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## Extreme Couponing + Extreme Charity = Laurie Salazar



Extreme Shoppers, left to right: Stephanie Rife, Kennedy Rife, Linda Shafer, Chris Kelley and Laurie Salazar

By Mary Masonholder Wilson  
Gazette Staff

Some people use a few coupons now and then to save money. Laurie Salazar, local woman from Fredonia, practices extreme couponing, which is using a LOT of coupons and saving a LOT of money. In fact, she sometimes gets her purchases for free or little or nothing! This doesn't just happen; it takes time and strategy. Recently Salazar put these skills to work to benefit the Ronald McDonald House (where families stay while their children are treated at the hospital) in Iowa City.

Laurie Salazar has lived in the Columbus Junction area all her life and was Laurie Snyder until she married Roger Salazar in 1972. Laurie and Roger both have given much to their community. But it was Laurie, who now works at the Louisa County Court House in Wapello, who decided she wanted "to put the Christ back into Christmas." Her way of doing this was sparked by hearing that Community Action in Louisa County needed donated items. Then

someone else told her a scout troop was collecting items for the Ronald McDonald House. Also she knew of a business in Wapello called "Just Two Moms," run by Joni Simmons and Shelly Singleton. It is a resale shop in Wapello where profits are given back to help families who are in some way battling cancer. The effects of cancer have hit Simmons who lost her daughter, Nicole, to cancer when Nicole was only 15 years old. Lastly, Laurie worked with a woman, Linda Schaffer, whose granddaughter, four-year-old Jordyn Gourley, right now is fighting cancer.

For all these reasons, Salazar set out to do a charity. It also was in honor of Jordyn Gourley and in memory of Nicole Simmons. Laurie got on Facebook and started a new fundraiser called, "Coupons 4 a Cause", and she also spread the word of her plan. Soon many people were saving coupons and gave them to her. She then started a computer spreadsheet to keep track of the coupons she had. She knew her coupons would never cover all the expenses of the

purchased items, so she started another fundraiser for the project to collect cash. Many donated money: Laurie herself (she doesn't want that told!); the women of Just Two Moms; Matt and Jeannene Clark; and the Coralville Walmart.

December 17<sup>th</sup> was designated as shopping day, and Salazar and her helpers, such as Harlan and Linda Schaffer, Stephani and Kennedy Rife; Sean Salazar (Laurie's son) and his family, and Chris Kelly went to the Coralville Walmart with spreadsheets in hand and a shopping list planned by Laurie. Soon the shoppers had six cartloads of items. At checkout, the group had \$1,850 worth of goods, but due to the coupons, their bill was only \$750. What a savings! Then, too, they had the donated cash to cover the rest of the bill.

The shoppers traveled straight to the Ronald McDonald House in Iowa City to deliver their purchases. There they were met by Jordyn Gorley and her family to help unload. According to Salazar, "The Ronald McDonald house is not state or federally funded.

It is only funded by private donations." What she and her friends bought were food; cleaning supplies; personal hygiene products, such as shampoo, soap, toothpaste, etc. for the families to use while they stayed there. The house will hold 31 families and has four kitchens. All of these items are to help them with their meals, keeping clean, or doing laundry. What a gift these products must be to these families who are already strapped with many medical expenses, plus loss of job income while tending to their sick child!

Laurie Salazar did indeed put the Christ back in Christmas for many people who don't know her or have never even seen her. Her coupon and fundraising skills made a gift of love to many anonymous people who are suffering with their children. It could only have lightened the many burdens they carry. Salazar is hoping to make this an annual event. Who knows what next year will bring? Salazar is already planning her strategy!

## 2011 - The Year in Review Part 1

**January 5, 2011** – All area government agencies report that they are financially well set for 2011.

County Health Department warns residents of flu strains that are being reported in the county and recommends flu shots.

Iowa Veterans' Home is now offering admissions to Gold Star parents.

Louisa County Winter Camp is held despite very cold temperatures.

Ignacio Martinez' obituary is published.

**January 12, 2011** – Community Development Center recognized for completing requirements of "Strengthening Rural Iowa" certification.

Dennis Fraise and Sherry Humphreys are named new directors of the Louisa Development Group.

Area Girl Scouts begin cookie sales in the community.

Senior Center sponsors lunch for all area residents.

Guys and Gals 4-H Club holds food drive.

Obituaries published were Robert Lee Eichelberger, Kenneth Hill and Lois Ione Hills.

**January 19, 2011** – School Board reports that a new school day schedule is being considered.

A combination snow and sleet storm hits city and closes schools.

Cases of Whooping Cough are reported in the County.

