



Your Award Winning Hometown Newspaper

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Gazette Christmas Shopping Trip # 2

By Mary Masonholder Wilson

This week John and I hit some shops that offer diversity. You might say, "There is nothing for me there." But before you do, let me offer some personal anecdotes.

One is a story about a pinata. A few years ago when my daughter, Andrea, was still in college, I went to her yearly sorority fundraiser. The mothers came and brought things to auction, such as jewelry, luxurious towels, etc. I came with a colorful pinata and a basket full of Mexican food items purchased in Columbus Junction for my auction donation. I called it a "Mexican party." Before the auction, I heard many comments on it, such as, "How unusual!" or "Wouldn't this be fun!" The bidding on it was quite good, and the girl who got it said she was saving it for "finals week". She did, and Andrea reported the girls had a great time at the party. You don't have to be Mexican to buy a piñata.

Story two: Someone told us the jasmine rice at the Burmese Grocery Store, called Grace Chin, was the best they had ever had. I thought, "Rice is rice. What is the difference?" We bought and cooked some. It is the best rice I have ever had. It tastes great, stores well after having been cooked, and warms in the microwave quite well. We had an Oriental dish from it, but I want to try making some rice pudding. It is sold by the pound at Grace Chin. In fact, you can buy a 40-pound bag! However, it is now also sold by the amount you want. It is \$1.00 a pound. You don't have to be Burmese to buy here.

Story three: The Santa Ana Bakery makes specialty cakes for any occasion. John Carpenter ordered the birthday cake here for his wife, Donna's, big surprise birthday party that he had at the American Legion. It was very good cake and the baker took it to the Legion and set it up. These cakes are not just Mexican cakes—there are many different kinds, sizes, and prices. Prices run from \$20-\$100.

These three stories will hopefully lead you into reading all that is available at today's shopping list. Also, think in terms of your adult children and grandchildren if you have any, especially those who live out of town and may not have access to these items. Many people have become what is called "foodies." These are people who love to cook and love using unusual ingredients. Do you have any of these people in your family? Or people who are very health conscious? Then shopping in CJ may provide you many items to wrap as gifts this year and surprise your family members with the local fare.

We also visited two beauty shops. Great ideas for gifts abound here too!

Tomato Fashion: This store has unusual clothing, clothing that may not be found elsewhere. And here is the big news: The owner is wanting to get new inventory, so she wants

rid of all her items and is marking everything down to \$30 or below. What a deal! She has jewelry, clothing, purses, make-up, perfumes, accessories, etc. She has earrings that are only \$3.00. It is amazing what you can find here.

Take 2 Video: Of course there are movies galore here. But there is more. There are phones for sale—"I" wireless and accessories that go with them. This store advertises "the best burger in town", and the kids love them—this is the local "hang out" after school. There are booths for sitting or the old-fashioned soda fountain with stools. Tenderloins and cheese balls are also favorites. Think about gift certificates from here. These certificates are good for movies, food, and ice cream. The ice cream cones are huge. It also could be a fun night at home with movies and ordering the food to go. If you have family as guests, this would make an easy and cozy evening!

Santa Ana Bakery: As mentioned above, they have specialty cakes, but also much more. There are all kinds of baked goods, plus food and meals to eat in the store or to go. There are tacos, enchiladas, chimichangas, and homemade soups to name a few. Or get a breakfast and coffee here. The wall is lined with juices or pops to tickle your taste buds, and the homey atmosphere here is a lot of fun. There are gift certificates available and could be used to purchase food items or give a loved one "a meal out."

New York Dollar Store: This store has so much it is hard to know where to begin. They have piñatas on the top shelves, so "check these out." They have toys, clothes—two items often on many people's lists. They also have meat, food, cleaning products, and flavored drinks. There is a meat counter in the back. Most of all, they have many, many "little" items that would make great stocking stuffers. The owner runs a raffle where every certain-numbered customer gets a prize. You have to go in to see all that there is.

Grace Chin Asian Store: As mentioned before, they have the best rice here. They also have many different food items, clothes, blankets, and rugs. Yes rugs, and I love them! These are beautifully woven rugs in red, blue, green, with yellow, and these rugs are a really big size for an area rug. They are probably at least 8' by 10' and some are even bigger. They also could be used outside in good weather and would be a great addition to a patio setting. Some of the foods here are fresh, others canned or packaged. Some examples are Asian eggplant, Chana Dal split peas, Chinese doughnuts (good with coffee), Fried Chili Paste, Pickled Tamarind Leaves, Bamboo Shoots, fresh ginger, and Natural Palm Sugar (which is a candy).

