

Discipline concerns addressed at hearing

By Grace Paustian

A local Durant farmer, Mike Holst, has raised concerns about discipline at Durant High School and other schools statewide.

Mr. Holst, the father of two former Durant graduates, made his initial comments at a public hearing last month for the proposed bond referendum. The *Chronicles* reached out to Mr. Holst for a follow-up interview.

In the interview, Mr. Holst said the bond referendum is meant to improve the learning environment for Durant students. However, a lack of discipline is compromising that learning environment for grades K-12.

“As a taxpayer I am considering looking at this bond referendum from a point

of leverage. You want my vote for the referendum, and I want you to address and fix the school discipline issue,” he said.

“You guys want my vote [for the bond referendum] because you guys want to do all of this for the school, yet I am looking at this as if we aren’t going to make changes and get this discipline under control, then what kind of school are we going to have.”

Mr. Holst also feels the discipline issues in the school have been ignored.

“The whole discipline issue was being ignored, and it [the school] really wasn’t doing anything substantial to really solve the problem,” Mr. Holst said.

Superintendent Joe Burnett responded to Mr. Holst’s views, saying the school does address student behavior issues when they arise. The school was also pro-

active in purchasing surveillance equipment to help hold students accountable when they make unfortunate choices.

“I’ve been in education for 30 years, and there’s always been challenges in working with teenagers,” Mr. Burnett said. “Do I think it’s worse today than it was when I grew up? Honestly I do not.”

However, Mr. Burnett thinks that potentially the perception in the community is that the discipline issues may be worse based on social media and how people think things really are in the school.

Mr. Holst believes that discipline issues are not just a local problem.

“The issue of discipline is not just a local issue; it is a statewide if not nationwide problem,” he said. “Because of the lack of accountability for one’s actions, the real is-

sue is a compromised learning environment and therefore a reduced level of quality education, which is evidenced by lower student test scores.”

Mr. Holst also feels that education is treated like a right rather than a privilege.

“To help solve this problem, the goal should be to transfer the responsibility of discipline back to the parents,” he said. “We need to raise our expectations on the level of behavior needed to qualify and participate in public education.”

He said that part of the problem lies with the state because it restricts teachers and administrations on what type of discipline they can use on students.

Mr. Holst implied that Iowa used to lead the nation in test scores, and now it

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Former Durant student chases childhood dream

By Kiyah Daily

A recent Durant graduate, Tevin Miller, has started working for Canadian Pacific Railway in northeast Iowa.

Miller, who graduated last May, has wanted to work with trains ever since he was young.

“As a child I always remember being around trains, and I always wanted to be a railroad worker,” said Miller, “so that’s what I’m choosing to follow.”

Miller saw an ad on Facebook for a job with Canadian Pacific and originally applied to be a locomotive engineer but later found out that he is colorblind. As a result, he reapplied for a track laborer position a couple of months later.

He was extremely excited when he found out he got the job.

“There were a lot of tests, such as blood work, drug tests, and paper tests,” said Miller, “so it took a while, but it’s definitely worth it in the end.”

Miller is currently doing an internship, which is more like training to prepare him for when he starts the job. He started his training on November 7.

“It’s very hands-on; the first two weeks are in the classroom,” said Miller, “but now we’re on the job, so we work Monday through Thursday.”

Miller’s schedule varies from day to day with early mornings and late nights.

“Our schedule is eight in the morn-

ing to six at night, but you might work 12 hours, or you might work five hours, just depends on the day,” he explained.

Hours can also shift from four days of 10-hour shifts to five days of eight-hour shifts.

His job consists of many different tasks such as “working on the railroad, installing and replacing new rail, working outside, working hands-on, making sure the rail is safe for the trains to travel on, and making sure there’s no defects.”

Miller is currently living in different hotels for four days a week, but since he works Monday through Thursday, he can come home on Thursday night.

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Photo contributed by Tevin Miller
Durant graduate Tevin Miller works for Canadian Pacific Railway.

Surrounding schools start using electronic passes

By Kennedy Schumacher

Electronic passes have begun to be more prominent in Durant’s surrounding school districts.

Currently, Durant students must ask to leave a classroom, sign out on the classroom sign-out sheet, and receive a yellow paper pass from their teacher.

