

County receives request for road work

By VICKIE MOSS
The Iola Register

County road crews have had a busy summer and next year looks to be just as packed, so commissioners are reluctant to commit resources for an electric line project.

NextEra Energy is working on its Transmission Southwest project, connecting a substation near Wolf Creek to the Blackberry substation in Missouri. The line cuts through multiple south-east Kansas counties, including diagonally through Allen.

Some of the county's roads will need to be improved to accommodate the heavy equipment needed for the transmission line project. The im-

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ICT offers swashbuckling fun



Mike Marsh is the eponymous Robin Hood in the Iola Community Theatre production of "Robin Hood and His Merry Men," which runs Thursday through Saturday at the Bowlus Fine Arts Center. Here, Marsh rehearses a scene with Wayne Stephens as Friar Tuck and Lucas Hurlock as Kevin. REGISTER/RICHARD LUKEN

By RICHARD LUKEN
The Iola Register

With a wink and a nod, the Iola Community Theatre has turned a classic fairy tale on its ear as it brings "Robin Hood and His Merry Men: A Comedy in Two Acts" to the Bowlus Fine Arts Center this weekend.

While most are familiar with the standard Robin Hood folklore — a rebellious archer steals from the rich and gives to the poor, much to the chagrin of the fiendish Little John and his key enforcer, the Sheriff of Nottingham — there's plenty to keep the audience in stitches (and suspense) with the ICT version.

In this version, King Richard is away fighting in the crusades, leaving his brother, Prince John, in charge.

And the prince is more than willing to see things done his way, including decrees that citizens pay weekly taxes or face the

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Humanity House scrambles for funds

By SUSAN LYNN
The Iola Register

When the needs are so great, not everyone's requests can be filled, admitted Georgia Masterson, interim director of Iola's Humanity House.

Masterson learned in early September that a grant application to Health Forward,

a Kansas City-based foundation that has previously supported Humanity House, was denied.

The application requested \$100,000 a year for two years and would have covered the salaries of a full-time director, a part-time staffer and food subsidies.

Masterson volunteers her time at the non-profit located

at 110 East st.

Masterson now has four grant applications of varying amounts "in the pipeline," to keep the organization afloat.

A local fundraiser in mid-September raised \$1,300, of which all was used to stock its food pantry.

For more information, call Humanity House at 620-380-6664.



Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-NC) is serving as the acting speaker of the House of Representatives upon the ouster of Kevin McCarthy on Tuesday. DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES/TNS

Rep. McHenry leads the House, at least for now

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — As Kevin McCarthy got pushed out of his job as House speaker, in part by colleagues who helped put him on the dais nine months ago, one of his top lieutenants stepped in to preside — at least temporarily.

North Carolina GOP Rep. Patrick McHenry took the gavel after Tuesday's vote to oust McCarthy — a historic first for a House speaker. According to House rules, McHenry was picked from a list McCarthy was required to keep and will serve essentially as the acting speaker — known as speaker pro tempore — until the chamber figures out who will be the next leader.

For McHenry, who stands out with his signature bow ties, the interim job marks his most public position to date during his 10 terms in the House.

But he had already risen

in stature and prominence within the House. McHenry was one of McCarthy's closest allies, and helped him win the speaker's contest in January and negotiate the debt limit deal that McCarthy made with President Joe Biden earlier this year.

He helped McCarthy keep his fragile majority together until it came apart following the decision to work with Democrats to keep the federal government open rather than risk a shutdown. He gave a floor speech Tuesday supporting McCarthy.

Dee Stewart, McHenry's longtime political consultant and his first chief of staff on Capitol Hill, said it doesn't surprise him that, for now, his close friend is presiding over one of the world's most important legislative bodies.

"He's demonstrated a tremendous acumen as a

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Iola's Christmas Vespers, which hasn't been held since 2019, is returning this holiday. Here, director Jan Knewton leads a 2019 rehearsal. REGISTER FILE PHOTO

Vespers to return for Christmas 2023

By RICHARD LUKEN
The Iola Register

A cherished part of Iola's Christmas season will return in 2023.

The annual Christmas Vespers concert, which hasn't been held since 2019, is planned for Dec. 10 at Iola's Wesley United Methodist Church.

"We've missed it," said Jan

Knewton, who returns to direct the choir. "I've heard people say, it's not Christmas without Vespers."

Rehearsals begin Wednesday, Oct. 11, in the Bowlus Fine Arts Center choir room. Every Wednesday is designated as practice time, starting at about 8:15 p.m., until the last week before the concert, when extra rehearsals will be held.

Accompanying the concert is pianist Roberta Wilkes of Yates Center.

"She's a very accomplished musician," Knewton said.

Dr. Jeffery Anderson, head of the Allen Community College music department, will provide pre-concert music as well.

As in years past, the Ves-

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UK prime minister wants to raise the legal age to buy cigarettes

LONDON (AP) — U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Wednesday proposed raising the legal age that people in England can buy cigarettes by one year, every year until it is eventually illegal for the whole population and smoking will hopefully be phased out among young people.

Setting out his plan at the annual Conser-

vative Party conference, Sunak said he wanted to “stop teenagers taking up cigarettes in the first place.”

It is currently illegal for anyone to sell cigarettes or tobacco products to people under 18 years old throughout the U.K.

Sunak’s office said the incremental changes would stop children who turn 14 this year

and those younger than that now from ever legally being sold cigarettes in England.

If Parliament approves the proposal, the legal change would only apply in England — not in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

“People take up cigarettes when they’re young. Four in five smokers have started by the time they’re 20,”

he said. “Later, the vast majority try to quit ... if we could break that cycle, if we could stop the start, then we would be on our way to ending the biggest cause of preventable death and disease in our country.”

