

Sports: Humboldt Speedway welcomes added drivers

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THE IOLA REGISTER

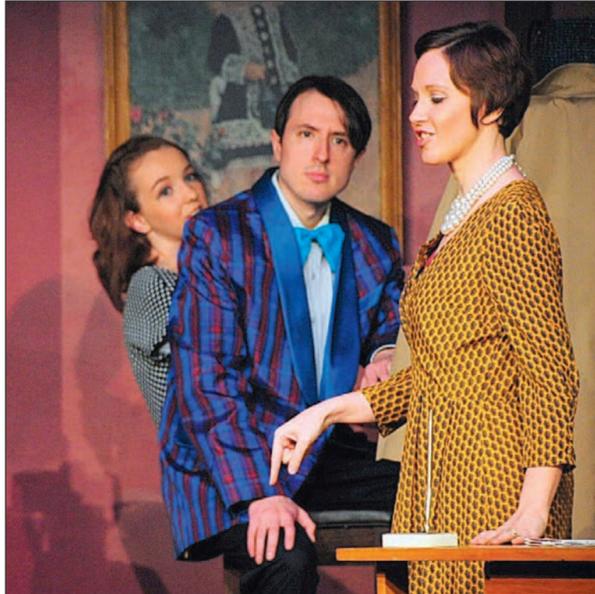
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Above, Walter Palmisano, seated and Sam Terhune star in the Iola Community Theatre play, "The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940." At right, Mandy Moyer, from right, speaks to co-stars Justin Chandlee and Gabby Lampe. REGISTER/RICHARD LUKEN



Lawmakers move to change bargaining

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Republican legislators in Kansas were moving ahead Wednesday with bills to shrink the state's civil service and restrict public employee unions, saying the measures would modernize government and make it operate more like private industry.

Public employee groups saw the bills being considered by the House and Senate commerce committees as part of a coordinated attack on organized labor, a key source of political support for Democrats. They also argued that the changes will harm workers.

"All the little bricks go together," said Rebecca Proctor, executive director of the Kansas Organization of State Employees.

The House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee approved a bill making it easier for state agencies

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Music, murder & comedy complete play

By RICHARD LUKEN
The Iola Register

A bevy of fresh faces star on the Iola Community Theatre stage starting Saturday in, "The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940."

Five of the 11 actors comprising the ensemble are newcomers to the ICT stage — further proof the local acting pool is continually being replenished.

There's music, there's murder and there's plenty of comedy courtesy of John Bishop's delightful script.

The plot is simple enough. A group of performers is invited to the mansion of Elsa Von Grossenkneuten in upstate New York, under the pretense of auditioning for an upcoming musical.

Elsa has other intentions. She wants to find the identity of the notorious "Stage Door Slasher," whose misdeeds ru-

ined a recent Broadway show.

And from the opening scene, it's evident the slasher is still on the hunt.

Elsa has invited a motley crew of performers, from the out-of-work comedian, Eddie McCuen (portrayed with aplomb by newcomer Justin Chandlee); Nikki Crandall, a not-so-typical chorus dancer (played by the delightful Gabby Lampe); and Patrick O'Reilly, an Irish actor (Whitney Olson) set on landing

a role in the musical — we think.

They arrive on a snowy night, making escape impossible.

Not that we want it to. The actors slowly begin to understand their night of auditions is anything but, courtesy of the eccentric and charming Elsa (Mandy Moyer), whose mansion is filled with a labyrinth of secret

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Task force targets teen substance abuse problems

By RICK DANLEY
The Iola Register

Over the last eight months, a volunteer organization has been taking shape in Allen County, drawing into its ranks, week by week, individuals from all pockets of civic life — teachers and parents; business owners; a district court judge; lawyers and police; health workers, ministers, social service providers — all of whom have taken upon themselves the difficult mission of stemming the destructive, occasionally lethal, impact of substance abuse among the county's young people.

The Allen County Substance Abuse Task Force (AC-SATF) is jointly chaired by Bryan and Angela Murphy, but its success, the couple insists, depends on the depth of the community's participa-

tion.

