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# The Gazette

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER IN IOWA'S TECHNOLOGY CORRIDOR

## WAR IN IRAQ

# Death reverberates in hometown

Guttenberg soldier mortally wounded in rocket attack

By Adam Belz  
The Gazette

**GUTTENBERG** — U.S. Army Reserve Cpl. Stephen Shannon, who died Wednesday in Balad, Iraq, sounded positive on the telephone when his parents last spoke with him a little more than a week ago.

"He sounded good. He



**Cpl. Stephen Shannon**  
Died Wednesday

sounded like he'd found purpose," Joan Shannon, his mother, said at a news conference Friday.

Shannon, 21, of Guttenberg, died from injuries he suffered when a rocket hit his vehicle during fighting Tuesday in Ramadi, Iraq, according to the Department of De-



**GUTTENBERG**

fense. "We believe it was a rocket-propelled grenade," Shannon's father, Dan Shannon, said at the news conference. He said his son was driving and the rocket slammed into the driver's side of the vehicle, one designed to sustain improvised explosions under the

► **DEATH, PAGE 3A**



Dave Kettering/Dubuque Telegraph Herald

Joan Shannon (right) holds her youngest son, Jack, 8, as she sits with her children Kathleen, 19, and Patrick, 14, during a news conference at their Guttenberg home Friday. Joan Shannon's oldest son, Cpl. Stephen Shannon, died in Iraq on Wednesday.

### On the Net

■ Read the Shannon family's statement at [www.GazetteOnline.com](http://www.GazetteOnline.com)

### Inside

■ Army helicopter shot down in Iraq, **3A**  
■ Bush's plan to keep troops in Iraq would cost about \$800 for every American, **3A**

## EDUCATION

# Tech savvy

What would schools do with tax money?

By Kristina Gleeson  
The Gazette

The world around today's students is highly technical, and Corridor educators say schools are falling behind in preparing students for that world.

In fact, educators say, the technology many students have in their homes tends to be faster and more sophisticated than the technology in their schools.

"Many (students) come from their homes and kind of check their technology at the door" of the school, said Dave Markward, Cedar Rapids school superintendent.

Most Linn and Johnson county school districts would use some local-option sales tax money to update

► **TECH, PAGE 8A**



Cliff Jette/The Gazette

Teacher Nanette Waddilove helps Rey'ez Bell draft a letter to a pen pal as a fourth-grade class works on laptop computers at Wright Elementary School in Cedar Rapids. Instead of having a traditional computer lab, Wright Elementary brings the laptops to the classrooms, allowing students to work at their desks. Each classroom has a digital projector, allowing teachers and students to display PowerPoint presentations or other work to the entire class. The Cedar Rapids Community School District has 5,885 computers, half of which are 5 years old or older.

**INSIDE:** How seven districts would spend money on technology, **8A**

**COMING SUNDAY:** Arguments for and against sales tax, **1A**

## TELEVISION

# Just in time

Agreement with Sinclair puts KGAN-TV back on Mediacom 2 days before the Super Bowl

By George C. Ford  
The Gazette

With Super Bowl Sunday looming, Mediacom Communications Corp. and Sinclair Broadcasting Group Inc. on Friday announced they had reached a multiyear retransmission agreement.

The deal enabled Mediacom customers to once again view KGAN-TV in Cedar Rapids and 21 other Sinclair-owned stations in 12 states.

Financial terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

The stations' signals were cut off Jan. 5 after the two companies failed to negotiate a new retransmission agreement.

Iowa, with the highest number of Mediacom subscribers of all the states — about 250,000 — was most affected.

Although fans will be able to tune into the game on KGAN-TV, Jon Jelinek, part owner of the Chrome Horse Saloon in Cedar Rapids, said he does not expect any decrease in turnout for the Super Bowl.

The Chrome Horse "is the official Bears club in Cedar Rapids," said Jelinek, 50, of Cedar Rapids. "This is the place to be. Everybody wants to be around everybody else."

A Mediacom spokesman expressed satisfaction with the agreement, which will expire

► **KGAN-TV, PAGE 8A**



Pam Schultz

Some decorations at Francis Marion Intermediate School in Marion support the Indianapolis Colts in Sunday's Super Bowl.

