

BEST OF DES MOINES® EVENT PHOTOS INSIDE!

MARCH 2023

CITYVIEW

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A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE OF WELLS FARGO ARENA

From a rodeo event to a basketball game to a hockey match, floor transitions are all part of the game.



CARS IN THE CITY
The 2023 Chevy Camaro is a powerful ride.

RELISH
Our guide to local food and dining inserted into this issue.

FEATURE
A look back on the COVID-19 pandemic — and a glimpse of the future

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Kryptonite, conversions, Camaros and COVID

A couple decades ago, our company officed on the south side of Des Moines at 4521 Fleur Drive. It was a cozy spot that eight of us crammed into back when we were publishing only one title. We didn't have a conference room, so we would often walk a few doors down to a wonderful coffee shop called Cup O' Kryptonite. We moved to another location, and Cup O' Kryptonite did, too, but the memories were brought back this month with Kristian Day's Des Moines Forgotten column about the once-popular coffee shop/comic book store. Be sure to check it out.

Columnist Joe Weeg took the reins with our cover story this month and shared his experiences with the floor transitions at Wells Fargo Arena as they set up and tore down for a rodeo, a basketball game and a hockey match. If you are a regular reader of Joe's Neighborhood, or even if you are not, you will appreciate this humorous look at the people and processes that happen in those conversions.

We held our Best Of Des Moines event on Jan. 31 to a sold-out crowd at a new venue. Look inside this issue for photos from this spectacular event.

Ever wonder who picks up dead animals on the road, and where this roadkill goes? Find the answer in Ask CITYVIEW in this issue.

I never owned a Chevy Camaro. Like most teenage boys from decades past, I certainly wanted to. If I am being totally honest, I still do. If you can relate, you will enjoy Jackie Wilson's auto review of the 2023 Camaro in this month's Cars in the City column.

Jim Duncan takes us to a new name from a list of Des Moines restaurant curiosities in his Food Dude column. He writes that Sprockets, at 1901 Ingersoll, has an amazing chicken and waffles sandwich. The chef's No. 1 recommendation is sausage gravy and biscuits, which is sold all day and night. I am in.

Three years have passed by quickly, and thank goodness. Just that short time ago, we were beginning to learn how to (and how not to) deal with the struggles of COVID-19. To some degree, we still are. Meanwhile, we undeniably have a new normal. Reporter Sofia Legaspi Dickens takes us on a look back at the pandemic along with a glimpse of the future.

Look for these stories and much more in this issue of your locally owned, independent news magazine.

As always, thanks for reading. ■

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Shane Goodman

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Sofia Legaspi Dickens

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Douglas Burns
John Busbee
Kristian Day
Jim Duncan
Randy Evans
David Rowley
Colson Thayer
Joe Weeg
Jackie Wilson

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES
Megan Pugh
Nick Noah
Mary Fowler

DESIGN MANAGER
Celeste Tilton

ADVERTISING DESIGNER
Jayde Vogeler

DIGITAL
Beckham Miller

BUSINESS OFFICE
Brent Antisdell

DISTRIBUTION
Mike Chiston



ADDRESS: 8101 Birchwood Court, Suite D, Johnston, Iowa 50131

PHONE: 515-953-4822 **FAX:** 515-953-1394

WEB: www.dmcityview.com

EMAIL: editor@dmcityview.com

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ASK CITYVIEW

By CITYVIEW staff

Ask CITYVIEW anything by emailing editor@dmcityview.com.

Q. Who picks up roadkill, and where does it go?

A. It depends on where you are. If an animal dies along the interstate, a U.S. highway or state highway, the Iowa Department of Transportation is responsible. Contact law enforcement if roadkill is affecting the flow of traffic. Otherwise, call the Iowa DOT Traffic Management Center (TMC) at 515-237-3300 for roadkill that is off the roadway. The TMC is staffed 24/7 and will dispatch maintenance personnel to respond, if necessary.

Cleanup is handled by DOT maintenance garages overseeing the respective area. The process is funded through the DOT's maintenance budget collected via the road use tax.

As for the fate of the animal carcass, most are pulled off the roadway into ditches and buried in tall grass, where nature then does its work.

"Others that can't be buried in our right of way get hauled off to another area where they can be buried or to a rendering company," explained Maintenance Bureau Assistant Director Mohamed Mohamed.

For roadkill on county roads and city streets, you'll need to contact your respective county or municipality during their regular business hours or leave a message. In Des Moines, you can call the Des Moines Police Non-Emergency Line at 515-283-4811 or reach the Animal Control Shelter directly at 515-284-6905. Police Sergeant Jake Lancaster, the city's animal control officer, noted that most calls are reported by city employees before the public would need to.

"The City of Des Moines has employees traveling throughout the city constantly, and they are diligent in reporting these situations when they come across them," he said.

Animal Service Officers are responsible for dead animal pickup on public roadways within Des Moines city limits. The city contracts with the Animal Rescue League of Iowa, which scans possibly domesticated animals for microchips and attempts to locate the owners. For wild animals or unidentified pets, the remains are taken to Metro Waste Authority.

And for any venison lovers out there — yes, you can legally bring home a deer hit by a car in Iowa, as long as you first obtain a salvage tag from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. It's legal to pick up any other roadkill if you have a hunting license for that particular animal and it is in season; otherwise, you'll also need a salvage tag.

Q. How about when a deer dies on my property? A. Who is in charge of cleanup?

Again, it depends on where you live, but for Des Moines residents, here's what we heard from a city spokesperson: "The City of Des Moines and the ARL will pick up wild animals found on private property. This is out of precaution for potential diseases the animal may carry. The City will not respond to domesticated animals at private properties. That is to be handled by the owner of the animal." ■

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YOUR VIEW

Letters are edited for space, spelling and clarity.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Christmas presents

I read with great interest and amusement your article "What did you get for Christmas?" in the January CITYVIEW. In recent years, I have come to the realization of a startling fact. When you're a little kid, the anticipation of Christmas always focuses on the presents you'll get. I remember spending time in the toy catalog trying to decide on my priorities and create a wish list. Lost in the excitement were the traditions that were created and repeated every year: Christmas Eve with my grandmother, Christmas morning with my parents and sister, followed by breakfast with the neighbors, and Christmas dinner with my other grandparents, aunt, uncle, and cousins. But now that I've grown older, I find I can barely remember any of the specific gifts I received over those years. Most of them are long gone. But the memories of those get-togethers and traditions are fresh in my mind and will stay with me for the rest of my life. I've finally realized that those memories and traditions are the true gifts.

—Bob Skelley

Fifth Street Bridge

Thanks for mention of the Fifth Street Bridge in the roundup of favorite Des Moines bridges. For your notes, you may want to update your files that this is now officially the Fifth Street Bridge — the original name. Or the SW Fifth Street Bridge — works, too. (Original drawings say SW 5th Street Raccoon River Bridge.)

Of course, there is no Jackson Street in Des Moines; there is a nearby Jackson Avenue (runs in front of Graziano's, for example). Not sure how things got sidetracked for a wagon bridge with so many danged names. Manhattanites never waffle on the names of their bridges!

Regardless, Fifth Street or SW Fifth

Street Bridge is now in the books for all City departments. And more important (perhaps most important): Google Maps agrees!

Oh, one more item: 2023 will mark the 125th anniversary of this Des Moines treasure. The bridge officially opened on June 17, 1898, as reported by Michael Gartner in that 2015 CITYVIEW article. Yep, we'll do something special to commemorate.

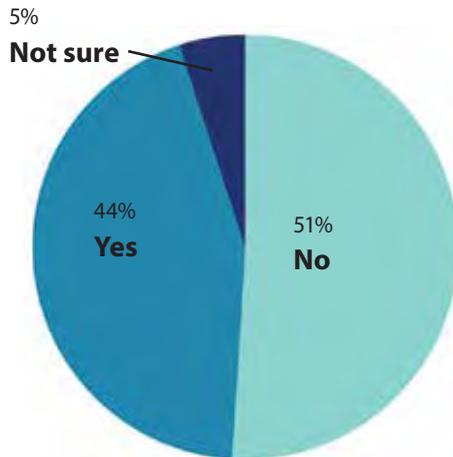
Sorta related: You might add in your files that local architect Cal Lewis (now deceased) designed the Gray's Lake Bridge and played a huge role in raising the additional funds to get it built the way he envisioned it.

—Carl Voss

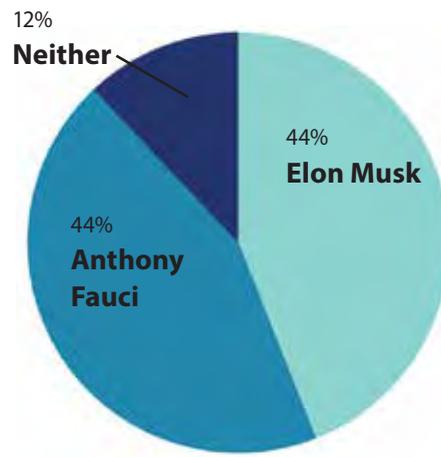
POLL POSITION

Results from last month's polls at www.dmcityview.com

Should Joe Biden run for president again?



Which person do you trust more?



RETWEETS



(comments unedited)

@hansmollman: One of my shoes has developed a squeak and now any walking I do has a slightly downcast Charlie Brown quality to it

@EwdatsGROSS: My therapist: and what do we say when we're sad
Me: add to cart

My therapist: no

@MaxStynn: If you're preaching to the choir, you're facing the wrong direction!

@Home_Halfway: You want me to go to the bathroom? The same thing that killed Elvis?

@theevilwriter: One of the best things about painting a room is getting to lick the empty paint can when you finish up a gallon.

@TheAlexNevil: *gets bitten by radioactive shark

*the remaining half does not gain super powers

@i_wasnt_looking: Does this thing get good gas mileage?

-my husband being kidnapped

@Tbone7219: My 89 year old mom asked if I was on that "Tic-tac-toe" site.

FACEBOOK COMMENTS



cityview magazine (comments unedited)

Cityview Magazine: What are your thoughts on school choice?

Rich Russell: Do you mean the "Bust the NEA" bill?

Dottie Johnson: Rural schools will be closed, private schools won't accept EVERYONE. Public money for public schools.

David Tweedt: All for it. Competition leads to success. Throwing money at it for decades on end has had zero positive effect.

James N Colette Klier: I have a BIG issue with no oversight of the money.

Matt Weis: It's not school choice when the schools can choose their students.

Adam J. Moraine: I am a parent who private school educated my daughter from preschool -12th grade. (2007-2021) I support school choice. There are many bright and intelligent children who would benefit academically, socially and spiritually in a private school setting, who

otherwise might be unable to attend a private school, if not for the vouchers that are being offered to Iowa families.

Janet McGovern: A disaster waiting to happen!

Blake Steven: Everyone who voted for this must go.

Katie Marie: The school choice bill was wildly unpopular with lowans, but passed anyways. What is the point of elected officials if they do what they want versus what is best for lowans? Can someone just help me understand that? Being poor is a crime in this state.

Jon Swanson: So tired of being governed by out of state agendas. This bill is horrible public policy, period.

Johnne Robison Kochheiser: Where's all the people who are outraged that people get help with providing food at school for kids from low income families? You know the ones who scream personal responsibility to pay their way and not take anything from the government. <crickets>

Teresa Baustian: Massive new spending program at

the very time that the legislature is defunding public education and the Regents institutions, as well as seeking to reduce SNAP benefits to the hungry. What has happened to Iowa?

Doug Hansen: Baffled. It seems to be a hugely expensive new entitlement program almost unanimously adopted by rural legislators with few if any local private schools. Won't their constituents end up paying tuition for a lot of affluent suburban families without increased choice for their own families? I don't think I understand the real motivations for making this the number one priority and rushing it through. Pretty sure it's not for the kids.

Cityview Magazine: What did you think of last night's State of the Union address?