Representative Tom Sands takes his oath of office.

LIFE MICROLENDING to begin small business academy.

Mary Meeker's obituary is published.

**January 26, 2011** – The front page is devoted to memories of Helen Aringdale who passed away on January 18, 2011.

School Superintendent Rich Bridenstine reported that the high school has been removed from the state's low achieving list.

Columbus Junction State Bank reported to shareholders that the bank devoted the year to positioning themselves for a strong upcoming

year. President Mark Huston remarked that he was very optimistic for 2011.

The Community Foundation awarded \$86,600 in grants to area agencies.

Dan Vogeler is elected president of Tri-Rivers Foundation.

Obituaries published were Helen Aringdale and Everett Howell.

**February 2, 2011** – The community celebrated the success of Obree Tribal's cancer battle as doctors reported that his MRI was found to be clear.

Lucile Smylie celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday and was honored for her years of service to area youth.

The City Council unveiled their Capital Improvement Plan.

Benita Grooms of Oakville receives the Leland McCosh Award from the SEIRPC.

Obituaries included Donna Bell, Kevin Hammons and Dorothy Pace.

**February 9, 2011** – The area experiences 13 inches of snow and 45 mph winds, causing schools to be cancelled and traffic problems.

School Board discusses possibility of joining with Muscatine Community College in a project to bring a college campus to Columbus Junction.

Kris Johnston's 1944 tractor is featured in "Antique Power" magazine.

Wapello residents hold town meeting on Emerald Ash Borer problem.

Keck Players present "February Follies" at Briggs Center.

Raymond "Dutch" Coleman's obituary is published.

**February 16, 2011** – CCHS Junior Class attends a Community Club meeting.

City Council announces that the new budget will increase because of grants received.

AgriLand FS announced that they will partner with area farmers to provide funds for area organizations.

Senator Grassley visits Columbus Junction and speaks at Senior Center.

"Live Healthy Iowa" kicks off

local program.

Fair Queen and Fair Princess visit Colonial Manor and Colonial Estates.

Kris Ann Griffith's obituary is published.

**February 23, 2011** – Area watches snow melt in northern United States in hopes of escaping flooding.

Del Evans' 1975 Ford 150 is featured in "Vintage Truck" Magazine.

Bob Schlutz is honored as 2011 "Friend of the Iowa Beef Expo."

Marsha Gerot is honored by the Iowa Association of School Boards.

Tri-Rivers Foundation plans fundraising auction.

Community Bank sponsors Women's Luncheon.

Columbus FFA reviews their 2010 year.

Sadie Coleman's obituary is published.

**March 2, 2011** – Columbus Parents' Organization held a student/parent meeting with the Junior Class members to encourage Pride and Effort in the upcoming ITBS tests.

Bob Buckman and Wanda Carson were named as Habitat Volunteers of the Year.

City Council approved a \$5.8 million dollar budget. Council also continued with plans for the relocation of the city's water treatment plant.

Hal Prior begins a science feature in the Gazette.

Adrian Ramirez earns Taekwondo Orange Belt with Black Stripe.

Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa plan a book celebrating 100 years of Girl Scouting.

Obituaries published included Catherine Virginia Ott and Robert James Stirling.

**March 9, 2011** – Plans are announced for the town's third annual St. Patrick's Day Parade.

LIFE Microlending representatives met with the Wapello FFA Class.

CJ Police Department announces plan to participate in the STEP Program.

Louisa Development Group hosted an open house for members.

Columbus art students are selected for State Youth Month art show in Des Moines.

Obituaries included LeAnn Rae Evans and Janet Skipton.

**March 16, 2011** – Governor Branstad brings "Jobs for Iowa Tour" to town.

Lewis and Romelle Dallmyer celebrate their 70<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary.

Tammy Virzi receives IHSAA News Media Award.

L-M students hold Falcon Day of Action/Giving.

Columbus FFA students competed in Sub-District contests. The students will advance to District Contests.

Obituaries included Catherine Blodgett, Ronald L. Schnobelen, Gail Dieckman and Forest Ross Hunt.

**March 23, 2011** – The Gazette details a community family in need of help and the community overwhelmingly.

Governor Terry Branstad and Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds visit Civic Center and details their "Jobs for Iowa" program.

O'Toole Incorporated donates \$2,590 to Letts Community Building from earnings they received from B.A.S.F. for acres sprayed.

Jerry and Pam Podaril donated \$2,500 to C.J. Fire Department that they won from Monsanto's "America's Farmers Grow Communities" program.

Louisa County Izaak Walton League received membership growth award from the Izaak Walton League of America.

Columbus FFA competes at District Convention.