# Halls are alive with Super Bowl rivalry

By Carly Weber  
The Gazette

**MARION** — The joke was supposed to be on Indianapolis Colts fans Friday morning at Francis Marion Intermediate School.

Chicago Bears fans Pam Schulz and Diane Roethler, both teachers, stayed after school Thursday to transform a mural into a homage to Da Bears.

Friday morning, though, the first thing Schulz and Roethler saw was a tribute to the Colts, spanning a doorway at the opposite end of the hall from their Bears mural. The Bears and the Colts square off Sunday in Miami

## Coming Sunday

■ Check out our four-page Super Bowl preview. **Sunday's Gazette**

in the Super Bowl. "Initially I was like, 'What?! They're kind of stealing our thunder,'" said Roethler, a longtime Bears fan.

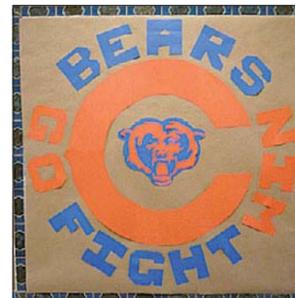
The culprits weren't Colts fans, though. They were just mischievous co-workers who thought the Bears fans needed to be put in their place.

"We just did it out of darn orneriness, because they were just being so secretive and

spent so much time on it," said Donna Bullard, a fifth-grade teacher from Marion. "They just thought they were going to put one up on the whole school."

Students were in on the rivalry, too. In fact, they started it. Schulz and Roethler started plotting after several fourth-grade classes paraded through Schulz's class with "Go Colts" signs.

"We were just hoping to get back at those two fourth-grade classes that were really getting in Pam's face and then general team pride," said Roethler, a fifth-grade teacher from North Liberty. She'd like their mural to



Diane Roethler, North Liberty

Chicago Bears decorations were the first to go up.

stay up. The Colts one will, of course, have to be taken down, she said.

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**TODAY'S WEATHER**



**Partly cloudy and frigid**  
TODAY SUNDAY **2-11 10G**  
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# Tech/Upgrades strain school district budgets

► FROM PAGE 1A

computers and other technology if voters approve the 1 percent tax on Feb. 13.

The proposed tax would produce roughly \$258 million to \$264 million in Linn County and \$136 million to \$139 million in Johnson County, according to projected (and recently revised) Iowa Department of Revenue estimates for 2006-07. Most of the money would go to buildings and property tax relief.

Keeping technology updated became increasingly difficult for schools in 2001 when the state faced budget problems and cut \$30 million a year it was spending on school technology, said Jeff Berger, legislative liaison for the Iowa Department of Education.

"When the state funded technology in schools in the late 1990s, many districts purchased equipment that is now in desperate need of replacement," said David Canaday, technology director for the Marion Independent school district.

"Most districts couldn't afford to maintain the funding level the state had initially provided, and those districts had to make decisions about supporting technology through other funding means ... or letting equipment and software fall behind or fail altogether," Canaday added. Some funding for technology now comes from property tax dollars or an income tax surtax. Cedar Rapids schools' income surtax is collected as part of its instructional support levy, and funds technology and other items.

The Iowa City school district is now able to replace about 300 of its roughly 4,500 computers each year.

"The computers have to last 15 years. That ain't gonna happen," said Perry Ross, the district's director of instruction. "Over time, the number of computers has grown in the district as well. We're in an impossible predicament here."

If voters reject the sales tax proposal, school administrators say they will have to struggle to maintain their systems.

"We don't believe the status quo is going to help us develop world-class learners," said Jay Marino, Cedar Rapids associate superintendent for organizational effectiveness and accountability.

Lori Bruzek, technology manager of the Cedar Rapids schools, said aging technology means costly repairs and frustrated users.

"Access to digital resources may be limited because our infrastructure or equipment won't support their use," she said.

While some Corridor districts haven't earmarked potential sales tax dollars for technology, most have. (See chart on this page.)