Liz Summers: Well played.

Randy Little: Real professionals with the booing and thumbs down wow

A rural school teaches lessons on governing

Gov. Reynolds' government reorganization makes clear the attorney general could choose to prosecute any criminal case, even without an invitation from the local county attorney.

There is an interesting study in contrasts playing out right now in Iowa.

One example comes from the Davis County School District in Bloomfield. It is the 96th-largest of Iowa's 328 public districts, with an enrollment of 1,150 students.

The other example comes from the Iowa Legislature and Gov. Kim Reynolds.

The Davis County school board is wrestling with an incredibly difficult decision — whether to hold classes four days a week instead of the traditional five-day-a-week schedule.

The decision-making process has been marked by ongoing public information over the past five months. There has been lots of opportunity for people to ask questions about what is best for the Davis County schools and Davis County kids.

The process is geared both for learning what people in the district want and for helping the community become comfortable with the decision the school board eventually makes.

On the other hand, the solid Republican majorities in the Iowa House and Iowa Senate, with a Republican in the governor's office, seem more interested in gaining legislative victories and less interested in following a process that builds confidence and acceptance among Iowans whose opinions differ from the Republicans.

See what you think:

There are several reasons why the Davis County School District has been thinking about switching to a four-day schedule. Money is not the prime motivation, but eliminating one day of classes would cut fuel costs for school buses by 20%. That is not insignificant. Davis County has one of the biggest bus fleets in rural Iowa because the district covers the entire county. And every dollar spent on transportation is a dollar not available for classroom learning.

The bigger reason for the possible schedule change would be to make it easier to recruit and retain quality teachers in a rural county where the closest Walmart is a half-hour drive.

The decision-making process being used in Davis County has been refreshing. Last October,

Superintendent Dan Maeder created a team to formally study the pros and cons of a four-day school week.

Business owners, parents of students and other residents have been looped in. School employees were surveyed. Informational meetings were held via Zoom so people could hear what was being learned and ask questions. Representatives from Waco of Wayland and Moulton-Udell, two rural districts that have already switched to a four-day week, shared the pluses and the minuses. And more community forums are planned in the coming weeks.

Through all of this, Maeder has been available to the public, the people for whom he works — at his office, at school board meetings, at school activities, and at the Casey's or Brothers Market — if local folks have questions to ask or comments to offer.

The process Maeder and the board are following certainly contrasts with the process we see at the Iowa Capitol.

Parents whose opinions are in line with the governor's on LGBTQ issues, controversial school books or other hot-button topics can get meetings with her or have their calls returned by her aides. Parents of LGBTQ kids or people who oppose banning certain books are frustrated by the governor's refusal to meet with them.

In the Legislature, it is not unusual for the public to get less than one day's notice before a controversial bill is debated. Sometimes an important proposal is introduced in the Legislature, voted on by both the House and Senate, and then signed into law by the governor, all in just a handful of days.

Three weeks ago, the governor unveiled a huge bill to reorganize the executive branch of state government. Unlike Dan Maeder, Reynolds and her staff have not been available to answer reporters' questions, or the public's, about the far-reaching bill. That there are questions should surprise no one, because the document authorizing the reorganization, Senate Study Bill 1123, is 1,570 pages long.

One worrisome section would change the longstanding practice of when Iowa's attorney general, rather than the locally elected county attorney, prosecutes an accused criminal. For nearly 50 years, the

attorney general has stepped in only when the county attorney asks for help.

Reynolds' government reorganization makes clear the attorney general could choose to prosecute any criminal case, even without an invitation from the local county attorney.

That change raises concerns political considerations could be injected into the decision whether someone is, or is not, prosecuted on criminal charges. While campaigning last year for Brenna Bird, Iowa's new attorney general, Reynolds often told voters, "I want my own attorney general."

But giving the governor her own attorney general gives many Iowans the hives.

That is especially true with some lawmakers pushing for teachers and librarians to be prosecuted for the books they make available or for transgender people to be prosecuted for using bathrooms not matching their gender at birth.

Calhoun County Attorney Tina Meth-Farrington, the president of the Iowa County Attorneys Association, is a Republican like Reynolds and Bird. She told the Cedar Rapids Gazette she believes the governor's proposal is intended to allow the attorney general to prosecute local cases if a county attorney chooses not to file charges.

"It's there because there's a concern there have been county attorneys who campaigned on spending time and resources on more important things instead of low-level crimes," Meth-Farrington said, apparently a reference to new Polk County Attorney Kimberly Graham, a Democrat.

Graham has pledged not to prosecute low-level drug crimes like marijuana possession. She also has vowed to not ask for bail for people not considered to be a threat, although a judge, not the prosecutor, makes that decision.

Meth-Farrington told the Gazette, "I don't want this office politicized, and this is kind of throwing politics into the game. I just don't like that." ■

Randy Evans can be reached at DMRevans2810@gmail.com.



CIVIC SKINNY

BY CITYVIEW STAFF

Kaleidoscope, Val Air, Gas Lamp. ION program. \$20k Super Bowl spot. DMAC director. MWA audit.

The abandoned east Kaleidoscope building at 515 Walnut St., now permanently closed, could soon be demolished to make way for a new addition to the downtown Des Moines skyline. Local developer **Joe Teeling** of Saint Joseph Group announced resurrected plans for 515 Walnut Tower, a mixed income multi-family project on behalf of not-for-profit St. Kevin Foundation. The plans are being transitioned over to Saint Joseph by Blackbird Investments, which first proposed the high-rise in 2016 — originally at the former Younkers site.

Kaleidoscope at the Hub opened in 1985. First operated by Hubbell Realty, it passed through the hands of EMC Insurance before Blackbird acquired it in 2018 and terminated all remaining leases within the struggling mall and food court the following year. U.S. Bank, a 17-year tenant in the building, sued the investment company for failing to pay nearly \$100,000 as designated by their lease termination agreement. Amid distrust

caused by this and other legal and financial missteps, the City of Des Moines terminated its agreement with Blackbird in June 2020.

Saint Joseph Group estimates the current project at \$140 million to \$145 million. At 33 stories, the new tower will be the third-tallest building in Des Moines, behind the 45-story Principal Building at 801 Grand and 36-floor Ruan Center. It will include 390 housing units, including 78 affordable housing units, and 1,400 square feet of first-floor commercial space. Redevelopment work is expected to begin in the summer, with completion in 2025. ...

Yet another building will be revived in the Des Moines metro, this time under the vision of local music promoter **Samuel Summers**. He purchased Val Air Ballroom in early 2022 for \$1.9 million and is planning a \$14.5 million renovation. The project will be complete by January 2024 and increase the property's assessed value to at least \$5.5 million. It is currently valued

at \$1.4 million and includes the 30,956 square-foot building on 8.5 acres, according to the Polk County Assessor.

The 84-year-old venue on Ashworth Road in West Des Moines formerly housed the Wilson Rubber Factory during World War I. In June 1918, it opened as an open-air dance hall — hence, its name. Big band and jazz legends who played at Val Air included **Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Glenn Miller** and **Guy Lombardo**. Major renovations began in 1954, and the “new” venue opened: air-conditioned, heated and open year-round. The 1950s saw stars like **Chubby Checker, The Everly Brothers** and **Brenda Lee**.

In this past year, under the direction of Summers, Val Air has hosted artists ranging from rock to blues to country. Summers, who founded First Fleet Concerts while a student at Iowa State University, also operates Wooly's in the East Village, organizes the popular



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As one venue is revived, another closes. Western Gateway music venue, Gas Lamp, announced it will close its doors for good on July 9, citing its struggling financial recovery post-pandemic and uncertainty of its future.

“As most of you have noticed, they have been revitalizing the area recently, and our building will be one of the next to be renovated,” the venue shared via an unsigned Facebook post. “While we do not know the exact timeline, we do know that Gas Lamp is not a part of the final plan.”

The building at 1501 Grand Ave., formerly known as the Butler Building, is owned by Krause Group, the parent company of Kum & Go. Gas Lamp opened in 2011 and has most recently been co-owned by **James Thyberg** and **Ryan Flattery**. The Butler Building has had a long history housing music before Gas Lamp; it was the former home of Blues on Grand, the Grand Avenue Lounge and Vicky’s Pour House. ...

And on the residential side, the City of Des Moines recently launched its “Improving Our Neighborhoods” (ION) initiative. The program will provide financial help for property owners tackling necessary home repairs. The goals of ION are to prevent the value of neighboring homes from diminishing and reduce the number of nuisance properties in the city.

For 2023, \$3.5 million have been earmarked to

help fund repairs, City Manager **Scott Sanders** shared in a press release. The ION program will focus on approximately 4,000 identified properties. Repairs are limited to the home’s exterior. Properties must be within city limits, insured, and current on taxes, utilities and mortgage payments. Homeowner income must fall below 80% of the Area Median Income: \$70,950 for a household of three in Polk County. ...

If you watched the Super Bowl last month, you may have noticed a commercial from Catch Des Moines, the metro’s convention and visitors bureau and sports commission. The video, titled “Believe the Hype,” highlighted the city as a destination for sporting events. Catch Des Moines forked over \$20,000 for the ad to air locally during the nation’s biggest sporting event — or 1.6% of the organization’s advertising budget, Marketing Vice President **Brock Konrad** told the Business Record.

The 30-second ad aired only in central Iowa. According to Fox Sports, a 30-second commercial on the national stage costs between \$6 million and \$7 million. ...

The Des Moines Art Center is celebrating its 75th anniversary year and the arrival of a new director in **Dr. Kelly Baum**. She will take over in May, filling the vacancy left by **Jeff Fleming** who served as the Art Center’s director for 25 years. The John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park came to Des Moines under his leadership.

Baum most recently worked at The Metropolitan

Museum of Art in New York and has served as a curator of modern and contemporary art for 23 years. On top of The Met, she has held positions at the Princeton University of Art Museum, the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Baum holds both a Ph.D. and M.A. in art history from the University of Delaware. ...

When it comes to funding waste collection in several metro communities, where does it go? Metro Waste Authority (MWA) recently released its 2021-2022 financial audit. Excluding depreciation and amortization, operating expenses totaled \$32.4 million — an increase of \$4.1 million, or 14.7%, from the previous year.

MWA’s operating revenues amounted to \$52.4 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, an increase of 19% from 2021. MWA employee compensation totaled \$7.45 million in 2022, up from \$5.85 million in 2021. Cash received from customers totaled \$49.66 million in 2022, compared to \$43.43 million the year prior.

An independent government agency, MWA is self-funded through fees charged to those who use its services. Revenue comes from Metro Park East Landfill, Metro Park West Landfill, Metro Recycling Facility, Metro Central Transfer Station, Metro Northwest Transfer Station, Metro Compost Center, Metro Hazardous Waste Drop-Off and the Curb It! curbside recycling program. ■

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POLITICAL MERCURY

BY DOUGLAS BURNS

Is Kari Lake a 2024 presidential candidate?

Lake said the Republican Party nationally only seems far more conservative today because Democrats have veered toward communism.

The Republican candidate for governor of Arizona in the last cycle, Kari Lake, an embattled and ascendent conservative with a rocketing national profile, pulled a crowd in Ankeny on Feb. 11 that had the feel of a White House-run event.

The former Iowan said she's not running for office, but the atmospherics at her event, styled like an Iowa Caucus rally, revealed the potential for Lake.

Several hundred people showed up early on a late Saturday afternoon, and stayed late, with lines of conservatives snaking to the back of the District Venue, waiting for an opportunity for autographs, well-wishing and selfies with Lake, who said she was in Iowa, the state in which she grew up and went to college, to make the case that Democrats and their allies stole the election from her. An Arizona appeals court ruled against Lake, who lost the election to Democrat Gov. Katie Hobbs. Lake contends that ballot printing issues were the result of intentional electioneering by her opponents.

