

The Paper

Our Town, Our Paper!



Laurens, Iowa



Vol. 11 No. 41

www.thepapernow.com

February 14,
2018

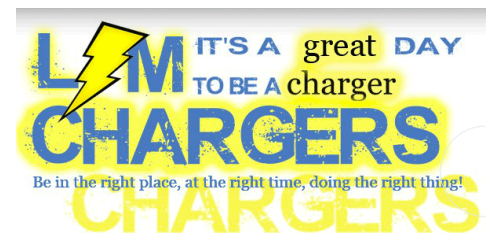
Local News

Jack Links Donates \$15,000 to L-M School

On Thursday, February 8, Jack Links presented a check of \$15,000 to the Laurens-Marathon School District to fund activities beyond the classroom that help students grow. John Sones and Marty Moore from Jack Links presented the check to Troy Oehlertz, Principal, and Scott Williamson, Superintendent.

Jack Link's is passionate about giving back to communities in which they operate. Each year, Jack Link's holds a charity golf tournament to raise money to support local schools. Vendors, supporters and employees all participate.

To date, Jack Link's has raised over one million dollars for schools.



*Thank you for your continued support of
Laurens-Marathon Community School, Jack Link's!*



Applications for Student Ambassadorship to Laurens, France

Available at Laurens City Hall

Eligible Students: 10th, 11th, 12th grade in L-M School District

Application Deadline: February 20, 2018

Two Positions Available

Further Details on Application Form

APPLICATION FOR AMBASSADORSHIP TO LAURENS, FRANCE

Deadline for filing is February 20, 2018. Please deliver completed application to either Hilary or Joan at Laurens City Hall, 272 N. Third St., Laurens, IA 50554. Must live in L-M School District.

Time of trip is during the first part of August, 2018

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Parents or guardians names & address _____

Telephone _____

Name of school and year of study (Should be a sophomore, junior or senior of year 2018-19)

High school/college extracurricular activities and/or leadership responsibilities:

Community, church, and club involvement and/or leadership responsibilities

Awards or honors

Work experience

Please include the following items with your application:

1. One letter of recommendation from a teacher.
2. One letter of recommendation from a community member.
3. An essay of 500 words or less describing the qualities and characteristics needed to serve as a student ambassador.
4. If under age 18, a brief letter from your parent or guardian stating their approval of your participation as a student ambassador.

Informational Items:

An adult ambassador will accompany the two student ambassadors chosen to travel to Laurens, France. A side trip to Paris is a potential option but may require \$ contribution from the student ambassador. Upon return from France, the student ambassadors would be expected to share his/her experience with peers and the Laurens Community. The Sister City Commission would appreciate the assistance of the student ambassadors at fund-raising events such as the Wine Festival.

FREE Family Fun Day

FREE Family Fun Day Sunday, February 18, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

The ISU Extension and Outreach Pocahontas and Humboldt Counties will host a family fun day. Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend!

There will be crafts, indoor games, snacks, basketball, and weather permitting, the Pocahontas and Humboldt Conservation will have snow shoes and cross country skies for all to enjoy on the Three Rivers Bike Trail.

The event will be held at the RAM Center (gym) in Rolfe and to participate in the trail activities, meet at the trail head on Railroad Street (SE Corner of Rolfe).



Windbreak Seminar

A Windbreak Seminar will be held on Monday, February 26, 2018 from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. at West Iowa Bank in Laurens, located at 202 W. Main Street.

ISU Extension Forester, Jesse Randall, will be presenting on species selection, site considerations, windbreak design, disease updates, and planting, establishment, and maintenance.

This seminar is provided by BV & Pocahontas County Soil & Water Conservation District.



Laurens Marathon Preschool Registration

- WHEN: Tuesday, February 27th
Come anytime between 3:30-6:00
- WHERE: Laurens Marathon School
Commons area (outside office)
- WHO: Parents of all incoming preschool children
- WHAT TO BRING WITH:
- Income verification for year 2017
 - Emergency Contact information (address & phone number)
 - Contact information for your Dentist & Doctor
 - Insurance information

If you have any questions, contact Angie Mitchell 712-334-1901 or call Laurens Marathon School 712-841-5000



2018 Laurens Summer Ball Registration



Sunday, February 25, 2:00-4:00 PM
West Iowa Bank in Laurens

For ALL kids who have completed Kindergarten through 6th Grade.
Registration cost is \$20 per child, or a maximum of \$40 per family.