Cedar Rapids and Linn-Mar administrators would use

## Proposed technology spending if school sales tax is approved

School district	Number of students	Number of computers	Age of computers	Local-option tax dollars, first year*	Local-option tax dollars set aside for technology	Number of technology employees	Current budget for technology
Cedar Rapids	17,777	5,885	2,665 are 5 years old or older	\$18.5 million	\$20.6 million over 10 years (includes \$5.2 million for wireless networking and optic fiber; \$4.5 million for student and staff computers; \$4.7 million for classroom electronic tools and resources; \$1.2 million per year in each of the final five years to upgrade and maintain technology)	The equivalent of 24.8 full-time staff	Roughly \$3 million. Includes staff compensation, district telecommunications expenses (network data and phone services), installation and maintenance of desktop and network hardware, districtwide application support and other services
Clear Creek Amana	1,477	511	Around 266 computers are 0 to 5 years old or newer; around 245 are 6 to 9 years old. Nine years is approximate replacement cycle	\$1.3 million	None (because facility and equipment updates and construction take precedence)	More than 2 full-time equivalents	\$194,000 for technology equipment replacement and other technology needs, including salaries and benefits
College Community	4,022**	1,500	80 percent are 4 years old or newer. The oldest ones are 6 to 7 years old	\$2.9 million	Minimal; most of tax goes to property tax relief	3 full-time equivalents	Roughly \$350,000 to \$400,000, not including information technology salaries. Primarily supplies, repair and professional services; hosting services, hardware and mobile labs
Iowa City	11,063	About 4,500	Average is roughly 8 years old. About 300 are replaced annually, on a roughly 15-year replacement cycle	\$14.5 million	\$12 million over 10 years	5 fulltime	About \$300,000 to \$400,000 per year; includes roughly \$100,000 for infrastructure and replacing non-computer equipment; and about \$300,000 for new computers
Linn-Mar	5,774	1,642 (1,013 for students)	About 730 computers are 5 years old or older	\$6 million	\$5 million over 10 years	4 (one paid through general fund)	\$308,300 includes 3 staff salaries (2 full time). The rest: 36% to computers, 15% for software, 15% for purchase services such as specialized technicians, 17.5% for hardware, 12.5% for network, and 2.5% for printers. Also for office operation, mileage and staff training
Marion Independent	2,734	Around 700	More than 500 computers are 3 years old or newer. Some computers are more than 8 years old	\$1.9 million	\$2 million over 10 years	2	\$75,000 for computers and other equipment for teachers and students; roughly \$60,000 for infrastructure costs, including repair, connectivity costs, software maintenance and purchases, servers and network support equipment
Solon	1,234	About 600	About 444 are 2 years old or newer; around 156 are older. Three-year replacement cycle	\$1.5 million	Sales tax goes mainly to facilities, with some flexibility for technology funds and bus purchase	2	Roughly \$300,000. Excludes salaries and benefits. Includes hardware (computers and peripherals), software, curriculum, and infrastructure

\* Estimates are Iowa Department of Revenue projections for 2007. Total drops by 40 percent in the last five years of the tax in Linn County and by 52 percent in Johnson County.

\*\* Includes both Linn and Johnson.

Source: School districts

Gazette graphic

## On the Net

■ For more Gazette coverage of the school tax issue, go to [www.GazetteOnline.com](http://www.GazetteOnline.com)

some sales tax revenue to add electronic tools. For example, students could take virtual field trips. Or they could become virtual astronauts or mountaineers and learn to identify where they are on a map, said Katie Mulholland, Linn-Mar's superintendent.

Other tools include electronic interactive whiteboards on which teachers can access multimedia files in front of the class.

"Technology is that motivator that draws all kids into curriculum and instruction," Marino said.

Jefferson High teacher Beth Holt said the boards also help special needs students who now need another person to take notes for them.

"The SMART Boards would allow teachers to write on the board the notes they're giving. It would go immediately to (a student's) computer, and they could print those notes," Holt said.

Having up-to-date technology at school evens the score between students who have that technology at home and those who do not, school leaders said. It's a skill colleges and future employers will expect students to have, they add.