An outspoken surrogate for former President Donald Trump, Lake, a product of north Scott County in eastern Iowa, insists she's not testing presidential waters and has no intention of returning with Oval Office ambitions.

"I am not running for president," Lake said in an interview. "I am fully supportive of President Donald J. Trump, and I want to see that man back in the White House as soon as possible."

That said, Lake added, "I am considering running for another office."

Lake plans to press her Arizona election case to the state supreme court in that southwestern reach of the nation.

In a fiery speech that lambasted so-called "cancel" culture, the Republican generated Trump-like energy with the standing-room-only crowd.

Political Mercury asked Lake, a 1991 alum of the

University of Iowa, if she would send members of her family there — or if she thinks the cultural environment in Iowa City today is too liberal.

"I'm very concerned with all of our universities," Lake said. "They have been turned into 'woke' ideology factories who are pumping out kids who have been brainwashed."

Does that include her alma mater?

"Well, I haven't studied their curriculum, but if they are anything like ASU (Arizona State University), U of A (Arizona University), NAU (Northern Arizona University), then I am sure they are having some of the same problems," Lake said in a 10-minute interview.

Lake attended the university in the late 1980s and 1990s, and noted she is a Republican because of President Ronald Reagan.

Is Iowa a better place now, with a series of conservative policies taking root under the leadership of Gov. Kim Reynolds, than it was in the 1980s of Lake's youth here?

"If I say 'Oh, it was a better place back then,' it's going to look like I don't love Iowa, and I do," she said. "We have to grow; we have to move forward. But I don't know enough to tell you things look bad in Iowa. I don't think that's the case. Sometimes it's hard to embrace that because we miss what it was like before when there were smaller towns, when it was a little easier to get around."

Lake said the Republican Party nationally only seems far more conservative today because Democrats have veered toward communism.

"The left has moved so far to the extreme left that it's not even recognizable," Lake said. "The Democratic Party is not even recognizable. This is almost communism. So when you are looking at communism over here, and you're looking at us, where we are, where we have been, it might look like we are way far to the right, but it's because the people on the left have moved so far."

Lake's grievances with the election in Arizona coursed through her speech, and she pledged to take the fight through the courts.

"I'm concerned that corruption has seeped into so many parts of our government," Lake said in the interview. "We look at how uneven our judicial system is right now. They are going after President Trump. They sic the DOJ on President Trump, Republicans, people who are their political adversaries."

Melissa Callahan, 44, a teacher in Altoona, thinks Lake connects in Iowa and represents values of Republicans here.

"I adore her," Callahan said. "She stands up for what's right, and she stands up for truth, and she stands up for election integrity, which scares so many people right now."

Carol Coburn, 78, of Waukee, thinks a presidential run is likely "too big of a step" for Lake now.

"But for myself, I have been so interested in Kari Lake," Coburn said, adding that the outcome of the Arizona gubernatorial race was a "supposed loss" for Lake.

"I would rather she run for president than for her to do vice president under someone else," Coburn said. ■

Douglas Burns of Carroll is fourth-generation journalist and founder of Mercury Boost, a marketing and public-relations company.



Arizona Republican Kari Lake insisted she is not running for the presidency following a speech to several hundred people in Ankeny. Photo by Douglas Burns



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MARCH/APRIL

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					31 7:08 COL	1 3:08 COL
2 1:08 COL	3	4 6:37 STP	5 6:37 STP	6 6:37 STP	7 6:37 STP	8 2:07 STP
9 2:07 STP	10	11 6:38 OMA	12 12:08 OMA	13 6:38 OMA	14 7:08 OMA	15 3:08 OMA
16 1:08 OMA	17	18 5:05 BUF	19 5:05 BUF	20 5:05 BUF	21 5:05 BUF	22 12:05 BUF
23 12:05 BUF	24	25 6:38 LOU	26 12:08 LOU	27 12:08 LOU	28 7:08 LOU	29 3:08 LOU
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COMING UP

SUBMIT ENTRIES AND PHOTOS TO EDITOR@DMCITYVIEW.COM

NOTE: The following events and attractions are subject to cancellation or last-minute changes. Before attending, be sure to check with each event individually to verify its status, start times, offerings and other details.

THINGS TO DO

'OLD SCHOOL, NEW SCHOOL'

Through March 31

Polk County Heritage Gallery, 111 Court Ave., Des Moines

"Old School, New School: An Exploration in Printmaking" will display works from 10 Iowa artists, as well as a display of printmaker tools. The exhibit is curated by Robert Schulte. The gallery is open 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays, located in the Polk County Administration Building. Details at www.polkcountyheritagegallery.org.



CELTIC CONCERT

Saturday, March 4 at 7 p.m.

Windsor Presbyterian Church, 6301 University Ave., Windsor Heights

Crossroads of Iowa will host a fundraising concert to support its programs for women. The popular ClearJoy Music duo will perform. There is no admission charge, but donations are appreciated. Overflow parking is across the street from the church on University Avenue, and a smaller lot is on the corner of 64th and University, east of the church. More information may be found at www.crossroadsofiowa.org/events.



Photo by Tim Garland for Iowa Wild

IOWA WILD

Wells Fargo Arena, 233 Center St., Des Moines

See more at iowawild.com.

- March 11 at 6 p.m. vs. Manitoba Moose
- March 12 at 3 p.m. vs. Manitoba Moose
- March 24 at 7 p.m. vs. Grand Rapids Griffins
- March 25 at noon vs. Grand Rapids Griffins



Militarie Gun. Photo by Tracy Nguyen

WHITE REAPER, MILITARIE GUN, MAMALARKY

Monday, March 6 at 7 p.m.

Wooly's, 504 E. Locust St., Des Moines

Louisville's White Reaper, self-proclaimed as "The World's Best American Band," will bring its garage punk stylings to Des Moines. They'll be preceded by Mamalarky, then Los Angeles-based Militarie Gun, whose tunes are defined by "musical restlessness." Tickets at woolysdm.com.



John Ratzenberger. Photo by Movieguide® - 0788_IMG, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=97163865>

CELEBRATE! INNOVATION

Thursday, March 9

DMACC, 5959 Grand Ave., West Des Moines

Des Moines Area Community College presents its annual Celebrate! Innovation (ciLive! 14) conference, an interactive and thought-provoking event. Presenters include actor John Ratzenberger, author Molly Bloom, drummer Kenny Aronoff and many others. The event is free and open to the public, located in the Ellipse. Presentations will also be streamed live via YouTube and the free e360TV network app or website. For more details, visit www.dmacc.edu/ciweek.

IOWA'S LARGEST ARTS & CRAFTS SHOW

March 10-12

Varied Industries Building, 3000 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines

More than 250 talented exhibitors from eight different states will congregate at the Iowa State Fairgrounds, selling thousands of unique, handmade products. Admission is \$7 for anyone older than 10 years old. Kids 10 and younger are free. Hours are 5-9 p.m. on Friday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday; and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. For more information, find the event Facebook page by searching "Callahan Promotions, Inc. Iowa's Largest Arts & Crafts shows."



Aubree Oliverson

'ST. CLAIR CONDUCTS TCHAIKOVSKY'

March 11-12

Des Moines Civic Center, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines

Renowned conductor Carl St. Clair will lead the Des Moines Symphony in a dramatic program beginning with award-winning composer John Wineglass' "Alone Together." Aubree Oliverson will then play Bruch's beloved First Violin Concerto. The concert will conclude with Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique" Symphony. Tickets \$15-\$70 at dmsymphony.org or the Civic Center box office.

COMING UP

SUBMIT ENTRIES AND PHOTOS TO EDITOR@DMCITYVIEW.COM



Photo courtesy of Iowa Wolves

IOWA WOLVES

Wells Fargo Arena, 233 Center St., Des Moines

Home games for Des Moines' pro basketball team. More details at iowa.gleague.nba.com.

- March 13 at 7 p.m. vs. Birmingham Squadron
- March 22 at 7 p.m. vs. Birmingham Squadron
- March 25 at 7 p.m. vs. Lakeland Magic



Photo courtesy of Harlem Globetrotters International

HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS

Tuesday, March 21 at 7 p.m.
Wells Fargo Arena, 233 Center St., Des Moines

Not your average basketball players, the Globetrotters are bringing their crazy tricks and legendary athleticism to Des Moines during their 2023 World Tour. Bring the whole family for a high-energy experience and a nonstop great time. Tickets at www.iowaeventscenter.com/events.

CAPITAL CITY CARD CONVENTION

March 24-26
Iowa Events Center, 730 Third St., Des Moines
Thousands of collectors attend this annual convention, where more than 200 tables of dealers from across the country will offer cards, memorabilia and collectibles. Autographs, bulk grading and authentication services will be on site. The show runs 3-8 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday. Tickets and information at theiowashow.com.



Photo courtesy of Des Moines Performing Arts

HOOPS AND HOPS

March 16-18
Cowles Commons, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines

Celebrate the NCAA Tournament at the Sixth Annual Hoops and Hops downtown. Large screens will be set up in a heated tent, with beverages from the Iowa Craft Beer Tent and local eats from multiple food trucks. Want to get in on the action? Two basketball courts will be set up. The event is free and runs 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. each day. Fans are encouraged to sport team colors and bring chairs (no outside food and drink, please). Details at dmpa.org.



The O'Brien clan at the 2022 parade. Front, from left: Joe Busch, RJ Reynolds, Riley Reynolds, Lynn O'Brien, Bobby O'Brien. Back: Max Purcell, Jessica Reynolds, Rick Reynolds, Shelly O'Brien Reynolds, Danny Avila, Gabby Dearth. Photo by Pat Checketts

ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

Friday, March 17, at noon
Downtown Des Moines

It's that time of year again. Dig out your greenest attire and get ready to feel lucky, thanks to The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick of Central Iowa's highly anticipated annual event. The parade begins at noon and runs along Grand Avenue and 15th Street in the Western Gateway district. Participant registration and the parade route may be found at www.friendlysonsiowa.com/Parade/parade.htm.



Photo courtesy of Greater Des Moines Partnership

DSM BOOK FESTIVAL

Saturday, March 25
Capital Square, 400 Locust St., Des Moines

The DSM Book Festival connects book lovers with local and nationally acclaimed authors, fellow enthusiasts, nonprofits and entertainment. Headlining authors include Chris Bohjalian ("The Flight Attendant"), Sequoia Nagamatsu ("How High We Go in the Dark") and others. More details are at dsmpartnership.com/dsmbookfestival.

ANTHONY RAY HINTON

Tuesday, March 28 at 7 p.m.
Hubbell Hall, 701 N. C St., Indianola

Simpson College is honored to present Anthony Ray Hinton, death row exoneree, acclaimed author and criminal justice advocate. Hinton will share his story of wrongful conviction, survival on Alabama's death row, and his decades-long journey to freedom. After 30 years, Hinton is free and sharing necessary changes to prevent wrongful conviction injustices in the future. Q&A session to follow, and a 30-minute signing of Hinton's New York Times Bestseller, "The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life, Freedom, and Justice." Books will be available for purchase. The event is free and open to the public, located on the second floor of Kent Campus Center. ■



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CITYVIEW'S

BUSINESS JOURNAL



Modern-day TREASURE HUNTING

The rise of bin stores

By Colson Thayer

Customers line up outside the store on a warm Saturday morning in February. Seventy-nine tickets are handed out before the store even opens — tickets that determine the order of entry. Once 10 a.m. hits, those first in line run into the store. By 10:02, carts are full. At 10:05, the first purchase is made.

“I think there’s a certain kind of a mental high you get, coming into a place like this, not knowing what you’re going to find,” said store owner David Gantt.

To the average onlooker, this scene might appear to be taken out of a Black Friday playbook; and, for some, it truly is. Customers rifle through bins of product overstock, returns, unsold clearance items and liquidation assets. Some of the luckiest customers leave with LEGO sets, scooters, board games, bedding and TV stands for only \$9. If it doesn’t sell on Saturday, the price will be lowered to \$6 apiece on Sunday, then \$3 on Monday. The chaos returns on Tuesday when everything is only \$1.