Financial Assistance and Travel Assistance is available.

All games during the week in the evenings.

Registrations must be postmarked by March 20th.

Registration forms were sent home in the Friday folders.

We will have some used ball pants, shoes and gloves available during registration.

If you have any questions please contact:
Allison Price at 314-413-6402



Search Begins for Iowa's Best Burger

Iowa's cattle producers are asking their fellow Iowans to help find Iowa's Best Burger in 2018. In this year's quest, the Iowa Beef Industry Council (IBIC) and the Iowa Cattlemen's Association (ICA) are encouraging you to nominate your favorite burger, whether it's gourmet or down-home style.

This is the ninth year the two groups are holding the annual Iowa's Best Burger contest, which officially kicked off February 12. The nomination period will close at 5 p.m. on March 12, 2018. To qualify to be named Iowa's Best Burger, the burger must be a 100% beef patty and served on a bun or bread product.

"We are excited to begin the search for this year's best burger in Iowa," comments Katie Olthoff, Director of Communications for the ICA. "This year, our goal is to get new restaurants involved in the contest. We know we have many restaurants across the state serving a great beef burger."

In order to recognize these great burgers, IBIC and ICA are asking Iowans to nominate their favorite burger for the award, and those nominations can be made online or by text. Details about the contest, rules, and the voting form are available on the Iowa Beef Industry Council's website, www.iabeef.org. Burger lovers can also find a link to the online nomination form at the Iowa Beef Council Facebook page; or by texting BEEF to 313131. Photos of your favorite burger can be shared socially using #IABestBurger.

"Restaurants can download a digital toolkit including promotional materials for the contest from IBIC's website at iabeef.org to promote the contest to their customers," says Brooke German, Director of Marketing for the IBIC. "The promotional materials can be used in their restaurants or online such as their social media platforms."

The nomination period ends March 12, 2018. German noted that the top 10 restaurants with the most votes are eligible for the title of Iowa's Best Burger. The top ten finalists will be announced on March 19. Finalists will receive a certificate and will be eligible for the secret taste-test of contest judges. The 2018 Best Burger in Iowa will be announced on May 1 with the kick-off of May Beef Month in Iowa.

"Funded by the Iowa State Beef Checkoff program, this contest not only promotes Iowa's restaurants serving great beef burgers, but also Iowa's beef farmers producing safe, wholesome and nutritious products for consumers," says Steve Rehder, chairman of the Iowa Beef Industry Council. "It is a great partnership between the Iowa Cattlemen's Association and the Iowa Beef Industry Council to promote Iowa's beef industry which generates an estimated \$6.03 billion in economic activity in the state."

In 2017, nearly 9,200 nominations for 500 restaurants were received in the contest. The final winners in previous years are: 2017 – The Smokin' Hereford BBQ, Storm Lake; 2016 – The Chuckwagon Restaurant, Adair; 2015 – The Cider House, Fairfield; 2014 – Brick City Grill, Ames; 2013 – 61 Chop House Grille, Mediapolis; 2012 – Coon Bowl III, Coon Rapids; 2011 – Rusty Duck, Dexter; 2010 – Sac County Cattle Company, Sac City.

The Paper

Published weekly by
My Laurens, Inc.
112 Walnut St.
Laurens, IA 50554

Phone:
(712) 841-2684

Fax:
(712) 841-4662

Website:
www.thepapernow.com

E-mail:
publisher@mylaurens.com

Publisher:
Rodney Johnson

Editor:
Amanda Tendal

Rights to Use Content: The Paper, its content, archived materials, and our websites, are provided solely for your personal, non-commercial use. The Paper, its content, our websites and all the materials available on our websites are the property of My Laurens, Inc., and are protected by applicable copyright, trademark, and intellectual property laws. You may download, print or transmit The Paper for your personal, non-commercial use. Any commercial use of copyrighted materials requires prior authorization from My Laurens, Inc. Unless explicitly authorized by My Laurens, Inc., you may not modify copy, create derivative works, reproduce, republish, transmit, sell, or distribute in any manner or medium (including by email or other electronic means) any material from The Paper or our websites for commercial purposes. You may not use The Paper or materials available on our websites, in a manner that constitutes an infringement of our intellectual property rights/copyrights or that has not been authorized by My Laurens, Inc. For information about requesting permission to reproduce or distribute materials from The Paper, please contact My Laurens, Inc. at (712) 841-2684 or publisher@mylaurens.com.

