

By TOM ALEX  
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High-visibility traffic enforcement crackdowns likely are giving Iowa motorists the impression that officers are writing more traffic citations.

In fact, the opposite is happening.

Statewide, traffic convictions dropped 9 percent between

2005 and 2008. (No uniform system exists in Iowa for keeping track of the number of traffic citations issued each year. The state tracks the number of convictions that result from the citations; cities track citations issued.)

Reasons for the decline vary among law enforcement agencies. Some municipal police de-

partments have disbanded their traffic units because of budget constraints. Others have shifted their focus to high-priority calls. Others have lost officers to attrition or deployment overseas.

In Waterloo, traffic citations dropped to 6,781 in 2008 from 12,593 in 2005, said Capt. John Beckman of the Waterloo Police

TICKETS, PAGE 6A

## Traffic ticket counts in recent years

### Iowa traffic violation convictions

2005	351,390
2006	331,228
2007	329,588
2008	318,908

Source: Criminal & Juvenile Justice Planning

### Traffic tickets issued by Des Moines police

FY 2005-06	40,625
FY 2006-07	32,548
FY 2007-08	30,678
FY 2008-09	26,050

Source: Des Moines police

### Traffic tickets issued by Waterloo police

2005	12,593
2006	11,651
2007	9,816
2008	6,781

Source: Waterloo police department



MARC HANSEN  
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## Age bias should be bipartisan concern, Iowan says

Jack Gross returned from Washington, D.C., on Thursday. It was a great little trip.

His wife, Marlene, and the grandkids, Lucy, 5, and Zoey, 3, came along.

Everyone had a great time. It wasn't a vacation, though. Gross, 61, an insurance man from Des Moines, testified before Congress.

Growing up in Chariton and Mount Ayr, raising sheep and horses, working on his grandfather's farm in the summertime, he never figured he'd be the main player in a landmark age-discrimination case. But there he was, front and center, appearing at news conferences and telling Tom Harkin, Patrick Leahy, Al Franken and the other members of the Senate Judiciary Committee his life story.

It's been a strange, disappointing, sometimes exhilarating, often deathly dull seven years since Gross was reassigned at FBL Financial in West Des Moines, or Farm Bureau to you and me.

"Reassigned" isn't his word. His word is "demoted."

Until then, Gross had been the definition of an overachiever. Despite illness and injury along the way, he became class president and editor of the school newspaper at Southwestern Community College in Creston. Then, with a young family to feed, he moved on to Drake University, paying his way through school, and landed a job as a claims adjuster at Farm Bureau.

He left the company for a while before coming back and working his way up to claims administration vice president. He was getting regular raises and great job reviews. He was highly valued.

Then one day in 2003, Gross said he and just about every other 50-or-older supervisor or higher-level worker in the claims department — and nobody younger than 50 — was demoted. It was a kick in the gut.

"For years, I couldn't have been more loyal," he said. "I was always proud to say I worked for the Farm Bureau."

He had no idea he'd become the invisible man. "I went from

HANSEN, PAGE 6A



"Fight, fight, fight against hunger," World Food Prize Foundation President Kenneth Quinn tells hikers. He was quoting crop scientist and World Food Prize founder Norman Borlaug.

## Hundreds hike to help others in need of food

Participation down for D.M.-area fundraiser, but organizers still hope to top '08 results



MARY CHIND/REGISTER PHOTOS

Participants in the Des Moines Area Hunger Hike set out Sunday from the west-side steps of the Iowa State Capitol. In the last 20 years, the event has raised more than \$824,000 for nonprofit groups engaged in battling hunger. This year's goal is \$50,000.

By MALLORY GEORGE  
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The 40th annual Des Moines Area Hunger Hike drew one of its lowest numbers of participants in a year when a poor economy has caused more people to go hungry.

About 400 people, mostly from area church congregations, took part in Sunday's hike. The hike has had as many as 3,000 participants and as few as 400, said Lucille Wilson of Des Moines, who is the treasurer for the hunger hike board.