“Instead of pricing stuff, the whole concept is let the customers decide what it’s worth,” Gantt said.

Customers fill The Looney Bin Store in Clive within minutes of opening.

The Looney Bin Store

Before opening The Looney Bin Store in Clive, Gantt had no real previous experience in retail. But now, he and his wife, Diane, week after week, find themselves stocking up their store for Saturday mornings.

Gantt got the idea when he was visiting his daughter's father-in-law in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Bobby, as they call him, successfully runs two bin stores in that market.

"I thought it looked like an interesting business that Des Moines could use," Gantt said.

Gantt went on to spend weeks in Tulsa learning the tricks of the trade. He wanted to duplicate what Bobby was doing as closely as possible. Soon, Gantt learned what he needed to know about suppliers, inventory and how to run a successful bin store.

Beginning in the summer of 2021, the Gantts began their search for their store location. In April 2022, they opened their doors for the first time. At the time, The Looney Bin Store was central Iowa's biggest bin store in terms of square footage.

2nd Chance Liquidation

"COVID is really what started it all for us," said Rebecca VanDorpe, owner of 2nd Chance Liquidation in Urbandale.

Before the beginning of the pandemic, VanDorpe was running a gluten-free bakery out of her home kitchen. Meanwhile, her husband, Alex, was running a casino party company that relied on gatherings for business.

A friend of the couple introduced them to liquidation: purchasing another company's entire inventory when it goes out of business. Their friend had been running his own bin store in Des Moines and utilizing eBay. Everything at his warehouse was \$5 per piece. The VanDorpes visited his store, bought a bunch of stuff and flipped it all to sell on Facebook.

"We ended up doing that a couple of times, and then we decided to get brave and buy a pallet from him," VanDorpe said.

At that time, the VanDorpes were living in Cedar Rapids and sold their liquidated goods out of their garage. Quickly, their traction on Facebook picked up, and they needed to rent a small space out of a mall. They established their first storefront as a liquidation and discount store under a different name. For a year, they sticker-priced and displayed goods, but it was never a true bin store.

At the end of 2021, the couple moved back to the metro to be closer to family. They brought with them a goal: to open another liquidation store. In October 2021, they opened their current location as a "discount mall." 2nd Chance Liquidation was given



David Gantt owns The Looney Bin Store in Clive.

three months of free rent when they started leasing the space. The VanDorpes took it as an opportunity to make their business known to the public as a bin store before it even opened as such. In February 2022, they made the switch.

"We knew the whole time that we wanted to do bins eventually because we knew that's where the money was. We knew that's where the popularity was growing," VanDorpe said.

On the first day 2nd Chance Liquidation was open as a bin store, about 50 people were outside waiting in line before the store opened. They were slammed all day.

Suppliers and inventory

Bin store owners like Gantt and VanDorpe are not able to get their inventory directly from the original sellers.

"There are contract holders all over the country," Gantt explained. "They hold contracts with all the big companies like Target, Walmart, Costco, Sam's, T.J. Maxx, Kohl's and whoever. And these contract holders can get the overstocks and returns and things like that from the stores."

The stores send their overstocks and returns to central distribution centers. The distribution centers

sell pallets to contract holders and brokers, who then sell to bin store owners. Gantt, for example, makes weekly trips to Minneapolis with his own truck to pick up pallets for his store. Other times, the pallets are brought directly to the stores and warehouses, but there is one catch.

"You can buy these overstocks and returns and things, but you pretty much have to buy an entire semi load to get the kind of pricing we get," Gantt said. "So, it's not like the average guy can go and say, 'Hey, I want a pallet of this or that.' You need to buy a semi load."

The pricing for each semi load varies. Gantt estimated the least expensive ones to be around \$10,000, with the priciest around \$20,000.

2nd Chance Liquidation owns its own pallet house. There, they house their own pallets, as well as sell pallets to the public and other bin stores.

When 2nd Chance Liquidation receives its inventory, the first thing to do is sort it. VanDorpe claimed that other bin stores simply dump their inventory in the bins; 2nd Chance, on the other hand, hires processors to go through their inventory before it goes to the store. They sort the inventory into categories and get rid of the trash and packaging that comes along.



Rebecca VanDorpe owns 2nd Chance Liquidation in Urbandale.

Pricing

VanDorpe estimated that each pallet comes with anywhere between 300 and 1,100 items, costing 2nd Chance about \$1.60 per item. At that price point, they can justify selling electronics, appliances, toys and everything in the bins for as low as \$7.

At 2nd Chance Liquidation, Wednesdays and Thursdays are spent restocking. Doors open at 10 a.m. each Friday with a price point of \$7. By the end of the day, much of the inventory is gone. What is left is sold for \$7 on Saturday, \$5 on Sunday, \$3 on Monday, and \$1 on Tuesday. VanDorpe said she typically sees around \$3,000-\$4,000 in sales on Fridays, \$3,000 on Saturdays, \$600-\$900 on Sundays, \$1,100-\$1,400 on Mondays and \$1,600 on Tuesdays.

The Looney Bin Store follows a similar schedule at slightly different prices: \$9 on Saturdays, \$6 on Sundays, \$3 Mondays and \$1 on Tuesdays. What The Looney Bin Store does differently is offering a “vault” section in the store. In the vault, customers can find furniture, bedding, vacuums, strollers, snowblowers and more. When Gantt receives these items, he prices them at about half the retail price. Each week, if an item does not sell, he'll lower the price again.



A photo posted by 2nd Chance Liquidation on Facebook features \$10 “mystery boxes.”

Returns and refunds

Neither store offers refunds on merchandise found in the bins. At The Looney Bin Store, Gantt will refund any purchase made from the vault within seven days of purchase.

“It’s a gamble way of shopping,” VanDorpe said.

Both stores do offer ways for customers to see if products are damaged or broken. At The Looney Bin Store, Gantt has two tables on either side of the store with outlets and batteries to test products. At 2nd Chance Liquidation, customers are not allowed to open any goods, but employees are happy to help open and assist as needed.

For the unwanted goods each week, 2nd Chance Liquidation devised a solution. VanDorpe prepares unwanted items and gathers them in “mystery boxes.” Customers must then join a waiting list for these \$10 boxes.

The industry’s future

“I firmly believe that bin stores are going to be what’s happening here in the future,” VanDorpe said. “You’re going to go to the grocery store to get your food, and you’re going to go to a bin store to shop for your other stuff.”

And that might be the case as malls continue to close and big retail stores continue to get rid of unwanted goods. But, for now, the biggest challenge to bin stores is familiarity.

“Most of the people that walk in that haven’t been here, have no idea how this works,” Gantt said.

“I am always telling people, ‘Go see Looney Bin; go to these other bin stores,’ because I want people to be as educated as possible about bin stores so that they want to go see all of them,” VanDorpe said. ■



CENTRAL IOWA BUSINESS CONFERENCE

HOSTED BY: THE URBANDALE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Tiffani Bova

Chief Growth Evangelist, Salesforce

Bova has been named to the latest Thinkers50's list of the world's top management thinkers and is a welcomed guest on Bloomberg, among others.

She is a change maker whose thought-provoking and forward-thinking insights have made her a frequent guest on a variety of industry-leading podcasts and live broadcasts.



Tommy Breedlove

Author and Feature Keynote Speaker

Tommy Breedlove challenges audiences to embrace a new kind of ambition to live a well-rounded life of purpose and abundance which, as he found out, leads to even more profitability.

He shares tools and simple steps to help audiences reclaim significance and meaning in their lives.



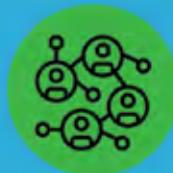
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SALE PRICE: \$909,533
SELLER: AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT LC
BUYER: SHIVASHAKTI LLC
ACRES: 3.484
SQUARE FEET: 0



11040 HICKMAN ROAD, CLIVE
SALE DATE: 2023-01-10
SALE PRICE: \$5,600,000
SELLER: RAVENWOOD/HIGHLANDER II LC
BUYER: BATRA HOSPITALITY GROUP INC
ACRES: 2.456
SQUARE FEET: 73,419



6115 S.W. NINTH ST., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2023-01-10
SALE PRICE: \$115,000

NO ADDRESS, SOUTH DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2023-01-06
SALE PRICE: \$110,600
SELLER: VACCO, BRANDON M
BUYER: FATINO PROPERTIES LLC
ACRES: 0.483
SQUARE FEET: 0

2359 E. GRAND AVE., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2023-01-10
SALE PRICE: \$27,000
SELLER: GRUEN, STANLEY C ESTATE
BUYER: VELAZQUEZ, VICTOR
ACRES: 0.073
SQUARE FEET: 1,224

SELLER: NOAH, ANNE MARIE
BUYER: AYBARR AT NOAH'S LLC
ACRES: 0.730
SQUARE FEET: 5,765



1710 N.W. 86TH ST., CLIVE
SALE DATE: 2023-01-11
SALE PRICE: \$770,000
SELLER: 1710-86 HOLDINGS LLC
BUYER: RIDGWAY HOLDINGS LLC
ACRES: 0.586
SQUARE FEET: 7,128

1537 VERMONT ST., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2023-01-12
SALE PRICE: \$600,000
SELLER: DARLENE M THOMPSON LIVING TRUST
BUYER: VERMONT BUILDING LLC
ACRES: 0.472
SQUARE FEET: 9,055



710 S.W. THIRD ST., ANKENY
SALE DATE: 2023-01-17
SALE PRICE: \$340,000
SELLER: 98 INVESTMENTS LLC
BUYER: JC K&G NORWALK LLC
ACRES: 0.471
SQUARE FEET: 2,964

NO ADDRESS, ANKENY
SALE DATE: 2023-01-18
SALE PRICE: \$1,300,000
SELLER: KNAPP-ELWELL LC
BUYER: CONVENIENCE BUSINESS PARK LLC
ACRES: 4.730
SQUARE FEET: 0

3721 COTTAGE GROVE AVE., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2023-01-18
SALE PRICE: \$235,000
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**2465 ROBINSON AVE. N.E.,
 BONDURANT**

SALE DATE: 2023-01-18
 SALE PRICE: \$1,093,569
 SELLER: BONDURANT BUSINESS
 PARK LLC
 BUYER: SKOL HOLDINGS LLC
 ACRES: 5.228
 SQUARE FEET: 0

**2101 E. ARMY POST ROAD,
 DES MOINES**

SALE DATE: 2023-01-18
 SALE PRICE: \$400,000
 SELLER: R&J MOBILE HOMES INC
 BUYER: FLUMMERFELT EAGLE
 POINTE LLC
 ACRES: 26.649
 SQUARE FEET: 3,486



2002 INDIANOLA AVE., DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2023-01-19
 SALE PRICE: \$62,000
 SELLER: WAYNE RUSSELL LC
 BUYER: GARZA DE MARTINEZ,
 EDITH
 ACRES: 0.276
 SQUARE FEET: 300

1910 S.W. THIRD ST., ANKENY

SALE DATE: 2023-01-20
 SALE PRICE: \$240,000
 SELLER: PORTER, ROBERT G
 BUYER: VINJE, MATTHEW STEPHEN
 ACRES: 0.571
 SQUARE FEET: 5,000



716 S.W. THIRD ST., ANKENY

SALE DATE: 2023-01-24
 SALE PRICE: \$2,100,000
 SELLER: FIRETRUCKER LLC
 BUYER: 98 INVESTMENTS LLC
 ACRES: 0.749
 SQUARE FEET: 7,926

1424 ARMY POST ROAD, DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2023-01-24
 SALE PRICE: \$550,000
 SELLER: TJADEN HOLDINGS LLC
 BUYER: BIG DEAL INVESTMENTS
 LLC
 ACRES: 0.327
 SQUARE FEET: 3,223

