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PANTHER?
Coach Farley confirms Barkley Hill has left Iowa and enrolled at UNI

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NEW ROLE
Leader of Wu-Tang Clan takes on crime in TV drama 'Gang Related'



THE COURIER

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COURTNEY COLLINS / Courier Staff Photographer
Mayra Nolasco, right, fixes Rubi Nolasco's tassel before the West High School graduation ceremony on Wednesday.

A second chance

Former West dropout gets degree at age 21

ANDREW WIND
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WATERLOO — When a group of volunteers looking to re-enroll dropouts knocked on Rubi Nolasco's door in fall 2012, she wanted to go back to West High School.

But after a year out of school, she was uncertain. "I was older," said Rubi, who is now 21.

Still, her father seemed to support the idea, so she returned to classes to complete her junior and senior years. On Wednesday, Rubi graduated with the Class of 2014, including her 18-year-old sister, Mayra.

"I'm pretty excited. I can't believe it that I'm going to graduate," Rubi, a native of El Salvador, said before the

ceremony.

"My dad is so happy," she added. Initially, he had pressured her to quit school and help support the family. However, Rubi did not have a job when she met the Reconnect to Graduate volunteers.

The door-knocking campaign sent volunteers out in groups of three or four across Waterloo Community Schools to invite students back who hadn't returned to classes. The first year, 30 people re-enrolled. Some graduated that spring, but a number of them had dropped out by the following year. Officials didn't make exact numbers available.

When volunteers knocked on doors again last fall, 60 students re-enrolled. Officials don't yet have solid numbers of

how many returning dropouts graduated, like Rubi. And they won't have complete numbers until next fall on whether some of the 60 students dropped out during the year or didn't return after finishing classes this spring.

Returning students could enroll in traditional classes at West or East high schools. They could also enroll in Expo High School or a number of other alternative programs based at Expo, East or West.

Ellen Vanderloo, who coordinates Reconnect to Graduate for the district, was among the team of people who knocked on the Nolasco family's door almost two years ago. In recent months, she has been meeting

See **GRADUATE**, page A10

O'Brien touts experience in 1st District race

One in a series of profiles of primary candidates.

ALISON SULLIVAN
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DES MOINES — Dave O'Brien has never been elected to public office, but he's quick to note he's helped others reach such positions of power for the past 25 years.

O'Brien, 55, of Cedar Rapids, served as the Iowa chair for former President Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign, campaigned for Vice President Joe Biden during his presidential pursuits and also campaigned for Sen. Tom Harkin, Rep. Dave Loebsack and Rep. Bruce Braley.

As Braley sets his sights on a Senate seat, O'Brien is joining four other candidates vying for the Democratic nomination to represent Iowa's 1st Congressional District.

O'Brien said his experience at the federal level coupled with his work as an attorney has naturally equipped him to seek a congressional seat. As an attorney, O'Brien works with labor and constitutional rights issues.

"It was a perfect fit to take the skill set I'd developed over the years and expanding that to representing all of the people of Iowa's 1st District," he said.

O'Brien said he believes his experience trumps the fact he's never been elected to public office, unlike his Democratic challengers. He did mount an unsuccessful run for the seat in what was then Iowa's 6th Congressional District in 1988.

During the Clinton administration, O'Brien held leadership positions within the U.S. Department of Labor.

One of O'Brien's top issues is raising the federal minimum wage to

Dave O'Brien

Age: 55.
Occupation: Attorney.
Hometown: Sioux City.
Current city: Cedar Rapids.
Previous public office held: None.

\$10.10 an hour. Although a recent push from Harkin to increase the minimum wage failed in Congress, O'Brien said if he were elected he'd continue the fight to enact a measure he says would help the country's economy.

"I think it's something we

See **O'BRIEN**, page A10

Man charged in wife's stabbing

■ **Dustin Jefferson faces murder charge after his mother's conviction.**

DENNIS MAGEE
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TOLEDO — Authorities on Wednesday officially charged Dustin Jefferson with first-degree murder for killing or helping to kill his wife.

Kerry O'Clair-Jefferson, 32, died Sept. 25. Jurors convicted Dustin Jefferson's mother, Ginger Jefferson, of first-degree murder on Tuesday. She will face life in prison with no chance for parole when sentenced.

During Ginger Jefferson's trial in Tama County, her defense attorneys and prosecutors suggested Dustin Jefferson likely helped kill Kerry O'Clair-Jefferson. In fact, they went beyond that, introducing evidence and calling witnesses who implicated Dustin Jefferson.

O'Clair-Jefferson died because of two stab wounds to her neck. One severed her jugular vein. The other penetrated her esophagus. According to police, Dustin Jefferson identified the murder weapon, a knife, as his own.

Jurors in Ginger Jefferson's trial also heard about blood discovered on Dustin Jefferson's clothing. The DNA profile matched his wife's, according to an expert witness.

Aaron Siebrecht, one of Ginger Jefferson's defense attorneys, conceded during closing arguments the state "provided a very



DENNIS MAGEE / Courier Regional Editor
Dustin Jefferson showed up in Tama County court Wednesday to face a charge of first-degree murder in his wife's death.

compelling case" for murder.

"Unfortunately, it's for Dustin Jefferson," Siebrecht told jurors.

Dustin Jefferson, 38, declined to testify during his mother's trial, invoking his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.

As jurors deliberated Tuesday, authorities prepared additional paperwork. As soon as Judge Stephen Jackson Jr. announced the guilty verdict against Ginger Jefferson, officials filed the new charge against her son, alleging Dustin Jefferson also committed first-degree murder or aided and abetted his mother.

Either way, the offense is a class

See **JEFFERSON**, page A2

Museum wants break on outstanding sidewalk bill

■ **African-American history group can't pay tax assessments.**

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WATERLOO — New leadership at Waterloo's African-American Historical and Cultural Museum is asking the city to forgive its unpaid property tax assessments.

But City Council members balked at the request Tuesday after voicing concerns about whether other private nonprofit groups would expect similar treatment.

"My concern is setting a precedent," said Councilman Pat Morrissey.

"If we do this for them, what about the Boys and Girls Club?" added Councilman Tom Lind. "I guarantee you that if we say yes here, there will be a line of people saying 'What about my sidewalk?'"

The AAHCM property at East

Fourth and Adams streets is exempt from property taxes but is not immune to special assessments. The organization failed to pay some \$4,015 for sidewalk repairs and code enforcement mowing and snow removal activity dating back to 2010.

The museum board, which has struggled since 1996 to get a full-blown construction project underway, has been embroiled in a bitter leadership struggle in recent months.

The museum board voted in November to replace long-time executive director Melvina Scott with Marcia Griffin. Scott has argued the board lacked the authority to replace her and that she still is



Pat Morrissey

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