At the Library

with Glenda Mulder
February 14, 2018

Happy Valentine's Day! Hope your entire week is filled with the things you love. Mine, of course, will be filled with books and the wonderful patrons of the Laurens Public Library – what more could I want?!

Plans for our Music Garden beside the library are starting to come together. Have you heard our good news? The Kiwanis are sponsoring the “Contrabass Chimes” and the Oleson family is sponsoring “The Swirl” in memory of Dean, Dwight & Leota. How cool is that?! Also, Hometown Pride received a Pocahontas County Foundation grant for installation of the instruments and will provide the labor! We have received donations from Casey's, HorseTech, The Paper, and Positech towards our project and a few private donations also. But, as you know, this is an expensive project (well, we wouldn't want flimsy, cheap stuff permanently installed outside the library, now would we?) so we are still asking for your donation.

And speaking of the Music Garden, the Library Foundation is planning a Tropical Getaway Supper to raise funds for it! This will be held in conjunction with the Chamber's Cabin Fever event on Thursday, February 22. We tried to set the menu with a visit to the tropics in mind. We are planning hula hoop challenges with fun t-shirts as prizes,

some will be returned soon. Let us know if we should save a copy for you! The central character in this book is a 38 year old woman who moves to an assisted living facility because she has Alzheimer's. This should make a good discussion! Plan to join us Monday, February 26 at 7 pm.

so brush up your skills! We couldn't do a luau, so pulled pork sandwiches will be close. But the part I am most looking forward to, naturally, is the dessert – pineapple upside-down cake!

James Patterson took a time out to co-author a nonfiction, for a change. It's *All-American murder: the rise and fall of Aaron Hernandez, the superstar whose life ended on murderers' row* (again, I would like to express my dislike for these nonfiction titles which are almost like a short book themselves! End editorial opinion.) In fiction, we received *Into the Black Nowhere* by Meg Gardiner, *White Houses* by Amy Bloom, *Night Moves* by Jonathan Kellerman, *Poison* by John Lescroat, *Mrs. Fifty* by Macy Caitlyn and *Fifty Fifty* by James Patterson.

Last week we told you we had received *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones. This week Oprah announced that it is her Book Club 2018 selection! The review I read said, “*An American Marriage* is a masterpiece of storytelling, an intimate look deep into the souls of people who must reckon with the past while moving forward--with hope and pain--into the future.” Let us know if you'd like to read it.

February's book club choice is *The Things We Keep* by Sally Hepworth. As I write this, all our copies are checked out, but I'm sure

some will be returned soon. Let us know if we should save a copy for you! The central character in this book is a 38 year old woman who moves to an assisted living facility because she has Alzheimer's. This should make a good discussion! Plan to join us Monday, February 26 at 7 pm.

COMING EVENTS

- Tot Time Every Monday at 10 a.m.
- Take it Tuesday - 1st Tuesday 6:30 p.m.
- Card Making – 4th Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.
- Book Club 4th Monday at 7 p.m.



United Methodist Men's Annual Soup & Pie Supper

**Wednesday, March 7th
from 4:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.**

**Laurens United Methodist Church
201 W. Main St.**

**Serving Chili, Chicken Noodle
& Broccoli Cheese Soup.**

**Adults~ \$6.00
Children 12 yrs. & under ~ \$3.00**

**Our Methodist Men help support many local
& global projects.**

Birthday Greetings!

Peggy Netsch of Spirit Lake (formerly of Laurens) will be celebrating her 81st birthday on Wednesday, February 14. Her children, Neal, Kelly, and Stephanie, invite you to help honor her with a card shower.

Greetings may be sent to Peggy at: 2304 Denver Ave, Spirit Lake, IA 51360.



LAURENS AREA YOUTH GROUP

FEBRUARY SCHEDULE

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

FEBRUARY 4TH - JUNIOR HIGH

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9TH - SATURDAY FEBRUARY 10TH
LOCK-IN ALL JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH
INVITED (**METHODIST CHURCH**) 6:30P.M. - 8A.M.

FEBRUARY 18TH - HIGH SCHOOL

FEBRUARY 25TH - JUNIOR HIGH

Youth Group meetings are from 6-8 p.m. on Sunday evenings. All youth 6th to 12th grade are invited to attend.

