

IOWA TODAY

LINN COUNTY

Central City to be recognized as 'River Town of the Year'

By Orlan Love, The Gazette

Central City will be recognized as the Iowa River Revival's "River Town of the Year" today.

"It's exciting to be honored," City Administrator LaNeil McFadden.

"The community volunteers who have worked hard on improving our riverfront are thrilled," McFadden said.

The award celebrates vibrant river communities across Iowa that are reclaiming river fronts as anchors for recreation, economic development, ecological practices and good water quality, said Roz Lehman, executive director of the statewide advocacy group that encourages Iowans to respect and enjoy their rivers.

Two events, the Wapsipicon River flood of 1999 and becoming a Main Street Iowa community in 2000, changed the community's relationship with the river, Mayor Don Gray said.

With assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the city acquired 12 flood-prone properties, which were converted to parkland, essentially



Kaitlyn Bernauer/The Gazette

Participants get set up and wait for the fish to bite Jan. 13 at the Kids Ice Fishing Clinic at Pinicon Ridge Park in Central City. The city has used assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to change the Wapsipicon River from a flood hazard to the community's premier asset.

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The city's designation as a Main Street Iowa community strengthened residents' resolve to develop that asset, Gray said.

In addition to fishing and paddle sports, which have long been popular in the community, Central City's riverside attractions now include a basketball court, play-

ground equipment, a splashpad and pavilions for community events.

Perhaps the greatest

attraction, according to McFadden, is the hiking and biking trail that stretches nearly a mile

along the east side of the river and recently has been connected with the eight miles of trails at Linn County's Pinicon Ridge Park.

"We've always had a lot of fishermen along the river, but the popularity of the trail has been amazing to us. People are on it all the time, even in the winter," she said.

McFadden and Gray said they see an increasing number of Iowa communities looking at rivers as assets they can capitalize on.

The award will be presented at a 10:30 a.m. ceremony at the Falcon Civic Center, 137 Fourth St. North.

Previous "River Towns of the Year" recognized by Iowa Rivers Revival are Webster City, Elkader, Coon Rapids, Cedar Falls and Charles City.

New parents! Share the joy of your newborn with a photograph and birth announcement in the Milestones section of Sunday's Gazette. Call (319) 368-8873 or 1-(800) 397-8212 for details.