

Iowa's nursing assistants are seeking respect

Continued from Page 1A
Some nursing home operators are nervous about it. The organization is growing at a time when nursing assistants are taking over duties once handled by nurses. And there's a serious shortage of nursing assistants.

Some administrators are concerned about the potential for a union, says Susan Bowen Coppie, executive director of the Iowa Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.
But Coppie, whose organization has 100 member institutions, all non-profit, says her members support Flindley's goals, though many administrators are trying to achieve them on their own.

Some nursing home assistants, including those in Cedar Rapids and Dubuque organized by the Trans-state union, are members of collective bargaining units. But those units include other nursing home workers.

Flindley says when she was leading the opinion of people in the nursing home industry about forming their own union, she was told it would be perceived as a union. "We're still fighting that," she says.

Flindley's vision encompasses more than wages and benefits, she says. She wants nursing assistants to think of themselves as professionals worthy of a professional organization, such as the ones nurses and physician have.

Flindley says she is especially true in urban areas, where nursing homes must compete with other service industries for workers. A nursing home administrator in the Des Moines area told Flindley that he recently lost five nursing assistants in one day to the Prairie Meadows race track and casino.

'A system that's gone haywire'



Charles Gunn was told in 1961 that part of his Jefferson farm was a federally protected wetland that, after this drainage pipe went in, could only be used to grow hay. Every time he appealed, more acres were deemed 'wetlands.' Now he can't even grow hay on it.

Continued from Page 1A
more than wetlands regulation. That anger has been merged into the larger property-rights movement, now riding high in its campaign against what it calls "the environmental onslaught."
Congress has taken action. Already the House has passed a revised Clean Water Act that relaxes some restrictions on wetlands, and it has passed a property-rights bill that gives the government to pay landowners for regulations that "take" value from their property.

However, as the property-rights bill moves through the Senate, it is not clear if it will include provisions for wetlands, and if so, how much. The bill also gives the government the right to sue landowners who violate wetlands regulations.

Drake University law professor Neil Hamilton told a congressional committee, "Farmers and ranchers may end up being seen as the public's eyes, as only they can spot and report environmental violations, such as those who enjoy many public lands but who have little regard for the protection of resources on those lands."
How has it come to this?

The 1985 farm bill included for the first time "swampbuster" provisions intended to prevent farmers from converting wet, forested and cropland rights for mudflats.
Under the provision, farmers are required to use wetlands during times of flood and in providing temporary habitat to ducks and geese during spring migrations.

Continued from Page 1A
The fact is, said Dennis Pate, the assistant state conservationist in Iowa, the inventory was never finished. About a third of the state had been inventoried when the Bush administration put a freeze on the program.
When the program resumed in January, some previously inventoried areas were re-examined, using new standards, but mainly the agency was trying to complete mapping. The agency prevented that from happening.

"It's a damned emotional issue," Pate said. "There's not a good understanding of why we're doing this, and people don't have the same understanding of what value those habitats have."
In some cases, inflexible swampbuster rules have been their own worst enemy.
"Once you get in a certain box," Pate said, "the options we have in dealing with the producer are pretty limited. Maybe the producer needs some back a little bit and be more flexible and look at the value of each acre."

The proposal by the Clinton administration contains some of that. Bruce Jahn, a member of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, said the proposal would allow field officers to judge whether a farmer's claimed disturbance of a wetland would have a minimal effect, in which case special requirements would apply.
In cases where changes to a wetland would have an effect, there are more options for offsetting those effects.

In the case of Charles Gunn, it appears the rules tripped him.
Donald Elber, administrative director of the Iowa Drainage District Association, has been assisting Gunn in his appeals. Elber has been reading wetlands regulations for years, and he sees the Gunn case in a bigger property-rights context.

Elber wants all land that is part of a drainage district — like Gunn's land — to be exempt from wetlands regulations. That is in terms of thousands of acres in Iowa, and he is seeking to build a coalition with other farmers to press the issue.
Elber's view is at one end of the philosophical spectrum, seeing wetlands rules as part of "social policy" that Congress never intended to grant the Natural Resources Conservation Service when it passed the 1985 farm bill.

For the RECORD

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS
An item in Sunday's Des Moines Register incorrectly stated that the C. Tom Lane Quarters will perform Tuesday. The band will play from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the main lobby in downtown Des Moines.

LOTTERIES
Iowa Lottery
14-21-34-36-38-40
Jackpot - \$600,000
Numbers: 10-30-30-30-30
Saturday 11:00 AM, Sun game 11:15-18-26-35

Powerball
Saturday evening drawings:
Power Ball - 4-9-19-24-28
Pick 3 - 1-9-7
New Jackpot - \$4 million

Wisconsin
Saturday evening drawings:
SuperCash - 5-11-12-17-28
MegaBall - 10-18-27-28-33

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Felon back to prison
The Des Moines Register reported that Charles Gunn, a Des Moines farmer, had been sentenced to 30 months in federal prison for a felony conviction for being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Pattern of abduction, killing?

Continued from Page 1A
had been sexually assaulted and strangled.
"Holiday killer"
Investigators believed the Benning and Pate slayings were linked. Both occurred during holiday periods — Thanksgiving and Labor Day — prompting speculation of a "holiday killer."

Police had been one of several victims of a bizarre sex and extortion scheme operating in the Mason City area, but Benning apparently wasn't involved in that. A former Waterloo College employee came under suspicion for a while but charges were never filed in either killing.

Investigative agencies around the area for weeks but found nothing. The Plymouth County attorney last year called a special grand jury to look into all evidence that would point to a woman. Still, there's been little of the woman.

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Advertisement for 'ONCE IN A LIFETIME' exhibition. Features a portrait of a woman and text: 'TREASURES OF THE CZARS August 2 - December 31, 1995 • Topeka, Kansas. A real life story that begins with a murder and ends in a revolution.'

Advertisement for 'AQUATIC PARADISE Swim Exercise & Spa'. Text: 'Come & See a Feel It's a 77' x 40' x 7' Huge Selection... KANSAS INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM 125 E. 6th Street, Suite 105 • Topeka, Kansas 66603'

Table titled 'IOWA DEATHS' listing names, dates, and locations of deaths across various Iowa counties.

Advertisement for 'AQUATIC PARADISE Swim Exercise & Spa' with details about services, pricing, and contact information.

Advertisement for 'ONCE IN A LIFETIME' exhibition, including details about the exhibit, dates, and ticket information.