The government said that smoking won’t be criminalized, and the phased changes mean that anyone who can legally buy cigarettes

now won’t be prevented from doing so in the future.

The number of people who smoke in the U.K. has declined by two-thirds since the 1970s, but some 6.4 million people in the country — or about 13% of the population — still smoke, according to official figures.

Britain’s government raised the legal age of

sale for tobacco from 16 to 18 in 2007. That succeeded in reducing the prevalence of smoking among 16 and 17-year-olds by 30%, Sunak’s office said.

Health experts welcomed the prime minister’s plan to steadily increase the legal smoking age. A similar measure was approved in New Zealand last year.

ICT: Brings ‘Robin Hood’ production to Bowlus

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penalty of death, courtesy of the dastardly Sheriff.

And, as power hungry titans are wont to do, Prince John quickly bores of seeing his pockets filled, and must have more. So, he sets his sights on marrying Maid Marian. (Whether she wants to marry him is irrelevant, he argues, because it’s his official decree, and thus must happen.)

But a downtrodden populace has learned of Robin Hood, a noble hero whose strength and bravery are seemingly legendary. (With an emphasis on seemingly.)

Naturally, as Robin Hood’s legend grows, Prince John and the Sheriff hatch a plan or two to capture Robin Hood and his band of merry men (who are mostly girls, by the way.) Can Robin save Maid Marian from Little John’s clutches? Will the sheriff and his henchmen foil the incoming insurgency?

Find out at 7 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 2 p.m. Saturday in the Bowlus Auditorium. Tickets sell at the door for \$10 for adults and \$5 for students.

MIKE MARSH shines as Robin Hood, who notes from the outset his mythical reputation may not quite live up to expectations.

You see, Robin isn’t quite the ruggedly handsome and swash-buckling type they envisioned. (Even Prince John mistakes him for Peter Pan when they first meet.)

Nevertheless, the quick-witted Robin has a few tricks up his sleeve to stay one step ahead of his pursuers. Speaking of Prince John, the incomparable River Hess takes great pleasure in portraying a sadistic vil-



Rhi Jordan is Maid Marian, River Hess is Prince John and Logan Belknap is Kevin, the prince’s henchman, in the Iola Community Theatre production of “Robin Hood and His Merry Men,” which runs Thursday through Saturday at the Bowlus Fine Arts Center. REGISTER/RICHARD LUKEN

lain, with just a hint of oafishness.

Likewise, “Scowling” Stacie Smail is equally brilliant as the brutal, intimidating Sheriff of Nottingham, cracking the faintest hint of a smile only when she knows she has the upper hand on her enemies.

And Rhi Jordan brings plenty of leading-lady panache as Maid Marian, who swears she has fallen in love with Robin Hood as she learns of his plans to rescue her — even if she hasn’t actually seen him yet.

DIRECTOR Alison Fees has a sterling supporting cast at her disposal as well.

Wayne Stephens and Jacob Cooper are uproarious as Friar Tuck and Little John as they quickly bond with Robin Hood over a duel, not by swords or arrows, but with a thumb war. (Yes, really!)

Katie Jo Knoblich is brilliant as Matilda, whose allegiance to the sheriff is frequently tested by an over-sized crush on Robin.

Newcomer to the ICT scene Logan Belknap,

likewise, offers plenty of comic relief as Kevin, Prince John’s henchman.

Lucas Hurlock, another newcomer, is worth a laugh or three as Duncan, who is itching for an adventure alongside Friar Tuck and Little John.

Dan Davis plays two roles with aplomb, primarily as narrator, where he occasionally has to prod the actors from scene to scene, and later as King Richard, whose return from the Crusades comes at the thrilling conclusion.

Making full use of their time on stage are Shellie Barnett, Tiffany Hurlock, Amanda Belknap, Piper Jordan, Monica Gayle Wright and Amanda Easley as Robin’s band of Merry Men Women, or as various ladies in other scenes, while Shannon Simpson and Sandy Hardwick sparkle as Nottingham citizens.

Last, but not least, young Winston Jordan gets plenty of stage time as the production’s “stage manager.” He’s eager to help move along the narration, and to remind the audience

of pending scene changes.

The play is set up so actors frequently break the fourth wall, and occasionally learn of plot twists alongside the audience by simply read-

ing ahead in the script. (Of course, the last page of the script is missing, so the ending remains a mystery to them as well.)

Overseeing it all is Fees, whose direction keeps the story moving at a brisk pace, even with missed cues aplenty, and redoing scenes if they’re not up to the performers’ satisfaction — yes, on purpose. Heck, there’s even a slow-motion fight to enjoy, twice.

The legend of Robin Hood has been around for centuries, and remains culturally relevant still today, whether it’s from the Errol Flynn era, through the prism of a Disney cartoon, to more recent renditions offered up by Kevin Costner or Taron Egerton.

The Iola Community Theatre’s presentation, too, warrants a spot on the pantheon of legendary performances — at least in this neck of the Sherwood Forest.

Vespers

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pers concert is free to the public, as a musical Christmas gift to the community. A reception for the singers and community will follow the 3 p.m. show.

THE IOLA Music Club started Vespers in 1955. It became an annual tradition, even after the Music Club folded, until the COVID-19 pandemic prompted organizers to cancel the 2020 concert.

KNEWTSON is recruiting singers for the choir to present the collection of religious and secular Christmas music. New tunes will be performed along with the traditional standards.

For more information, contact Knewtson at (620) 380-1711.

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