However, some area schools districts have already started using apps to have students sign in and out of classrooms, according to School Resource Officer (SRO) Mike Meier

At the beginning of every school year, all the school resource officers in the Quad City area meet to discuss the latest

school trends, school safety and security, and training.

Using electronic passes was one of the topics that was discussed at the August meeting for the surrounding area’s SROs, said Sgt. Meier.

Sgt. Meier said he would prefer having passes become electronic or even using lanyards.

Sgt. Meier explained each classroom could have a set of lanyards that state where a student is coming from and where that student is going.

This is an alternate method he has suggested in the past. He also points out that having a physical reusable pass for every

classroom would also be an upgrade from the yellow paper passes currently being used.

This would provide information such as which classes students are coming from and where they are going.

With electronic passes, students would download an app preferably on their school iPads, or even on their phone, ask to leave the classroom, sign out using that app, and sign in using the app when they return to the classroom.

Either of these methods would be more efficient and would not involve interrupting class to write a pass.

While these methods are currently

not in use at Durant, Sgt. Meier said, “Everything is always in the works, in the planning stages, but currently at Durant using apps as passes is not.”

He also believes the purpose of passes are more about accountability.

If something were to happen, every student would be accounted for, he said.

However, Sgt. Meier said these types of apps can not track students or listen to conversations and are for tracking passes only.

Informal interviews with five students found that a majority would prefer electronic passes for reasons such as saving paper and not interrupting class.

Local dog boarding kennel creates employment opportunities for Durant students

By Ryan Brown

A local kennel has become a popular destination of employment for Durant students.

Green Acres Dog Boarding Kennel, which lies between Wilton and Durant, currently employs six current or former Durant students, including junior Addison Schuett,

who has been working at the kennel for nearly two years.

“Working at Green Acres has been an incredible experience that has taught me many things,” said Schuett.

“I love that I get to work with dogs and other animals every time I go to work.”

Another junior, Lauren Huston, began working at the kennel last summer. Huston said that she enjoys getting to work with all the pets, from dogs all the way to the donkeys they help take care of on the surrounding farm.

Schuett says that she also enjoys helping out around the farm.

“The farm side of things has especially been eye opening for me,” she said.

Originally opening in 2003, Green Acres’ current owner, Cheryl Kroeger, purchased the kennel in 2018 alongside her hus-

band, Mark.

“We have always loved animals, and I’m a caregiver by nature,” she said.

Mrs. Kroeger was an in-home daycare provider for 25 years while she and her husband raised their three daughters.

“I knew it was time for a new life chapter when we found the farm, and it had the boarding kennel on it,” she explained.

In their first two years, the Kroegers only offered boarding. Now they also offer daycare and grooming.

Even through the hardness of the pandemic, Mrs. Kroeger feels they were blessed.

“COVID actually helped our business boom. During the COVID shutdown, so many people got a new pet,” she explained.

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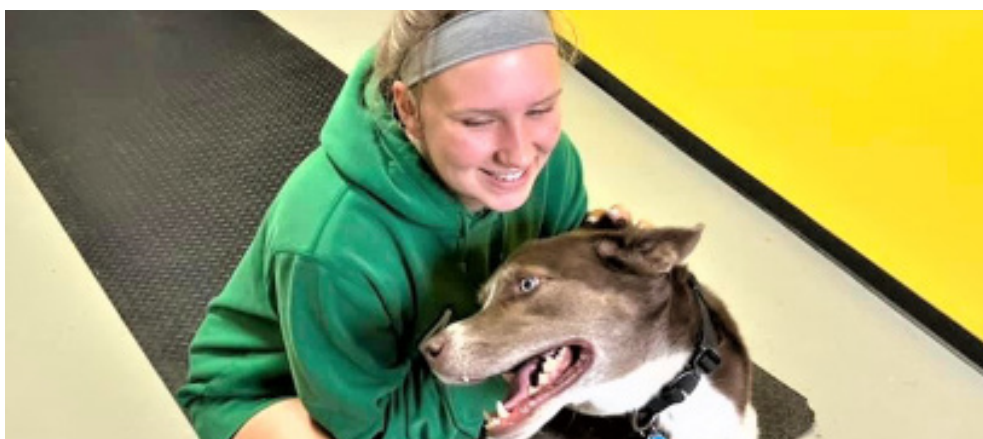


Photo contributed by Green Acres
Junior Addison Schuett works with dogs at Green Acres Dog Boarding Kennel.