowa teachers with critical training in the Science of Reading and through strong collaboration with students, families and school partners, ELA proficiency for last year's third graders jumped an impressive 11 percentage points just one year later. Together we will continue this transformational work in literacy while also prioritizing math through the implementation of the Math Counts Act to ensure Iowa's education system is helping every student achieve their potential."

Following the enactment of landmark early literacy legislation enacted in 2024, students who were in third grade during the 2023-24 school year showed outstanding gains as fourth graders in 2024-25, with ELA proficiency increasing 11 percentage points.

Compared to last year, ELA proficiency rates increased or were maintained in grades 3-5 and 8-10, with grades 3 and 8 showing the most significant increases of 4 and 3 percentage points, respectively.

Math proficiency in high school grades is much lower than that of earlier grade levels, with differences ranging between 4 to 12 percentage points lower. Students in ninth grade experienced the largest long-term decrease in math proficiency, down 5 percentage points from 2019.

Compared to last year, math proficiency rates do not show change beyond 1-2 percentage points, reinforcing the need for the Math Counts Act passed in 2025.

Following the recent passage of the Math Counts Act, Iowa is implementing new statewide supports for mathematics teaching and learning.

This will include early identification and progress monitoring for students who are not on track to be proficient, personalized math plans and interventions for students in need of support, evidence-based professional development for teachers, alignment of Iowa's educator preparation programs to evidence-based instruction and availability of family-centered resources to support children's mathematics development at home.

In the 2024-25 school year, science proficiency was included in Iowa's new, unified school accountability system for the first time.

This spring, science proficiency rates show gains across all tested grades, exceeding

pre-pandemic performance with a 12-percentage point increase in both 5th and 8th grade since 2019. In just one year, science proficiency increased by 4 percentage points in 5th grade, 5 percentage points in 8th grade, and 7 percentage points in 10th grade. While the data show some long-term narrowing of proficiency gaps between overall student results and those of certain student groups, significant proficiency gaps persist.

Students with disabilities and students who are English learners experienced much lower proficiency rates than their classmates, with average differences across grade levels in ELA proficiency of 45 and 53 percentage points, respectively.

The average proficiency rate gaps in mathematics for students with disabilities and students who are English learners was slightly lower at 41 and 45 percentage points, respectively.

The ISASP is administered each spring and is the general summative accountability assessment in Iowa that meets the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The assessment reflects what's being taught in Iowa classrooms and how students are progressing toward grade-level expectations outlined in Iowa's academic standards.

The ISASP helps teachers understand where students are succeeding and where they may need more help.

The spring 2025 ISASP results, proficiency rates by public district, public school building, nonpublic school building and fact sheet with additional graphs and charts can be found on the Iowa Department of Education's PK-12 Education Statistics webpage at:

<https://educate.iowa.gov/pk-12/data/education-statistics#student-performance>

LEGAL NOTICE

The Cherokee County Board of Supervisors met in regular session on Tuesday, August 19, 2025 with Bryan Petersen, Cheryl Ellis, Dave Skou, Ray Mullins II and Shane Bellefy present. Madeline Combs, Chronicle Times, represented the press. George Wittgraf, Ned Lundsgaard, Chuck Stubbe, Les Beck, Ben Metcalf, Justin Willis, Erin Rydgren, Gauthier Dubois, Kelly Puhmann, Justin Pritts and Stu Hogg were also in attendance. Unless otherwise indicated, all votes were offered as follows: Ayes – Mullins, Ellis, Bellefy, Skou, Petersen; Nays – none; Abstentions – none.

Chairman Petersen called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion by Mullins, seconded by Ellis to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Motion by Skou, seconded by Bellefy to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion carried.

There were no comments from the public.

Motion by Skou, seconded by Ellis to open a Public Hearing for the proposed Solar Energy Systems Ordinance. Roll call vote: Mullins-aye, Ellis-aye, Bellefy-aye, Skou-aye, Petersen-aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Petersen read a summary of the Solar Energy Systems Ordinance as published with full copies of the ordinance available to those in

attendance.

Written comments were received from Les Beck, Legal Representative for Tyr Energy Development (TED) Renewables. Several comments were received from those in attendance. The supervisors considered each of the comments and noted areas in the draft ordinance to be revised. Chairman Petersen will meet with County Attorney Ryan Kolpin to prepare an updated draft of the proposed solar ordinance and make the document available to the public prior to the third reading. The supervisors thanked those in attendance for their comments.

Motion by Ellis, seconded by Skou to close the Public Hearing for the proposed Solar Energy Systems Ordinance. Roll call vote: Mullins-aye, Ellis-aye, Bellefy-aye, Skou-aye, Petersen-aye. Motion carried.

Motion by Mullins, seconded by Bellefy to approve the second reading of Ordinance #2025-01 Solar Energy Systems. Roll call vote: Mullins-aye, Ellis-aye, Bellefy-aye, Skou-aye, Petersen-aye. Motion carried.

Motion by Ellis, seconded by Bellefy to schedule August 26, 2025 as the third reading for the proposed Solar Energy Systems Ordinance #2025-01. Motion carried.

Kelly Puhmann, County Engineer, presented utility permits for consideration.

Motion by Skou, seconded by Mullins to approve an underground construction on county right of way application for Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative in Section 24 of Rock Township. Motion carried.

Motion by Bellefy, seconded by Ellis to approve an underground construction on county right of way application for CML in Section 22 of Cherokee Township. Motion carried.

Puhmann provided an update on activities in the Secondary Roads Department.

Motion by Ellis, seconded by Skou to approve Resolution #2025-19 Inter-Fund Operating Transfer of \$973.46 from the Mental Health and Disability Services (MHDS) Fund to the General Basic Fund effective August 19, 2025. Roll call vote: Mullins-aye, Ellis-aye, Bellefy-aye, Skou-aye, Petersen-aye. Motion carried and resolution adopted.

The supervisors provided committee reports and reviewed meeting schedules.

There being no further business, Chairman Petersen called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Ellis, seconded by Bellefy to adjourn the meeting at 10:22 a.m.

All board agendas and minutes are available online at cherokeecounty.iowa.gov.

Bryan Petersen, Chairman
Attest: Kris Glienke, County Auditor
(CT08-29/L#110)