Rey de Reyes Mexican Store and Taqueria: Once again, there are



so many items here, you need to go in to see. Let me name a few: spices; mole sauce; marinades for chicken, pork, and beef; beans; canned and fresh jalapeno peppers; sauces; Pacaya—date palm in brine; cookies; corn shells or banana leaves to wrap tamales; cheeses; meats; fresh fruits—granada, papaya, pineapples, and more. Also fresh vegetables, including green tomatoes for making salsa are here. In the back of the store is a small restaurant which serves tacos, quesadillas, burritos, enchiladas, sanchos, and more. This taqueria is open on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesdays. Pinadas can also be purchased here.

Special Effects: This beauty shop does hair and nails. They also have a tanning bed and sell hair and nail products. They have gift certificates available for hair, tanning, or

products. Heidi Hartsock, who works there, said that a gift certificate can even be given for a certain number of weekly washes and sets—what a great idea for an elderly person or someone who regularly gets his/her hair done there! Any person would love this!

Elvia's: This, too, is a beauty shop. They do hair, give manicures and also give pedicures. A relaxing gift would be to get a gift certificate for all three, or at least two! What a gift! Total pampering!

That concludes this week's shopping trip. All of these stores are located on Main Street. There are gifts mentioned here for all ages and many "foodies." How surprised many of your children home from "the city" would be to find some of these gifts came from right here in Columbus Junction.

City Council grants Fair Board flood plain variance

By Jim Rudisill

The Louisa County Fair Board will apparently only have to worry about climbing a fundraising mountain for its new youth center; and not literally build one on its grounds for the facility. The Columbus Junction City Council agreed at its November 23 meeting to grant a floodplain variance for the \$500,000 center to the fair board, which would allow the board to reduce how high it would need to elevate the building.

Fair board members Bob Schlutz and Bryan Townsley requested the variance, explaining without it floodplain regulations would require the new building to be substantially elevated. "It's in the floodplain so we need a variance unless we go up to elevation 588," Schlutz said, explaining that elevation would be about eight feet above the surrounding ground. "We plan to raise it two and half to three feet," he continued. Mayor Dan Wilson provided more detail on the city's floodplain regulations. Buildings in the floodplain must be one foot above the 100-year flood level. If the city receives a permit request that shows a building does not meet that elevation, the floodplain administrator cannot is-

sue a permit. Although the fair board's permit was still pending, Wilson said he expected city clerk Julie Heindel, who is also the city's floodplain administrator, to reject the request.

The council could take direct action because the city's floodplain regulations identify it as the government body with the power to grant floodplain variances. Wilson said a variance could be granted if a proposed building would not increase flooding or pose a public safety risk. Since the proposed youth center would not create either of those problems, Wilson said a variance could be granted.

Although the variance would mean the fair board would not need to build a mountain for the center, Schlutz acknowledged there was still a lot of fundraising to do before any construction could begin. According to the board members, about half of the funding has been raised, but another \$250,000 is still needed. The Community Foundation of Louisa County has contributed \$50,000 of the funds that have already been raised, with Casey's General Stores, Inc. pledging another \$50,000 over a five-year period. In addition to the

cash donations, Columbus Junction has offered around \$100,000 of in-kind sewer and water improvements.

Schlutz said the new building would use a unique combination of blocks, foam boards and thick concrete walls that would minimize damage from any future high water. He said the thick walls would also allow building to be used as a storm shelter. According to an earlier press release, the fair board was looking toward the future when it decided to seek a youth center at the fairgrounds. "County fairs are about continuing traditions, training tomorrow's agribusiness leaders and providing wholesome activities for families and friends to enjoy together. The Louisa County Fair Board is undertaking an expansion that will ensure their ability to do these things well into the future," the fair board explained in the October release.

The city's decision to upgrade the nearby Iowa River levee was an important factor in the fair board's decision to construct the building. The levee improvement is expected to provide increased flood protection to the fairgrounds and other low-lying properties in the east side of Columbus Junction. "We wouldn't be do-

ing something if you folks weren't going to be raising the levee," Schlutz said. Mayor Dan Wilson said bid letting on that project is expected to be held this February or March. That schedule appealed to Schlutz because of the fundraising mountain that still needed to be scaled. "It's a large figure, (and) we'll get it done; (but the center) is not going up until you get that levee done," Schlutz assured the council.

In other action, the council accepted a high bid of \$1265 for the sale of 42 trees in Chautauqua Park. The high bid was submitted by J. Kubitz Logging, Dubuque. White Logging Company, Edgewood, bid \$1160 for the trees; while Al Cole Logging, Strawberry Point, offered \$500. Wilson said the trees identified for cutting had been marked by Geode Forestry, Swedesburg. "The whole process will open things up," he said, explaining the city will be able to grow grass in some areas while neighboring trees that are in better shape will be released from the lost competition. Although the sale of the trees was approved, Wilson said he would confirm the logging company was properly licensed and bonded before any cutting occurs.

Briefly -

Ainsworth Opera House update

December breakfast at the Ainsworth Opera House has been cancelled. We also will not be doing nativities this year.

