



First Friday News & Views

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*The Monthly Newsletter
of the First Friday
Breakfast Club, Inc.*

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Calendar

▼ No July Meeting

▼ FFBC Picnic on July 19.
At the home of Michael
Thompson and Allen
VaanderLinden from 7 -10 p.m.

7500 Benton Drive in Urbandale
(north from Hickman at the ice
rink, left—west—on Benton
Drive)

Teacher Prep: The Key to Quality Education

By Jonathan Wilson

The Director of the Iowa Department of Education, Brad Buck, recently spoke to the First Friday Breakfast Club. He talked about recent public education reform efforts in Iowa. Among other things, he said that a rigorous core curriculum is key, and so is the quality of our classroom teachers. I couldn't agree more.

The reformer response, he said, was two-fold: developing that rigorous core curriculum, coupled with extensions and remediation for students performing above and below that standard; and improving the existing teacher corps using more pay for role model teachers. So far, so good. But it doesn't go far enough soon enough in the process.

Teachers come from teacher preparation institutions like Iowa State University, The University of Iowa, The University of Northern Iowa, and Drake University. It will surprise some to learn that not one of those has a teacher preparation program that is nationally accredited. Not one. All four dropped their national accreditation in the early 90s, so it's been twenty years that those schools have turned out teachers, however well-intentioned and dedicated, who have not been held to the highest known standards for teacher preparation. Research has shown that teachers are the single most important *in school* influence on student achievement. All four universities should be ashamed, and taxpayers who help fund them and pay for the public schools where their graduates teach, should be mad as hell.

Accreditation is a non-governmental activity based on peer review that serves the dual functions of assuring quality and motivating improvement. The accreditation process provides a ready means of bringing evidence to bear on the task of meeting the unique demands, challenges, and opportunities that make up the ever-changing educational landscape. There was a day when a quality education might include buggy whip making. Now, to keep up in a global economy dominated by advances in technology, science, and cross-border communications, a quality education is continually being redefined.

The Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) is the sole specialized *national* accreditor of teacher preparation institutions. Coincidentally, CAEP recently adopted new accreditation standards that raise the bar for educator preparation even more. These new standards are designed for *all* preparation providers, and emphasize the three areas of teacher preparation identified by the National Research Council as most likely to have the strongest effects on raising student achievement – content knowledge, clinical experience, and the quality of teacher candidates. The standards also address quality assurance, continuous improvement, transparency, and public accountability.

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We take our children and grandchildren to see doctors, dentists, and other professionals who are graduated from accredited schools. We take them to eat at restaurants that are inspected and feed them food that passes muster under FDA regulations. We drive them on roads and bridges designed by architects and engineers with accredited professional training. And yet, when we drop them off at taxpayer-supported public schools, we give the professionals there a “pass.” We shouldn’t have tolerated that for these last twenty years and shouldn’t tolerate it now. Our teaching professionals should be held to the highest known standards.

Dr. Buck was right, as far as he went. Our kids/grandkids deserve a quality education that comes from a rigorous P-12 core curriculum. If he’s right about that, it’s also true that the highest quality teachers will come from preparation institutions that likewise adopt those highest known standards. Today, that is accreditation by CAEP.

The Iowa Board of Education could weigh in on this by partnering with CAEP for teacher preparation accreditation in Iowa. The Iowa Board of Regents could weigh in on this while it is re-examining funding formulas for UNI, ISU, and U of Iowa. Those that pursue CAEP accreditation should get more tax dollars. And local school boards could weigh in on this by giving teacher hiring preference to graduates from CAEP accredited institutions. All three stakeholders could act simultaneously, but also independently. If UNI, ISU, and U of Iowa were to seek that accreditation, Drake University will almost certainly follow. Any one of the stakeholders could make it happen. The tail really can wag the dog sometimes.

We should follow CAEP’s lead and use accreditation to leverage further advancement in the field of education, ensuring that our P-12 students --our children and grandchildren --are best prepared to compete in today’s global economy. There are many pathways for entering the teaching profession, but Iowans should demand the mark of distinction and evidence of quality preparation that accreditation under CAEP standards will afford.

Dr. Buck said he wanted to make a good work force better. That’s fine, but I say we should also do what can be done to make the work force better *before* it becomes our work force.