**1615 S.W. MAGAZINE ROAD,
 ANKENY**

SALE DATE: 2023-01-26
 SALE PRICE: \$100
 SELLER: CPM INVESTMENTS LLC
 BUYER: THE COLLIER LLC
 ACRES: 0.719
 SQUARE FEET: 0

6900 FLEUR DRIVE, DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2023-01-26
 SALE PRICE: \$914,760
 SELLER: HORIZON VENTURE ONE LC
 BUYER: DES MOINES HOSPITALITY
 LLC
 ACRES: 2.000
 SQUARE FEET: 0



**900 MULBERRY ST., UNIT 5,
 DES MOINES**

SALE DATE: 2023-01-26
 SALE PRICE: \$985,000
 SELLER: DINGEL PROPERTIES LLC
 BUYER: DMFD-THE SHOP INC
 ACRES: 0.273
 SQUARE FEET: 5,267

**1510 W. WALNUT ST., UNIT 106
 BLDG 1, ELKHART**

SALE DATE: 2023-01-27
 SALE PRICE: \$230,500
 SELLER: ELKHART PROPERTIES LLC
 BUYER: SHORT ANSWERS LLC
 ACRES: 0.135
 SQUARE FEET: 1,800

2300 128TH ST., URBANDALE

SALE DATE: 2023-01-27
 SALE PRICE: \$2,180,000
 SELLER: BEJOFOBA LLC
 BUYER: BDC MANAGEMENT CORP
 ACRES: 1.626
 SQUARE FEET: 16,140

2220 E. OVID AVE., DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2023-01-31
 SALE PRICE: \$765,000
 SELLER: BILL DITO LLC
 BUYER: 2220 OVID LLC
 ACRES: 2.778
 SQUARE FEET: 21,360



7701 DOUGLAS AVE., URBANDALE

SALE DATE: 2023-01-31
 SALE PRICE: \$500,000
 SELLER: NGUYEN, THAO TP
 BUYER: THE DRAWBRIDGE LLC
 ACRES: 0.595
 SQUARE FEET: 4,620



**1861 S.E. PRINCETON DRIVE,
 GRIMES**

SALE DATE: 2023-02-01
 SALE PRICE: \$2,230,000
 SELLER: IPE1031 REV444 LLC
 BUYER: SMITH, CHAD J
 ACRES: 1.545
 SQUARE FEET: 15,750

2921 EUCLID AVE., DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2023-02-02
 SALE PRICE: \$200,000
 SELLER: REYNOLDS, LAURA E
 BUYER: KALDENBERG
 ENTERPRISES LLC
 ACRES: 0.201
 SQUARE FEET: 1,661



109 E. FIRST ST., SUITE A, GRIMES

SALE DATE: 2023-02-06
 SALE PRICE: \$575,000
 SELLER: UTHE PROPERTIES LLC
 BUYER: MAATARANI LLC
 ACRES: 0.201
 SQUARE FEET: 2,500 ■

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Borrower Name	City	County	Cong. District	\$ Amount	Jobs Created	Jobs Retained	Existing Jobs	New Vs. Existing	Business Type
CRE-PRO LLC	POSTVILLE	ALLAMAKEE	01	\$2,500,000	4	2	6	EXISTING BUSINESS	Other Activities Related to Real Estate
Tubaugh Properties, LLC	CENTERVILLE	APPANOOSE	02	\$180,000	2	2	0	NEW BUSINESS	Offices of Chiropractors
Tubaugh Family Chiropractic Clinic, Inc.	CENTERVILLE	APPANOOSE	02	\$45,000	2	5	3	NEW BUSINESS	Offices of Chiropractors
William Orthaus	IONIA	CHICKASAW	04	\$73,500	1	1	1	NEW BUSINESS	General Freight Trucking, Local
William Orthaus	IONIA	CHICKASAW	04	\$73,500	1	1	1	NEW BUSINESS	General Freight Trucking, Local
Balk Performance LLC	SABULA	CLINTON	01	\$35,000	2	0	0	NEW BUSINESS	Sporting and Recreational Goods and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers
Robotic Ag Solutions, LLC	BATTLE CREEK	IDA	04	\$85,000	1	0	0	NEW BUSINESS	Soil Preparation, Planting, and Cultivating
LITTLE VILLAGE, LLC	IOWA CITY	JOHNSON	02	\$82,000	3	15	15	EXISTING BUSINESS	N/A
Coffee Emporium LLC	TIFFIN	JOHNSON	02	\$198,500	15	18	18	EXISTING BUSINESS	Snack and Nonalcoholic Beverage Bars
InCourage Counseling PLLC	ALGONA	KOSSUTH	04	\$18,000	2	2	0	NEW BUSINESS	Offices of Mental Health Practitioners (except Physicians)
Ssyong and Family, Inc.	Marion	LINN	01	\$235,000	1	5	5	EXISTING BUSINESS	General Automotive Repair
STAPES CONCRETE AND GRADING LLC	Saint Charles	MADISON	03	\$350,000	3	3	3	EXISTING BUSINESS	Site Preparation Contractors
DPW Services, Inc.	Altoona	POLK	03	\$170,000	2	4	2	NEW BUSINESS	Remediation Services
DPW Services, Inc.	Altoona	POLK	03	\$50,000	2	4	2	NEW BUSINESS	Remediation Services
Castle Fitness Holdings LLC	Ankeny	POLK	03	\$250,000	0	2	2	NEW BUSINESS	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
1500 Delaware, LLC	Des Moines	POLK	03	\$3,362,000	5	0	12	EXISTING BUSINESS	General Freight Trucking, Long Distance, Truckload
Golden Brother Company Inc	DES MOINES	POLK	03	\$1,000,000	0	5	5	NEW BUSINESS	Supermarkets and Other Grocery (except Convenience) Stores
KBJ Real Estate, LLC	Grimes	POLK	03	\$248,000	4	0	8	EXISTING BUSINESS	Flooring Contractors
JT Fitness LLC	URBANDALE	POLK	03	\$75,200	2	0	6	EXISTING BUSINESS	Sports and Recreation Instruction
THE LUTHERIE SHOP, LLC	URBANDALE	POLK	03	\$19,000	1	1	1	EXISTING BUSINESS	Other Personal and Household Goods Repair and Maintenance
Hot 3, LLC	Davenport	SCOTT	02	\$267,700	11	1	1	NEW BUSINESS	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
Randy R. Mumm and Teresa S. Mumm Revocable Trust	Ames	STORY	04	\$509,000	18	0	75	EXISTING BUSINESS	Limited-Service Restaurants
Freedom Self Storage 24/7, LLC	Carlisle	WARREN	03	\$2,304,000	0	0	1	EXISTING BUSINESS	Lessors of Nonresidential Buildings (except Miniwarehouses)


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ON ISSUES THAT MATTER TO YOUR BUSINESS

TECHNOLOGY

You're Welcome

Our IT departments, IT partners, and IT Infrastructure are commonly the most willing or able to make our lives a little easier. When thinking about recent events in our community I tend to realize that there are so many people doing things a lot of us can't imagine doing for one reason or another.

When it comes to technology, there are expectations and thoughts that we just want it to work. The value of the technology working sometimes doesn't present itself until we must live without it. This past month in our community we had a cyber-attack on one of the largest public-school districts we know. We also had a much more significant event that costs the lives of children in our community and risked the life of someone that serves in a way that many people can't imagine...

Staying with this issues theme, I just want to say THANK YOU. Thank you to all of the people that are behind the curtains maintaining systems, responding to calls, and rising to the occasion!

Let's keep them equipped!



Scott Hardee

Business Development Executive – Branch Manager



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ACCOUNTING

Can I take itemized deductions for the 2022 tax year?

This is a typical question during tax season for individual clients.

Before I answer the question, let me explain what it means to be able to "itemize" on your tax return. In order to itemize you must have enough deductions that in total they exceed the standard deduction.

In 2018 the federal standard deduction increased from \$12,000 to \$24,000 for married individuals and from \$6,000 to \$12,000. This meant that you had to have a lot more in the "itemized" deductions to have enough to exceed the standard deduction. Therefore, many people thought that they could no longer itemize.

This is true for Federal, however, Iowa did not change their standard deductions, which are \$5,420 for married and \$2,210 for single.

So the answer to the question is YES, you still can take itemized deductions in 2023.

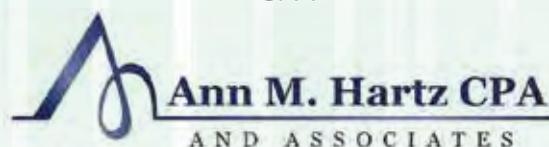
Here is a list of the common itemized deductions: mortgage interest, property taxes, car tags, donations, and medical (if you meet the 7.5% threshold)

The best way to find out is to bring all your deductions with you to your tax appointment and your preparer can determine if you have enough to itemize.



Ann M. Hartz

CPA



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ADVERTISING

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Brand advertising builds a connection with consumers over a long period of time. It establishes your identity and credibility in the market place, providing tremendous value to your business. Branding helps make the cash register ring.

Successful branding starts with a thorough understanding of your business. What is your niche? How are you better than you competitors? Why are your customers loyal? What do they say about you? Who are you or who do you want to be in the market place?

Are you quality, fast, cheap, friendliest, award-winning, dependable, giving back to the community, etc.? Through brand advertising, you control your story, image and reputation.

Pinpoint your brand and communicate it to your customers and community. Include brand advertising in your marketing strategy with the goals of:

- 1) Creating a positive impression,
- 2) Increasing awareness,
- 3) Supporting loyalty among current customers and
- 4) Generating demand for your products and services.



Jolene Goodman

Vice President



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A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE OF WELLS FARGO ARENA

From a rodeo event to a basketball game to a hockey match, floor transitions are all part of the game.

By Joe Weeg

The horse is smarter than your average bucking bronc. All the others just bucked forward and bucked back as they went around in a circle in the Wells Fargo Arena. Not this horse. He bucks forward, bucks back, and then does a twisting buck forward. Really? A twist? Is the horse training for a gymnastic floor routine? The rodeo rider doesn't stand a chance as he flies out of the saddle and lands on...



... the hardwood floor losing the ball. Picking himself off the floor, the Iowa Wolves player sprints to the other end of the court. Grabs a quick steal and back he comes. The clock is ticking down. The player looks up, dribbles directly into the lane of big men and leaps high over arms and bodies and dunks the ball into the basket. The crowd erupts as the ball rolls across...



... the ice. The score is tied 1 to 1. The goalie is superhuman. Shot after shot by the other team is blocked. But now the overtime is over, the score is tied and it is a shootout — the goalie all alone against the opposing player. Can the Iowa Wild win once again? “Craaaack” goes the hockey stick against the puck.

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Founded in Urbandale in 1987, Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm has always had a client-first approach. This has allowed us to grow with Urbandale and the greater Des Moines community while also growing in our legal expertise and areas of practice. Our commitment to excellent results for each of our clients means we can continue to grow in the years ahead.

We are proud to be a reliable resource for our community by providing real estate closings for Habitat for Humanity. Additionally, we consistently provide free seminars covering our varied practice areas for partner agencies, medical organizations, clients and the community at large.

Because we focus on the needs of our clients and our community, we are a service-oriented firm. Our attorneys, along with professional and courteous staff, work together to ensure each client receives friendly service and prompt responses to all inquiries, and to exceed our clients' highest expectations. As always, we strive to provide excellent legal counsel and representation to help our clients meet their legal needs and goals.

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THE BEGINNING

Wells Fargo Arena sits like a gigantic, perched gargoyle overlooking Des Moines' downtown. It is early morning. The northwest parking lot is empty. No one is moving. But the air shimmers with anticipation for the crowds to come. The old man in the parking booth waves me on with a smile. "Go check it out," he says. So I do.