Wilson attributed the low turnout to chilly weather, late publicity efforts and a growing number of competing events.

### How to donate

To donate to the Des Moines Area Hunger Hike, call Lucille Wilson at (515) 279-1106 or mail donations to Des Moines Area Hunger Hike, P.O. Box 489, Des Moines, IA 50302.

The five-mile hike took participants from the Iowa State Capitol to Union Park and back to the State Historical Building near the Capitol.

The hike is designed to increase awareness about hunger and raise money to benefit nonprofit agencies that distribute food. Or-

ganizers hoped this year to top the amount raised last year, but they won't know the total until early December because nearly two-thirds of the money comes in after the event.

This year's goal is \$50,000. Almost 500 people participated last year and raised \$41,140.

"This year has seen an increase in the number of people coming for help," Wilson said. "There's more need, more people out of jobs."

Wilson said nonprofit agencies apply for money raised from the hunger hike in De-

HIKE, PAGE 6A

## Older adult population growing in Johnson County, data show

By B.A. MORELLI  
lowa City Press-Citizen

Iowa City, Ia. — Johnson County, home of Iowa's largest university, is getting grayer.

According to the Iowa Data Center, Johnson County's older adult population has grown in numbers in recent years, a trend that is expected to continue.

According to the center:

- The number of people in Johnson County who are 50 or older

grew by nearly 10,000 between 2000 and 2009. In 2000 the population was 22,338, and in 2009 it was 31,693.

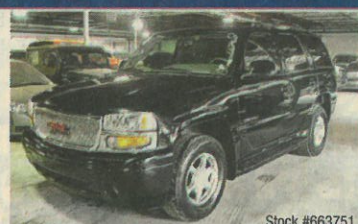
- The median age in Johnson County has increased to 31.0, from 28.4.

- By 2015, the center projects, the county will have 38,444 people age 50 or older, accounting for 27 percent of its population.

Iowa as a whole also is graying.

AGING, PAGE 6A

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been accused of breaking a 76-year-old woman's arm as he tried to rob her at a casino.

David Jacob Mathias, 21, is charged with second-degree robbery in the Oct. 1 attack at the Catfish Bend Casino. He was arrested Thursday.

Mathias tried to take the woman's purse, and when she wouldn't let go he knocked her to the ground, authorities said.

She suffered a broken arm, dislocated shoulder and broken ribs.

## Murder trial delayed over ailing attorney

The trial of a Burlington man accused of killing his ex-wife and setting her house on fire last winter has been delayed because his defense attorney is ill.

Dennis Richards, 59, is charged with second-degree murder and second-degree arson in the death of Cyd Richards on Jan. 4.

A judge rescheduled the trial, which had been set for Tuesday, to Oct. 20.

The move allows preparation time in case a substitute attorney is needed.

## ■ CEDAR RAPIDS

## Man on MySpace gets 1 year for gun charge

A Cedar Rapids man who pleaded guilty to a federal gun charge after being spotted on MySpace holding a rifle and a handgun has been sentenced to a year in prison.

Gamaliel Figueroa was on probation for drug charges when his probation officer found photographs of him with the guns on the social networking Web site in 2007.

Officers searched his home and found a semiautomatic rifle loaded with 23 rounds.

He was sentenced Thursday in U.S. District Court in Cedar Rapids.

s pages Saturday about the Belin rrectly reported the age of Mark the law firm. He is 76.

## Worth

ments at DesMoinesRegister.com/ e comments online.

because Barack Obama is a thousand times better than Bush-Cheney does not mean he deserves the Nobel Peace Prize. The committee should not confuse relief with hope.

— West side independent

Tom Miller hasn't been "new blood" since 1974!

— Ankeny man

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The Des Moines Police Department has a traffic unit with about 20 officers — including four officers from the neighborhood unit — and supervisors.

Still, the number of traffic citations issued by Des Moines police dropped to 26,050 in the fiscal year that ended June 30 from 40,625 in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2006.

"I don't know what it is,"

## HANSEN

FROM PAGE 5A

having a great job to, literally, not doing much of anything."