In time, the task force, which has recently submitted its application for a \$125,000 per year federal grant, will tackle the variety of substance abuse challenges — alcohol, tobacco, prescription drugs — facing the county's middle and high school students. For now, though, its focus is narrowed on the problem of underage drinking.

Given the absurd neurological fact that the teenage brain combines high impulsivity with low executive function, it's no wonder that some of the deadliest statistics to emerge from the Centers for Disease Control and the National Highway Safety Administration involve teens who take the wheel while drunk.

"The whole idea behind the task force," said Sheriff Murphy, "is to be proactive and fo-



Michelle Meiwes, Ceri Loflin, Jamie Westervelt, Bryan Murphy, Stacy Haines and Angela Murphy discuss ways to remedy substance abuse in Allen County. REGISTER/RICK DANLEY

cus on prevention, so that my job is not so inundated with simply reacting to the consequences of underage drink-

ing." The coalition has identified three features of the problem into which they've poured

their energy and expertise: The first is the easy availabil-

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Forensics team to host adult spelling bee

Go ahead and dust off those dictionaries.

A spelling challenge awaits. The inaugural "Bee For the Arts" — a fundraiser to benefit the school's forensics team and the upcoming Little Oscars celebration — is planned for April 25.

Several activities are in store, beginning with a rum-

mage sale that morning at Iola Middle School.

The events shift to the high school that evening for a dinner and improv acting show, capped by an adult spelling bee.

Teams of up to five members are allowed, with a \$50

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Panel considers divesting pension fund

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Kansas' public employee pension system would be forced to divest from any companies operating in Iran under a bill considered by a House panel on Wednesday.

The bill, which comes amid a spat between Republicans and Democrats in Washington over President Barack Obama's handling of Iran, would require the pension system to sell stock in any

companies that had invested \$20 million or more in Iran's petroleum industry since 1996. That would immediately impact the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System's \$68.5 million investments in Royal Dutch Shell, Total and Toyota.

KPERS would be required to notify those companies of the move, and if the companies did not divest from Iran voluntarily, KPERS would be

forced to sell their stock within 12 months.

Republican Rep. Scott Schwab of Olathe, who sponsored the bill in the Pensions and Benefits Committee, said it would keep Kansas public employees from unwittingly contributing to Iran's economy and reduce the pension fund's investment risk should relations with Iran

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Quote of the day

"Aim for the moon. If you miss, you may hit a star."

— W. Clement Stone



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KPERS: Iran

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deteriorate. "You're also protecting our assets because if we do go to war with Iran — I believe that day will come, I think there will be a day that we go to war with Iran — they're not going to gobble up our resources," Schwab said.

Obama has been hoping for a deal that would reportedly limit Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons in exchange for easing economic sanctions on the country. Democrats have accused Republican lawmakers of trying to sabotage the talks by inviting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to speak to the U.S. House of Representatives March 3 and by sending a letter to Iran's leaders suggesting a future president might invalidate the nuclear deal.

Schwab called the letter a strong move said divesting the state pension fund from Iran would signal Washington where Kansas stands on the country's relationship to Israel and Iran.

"This would send a message to Washington

and even to the White House saying, 'Look, we're going to defend our allies and we're not going to invest in those who try to do harm to them or us,'" Schwab said.

Chairman and Republican Rep. Steven Johnson from Assaria said that he hopes to put the measure to a vote Friday, but it is unlikely to advance further if the committee does not endorse it by then.

Alan Conroy, executive director of KPERS, said the bill would cost the pension fund \$8,000 per year for additional research and as much as \$2.6 million per year in losses from dumping and avoiding Iran-connected investments. Conroy acknowledged that it was difficult to project how the changes would affect the fund's long-term profitability.

Republican Rep. John Edmonds from Great Bend, who previously served on KPERS' board, said he was uncomfortable with adding political considerations to the funds' investment decisions.

Bargaining: Lawmakers look at changes

Continued from A1

to move jobs outside the civil service system, where workers have greater job security than political appointees. The proposal comes from Republican Gov. Sam Brownback's administration, and the committee's 9-7 vote sends the measure to the full House for debate.