Blue Christmas Service

There are years when we hurt at Christmas time and can't get into the festivities as others seem to be able to. It's at such times that we need to make the space and take the time to acknowledge our sadness and concern. We need to know that we are not alone. Please join us on Sunday, December 11 at 3:00 pm at the Columbus Junction United Methodist Church for an Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service for all those who have suffered loss of any kind.

Christmas Cantata

Everyone is invited to "Shine on Us," a cantata for Christmas, to be presented at the Columbus Junction United Presbyterian Church by the Church's Adult Choir (and Friends), on Sunday, December 18, 7:00 p.m. The cantata will be directed by Jay Hauenstein; accompanied by Jill Bowen; narrated by Rev. Faye Fedlam.

Early Childhood Board to meet

The Des Moines/Louisa Early Childhood Iowa Area Board will be meeting at the First United Presbyterian Church, 801 Middle Street, Mediapolis on Wednesday, December 7, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.

Honor Society to hold blood drive

Columbus Community High School will be having a blood drive, sponsored by the National Honor Society on Wednesday, December 7th from 7:00 am to 12:00 pm, at the high school gymnasium, 1004 Colton St., Columbus Junction. To donate call Scott Symmonds at 319-728-2231. Walk-ins welcome! Blood donation is a safe, simple procedure that only takes about an hour. Donors must be at least 16 years old, in good health, and weigh at least 110 pounds. A Blood Donor card or other photo I.D. is required to donate; 16-year-old donors must present a signed parental consent form, available from the Blood Center or for download from www.bloodcenter.org. Controlled high blood pressure and diabetics are acceptable. Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center is the exclusive blood provider to Washington County Hospital and Clinics, Mercy Iowa City, and Iowa City VA Health Care System.

Winfield's SELAH at Christmas

Come enjoy an afternoon of Christmas music presented by Winfield's Selah. Members of the women's vocal sextet are Brianne Schumann, Debbie Lowe, Barb Phelps, Linda Haight, Deb Remick, Kim Davis and accompanist, Mary Kilpatrick. Selections include music from contemporary artists such as Point of Grace and Amy Grant, as well as traditional/seasonal hymns. The concert will be held at the Winfield First Presbyterian Church on Sunday, December 4th, beginning at 2:30 p.m. with refreshments to follow in the fellowship hall. (A freewill offering is planned to help with costs for recording a Selah CD.) Come, bring a friend, and join the fun!!!

P.E.O. to meet

The next meeting of Chapter CX will be on Monday, December 5th at 7:00 p.m. at the home of Susie Leonard with Judy Sievers as co-host. The program will be the Christmas party and soup will be served. Please bring a \$10 gift to exchange and non-perishable food items for our Friendship Fund recipient.

Christmas at Pleasant Grove

Mark your Calendars: The Pleasant Grove Community Church is having a special Christmas program, Sunday evening, December 4th. The high school kids of the First Baptist Church of Silvis, Illinois will be here to present to us "Christ-myths". It is a puppet program about all the different myths that are out there in the "world" about Christmas and concludes with the Christian message. It is appropriate for young and old. The church will have a potluck meal at 5:00 p.m. and the program at 6:00. Please bring a dish to pass, we look forward to seeing neighbors and friends.

School Board to meet

The Board of Education for the Columbus Community School District will hold a special meeting/budget workshop I on Monday, December 5, 2011, at 6:30 p.m. at the Roundy Elementary Library.

Shellbark Club to meet

The Shellbark Club will meet at the home of Larry and Judy Prior for a potluck dinner on Thursday, December 8th at 11:30 a.m. Please bring a dish to pass. Election of officers will be held.

Sheriff's Dodgeball tournament

On Saturday, December 3, 2011, the Louisa County Sheriff's Patrol will hold its first annual Dodgeball Tournament, at the L-M High School Gym at 10:00 a.m. The cost is \$25 per team. Teams are 4 players, at least one female per team. Players must be 16-years-old or older. To register a team, contact Lindsay or Lisa in dispatch at 319-523-4371 or email louisa_county_dispatch@yahoo.com. Please have your team registered by November 1st. Prize for winning team. Will also have a 50/50 raffle. Concession stand will be open. Tournament will be double elimination.

UMW Women's Potluck

The United Methodist Women will meet in the lovely home of Marilyn Thomas for their Christmas potluck on Thursday, December 8th at 6 p.m. Installation of 2012 officers and special remembrance will be held. Plan to attend this holiday season!

Winfield First Presbyterian cookie and candy walk

The First Presbyterian Church in Winfield will have a cookie and candy walk on Saturday, December 3rd from 8:30-11:30 a.m. The cookies and candy will be sold and rolls and coffee will be served. For more information, call Jeannie Binkley at 759-0798 (cell) or 319-257-3303 (work).

See Pages 7 and 8 for complete Family Night Schedules