Notre Dame Cathedral to the Space Shuttle to Terrace Hill and the U. S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., all in matchsticks, toothpicks, and glue! His creations are on display in Ripley’s Believe It or Not museums in the United States and around the world. The Gladbrook museum features many of his creations along with a video presentation explaining his unique artistry and the thousands of hours he puts into creating these wooden gems. So those two venues are why I hope a tornado never strikes in those towns. I can just picture scores of salt and pepper shakers strewn amid the corn and soybean fields of Marshall and Tama Counties peppered (no pun intended) with bits of a miniature Terrace Hill or sprinkled with a Space Shuttle wing among them.

By the way, a business opportunity in Traer awaits anyone who might be so inclined. The Sunnyside Café and Bar is for sale, brown carpeted walls included in the asking price!

Briefs & Shorts

There will be no July meeting. Instead, make plans to enjoy the FFBC picnic at the home of Michael Thompson and Allen Vander Linden on July 19 from 7:00-10:00 p.m. They are at 7500 Benton Drive in Urbandale (north from Hickman at the ice rink, left —west—on Benton Drive).

Thanks to Ryan Crane for his introduction of Michael Gartner at the June meeting and also to Ryan Crane and Mike Smith who introduced our FFBC scholarship winners.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Barry McGriff for coordinating the book exchange.



Consider a tax deductible donation to the FFBC Scholarship fund.

A Few Thoughts About PrideFest 2.0
By John Schmacker (co-founder of FFBC)

It doesn't seem like many years ago that a Pride Week rally in Des Moines was a matter of 20-25 people gathered at Nollen Plaza. It wasn't that long ago, for those of us who were around, but for the hundreds of twenty-somethings who crowded PrideFest 2.0, it was a lifetime ago. Back then, the school teachers wore Groucho masks or clown face, certain to lose their jobs if their identities became known. Anybody with a decent job stayed safely at home. Showing up required courage.

We may have had a musician or two, and a few political speeches. We'd release some balloons, maybe sing a song, and then everyone went home. Considering that each year's pride rally was a little bit bigger than the last time, we felt good about it. We knew then that our cause was right, that the closet was evil, and that we deserved better treatment. We hoped that something would come of this, and that our pride would grow.

And grow it did. PrideFest 2.0 drew somewhere around 15,000 people to the Grand Avenue Bridge. Bigger than the Italian-American Festival, bigger than the Asian Festival, much bigger than a Branstad rally.

Our pride grew as so many of our churches figured out they had been on the wrong side not only of history, but of Christ-like theology, which is not always the same as Christian theology. Without actually counting, it seemed to me that the majority of units marching in our parade were church groups. Condemnation has been replaced with inclusion, and we did that by insisting on it.

Our pride grew as so many of our employers finally figured out that they would benefit from employing us, instead of dismissing us as pariahs. The next largest contingent marching with us were employee groups, big insurance companies, and banks. The brains and talents of LGBT employees have transformed much of America's workplace into

places where it is safe to be honest. Nobody handed that to us. We made that change by being visible, patient, and demanding.

The Des Moines Police Department provided security and assistance and, from all accounts, treated the crowd with courtesy and respect. This is the same DMPD that, not many years ago, was bashing our heads. We made that change through education and patience.

Our pride grew as our governments -- state and federal -- came to understand that our constitutions mean what they say about equal justice, and that Jefferson's right to the "pursuit of happiness" was as much ours as anybody's. Those rights were always there for us, but we had to claim them over the objections of many.

We have so little left to complain about politically. We have won the war over marriage equality here in Iowa. Our state and many of our cities protect our civil rights. We won the campaigns to dismantle DOMA and Don't Ask, Don't Tell. None of this came easily.

But we cannot relax just yet. The pathetic few sign-carrying homophobes present at PrideFest were less threatening than what we remember from many years ago. But they remind us that the hatred is still there. The right-wing nuts, always only one election away from taking over our government, remind us that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

A few days after Pridefest, I drove across the Grand Avenue Bridge, which was back to normal. It was as if nothing had happened. But something did happen and is still happening. For the weekend, Pride was seen on the streets in 3-D, Surround-Sound Technicolor replete with glitter and beads. Now, and every day, we must show pride with our smiles; our lives; and how we treat our brothers and sisters and even those who hate us. We can say that we, along with our enlisted allies, have created this world in which we are now free to move about. This is something for which we can all be thankful and, yes, proud.

Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.

To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.

I didn't say it was your fault. I said I was blaming you.

You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.