The state has about 13,000 civil service em-

ployees, and Department of Administration spokesman John Milburn said in an email that the change "gives the flexibility to the agency when it fits their mission."

"It does fit much more with the practices of industry today in leveraging their talent," said House committee Chairman Mark Hutton, a Wichita Republican.

Milburn said even if

the changes are enacted, many state jobs will remain in civil service. Proctor was skeptical, saying the measure basically phases out the system.

Meanwhile, the Senate Commerce Committee debated a bill to limit collective bargaining between state agencies and public employee unions to minimum pay for workers.

The measure also would repeal a provi-

sion in state law allowing a union or an agency to seek mediation of a contract dispute. It would have the governor's secretary of labor review disagreements over whether a government agency is violating employment laws, rather than a five-person board with one member representing public employees.

The Senate committee expects to vote today on the measure.

Bee: Forensic team host fundraiser

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entry free for each team.

Businesses and individuals are encouraged to form teams. Bee sponsorships also are welcome.

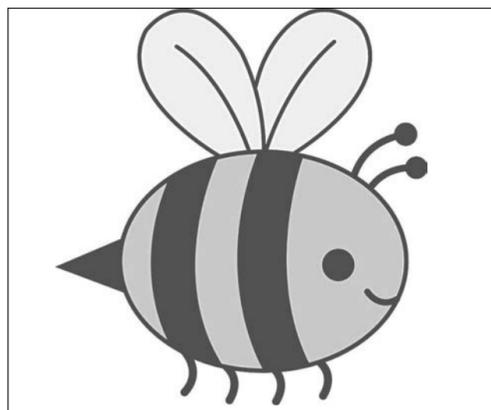
Lest anyone get too serious about the proceedings, a costume contest also is in the works. Prizes will go to whoever has the best bee-themed costume.

Proceeds will help pay for forensics team members Tribby Bannis-

ter and Catherine Venter, who have qualified for the National Forensics Meet May 23-25 in St. Augustine, Fla.

A portion of the proceeds also will help pay for expenses related to the 50th annual Little Oscars celebration in May.

To form a team, contact Regina Christenson at regina.christenson@usd257.org, or Clara Wicoff at clara.wicoff@usd257.org.



Task: Community sectors come together for Allen teens

Continued from A1

ity of alcohol to minors, who, the group's statistics indicate, typically come by their buzz not at a club or liquor store, but at their own or a friend's home. Second is the family structure in which a young person is raised, in which — often through no conscious fault of his parents — he has never been provided with clear rules regarding the use of alcohol. A connected problem, of course, is the family in which the adults model the proscribed behavior. A final point of focus for the task force is law enforcement — are they paying due attention to underage drinking, are the legal consequences for being caught sufficiently tough? And are there proactive measures by which law enforcement can intervene in a young person's life early "as opposed," said Sheriff Murphy, "to never seeing them until they end up in court."

At this stage the group's goal is to support existing programs in Allen County, including Alcohol EDU, Parenting Wisely, Party Buster

Hotline, and others.

"We're helping to build a foundation for these current programs and to get the word out," said Angela Murphy, who is also the county's 911 director.

Sheriff Murphy: "Unfortunately, they're about four feet under water. We're just trying to pump some air into them, to get them to float to the top."

SUBSTANCE ABUSE in Allen County is becoming more acute.

And while the task force is under no illusion it will be able to completely wipe clean the habit, which is likely as old as the fermented grape, it has the insight to realize the solution will be broader than any single program.

"It is a community problem," said Michelle Meiwes, a member of the group's core team, and a staff member at Hope Unlimited. "All of the solutions are going to be based on input from every segment of this community. Most of us work in a social service field and we see the problems that arise every day. If

You can be the cool parent without providing the alcohol.

— Jamie Westervelt

we can address them at a younger age, and help prevent underage drinking, maybe these kids can carry those habits over into adulthood."

