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Greyhound breeders fear 'financial ruin'

Dubuque and Council Bluffs casinos look to end dog racing in Iowa, but area kennel owners say the industry could rebound.

BY BEN JACOBSON
TH staff writer • ben.jacobson@wcinet.com

BELLEVUE, Iowa — Thursday night was long and mostly sleepless for Melissa Schmidt.

The latest litter, this time from Sheila, was larger than usual, and the birthing process required Schmidt's constant vigilance. Sheila would push and Schmidt would pull, removing amniotic sacs from the Twinkie-sized newborns as they emerged.



Melissa Schmidt



Dan Schmidt

By Friday morning, nine greyhound pups surrounded an exhausted Sheila, each mewling for attention. According to Schmidt, they are in good paws.

"They're really, really good moms," she said. "I've never had one that didn't take care of their puppies. They always are very gentle and loving."

Schmidt, along with her husband, Dan, owns and operates a kennel on the family cattle farm. At any given time, about 120 greyhounds, including puppies and expectant mothers, are housed on

TH in her own words

Video of Melissa Schmidt discussing the potential impacts if greyhound racing stops and what can be done to bolster the industry, THonline.com

the property.

The Schmidts have spent eight years in the industry, raising and nurturing generations of successful racing dogs. But local forces recently have taken up arms against greyhound racing, leaving Schmidt doubtful of her business' long-term future.

"I think it would put us into financial ruin, especially with having six kids and all the money we have invested in our

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JESSICA REILLY • Telegraph Herald
Melissa Schmidt holds her greyhound Blazin Spitfire at her farm in Bellevue, Iowa. Schmidt is worried about her kennel business if Iowa casinos end dog racing.

people who make a difference



Food service workers Jeanne Stierman (left) and Tina Busch sing "Happy Birthday" to third-grader Seriah Bogovich while serving lunch Friday at Fulton Elementary School in Dubuque. Find out their favorite part of the job: THonline.com

On the menu at Fulton: Kindness

Lunch ladies serve more than food, and they receive cards and hugs from students in return.

BY STACEY BECKER
TH staff writer
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Lunch was stopped for a few moments as Jeanne Stierman and Tina Busch enthusiastically sang "Happy Birthday" to a third-grader.

It's tradition for the Fulton Elementary School food service workers to sing the ditty to students in the lunch line.

"Neither one of us can sing worth a hoot," Stierman said.

Tina Busch
Age: 52
Family: Husband, John; two children and three grandchildren
Hometown: Dubuque
Job: Food service worker in Dubuque Community School District
Hobbies: Gardening and other outdoor activities

"But they all love the 'woot woot' at the end," Busch added, with a smile.

The two women, who are much more than "lunch ladies" to their students, have served lunch together at Ful-

Jeanne Stierman
Age: 71
Family: Husband, Richard; four children, four stepchildren, 21 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren
Hometown: Dubuque
Job: Food service worker in Dubuque Community School District
Hobbies: Gambling

ton for seven years.

Third-grader Seriah Bogovich, who turned 9 on Feb. 17, when school wasn't held, said the song was slightly embarrassing but the ladies are really nice.

"They say kind words," she said. "They care about people."

Although they took different paths to the food service industry, both ladies said they thoroughly enjoy their current career. Busch wanted a job where she could have summers off with her children, and Stierman followed a former manager at Shot Tower Inn, where she

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Jeanne Stierman



Tina Busch

Consultants seek savings at Sunnycrest

Dubuque County supervisor says the use of an interim administrator is not increasing the consulting firm's bill.

BY ALICIA YAGER
TH staff writer • alicia.yager@wcinet.com

A consulting firm hired by Dubuque County is in the initial steps of examining the operations and expenses at Sunnycrest Manor.

Consultants from Health Dimensions Group have been at the county-owned, long-term care facility for about three weeks, getting acquainted with the staff and residents, according to Diane Peters, project manager for the consulting team.

"We're looking at each department for where the costs are, where they've been ... and looking for opportunities to decrease expenses," she said.

Among the first tasks was having HDG senior consultant Cathy Jenkins step in as interim administrator at Sunnycrest, following the resignation of administrator Cathy Hedley on Jan. 29. Jenkins declined to comment for this story, referring questions to Peters.

County Supervisor Daryl Klein said Jenkins was not hired as a county employee in her new role. He said having Jenkins serve as interim administrator only is a modification of HDG's contracted duties, and it's not increasing the county's costs.

"My understanding is that she was going to be there anyway working with Cathy Hedley, but when (Hedley) resigned, that changed (Jenkins') purview," Klein said.

Peters said Jenkins has been acquainting herself with the operations, staff and residents of the facility, and she also reached out to the families of residents to answer questions about HDG's work and what that will mean for the residents.

As part of HDG's contract with Dubuque County, the consulting group will compile data on operations and expenses for Sunnycrest in order to

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Diane Peters



Cathy Jenkins



Daryl Klein

today's TH



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