I wait inside with Elly Simpson, the marketing manager of the Iowa Events Center, which includes the Wells Fargo Arena. It is cold. Elly has other work to do. And a long weekend of shows is just beginning. But she kindly stands with me in the early morning. I practice my Iowanese:

"It sure is cold."

"It sure is."

"I think it's mostly the wind."

"And that wet air, don't you think?"

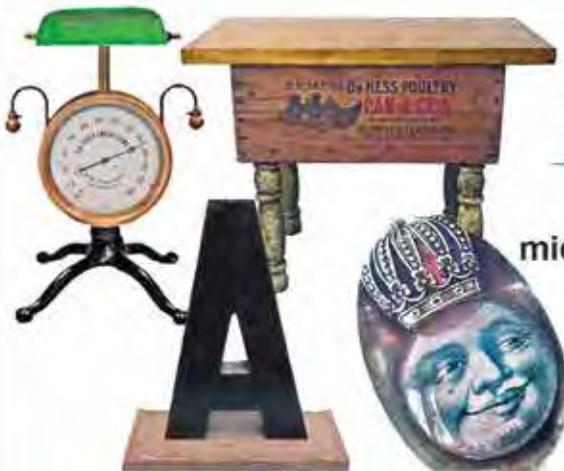
We are waiting the arrival of the dump trucks with dirt for the rodeo floor. Elly earlier explained to me that the rodeo is on Friday and Saturday, the basketball team plays on Sunday, and the hockey team has a game on Monday. All in the same location at Wells Fargo Arena.

"My goodness," I say cleverly, "won't it be hard to play basketball in rodeo dirt? And how will those hockey skates work on a hardwood floor? And won't the horses slip on the ice?"

Elly, still young and kind, smiles patiently.

A big truck backs in, beeper sounding, lights flashing, and dumps its load. A teaspoon of dirt in a large sandbox.





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Harold Peterson, director of operations for Iowa Events Center, later joins me. Personable and calm, he is perfect for the job.

“Our ice is down for the hockey season. So we cover our ice with ice board decking, then a layer of plastic over the ice board decking and then plywood. The dirt comes in on top of that.”

We go down to the arena floor.

“Roughly 40-50 dump trucks of dirt for a rodeo. Twice that amount of dirt is used for a Monster Jam.”

Harold enjoys his job and doesn't realize that I'm a boring old man and don't have a clue what a Monster Jam is, but I smile and nod along.

“It will get incredibly dusty over the next few days. So we really have a small window to allow all the dust to settle and wipe down all the seats, detail clean, and dust the entire building. The dirt will be out between the 3-5 a.m., and then a crew of 30 guys and a cleaning crew of 50 will come in just to turn the building.”



Harold Peterson

THE RODEO — DAY 1 AND 2

And several hours later, voila — home for bucking broncs, cowboys, cowgirls, a clown and a herd of bulls. Although I am curious how the young man, floating several feet above the bull, is going to experience the well-made dirt floor.



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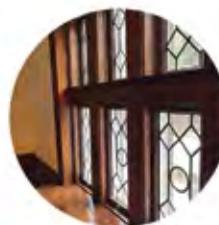
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Billy Snyder and his family come down to the dirt to do some roping with a real cowboy before the main rodeo starts on Friday.

“We love the rodeo and the chance to come down before the show,” says Eric Snyder, the father of Billy. “We’ll be here every year for this event.”

And Billy, how did the roping go?
 “Loved it. I’ll be better next year.”



Eric and Billy Snyder

The dirt floor is holding up well. As the show goes on, I sit next to David Jones. I explain that I am here to check out Wells Fargo and all these floor transitions from event to event.

“Do you want to hear about another transformation?” he says.
 “Sure.”

“Have you ever heard of the Tin Man in ‘The Wizard of Oz?’ ”

And David Jones goes on to explain . . .

“We all met in the hospital when we were on heart-assisted devices. Dan, one of us, received a Tin Man from someone because, of course, the Tin Man needed a heart. Two days later, he got a call and got a heart. Dan passed the Tin Man to me, and I got a call for my heart. Then I passed it to my brother, who got his heart six months later. He then passed it on to another guy named Mike, and Mike got his shortly after.”

Unbelievable. Four heart transplants and a lucky talisman. The Tin Man Club. So, bucking broncs, cowboys, cowgirls, a clown, a herd of bulls, a young boy roping and . . . a heart transplant survivor. All at the rodeo on a Friday night.



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BASKETBALL — DAY 3

“As the dirt comes out, the plywood goes out, the plastic goes out. Clean the ice decking and lay down the court. We will lay it down by 6 a.m. and be ready for basketball at 1 p.m. We have a really strong crew here.”

Sure enough, all happens as Harold Peterson predicts. By 2 p.m., the Iowa Wolves are tipping off. But, first, I have to get past Mary Ann.

Mary Ann has been working nearly 12 years for the Iowa Events Center. Today she is taking tickets for the basketball game.

“I have been working here since my daughter’s wedding. I have a full-time job but needed the extra money. And now I keep saying this is my retirement job for when I eventually retire.”

Mary Ann laughs at her crazy work schedule.

“I enjoy it all. I’ve done tickets and been an usher and been down on the stage. I’ve gotten to see so many shows.”

And she does enjoy it. She is a regular to the regulars who come for the games. When she takes a day off, they are concerned about her whereabouts.

She smiles her slanting smile and helps the next person in line.

My wife and I find our way into the game. But to the amazement of no one but me, a loser who never watches sports, I soon discover watching the game is just one of many options in the arena. There is the amazing Howl-O-Meter, which measures the loudness of the wolf howls from the crowd during opposing team free throws. There are T-shirts being tossed into the stands to screaming fans holding giant foam wolf



Mary Ann



paws. And there is a wolf mascot tumbling, jumping, yelling, rolling and scootering around the court exciting the crowd. But my favorite non-game activity? The Kiss Cam. Yup, audience members smooch for the big screen as the camera zooms in for a close-up. My wife, thrilled by this idea, quickly moves a couple rows down.

The Wolves win in the last seconds. The crowd goes wild. Everyone goes home happy. Another day passes.



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HOCKEY — DAY 4

Marlon Ballentine is soft spoken, easy to smile, gentle eyes. Don't be fooled. He's the boss. He is operations supervisor at the Events Center and is in charge of maintaining the buildings and the changes with the floor. He's done this since he was 18 years old. He exudes competence.

"We are now changing out from basketball to hockey. We will pull out all the decking and then start taking the court apart. We are standing on the ice decking now. These are 4 by 8 sheets. Once we get the decking out, we'll put the hockey glass in. The basketball floor will be the last thing we pull. We'll be done within four to five hours, depending on the manpower we have."

"How did you handle the rodeo dirt?"

"We didn't remove the dirt. The rodeo takes care of that. However, we clean the arena after the rodeo. No matter how hard we clean, the dirt from the rodeo will linger for a while."

"Do you like your job?"

Marlon looks at me with his crooked smile.

"I've done this my whole life. I'm from Des Moines. Born and raised. I started when I was 18 years old. This is what I do."

And that is what he does as he takes over tearing apart the basketball court and directing the 20 or so

other helpers.

"Marlon, just wondering, how many pieces to the basketball floor?"

"The basketball floor is 4 by 8 sheets. We have about 500 sheets."

So, 500 sheets and 24 hours later, the Iowa Wild are in a tight hockey game that goes into a shootout. Zane McIntyre is in the goal. He saves shot after shot all game long. He has to save one more. One on one. The puck is shifted back and forth by the player for the Grand Rapids Griffins. First to the right, then to the left, then small pulses of the puck back and forth. He shoots... McIntyre effortlessly blocks it with his right hand. Yahoo! The Wild win.

And how could they not win after more than 60 kids from Van Meter Elementary School have sung the National Anthem, and Pack 383 from Altoona have been the standard-bearers? It's like having Mother Teresa rooting for you. Goodbye, opponent. Hello, victory.



Marlon Ballentine



THE END

And the day ends. The floor, at last, sits quietly. The crews of workers are punched out. The parking lot is empty. The old man in the booth has gone home. And Wells Fargo Arena settles gently into its foundation. All is well.

So, what's up next for Wells Fargo Arena? Of course... THE MONSTER JAM! ■

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 **4/7 • FAN APPRECIATION NIGHT**
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MONDAY - \$1 Hot Dogs

MON-THUR - \$3 Off Tito's Drinks

TUESDAY - \$2 Hot Dogs & \$2 Popcorn

WEDNESDAY - Winning Wednesday

FRIDAY - \$2 Beers & Fireball Drink Special

SATURDAY - Local Concert Series &

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Thank you!



We enjoy honoring central Iowa's best, as it is part of our mission in celebrating all things local at CITYVIEW. While putting together this year's Best Of Des Moines issue, we tallied 16,332 votes that were cast in 277 categories. And when the votes were all counted, we announced the winners at an invitation-only event for all the top vote-getters at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny on Tuesday, Jan. 31.

A sold-out crowd attended the gala this year with food, drink, live music and a presentation emceed by Lou Sipolt Jr. and Jackie Schmillen and hosted by Shane Goodman, CITYVIEW's editor and publisher. We share some of the photos from the event and the related awards presentations in the following pages. Please join us in congratulating these incredible local people, businesses, places and events. ■



Don Stabenow and Holly Lewis, Stivers Ford



Mellissa and Andy Hall, Laser 103.3



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Ryan Young, Tara Bougher, Rebeca Young and Michael Foreman, Toad's Tavern



Kelsey Seay, Beth Brouner, Megan Fitzgerald, Vanezza Van Buskirk, Madison Short, Britney Brown, Jake Brown, Michelle Audas, Ali Hubbard and Bri Harding, Copy + Paste

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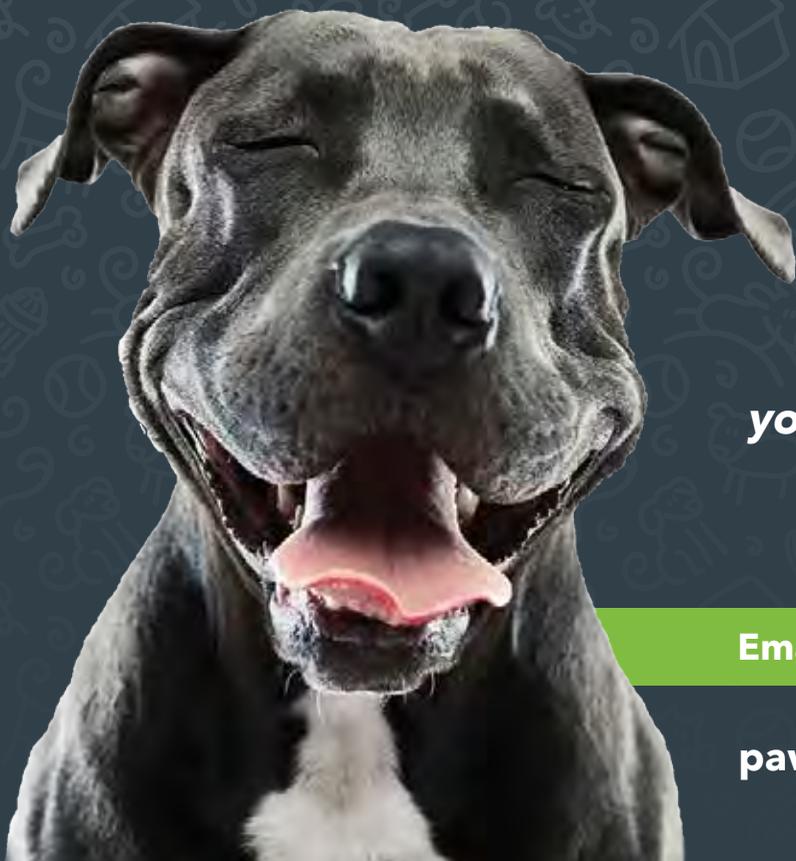
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Garrett Sheppard and Katesha Butler, Sculpted515