To that end, the task force has built partnerships with teachers, students and administrators in each of the county's three school districts — Iola, Humboldt and Moran — and is helping to fortify the various prevention programs already in place at each school, while crafting plans to eventually introduce more.

According to the group, sometimes correcting the habits of kids means changing the attitudes of adults.

Jamie Westervelt, the owner of M & W Mfg. and a former substance abuse counselor, recalls seeing a recent exchange on social media in which a parent was being re-

buked for calling the police on a party where there were underage drinkers.

"This parent was being attacked for turning in a party. No," Westervelt said, "they did what they were supposed to do. Whoever turned it in, I don't care — thank you."

"We definitely need to change the thinking processes in our community," said Angela Murphy. "You can be the cool parent without providing the alcohol," said Westervelt.

Another member of the core team, Ceri Loflin — an audiologist at Greenbush Education Service Center — grew up in Iola, but then moved away for a period of years, living in Lawrence, then Kansas City. Returning to her hometown after a decade, the picture "was pretty eye-opening for me. And so

Jamie [Westervelt] and I had this talk." And that's when Westervelt put the question to Loflin that the task force is now putting to the entire community. "She asked me: Don't you just want to change it?"

WHILE THE group awaits the decision on the Drug-Free Communities grant, it will benefit from \$20,000 of state money, which was arranged by the task force's project facilitator, Stacy Haines, of the Iola-based Regional Prevention Center at Preferred Family Healthcare.

Haines is the author of the grant and, along with Angela Murphy and the rest of the core team, responsible for defining the outline of the group's ambition. Armed to the teeth with statistics and fluent in the idiom of "action plans" and "logic models" and all the bright language that the grant world smiles on, Haines is eager to return the credit to the Allen County Multi-Agency Team.

"One thing that's great that I have to say about ACMAT is that

they've been able to do a lot of fabulous work in Allen County with very little funding. They've got their ducks in a row and they're ready to go, and now they're moving toward funding. They've shown they can build relationships, they can get people involved and get them passionate and excited about what they're doing, and it shows.

"Not every coalition is able to do this, and I can speak to that from working with others."

The future of the task force, however, doesn't turn on this or that grant, but on the connective tissue the group has been able to establish between the various players within the county. "Even without the grant, we're still going to do big things. We're all optimistic or else we wouldn't be here. We're going to change lives whether we have the money or not."

ACMAT invites anyone interested in finding out more about the organization to contact Angela Murphy at amurphy@allencounty911.org or Ceri Loflin at ceri.loflin@greenbush.org. Volunteers are encouraged.

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ICT: Play this weekend

Continued from A1

doors and hidden passageways.

Other cast members are newcomers Walter Palmisano, as Ken De La Maize, who loves to talk about actors and shows he's worked on in the past, even if none of the productions have yet been released; Brittany Porter as Bernice Roth, a singer whose true inspiration comes from a bottle (or several) of alcohol; Jeremy Francis, an undercover detective sent to the mansion to help find the killer; and Debra Francis, as a chuckle-inducing Broadway producer.

Completing the ensemble are Sam Terhune as Roger Hopewell, a musical composer who unwittingly helps unravel the series of mysterious occurrences in Case De Grossenkneuten; and

Dan Johnson, as the radio announcer.

Last but not least, many of the largest laughs will come from the uproarious Bryan Johnson as Helsa Wenzel, the maid whose murder in the opening scene begins the chain of twists and turns that should leave the audience guessing more than once of who is responsible for the ghastly crimes.

The actors aren't the only newcomers. Elyssa Jackson, a stage veteran and ICT board member, makes her directorial debut.

The splash of new blood, on stage and off, will create a delightful evening, and assure audiences the Iola Community Theatre is in good hands for now and well into the future.



Bryan Johnson plays Helsa Wenzel.

"**THE MUSICAL** Comedy Murders of 1940" runs at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday, and 7:30 p.m. March 27 and 28. Tickets sell for \$15 for adults and \$10 for students. (Dessert is included). Doors open one hour prior to showtime. Dessert will be served 30 minutes before the curtain rises.