QUESTIONS CALL: ANGELA CHRISTENSON—712-450-0295

SCORE A NEW CAREER WITH US!

Are you looking for a new career? If you are dependable and motivated, we want to talk with you.

We are currently accepting applications for the following position:

WELDERS & MACHINISTS – 2nd Shift

We are seeking Dependable and Motivated applicants. Experience is preferred but not required. We are willing to train the right applicants AND WE WANT TO TRAIN THE RIGHT APPLICANTS. Come work in a team-oriented and friendly atmosphere with state of the art equipment. Shift premium is paid during training and overtime is available. We are accepting applications for 2nd shift but will train on 1st shift.

A Pre-employment Drug Screen is required. **Fisher Hydraulics** is an Equal Opportunity Employer offering expanded benefits that include Competitive Wages, Medical, Dental, Flexible Spending Accounts, STD/LTD, Life Insurance Plans, 401K Plan, Paid Personal & Vacation days, & Paid Holidays.

To apply: Call 712-845-2634 ext. 113, during the hours of 7:00 am-4:30 pm, Mon.-Thur. and speak with Diane. You may also stop in for an application.

FISHER HYDRAULICS
603 Hwy 10 West
LAURENS, IOWA



Friday, February 16th
Serving from 5-8 pm

Menu: All You Can Eat Fish, Baked Potato, Baked Beans, Cole Slaw & Garlic Toast

Come Out &
Enjoy Dinner
with Us!



12582 Hwy 10 West, Laurens
Phone: (712) 841-2287

Public
Welcome!

This Week at Bethany Lutheran

Pastor Scott Baker

Wednesday: February 14, 2018

Ash Wednesday

7:00 PM ~ Ash Wednesday Service

Council Mtg. following service

Sunday: February 18, 2018

First Sunday in Lent

9:15 AM ~ Adult SS

9:30 AM ~ Youth SS

9:30 AM ~ Coffee Fellowship

10:30 AM ~ Worship w/Communion

11:30 AM ~ Potluck

2:00 PM ~ Girl Scouts mtg. @ BLC

4:00 PM ~ Pack/Den 70 Mtg. @ BLC

4:00 PM ~ Laurens Care Center Service

6:00 PM ~ Laurens Area Youth Group

(HS) at FCC

Wednesday: February 21, 2018

11:30 AM ~ Lenten Luncheon at LC

5:00-7:00 PM ~ FCC Men's Soup Supper

6:30 PM ~ Lenten Service at BLC

*Worship, Love, Accept~ Together in
Christ's Name*



Bethany
LUTHERAN CHURCH
North American Lutheran Church

Resurrection of Our Lord Catholic Church

Pocahontas, IA -- Pastor: Very Rev. Craig Collison, VF

MASS TIMES:

Daily Mass as scheduled in the weekly bulletin

Saturday at 5:00 PM

Sunday at 8:30 AM

Confessions: Saturday 4:15 pm at Resurrection

Office: 16 SW 2nd Street, Pocahontas

Office Phone: 712-335-3242 -- **Residence Phone:** 712-335-8065

E-mail: colly@ncn.net

Pastoral Care: Sister Renae Hohensee, 563-552-8666

Our Town Our Paper!

This Week at First Christian Church

Pastor Rev. Rita Cordell

Wednesday, Feb. 14

7:00 p.m. - Lydia Group

Friday, Feb. 16

7:00 p.m. - AA

Sunday, Feb. 18

9:30 a.m. - Sunday School

10:30 a.m. - Worship followed by

Potluck Dinner

6:00 - 8:00 p.m. - High School Youth

Group at First Christian



This Week at Laurens United Methodist Church

Pastor Ed Frank

Wed., Feb. 14th:

Book Club @ 9 A.M.

Puppet Troop @ 6:30 P.M.

Thurs., Feb. 15th:

Rachel Circle @ 9:15 A.M.

Fri., Feb. 16th:

Men's Bible Study @ 7 A.M.

Sun., Feb. 18th:

Adult Sunday School @ 9:00 a.m.