Cliff Jette/The Gazette

Fourth grader Haylee Lynch uses Type to Learn as her class works on laptop computers at Wright Elementary School in Cedar Rapids. Some students were using this software while others wrote letters to their pen pals or used Calculating Crew, a math program.

"A McDonald's employee uses digital timers, cash registers, wireless technologies and receives basically a minimum wage," said Canaday, the Marion district's technology director. "Technology is no longer a privileged part of a rich curriculum. It is a

necessary function in a global learning society."

Dick Spencer of Cedar Rapids, from the anti-tax group DAART (Don't Allow Additional Regressive Taxes), said students should first learn to make change and do math without calculators and other

## Other funding

■ The Cedar Rapids school district has just more than \$2 million budgeted for technology from the 2006-07 instructional support levy. That levy is partially funded by a 6 percent income surtax. The total instructional support levy is roughly \$7.5 million. It comes from \$585,800 in state aid; \$474,900 in property tax; and nearly \$6.5 million through a 6 percent income tax surtax.

■ The Iowa City school district expects to collect about \$4.2 million from its income tax surcharge in the 2006-07 school year, the maximum available. The money goes into the general fund; the district's technology budget comes from that fund.

Source: School districts

technology. Students, he said, do not need to use computers before middle school.

But Bruzek, technology manager in the Cedar Rapids schools, said, "Twenty years ago, we weren't able to do our banking and shopping from the comfort of our homes at any time of day or night. Our students today accept this as the standard."

## What's planned

Here are the technology projects the Corridor's seven largest school districts plan to pursue if voters OK a local option sales tax Feb. 13:

### ■ Little to nothing:

**Solon:** Money going to facilities. District over past five years has used instructional support levy to buy technology. It has about 600 computers on a three-year replacement cycle.

**Clear Creek Amana:** Money going to facilities. Computers now on nine-year replacement cycle.

### ■ Updates:

**Marion Independent:** Upgrade network infrastructure to keep up with demand for Internet resources, video and network access. Put systems on a sustainable replacement cycle.

**Iowa City:** Put computers on a five-year replacement cycle. Any leftover money would be used to run fiber optics between district buildings.

**College Community:** Upgrade wireless infrastructure. Replace networking equipment. Go to a four-year computer replacement cycle. Would like to buy a management system to expand student wireless use.

### ■ Updates and new technology:

**Cedar Rapids:** Update computers, printers and other technology. Continue to work with Linn County and the city of Cedar Rapids to implement a fiber network. Create wireless access in all district buildings and increase student access to digital learning tools.

**Linn-Mar:** Put computers on three-year replacement cycle. Fund instructional technology and software for students such as interactive whiteboards, science instrumentation and global positioning technology. Expand wireless access in district buildings. Upgrade other technology infrastructure.

Ross, of the Iowa City district, said typing used to be "a required class because the consensus was it was a life skill that everybody needed to survive. That's what computers are today."

More technology increases students' need for school media specialists and teachers, said Craig Barnum, director of information and technology services in College Community schools.

They help students access information and identify reliable from unreliable sources.

"Our kids are coming almost hard-wired with technology," Barnum said. "They're coming to us ready to go in that regard. What they really need help with is becoming information-savvy and media-savvy."

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## KGAN-TV/Pizza still on

► FROM PAGE 1A

Dec. 31, 2009.

"We're thrilled to have the channels restored, and we're thrilled that our customers will be able to watch the Super Bowl this weekend," said Tom Larsen, vice president for legal affairs at Mediacom, based in Middletown, N.Y.

Sinclair stations were back on Mediacom last night. Mediacom spokeswoman Phyllis Peters said Mediacom has agreed to upgrade the signal of KGAN-TV to high definition by Sunday's Super Bowl.

"We are committed to working people overtime to get that on the air," she said. Peters was unable to say

whether the Sinclair deal could lead to a cable rate increase for subscribers. "That will get sorted out in the coming weeks and months," she said.

Peters said Mediacom would carry through with its promise to hand out 10,000 frozen pizzas to customers in Cedar Rapids and Waterloo today.

Sinclair spokesman Barry Faber did not return a phone call Friday seeking comment.

Ben Fornell of The Gazette contributed to this story.

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