This year, he's been doing mostly clerical work, "taking numbers from one report and posting them onto another."

I know, at least it's a job. It beats the unemployment line, but still. If it weren't for the granddaughters and the rest of his family, Gross isn't sure what he'd have done.

"They don't know it," he said, watching Zoey doze on her grandmother's lap during an interview, "but they've been my little therapists."

First, Gross wanted his old job back. Now, he wants to make sure this doesn't happen to anyone else. Five years ago, he filed an age-discrimination lawsuit.

Winning such a case, proving a state of mind, is difficult. The success rate is about 3 percent. If you can't produce a memo or some other smoking gun, you're out of luck.

Still, a court ruled in his favor, awarding him just less than \$47,000. An appellate court reversed the decision, and last June the Supreme Court agreed: Age has to be more than a motivating factor. It has

## AGING

FROM PAGE 5A

Statewide, about 22 percent of Iowa's population will be over 64 by 2030, according to the Iowa Fiscal Partnership, which provides information and analysis on tax and budget policies in the state.

But it appears the number of people who are retiring and staying in the Iowa City area and the number coming to the area to retire are increasing, said Brian Kaskie, a University of Iowa associate professor in the College of Public Health and director of public policy for the University of Iowa's Center on Aging.

The area has a number of features desired by older adults — access to health care, affordability and activities like cultural events and volunteer opportunities, Kaskie said.

Bob Welsh, 83, of Iowa City, a longtime advocate for older adults, said: "I think Iowa City and Johnson County as a whole is a very desirable place for people to retire."

Groups like Johnson County Livable Community for Successful Aging Initiative, which formed in 2007 and with which Kaskie works, are now trying to cultivate the niche.

Some of the efforts garnered Iowa City the

speeds in potentially dangerous places, saving lives and lessening the seriousness of injuries.

Warnings are also popular. On Sept. 19-20 on Hickman Road in Des Moines' western suburbs, 55 law enforcement officers stopped 175 vehicles, issuing 39 citations. They issued 168 warnings.

On July 17 another massive team of local officers

to be the deciding factor, which is harder to prove.

The vote was 5-4 with the conservatives lined up against Gross, the liberals lined up for him, and Anthony Kennedy living up to his swing-voter reputation.

"I feel the case was hijacked for ideological purposes," Gross said.

Funny he should say that. His great-uncle was legendary fiscal conservative H.R. Gross, who served Iowa for 26 years in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Following in the family tradition, Jack Gross is an old-line Republican, a free-enterprise capitalist who believes business owners should have the latitude to manage their companies as they see fit.

As a bedrock conservative, Gross was never one of Tom Harkin's biggest fans. But that was before Harkin responded to Gross' travails by introducing the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act.

Suddenly, they were on the same team. Rep. George Miller, a Democrat from California, will be introducing a similar measure in the House.

Gross acknowledges some political incongruity here, but he says age bias should be a Republican fight, too, and quotes Joy

Environmental Protection Agency "Excellence in Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging" award in 2008.

Recommendations to make the area more accommodating for older adults include launching core services and transportation services, Kaskie said. While the area scores well in affordability, many from rural parts of Iowa don't see it that way because housing prices are higher in Iowa City than elsewhere in Iowa, Kaskie said.

The livable community initiative has been lobbying homebuilders to build houses that accommodate older residents' needs and to build houses priced for an average older person's budget, he said.

That's been happening in "bits and pieces," Kaskie said.

Carol Thompson, 67, was part of a group that bought 26 lots in a new Coralville neighborhood with the goal of developing "universal design" homes, but it has taken some effort to get builders to be conscious of older people's needs, she said.

Thompson designed a house for her and her husband, Ernie Nicholas, 78, in that neighborhood and moved into it in June. Thompson moved to Iowa City in 1960, and for a va-

2009.

Fine amounts are not static, of course. On July 1, 2005, fines for speeding increased for all violations in speed zones greater than 55 mph. At 5 to 10 mph over it went from \$20 to \$40; 10 to 15 mph over the limit from \$40 to \$60; 15 to 20 mph over from \$60 to \$80.