Michele and Chris Pruisner, Lucky Gal Tattoo

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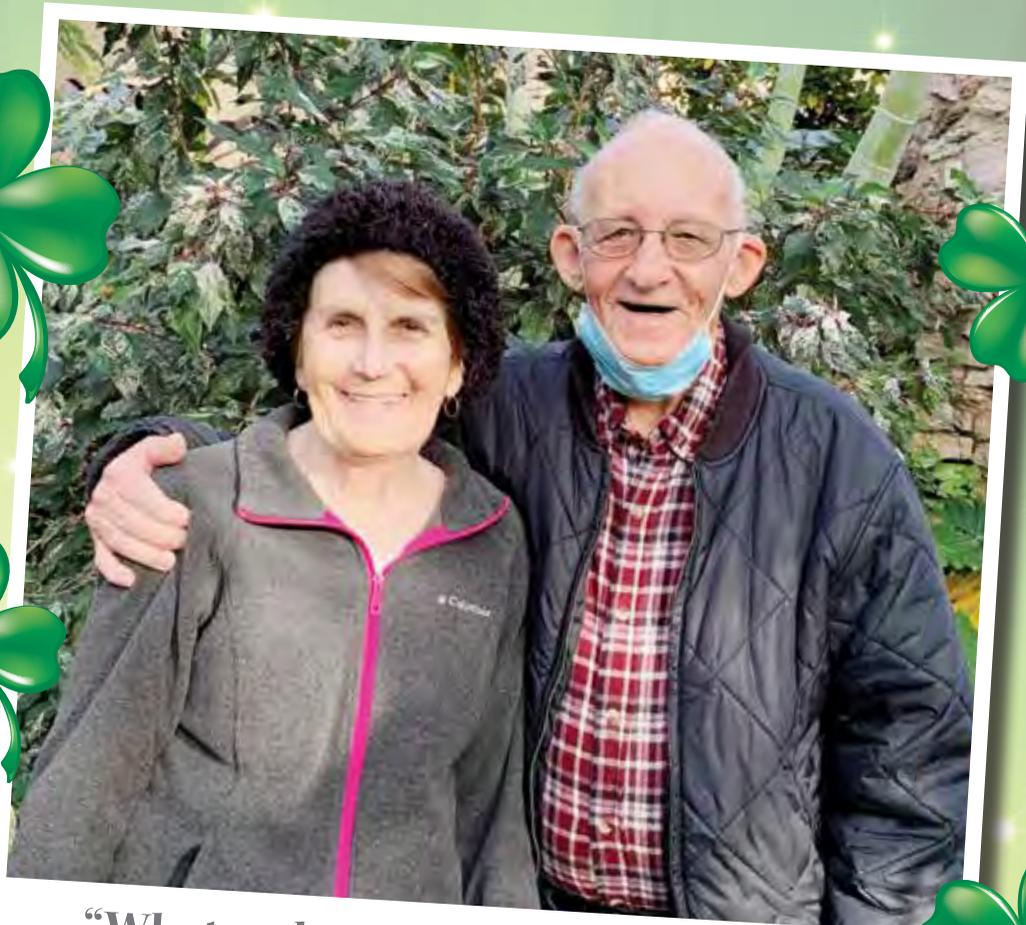
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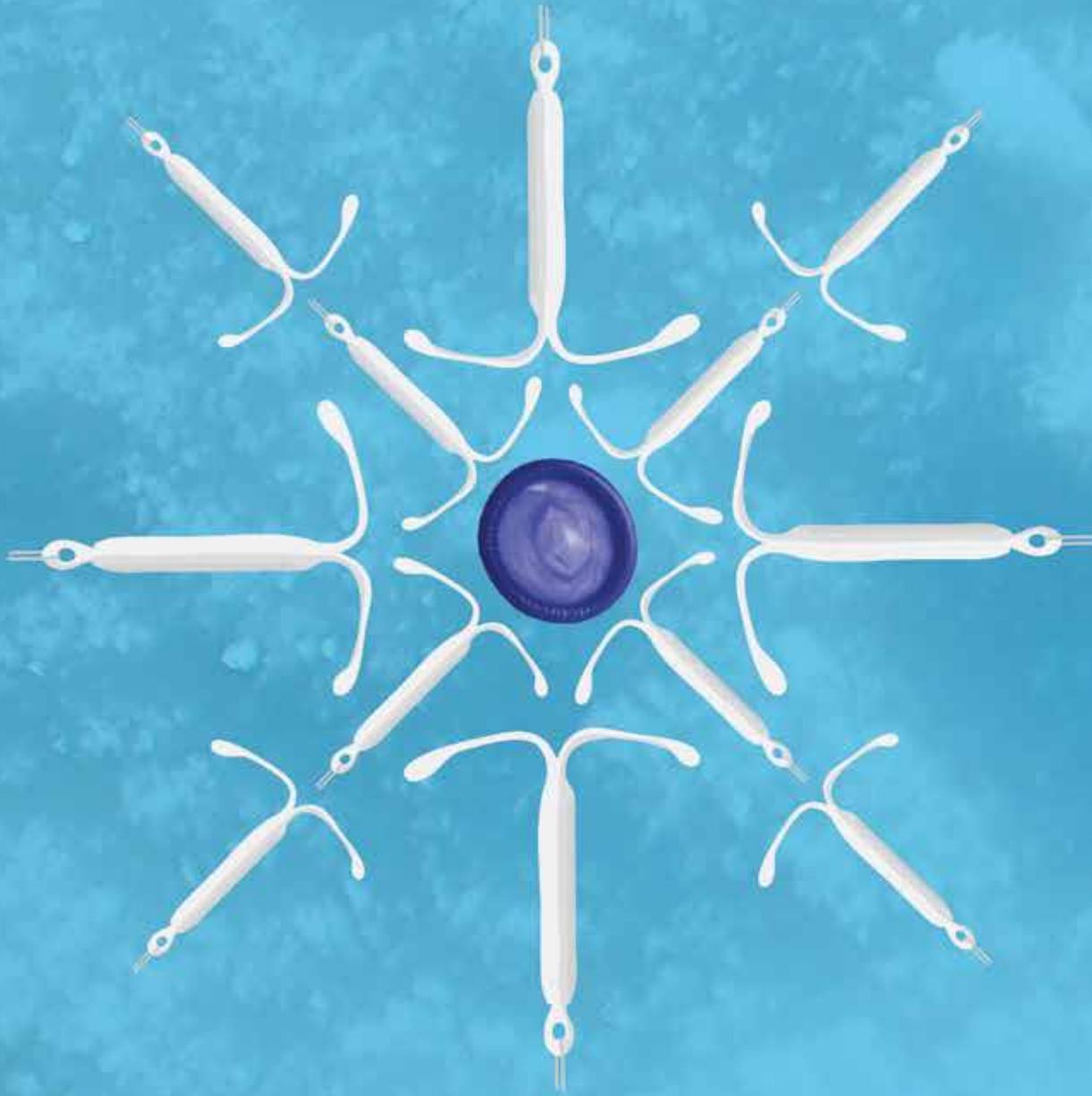


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The results are in! Now 11 years in a row! on behalf of the many people who make up our sales, service and support team at Stivers Ford Lincoln, I thank you so much for voting for us and helping us win the best domestic car dealership award in Cityview's "Best of Des Moines" poll - for the past eleven years straight. We won our first award in 2013.

We are so humbled. I am very proud of the hard working men and women who come to work each day with a smile and proudly wear our Stivers Ford Lincoln logo, especially over the past three years with the many new challenges we're all living with due to COVID-19 and supply chain shortages. For us, it's meant a different way of doing business, adapting to serve you better and safer. It wouldnt be possible without our amazing team.



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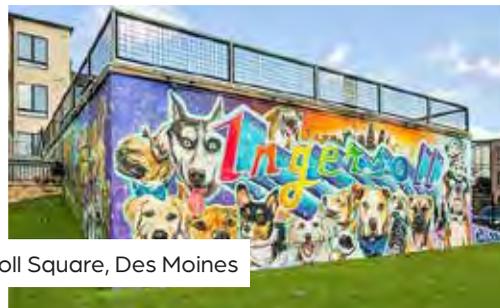
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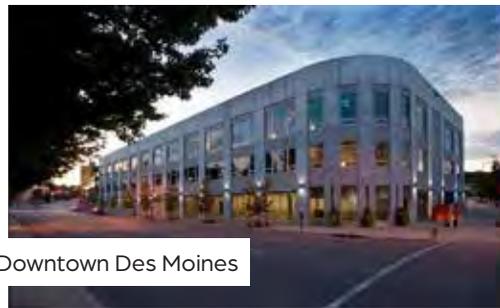
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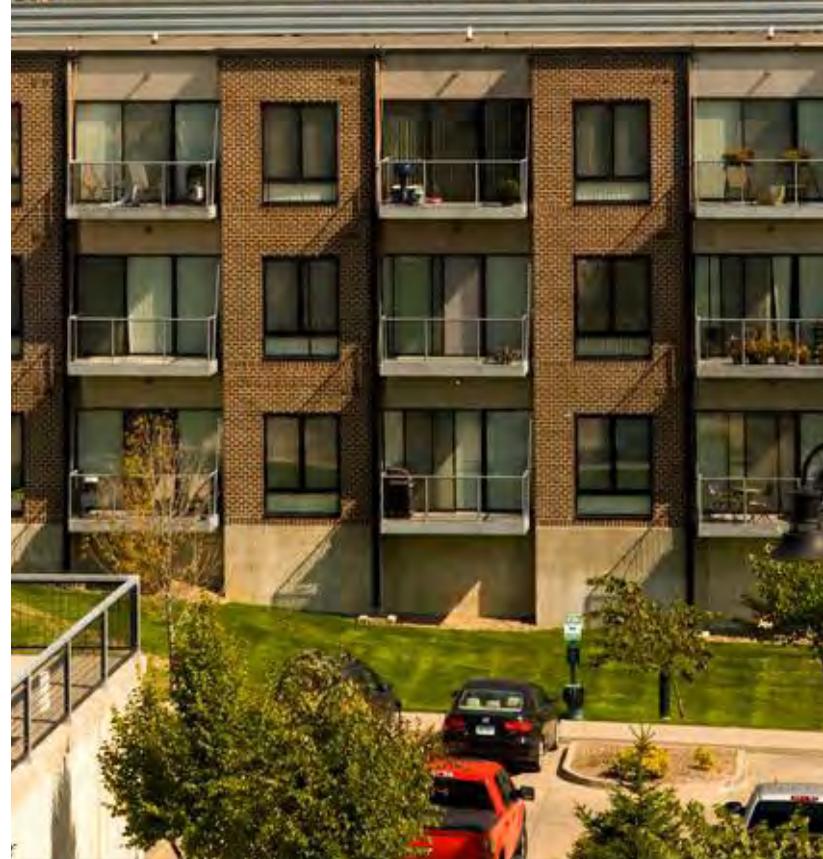