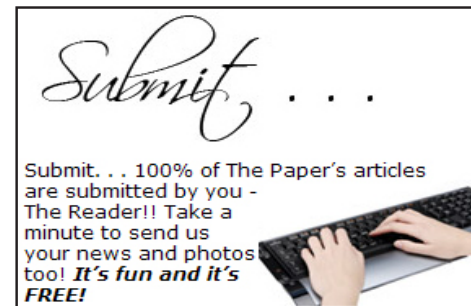
Sunday School (kids) @ 9:10 a.m.

Fellowship Coffee @ 9:30 a.m.

Worship @ 10:30 a.m.

Laurens Area Youth Group (HS) at FCC

@ 6 p.m.



Seed Treatment Course Scheduled for February 28

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Pocahontas County will host a Seed Treatment Continuing Instruction Course (CIC) for commercial pesticide applicators, Wednesday, February 28. The program will be shown at locations across Iowa through the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP).

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., and the course runs from 9 to 11 a.m. To register or to obtain additional information about the CIC, contact Dianne Dirks at the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach office in Pocahontas County by phoning 712-335-3103 or email dianned@iastate.edu.

The course will provide continuing instruction credit for commercial pesticide applicators certified in categories 4 and 10. Topics to be covered include equipment calibration and safe application techniques; pests, pest management and pesticides; and issues concerning treated seed, including disposal of unused treated seed.

Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) Continuing Education Units (CEUs) will be offered. Interested participants should bring their CCA number to the program.

Additional information and registration forms for this and other courses offered by the PSEP team can be accessed at www.extension.iastate.edu/PSEP/.

After School Robots

The winter after school robot club has started building their LegoMindstorms under the direction of Sue Jarvis, Master Robot Volunteer.

Due to the generous support of the Pocahontas Community Foundation Grant and the ISU Extension and Outreach Pocahontas County, youth in our county will have the opportunity to learn all about robots starting with the DASH robots and the Lego EV3 expansion kits that were purchased with the foundation funds.

If you have a child in 4th through 12th grade that would join our group, please contact the ISU Extension and Outreach Pocahontas County office at 712-335-3103. We will offer programs throughout the year.



Celebrating 100 Years

While Extension started in Pocahontas County 100 years ago, so much has changed, and some things never change.

I recently was cleaning out my father's farm home and found a book titled "*Farm Economy-Encyclopedia of Agriculture*" that was copyrighted in 1915. Under the fertilizer section, it suggests fertilizer rates for 30bu/acre corn and devotes an entire chapter on how to pick out ears of corn to plant next year's crop from.

The car was a new addition to rich families, but needed to be overhauled each winter. Most of the pictures had horses in them.

Electricity on farms was still many years away. So, water was pumped with windmills, or by hand.

Today ISU Extension has brought research-based information to help advance the production of Iowa's land, and improve people's lives.

It is interesting to reflect back to see how our rural population, and small communities, have pulled together to use the university's research to make all of our lives better during the past 100 years. ISU Extension is excited to see what the next 100 years will bring to make Pocahontas County a thriving rural community.

	1918	2018	2118
Corn Yield	30 bu/acre	200 bu/acre	1,200 bu/acre
Acres per Farm	160 acres	1,600 acres	16,000 acres
Pigs Raise/Farmer	100/yr	24,000/yr	??/yr
Transportation	Horses	Tractors	Robots
Information	Word of mouth/Print	Cell Phones	???

NW Iowa Beef Bonanza Held

The 2018 Northwest Iowa Beef Bonanza was held on Saturday, February 3rd at the Iowa Lakes Community College in Emmetsburg. There were 70 youth represented from 11 counties.

Mark Jensen, ILCC Beef Instructor, taught the session “It’s Not a Shot in the Dark,” which taught youth the difference between intramuscular (IM) and subcutaneous (SubQ) shots.

Judith LaBounty, an Emergency Management Veterinarian for IDALS, and Beth Doran, a Beef Specialist for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, taught the session “OUTBREAK!”. They taught youth about disease outbreaks and what to do if you have one on your farm.

Darcy Maulsby, a writer for Farm News, author, and speaker taught a session called “Telling It Like It Is,” which taught youth how they could advocate for the beef industry by telling their stories.

Youth also attended a session titled “Your Bottom Line” taught by Al Patten and Jeremy Truog from Farm Credit Services of America. Youth learned some interesting facts and trends in the cattle industry and how all that financially affects your bottom line.