Wildcat First members serve breakfast to Columbus students prior to ITBS tests.

Columbus JEL joins National Kick Butts Day.

**March 30, 2011** – A deadly fire ripped through businesses on North Main Street claiming two lives and displacing nineteen individuals from their homes.

Aurelia Torres institutes a food and clothing drive for families displaced by the fire.

A group of Americorps members spend 8 weeks in Wapello assisting the Conservation Board with natural resource management.

## Briefly -

### 4-H and Fair Board Soup Supper

Louisa County 4-H Clubs and the Fair Board will hold a Soup Supper and Dessert Auction Fundraiser on Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup> at the American Legion in Columbus Junction. Everyone is invited! Help raise money for the planned Youth Center at the fair grounds and enjoy good food and fellowship. The Soup supper is from 5-7 pm; supper is \$6 and includes all you can eat chili, vegetable or cheese soup and a drink. The dessert auction begins at 6 pm. All proceeds go towards the planned Youth Center at the Louisa County Fair Grounds.

### Legion Fish and Chicken Fry

The American Legion will be holding a fish and chicken fry on Saturday, January 14th at the American Legion Building. serving will be from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. A 50/50 drawing will be held along with other raffles. The cost is \$8.00

### Legion Auxiliary collecting Long-Johns

The American Legion Auxiliary (Post 100) is collecting long johns (underwear) for the VA Hospital in Iowa City. Donations can be dropped off at the Columbus Junction Public Library. Long johns will be delivered to the VA Hospital at the end of January.

### City Council to meet

The City of Columbus Junction will hold a regular Council meeting today, Wednesday, January 11, 2012, at 5:30 p.m. at the New Civic Center/City Hall.

### Blood checks at Senior Center

Colonial Manor, represented by Tami Nichols will be hosting health checks (Blood sugars, blood pressure and cholesterol checks) at the Columbus Senior Center on Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Hope to see you there!

### FCCLA searches for addresses of active servicemen

FCCLA is looking for active servicemen's addresses as a service project. The FCCLA would like to make up packages to send to area soldiers who are in active duty. If you know someone please contact Lois Mincks, FCCLA Advisor, at Lois.Mincks@columbuscd.org or 319-728-2231 ext. 3332 with their name and address. We will try to get packages to send for Valentine's Day.

### Solid Waste Agency to meet

The Louisa Regional Solid Waste Agency will hold its Quarterly Board Meeting on Tuesday, January 17, 2012, at 5:30 p.m. at the Transfer Station, 14048 70th Street, Wapello.

### Post Prom Committee to meet

The 2012 Post Prom Committee will have its first meeting on Wednesday, January 18, 2012, at the high school student center at 6:30 p.m. Any junior parent interested in helping with the 2012 Post Prom Party is asked to please attend. Any questions, call Jacque Chaney at 319-728-8580.

### New postage rates announced

Postage rates will increase on Sunday, January 22, 2012. The cost to mail a one-ounce letter increases to 45 cents. Post cards increase to 32 cents. The additional ounce postage remains the same at 20 cents. The Columbus Junction Post Office has been selling the Forever Stamp for the past year. Customers that have the Forever Stamp can still use it at the new rate.

### School Board to meet

The Board of Education for the Columbus Community School District will hold a public meeting on Monday, January 16, 2012, at 6:30 p.m. at the Roundy Elementary School Library.

### Shellbark Club to meet

The Shellbark Club will meet on Thursday, January 19, 2012, at 11:30 a.m. at 92 Roadhouse. Our meeting will follow at Colonial Manor Assisted Living.

### UMW to hold soup lunch

The United Methodist Women of Columbus Junction will be serving soup, relish and dessert after church on Sunday, January 15, 2012 from 11:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. There will be a donation basket. Everyone is welcome, plan to attend.

## New Business opens in community



By Mary Masonholder Wilson

If Mexican food calls to your taste buds, there is a new restaurant located in Toddtown, 219 Highway Dr. It is called Los Palmas for the palm tree and is run by Ana and Jose Tavarec. It is open every day except Wednesday.

Ana, who has long worked in the food business, says she had thought about opening her own restaurant for ten years and the opportunity came when this building became available. Her husband, Jose, had experience cooking, and it was a natural fit.

Los Palmas has a full menu of Mexican food and drinks, but some of their popular entrees are burritos, tacos, and fajitas. A favorite meat choice for these entrees is skirt steak. The favorite drink is the margarita with flavors of strawberry, mango, peach, and lime. Tavarec says, "Everyday I'm ready to go to work. Business has been good." In the future, there will be coupons in the newspaper for money off a meal.