

DHS adopts new anonymous reporting app

By Royce Richman

Durant’s new school resource officer (SRO) is implementing a new anonymous reporting app called Safe+Sound Iowa.

The app, sponsored by the Governor’s School Safety Bureau, is a source for anyone to report a threat or dangerous behavior from students, according to Officer Joshua Bujalski.

The app is available to download on the Google Play store and the App Store. All the students have to do once they have the app is click the “Submit an Anonymous Report Button” and select the school that the event or threat happened in.

They then select the type of incident and then type in the specific details of the event, such as the people involved and the story behind it.

According to Officer Bujalski, students or staff should report any bad situation that occurs at the school, such as a threat, fight, or assault.

“If you see something, say something,” he said.

Officer Bujalski said that he chose this app because it is run by the state of Iowa 24/7, so he can focus on his job as an SRO instead of just monitoring the app himself. School officials will be notified by the state if a report stems from the Durant school district.

“It’s good to have an application where students and people in general can be anonymous when reporting an incident,” said Officer Bujalski. “This gives them that option to voice their concerns without being judged.”

The app coincides with a new law HF 604 that Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds passed this May concerning school safety and violence. The law requires teachers to report an incident or threat of violence to the principal or lead administrator of the school within 24 hours.

Once notified by a student, teacher, or other reporting means, such as the new app, the administrator has to notify the parents or guardians of the student who caused the incident and the student who was the target of the incident, according to HF 604.

High school Principal Mr. Joel Diederichs said that these issues don’t happen often at Durant but are taken very seriously when they do happen.

“In my opinion, it [24-hour reporting period] was to give a standard for which

everyone across the state could abide by to create more of a consistent response.”

The law also requires “escalating levels of discipline each time the student makes a threat of violence or causes an incident of violence that results in injury or property damage or assault.”

According to an article by Axios.com, there were almost 64,000 total suspensions and expulsions in the state of Iowa in the 2021-2022 school year, the highest it’s been in six years.

According to the article, in the 2021-22 school year, Iowa schools reported 1,714 injuries, 1,138 incidents of property damage and 1,967 assaults. More than 80 percent of public schools nationwide have reported negative student behavior increasing due to the pandemic.

Discipline system updated

By Ava Streeter

This school year, Durant High School has updated its discipline system to create more consistency within the school.

Last year, students served detentions over the lunch hour, but this year, students must serve 30-minute detentions after school in the second-floor study hall room. Those detentions are monitored by rotating staff members.

High school Principal Mr. Joel Diederichs said the lunch detentions were inconvenient because lunch is only 25 minutes, and it could take a student ten to fifteen minutes to get their lunch and then report to their detention.

“I just didn’t feel it was as effective as it could be, and I wanted to be more consistent with that so that you guys know exactly when it is, where it is, and what the expectation is,” said Mr. Diederichs.

Durant has also updated its rules on tardiness. One handbook rule says if students are tardy unexcused to a class ten times, then they could be dropped without a credit from that class and be banned from school dances for that school year.

The handbook also mentions if students are tardy three times in a semester to any class, they will receive a 30-minute detention.

Mr. Diederichs said he didn’t think tardiness was a big problem last year, but

some students could benefit from the new system.

One student, a senior girl who has served a detention for being tardy, said the detention was boring and has impacted her behavior positively because she has not received another one since.

Mr. Diederichs said this new system “helps us with efficiency to get in the classroom to get going with it.”

The handbook also states that students who accumulate 10 excused absences in a semester may be required to submit a doctor’s note for each absence “beyond the 10th in order to deem the absence excused.”

This policy has to deal with chronic absenteeism, defined as a student who misses around ten percent of all total school days. According to state law, students ages 5-16 must attend school, and a violation of this code can lead to criminal charges and possible jail time for the parent of a student who has broken this rule.

Mr. Diederichs said that if a student misses more than ten times in a semester, that student might be facing other unseen issues and having a doctor’s note would cross that off.

Brooklyn Frantz, a sophomore, said she believes it’s unfair to require students to have a doctor’s note after 10 excused absences. A student can be absent for many

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Variety show Nov. 4-5

By Garrett Pearlman

Durant will feature a high school and junior high variety show next month. The high school show takes place on November 4 starting at 6:30 p.m., and the junior high show is the next day at 2 p.m.

Both shows are in the Durant High School auditorium and cost \$5 to attend. They both contain an intermission in the middle of the show as well.

The supervisor, Ms. Jeanine Link, sets up this annual show. She teaches both choir and drama at Durant High School. Although Ms. Link organizes the show, the students do most of the work. Mrs. Cassandra Sickels, the elementary art teacher, will also help with the show.

“The variety show is a collection of solos, duets, trios, small group songs as well as hilarious and creative skits written by the students,” said Ms. Link. “One student is also doing a stop motion animation.”

Throughout these unique and short acts, students are free to express themselves creatively.

“This allows students to sing songs that are meaningful to them and sing in some of their favorite styles,” said Ms. Link. “It also allows students to use their creativity in writing skits and coming up

with their own story lines.”

Ms. Link also believes the different acts help engage the audience.

“The audience gets to experience so many different songs, styles of music and stories through skits,” said Ms. Link.

The show includes around 80 students

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Photo by Nic Poston
Junior Carter Furne boxes with junior Wyatt Richards during their skit together in the variety show.

Local funeral home brings Durant family closer together

By Katelynn Toft

A funeral home is not the first place someone thinks about as a home for raising a family.

But Henry Bentley, former owner of the Bentley Funeral Home in Durant,

and his wife Beverly proved otherwise, according to their three grown children, Grace, Anna, and Will.

Mr. Bentley owned funeral homes in Durant and Wilton from 1993 until 2020 when he retired and sold the business to cur-

rent owners Tony Garcia and his wife Chrystal, who serves as the office manager. The Bentley family lived in the house attached to the Durant funeral home until 2011 while operating their home business.

All of the Bentley children lived in that house for a large portion of their lives.

The Bentley’s oldest, Grace (Bentley) Finnegan, grew up there from the time she was born until her senior year at Durant High School. Anna lived there until she was 16, and Will was 13 when the Bentleys moved into a house in the Golfview addition.

“Growing up in the funeral home was honestly relatively normal,” said Anna, now 27 years old and living in Cedar Falls.

“We learned pretty quick how to operate socially and be welcoming of others in our spaces,” said Will, now 25 and living in Grinnell.

Many people would be coming in and out of the funeral home on a daily basis,

and it could get very busy. Luckily Mr. and Mrs. Bentley had their kids to help them out.

“We had some different chores that involved helping take care of the funeral home by cleaning and helping with chairs,” recalled Anna.

“My siblings and I were often in charge of ‘playing’ with the children that were at the funeral home for visitations,” said Grace, now 29. “They would come back and play with our toys during the long hours of family visitations.”

If a service were held at the funeral home, the children knew where to go.

“It was common practice for me and my sisters to be resigned to the basement, so we wouldn’t make too much noise during the service,” said Will.

Since the funeral home was also a business, those social skills the Bentley kids developed would help them their entire lives.

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Photo contributed by Grace (Bentley) Finnegan

The Bentley family includes Will, Anna, Beverly, Henry, Grace, Grace’s child Marley, and Grace’s husband Austin.