Finances of Caregiving Series-A Family Affair

A unique group of 'Family Caregivers' living in our community are providing unpaid caregiving for adults who, because of physical impairments or failing memory, can no longer complete their day-to-day activities. Regardless of how to take first caregiving actions or make complex money decisions, a March 2018 "Finances of Caregiving" five-week workshop series brings national resources, community partners and tools assisting family caregivers to Iowans to protect their finances. The Iowa State University Extension and Outreach program registration closes on Monday, March 19.

Iowa caregivers documented in 2015 provided 24 to 40 hours helping with household chores, shopping and transportation. Their roles included managing finances, medications and overseeing nursing and medical tasks, spending some \$5,531 annually out of their own pockets.

The "Finances of Caregiving" research evidence based program

provides materials to assist caregivers in protecting their assets and prepare for their retirement while providing care. This five-week program, beginning on March 22 through April 19 (five consecutive Thursdays); will meet at the Pocahontas County Extension and Outreach Office from 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. The workshop fee of \$35 provides attendees workshop resources. Participants, feel free to bring your own sack lunch or snack.

"Understanding caregiving choices means knowing your current situation," says Carol Ehlers, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Human Science Specialist, Family Finance.

"This workshop series provides caregivers and care receivers guides and tools to explore information and resources for a tailored response to adult's day-to-day affairs.

This program is offered through a collaboration including: Pocahontas Community Hospital, Pocahontas County Public Health, Pocahontas County Home Care Aide Agency and ISU Extension and Outreach Pocahontas County.

For more information or to register, contact Pocahontas County Extension and Outreach Program Coordinator, Holly Frerk, at 712-335-3103 or email hfrerk@iastate.edu.



Free Tax Filing Helps Lower-Income Iowans Keep More of Their Refunds

An income tax refund provides an important annual financial boost for many Iowa families. Claiming that tax refund, however, is sometimes more expensive than it needs to be, according to Barb Wollan, a human sciences specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

“I talk to people all the time whose tax refunds are equal to one to three months of income. They rely on their tax refund to accomplish the financial goals they’ve set for the year,” said Wollan, who specializes in family finance.

“People sometimes resign themselves to spending \$100-\$300 in tax preparation fees, deciding it’s ‘worth it’ in order to get their tax refund, which may be a few thousand dollars,” Wollan said. “However, if they didn’t pay for tax preparation, they would certainly find a good use for the extra few hundred dollars.”

The good news is that there are at least two ways for low and moderate-income households to

file their taxes for free, Wollan said.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance. Volunteer Income Tax Assistance is an IRS-sponsored program in which certified volunteer tax preparers work with taxpayers to file their income tax returns for free. VITA sites are intended for low and moderate income taxpayers, with some flexibility in income guidelines depending on an individual’s situation.

Volunteers are equipped to prepare returns with a range of tax issues, including the most common types of income and tax credits. There are, however, some tax issues that volunteers are not allowed to address, including farm and rental income and some types of small business returns.

In many Iowa counties, ISU Extension and Outreach is a partner in VITA, often hosting VITA sites and assisting with site management. ISU Extension specialists also provide training and technical support to some Iowa sites.

“VITA volunteers work in pairs or teams with careful quality monitoring processes to ensure accurate tax returns,” said Wollan. “These caring and capable individuals work to help taxpayers understand their tax returns, and to inform them about opportunities to claim deductions or credits in the future.”

A list of ISU Extension and Outreach county offices that are

hosting VITA sites for the current tax year is available online at <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/vita>.

To find a VITA site anywhere in the nation, go to www.irs.gov and search for VITA.

“The IRS website also lists free tax preparation sites operated by AARP, which are similar to VITA sites. Some tax sites operate on an appointment basis, while other sites offer walk-in service. The listing found on the website will provide the information you need,” Wollan said.

IRS ‘Free File’ option.

For taxpayers who are fairly comfortable with computers, the IRS offers an online “Free File” option as well. Learn more at www.irs.gov/filing/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free. This service results from a collaboration of various commercial tax software providers who make their software available free to qualifying consumers. The software packages are user-friendly, designed for people who are not tax experts.

“Before paying to have your taxes prepared, consider making use of one of the free options,” suggests Wollan. “If you are not able to take advantage of free tax preparation, shop wisely when selecting tax preparation software or a professional tax preparer, and avoid paying fees for refund loans and other non-essential products or services. Your tax refund is a return of your money – keep it for your own use.”