Citations issued by Iowa State Patrol have increased.

Corning, the former Iowa lieutenant governor, who says the party of Abraham Lincoln should be against discrimination in all its forms.

At the moment, though, the party of Franklin D. Roosevelt seems to be leading the way. In a news conference, Harkin said his bill would treat age discrimination the same as discrimination based on sex, race, religion or national origin.

"I gained a lot of respect for Senator Harkin," Gross said. "I was impressed with both of our senators and the entire Iowa delegation."

Charles Grassley, a big tort reform proponent, said he hadn't read the bill yet but seemed open to the possibility and gave Gross the royal treatment.

Grassley was knee deep in health care during Gross' Washington trip, but he knew an Iowan was testifying, so he stopped by, drawing a bead on Gross and introducing him to the members of the Judiciary Committee.

Though Gross is looking at Harkin differently these days, he smiled when I asked whether Harkin had won his vote.

"I'm certainly impressed with what he's done so far," Gross said. "I don't know who I'll be voting for, but I'm thinking about attending his steak fry."

riety of reasons knew she wanted to grow old here. But she realized her previous home was not suitable for an older person, and she could not find many options on the market. After looking around for years, she decided to design her own home, with all the primary functions on the main floor, lower counters, outlets on the face of cabinets, large door handles, a no-step entrance and an upstairs suite a caregiver could live in someday.

"As you get old, your house becomes your enemy," Thompson said. "I designed this house to be accessible for me and my husband, and it doesn't look like a nursing home or institution."

Kay Brown, 70, a neighbor of Thompson's, faced some of the same considerations when realizing she had to move a few years ago. She weighed moving elsewhere, but ultimately decided Iowa City was the right place for her.

"There are too many things here that I would miss," Brown said. "I go to Chicago over the years, and people in Chicago don't do these things. It's an hour drive. Every thing is too far. It's expensive. Iowa City is an easy place to live. Whenever I am in a bigger city, I think about how much effort it takes."

borhood Sgt. Vince Valdez said a traffic officer and a detective now are assigned to attend neighborhood meetings.

"Traffic situations are now among the most talked about topics," at meetings, he said. "Speeding, running stop signs, loud motorcycles, school speed zones. Those are important concerns. It's then up to us to formulate a plan."

## HIKE

FROM PAGE 5A

cember, which is when the money is distributed.

About half the money raised will be distributed locally, and the other half will go to international organizations. Last year, money was divided among 25 organizations, including Bread for the World, Seed Programs Inc., Meals on Wheels, and Children and Family Urban Ministries.

"We are all concerned about hunger in our world and the people who don't have what we have," said hunger hike board member Jerry Sawyer of Ankeny.

In the last 20 years, the hike has provided more than \$824,000 to nonprofits.

Catherine Gillespie of Maxwell bundled up to participate in the hike with a group from Des Moines' St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

"We need to give back and share the wealth," Gillespie said. "Although there aren't hungry people in Des Moines like there are in the Third World, there are still people who don't know where they'll find their next meal."

Tim Goldman of West Des Moines participated in the hike to draw attention to the need to reform foreign assistance delivery. He invited others to go to Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Des Moines after the hike to prepare letters for their congressmen asking them to support bills that could make the foreign assistance program more efficient.

"We need to get support to people faster with fewer administrative costs," Goldman said.

Before the hikers of all ages started their walk, they heard from Kenneth Quinn, president of the World Food Prize Foundation, and former Iowa Gov. Robert D. Ray.

Quinn recognized the late World Food Prize founder, Norman Borlaug, a native Iowan and Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

"This is a day to have mixed emotions," Quinn said. "I have a heavy heart because the greatest hunger fighter, Norman Borlaug, is dead."

But Quinn said he was confident that Borlaug's work would continue through events like the hunger hike. Borlaug "may be gone," he said, "but his spirit is not."

Ray congratulated the hikers for making a difference.

"Iowans can be very proud of what they've done in helping humanity," he said.

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