A COMMITMENT TO GOOD IOWA GOVERNMENT

Here in Iowa, we have one of the best state governments in the country. Republican and Democratic legislators are always looking for ways to ensure government runs efficiently and offers good service to Iowans.

Those efforts have made Iowa one of the top three best run states, according to [24/7 Wall Street](#). Our high ranking is a result of our strong agricultural economy, low unemployment, perfect credit rating and strong budget.

Each year, we balance the state budget without raising taxes and set aside money for a rainy day. Iowa is expected to have a budget surplus of about \$881 million when this fiscal year ends on June 30. We also have \$650 million in our rainy day funds, the largest amount in state history.

Not only do we budget responsibly, it is easy for Iowans to see how their tax dollars are spent. Iowa was one of only eight states to receive an “A” grade from the U.S. Public Interest Research Group in their [2014 Follow the Money](#) report, which grades states on spending transparency.

Iowa's easy-to-use State Transparency Website allows citizens, experts and watchdog groups to find information on a variety of expenditures. The site at <http://data.iowa.gov> offers datasets, charts, tables, maps and other resources on Iowa's financial, tax and performance data. It even provides information on money recouped by the state when recipients fail to deliver the agreed-upon results, an accountability practice that sets us apart from most other states.

If legislators do discover problems in state government, we address them. For example, when we learned that taxpayer money had been paid to former state employees in secret settlements, the Senate's Government Oversight Committee immediately began looking into the matter and continues to work this summer to find out what happened and how to prevent the problem in the future.

As your state senator, I'm here to listen, learn and work with you to make Iowa the best it can be. Please call or e-mail me if you have ideas for how state government can better serve Iowans.

Additional information

This is a legislative update from Senator Matt McCoy, representing west part of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and Cumming in northwest Warren County. For newsletters, photos and further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy.

To contact Senator McCoy during the week, call the Senate Switchboard at 515-281-3371. Otherwise he can be reached at home at 515-274-0561. E-mail him at matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov.

Senator McCoy is an Assistant Senate Majority Leader, chair of the Commerce Committee and chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget Subcommittee. He also serves on the Appropriations, State Government, Transportation and Ways & Means committees.



Michael Gartner hits the Podium for FFBC's Annual Recognition of the FFBC Scholarship Winners by Bruce Carr

The First Friday Breakfast Club guest speaker on Friday morning June 6, 2014, was Des Moines writer and businessman Michael Gartner, owner of the Iowa Cubs baseball team and author of the "Civic Skinny" column in **City View**. The breakfast was highlighted by the presence of our nine 2014 FFBC college scholarship winners, along with their friends and families, and Gartner addressed his remarks specifically to them as a preface to the presentation of their awards.

Urging them (and us) to pay attention to Iowa's truly honorable history of promoting civil rights for all its citizens, Gartner began by citing the state's motto, adopted by the First General Assembly on February 25, 1847, and prominent ever since -- for all its length -- on the state's flag and its Great Seal: "Our Liberties We Prize, and Our Rights

We Will Maintain."

He then outlined a quick list of landmark events, beginning with the very first decision of the Iowa Territorial Supreme Court: the case, called "In the Matter of Ralph (a colored man)," made history when, on Independence Day 1839, Ralph was declared by the Court to be a free man. "No man in this territory can be reduced to slavery," said the Court.

-- In 1851 the 1839 Territorial law banning interracial marriage was eliminated, making Iowa the third state to reject "anti-miscegenation" laws -- 116 years before the U.S Supreme Court's *Loving v. Virginia* decision.

-- In 1855 the University of Iowa opened, admitting both men and women on an equal basis.

-- In 1868 the Iowa Supreme Court, in *Clark v. The Board of Directors*, effectively integrated Iowa's schools 96 years before the federal court's *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision.

-- In 1869 the Iowa Supreme Court ruled that women may not be denied the right to practice law in Iowa and admitted Arabella A. Mansfield to the bar, making her the first woman in the United States to be granted a law license.

-- In 1873 the Court held, in *Coger v. Northwestern Union Packet Co.*, that Emma Coger, a mixed-race woman who had been forcibly removed from a steamboat dining cabin reserved for whites, was entitled to the same rights and privileges as white passengers. The Court proclaimed that "The principle of equality is announced and secured by the very first words of our state constitution which relate to the rights of the people, in language most comprehensive, and incapable of misconstruction, namely: 'All men are, by nature, free and equal.'"

-- In 1969 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Tinker v. Des Moines* (argued by FFBC member Dan Johnston), that high school students do have First Amendment rights to freedom of speech.

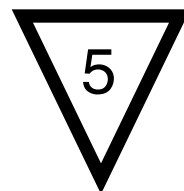
-- In 2012 Polk County district judge Eliza Ovrom ordered the Department of Public Health to issue a birth certificate listing both Melissa Gartner (Michael Gartner's daughter) and her wife Heather Gartner as the legal parents of their young daughter. "Pursuant to *Varnum v. Brien*, where a married woman gives birth to a baby conceived through use of an anonymous sperm donor, the Department of Public Health should place her same-sex spouse's name on the child's birth certificate without requiring the spouse to go through an adoption proceeding," wrote Judge Ovrom.

Finally, Gartner urged everyone to read and re-read Iowa Supreme Court Justice Mark Cady's eloquent opinion in *Varnum v. Brien*, especially the paragraphs regarding the separation of church and state: "State government can have no religious views expressed in its laws."

Q&A after Gartner's talk produced no questions but two answers nevertheless: "1) Tonight's Cubs game vs. Colorado Springs begins at 7:05, and 2) Tickets are still available."

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Michael Gartner, former editor and co-owner of **The Daily Tribune** in Ames, has had a long and distinguished career in journalism, starting when he began answering phones in the sports department of **The Des Moines Register** at age 15. Over the years, he has been Page One Editor of **The Wall Street Journal**; editor and president of **The Des Moines Register**; general news executive of Gannett Co. and **USA Today**; editor of the **Courier-Journal** of Louisville; and president of NBC News. A lawyer as well as a newspaperman, Gartner is a graduate of the Law School of New York University and a member of the bar in New York and Iowa. He writes frequently on First Amendment issues. His editorials in Ames have won many awards -- including a Pulitzer Prize, the ASNE editorial-writing award, and the Inland Press Association award for best editorials. Gartner is a third-generation Iowa newspaperman; his wife, the former Barbara McCoy, was an editor at **The Wall Street Journal** when they met.



FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views*

Des Moines, Iowa

July 2014

*First Friday
Breakfast Club*

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MADE ON A  MAC

MY M.O. (MONTHLY OBSERVATIONS)

by Steve Person

Marvelous Museums for Miniature Minds

I would never wish a tornado on anybody—well, almost anybody (political candidates who champion animal mutilation and child abusers would be exceptions)—but I fervently hope a twister never lands at Traer, Iowa, or its neighboring town of Gladbrook.

On May 14, fellow FFBC member Paul Sadler and I set out on a long-awaited day trip that we had planned since last autumn—a visit to the Traer Salt and Pepper Shaker Gallery and Matchstick Marvels just ten miles away in Gladbrook.

Upon our arrival in the placid town of Traer, we discovered we were too early to visit the gallery (it didn't open until 1 p.m.), so we decided to have lunch at the local eating establishment, one Sunnyside Café and Bar on the main drag in Traer. It was a true small town establishment with friendly staff, colorful local patrons, and carpeting on the walls. Yes, I said carpeting on the walls—brown carpeting—although it may have been a lighter color when first tacked up there heaven-knows-when.

We finished lunch in time to be the very first patrons to the Salt and Pepper Shaker Gallery on that day. Once inside we were greeted by an enthusiastic town resident who reveled in showing us the amazing collection of salt and pepper shakers begun in 1946 by one Ruth Rasmussen of Traer. According to the brochure, the museum “has the largest collection of salt and pepper shakers in the United States west of the Mississippi River and the second largest in the world!” Alas, the largest museum of such condiment finery is located in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, but at least the Traer museum holds the distinction of being featured on the **CBS Evening News with Katie Couric** and Steve Hartman's “Assignment America.” The gallery contains over 16,000 salt and pepper shakers and keeps on growing. It even has an Adults Only section, kept behind a door, with shakers that mostly feature boobs in various cradles. The collection is expertly displayed by categories of types and/or makers of the shakers. If nothing else, it is a tribute to expert organizational skills.

While in Traer, we went to the Wilson Nature Preserve (presumably of no relation to our breakfast club president) to witness the two-acres of reconstructed prairie—a kind of let-down after seeing 16,000 salt and pepper shakers.

On to Gladbrook, the home of Matchstick Marvels—and marvels they are! Artist Patrick Acton fashions incredible models of everything from the **USS Iowa** to *Continued on p. 2*