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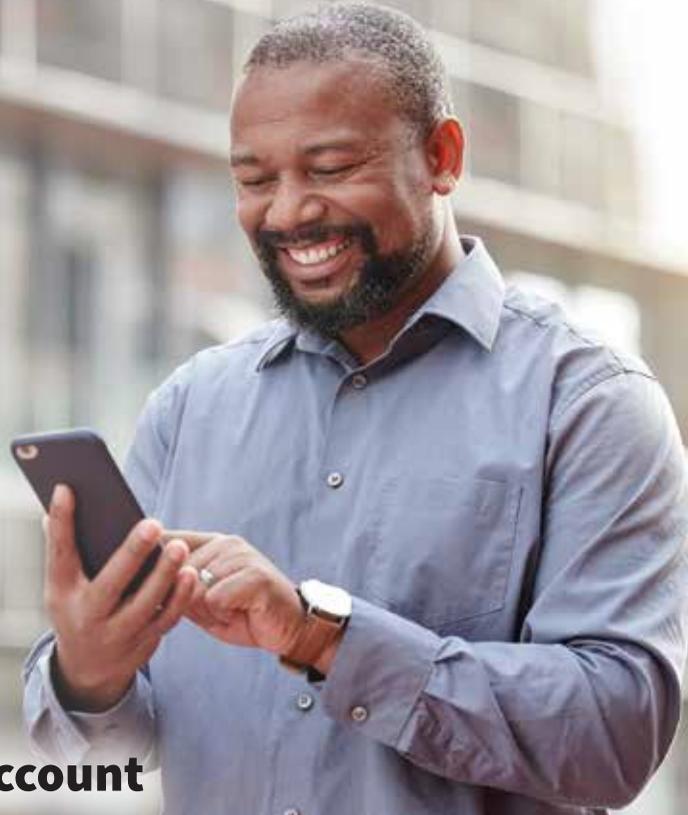


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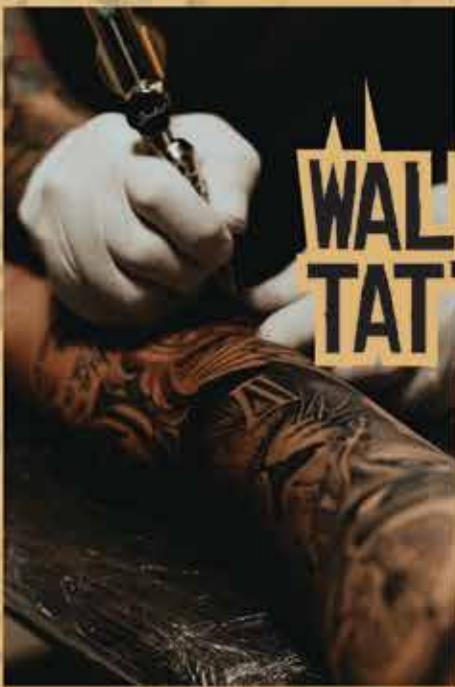
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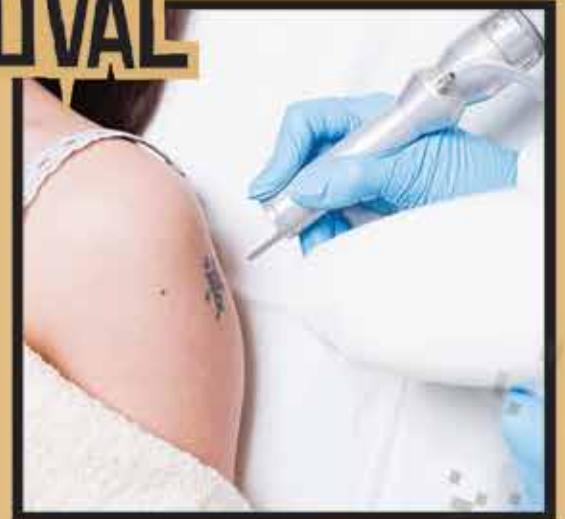


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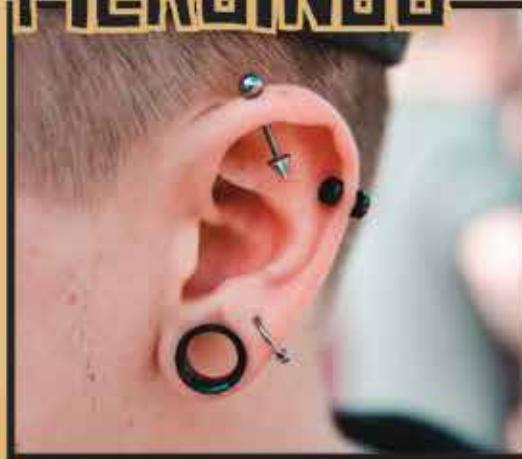


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LUNCH WITH...

BY JIM DUNCAN

Mike Wedeking at Wasabi Chi

EAT & DRINK

Mike Wedeking is Mister Barbecue. After 20 years at Flying Mango, purveyor of the best vibes of any restaurant in Des Moines, he is trying to retire. We asked him to lunch, and he selected Wasabi Chi on Douglas. This is the BBQ guy's escape — everyone in the restaurant knows him. "Oh, are you here to see Mike? This way."

Wedeking only goes to places with easy parking.

"I loved Alba, but the city planners ruined East Village for me. They did the same thing to Ingersoll. Zora is a \$5 million restaurant that people can't access because of traffic and parking chaos."

I was early, but Wedeking had preordered raw tuna tacos and a tuna princess roll.

"I am not sure it's still on the menu, but they always make one for me, whether I order it or not."

We added some Hamachi and white tuna nigiri and talked about the last quarter-century in Des Moines dining.

"We had our 20th anniversary at Mango a couple

weeks ago. I catered barbecue and worked the farmers markets for five years before that. So, I've been serving Q for a quarter-century here. It's time for me to get out. I am 67, and I don't want to die in the building. We are on the market. I think I have it priced to sell; it makes a good profit. I want to sell it to someone who will keep and respect my staff. That last part has eliminated one possibility."

What was the state of BBQ when Mango opened?

"Big Daddy's was here and Battle's. That was it. Big Daddy's is gone but still sells sauce. George (Battle) moved to Ames, became Battlecry, but closed last year."

Mango is the survivor from the old days before gas-run equipment and television persuasion popularized simulated BBQ. Wedeking built his all-wood smoker for mobility. He tows it long distances to cater special events, like weddings.

"I am licensed to officiate weddings. I can perform a marriage if I am retained to cater the reception. I tow my smoker and a couple grills, mostly to Kentucky. I

have catered weddings at Woodford Reserve distillery (Kentucky Derby sponsor). I am a serious advocate for bourbon. That has led to many happy connections."

Wedeking has some bourbons he does not plan to open.

"I bought a case of Pappy Van Winkle 20 years ago for \$106 a bottle at Frugal MacDougal (legendary liquor store in Nashville and Columbia). I have some Angel's Envy. I was given a bottle of Old Blowhard (26 year aged, \$1,200-\$1,300 online) that I have never opened. I just don't consume anything that expensive; I am a barbecue guy."

Dixie beer (now called Faubourg to appease the "woke" crowd) has been a connection.

"I know them and admire their products. I have been lobbying to bring them to Iowa for a long time. Their Blackened Voodoo dark lager is a fabulous beer."

How did the name Flying Mango come about?

"I was a licensed pilot since I was 16. Mango is my favorite fruit. I catered a lot of air shows, particularly

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LUNCH WITH... CONTINUED

in Ankeny. My great friend Paul Trostel let me use his kitchen at Chip's. Pork Expo, or maybe it was Iowa Ag Expo, was held at the Ankeny Airport one year. That is still the largest catering job I ever had."

Mike rode motorcycles with a gang of Trostel buddies.

"Yeah, Ron Brown and Dave Ward were the others. I really miss Paul; I still go to Greenbriar and think about him."

How did the COVID pandemic change things?

"We survived because barbecue travels well. We did so much take-out that I have never been able to reopen my east room for dining. The take-out traffic consumes the whole room, still."

TV has elevated the reputation of Mango, ironically.

"That's for sure. I don't watch television, at all. I don't go to movies either. I have not been to a fast-food restaurant since my junior year in high school. So when DDD (Diners, Drive-ins and Dives) called, I didn't have a clue who they were. They have done three shows now at Mango, and we get traffic from all 50 states because of those shows. There is even a DDD app for phones that alerts drivers when they are within 20 miles of a DDD restaurant. Most everyone who comes because of that, returns. I am friends with three members of the film

crew. Guy (Fieri) and I get along well. Ever since I told him to quit taking breaks for make-up updates. He liked that."

Music is a big part of the Mango vibe, even though Mango hosts only three or four shows a year, with only 50 seats. Yet some famous musicians play the room.

"Yes, and everyone who ever did returned to do it again. The California Honey Drops came her after selling out Red Rock (9,500 seats near Denver). They stayed at my house. The second time they came, I put them up at Stoney Creek Lodge and set them up at Temple for the Performing Arts to give them more exposure. They said they wanted to play the Mango and stay at my house in the future."

Who else has come?

"I hate that question because I'm afraid I might forget someone. Jon Justice was the first. I met him in Louisville; he's from Cincinnati. Stephen Kellogg, he's from Pennsylvania. Ryan Montbleau (Massachusetts). Lipbone Redding (North Carolina), Jonah Smith (New York), Carrie Rodriguez from Texas, Honey Island Swamp Band from New Orleans. I might have some really big news soon, but I can't say anything yet."

Wedeking, who is a very good writer himself, poured his heart out on Facebook while attending to



his sister's death bed in Florida.

"Six months later, Jonah Smith turned that into his song 'Ocala.' That made the front page of the Washington Post, as an extraordinary Christmas present. Now it's a song that is being covered by really famous singers. Bonnie Raitt even called Jonah when she heard the song and asked for the back story."

Smith called Wedeking recently from Georgia.

"He had just played a concert in a loud bar. One customer thanked him and apologized for the crowd. He told Jonah that he heard about a guy in Des Moines who threatens to throw people out if they talk during a performance. Jonah says, 'His name is Mike, and his place is Flying Mango. If you get a chance, go there.'"

"I am so humbled by the number of great relationships my little barbecue has fostered." ■

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Sprockets – not attached to a chain

Add a new name to the list of Des Moines restaurant curiosities.

EAT & DRINK

Hospitality management colleges, like the highly rated one at Iowa State, teach that names are a first essential step toward restaurant or resort success. A name should appeal to a public sense of comfort (Cozy's, Fireside), pride in history (Iowa Machine Shed, Proudfoot & Bird), romance (Open Sesame, Zanzibar), clever deceit (HomeGrown, PF Chang's) or esteem (Star Bar, Royal Mile). Curiosity is not usually discussed, but maybe it should be.

I have tried out new restaurants just because I wondered what the hell their name could mean — MinGaLaBar, Scenic Route, The Other Place, Psycho Suzi's in Minneapolis, Runza's in Omaha, and Le Fou Frog in Kansas City. All those places delighted me. Des Moines Performing Arts President Jeff Chelesvig told me that road show casts and crews almost always want to try Zombie Burger and Fong's Pizza because of their curious names and often return frequently for the food and value.

Add a new name to the list of Des Moines restaurant curiosities — Sprockets. Yes, a restaurant is named after something that most people only know of regarding bicycles and chainsaws. You could say that the restaurant keeps up this theme with lots of décor related to auto and machinery repair signs, but that is not what you will remember. My first notable experience was the music. I asked several people what to call it and heard “easy listening,” “light jazz” and “R&B.” By whatever name, it's as pleasant as any place's in town — soft, easy and curiously unfamiliar.

It created a vibe that made conversation easy, even with strangers. So did a very long bar where most people chose to sit on my visits. Customers made menu suggestions and asked how I liked certain dishes. So did staff, especially personable chef Austin and bartender Kai. Both seemed genuinely happy to greet me on return visits. I like to think Des Moines is the kind of town that treats newbies that way, but it's not always that way.

Austin told me he learned to cook from church ladies on Chicago's Southside.

“I grew up in foster homes, and that means you spend a lot of time in church basements. The church ladies would ask me to help, and I accepted that as an opportunity to learn,” he explained.

He learned well. Sprockets' breakfast-oriented menu



Chicken waffle sandwich Belgian style

executes basic dishes very well. Catfish, with grits and eggs till 2 p.m., or with a side choice later, was superb — hand-breaded and fried, or blackened. Wings, with a choice of six preparations were, too. A salmon omelet was Florentine in its simplicity — with cream cheese and spinach. Most everything here is made from scratch, even thick onion rings, and pancakes or waffles with a sweeter-than-typical batter.

“I think the best dishes are made with simple ingredients but preparations that take no short cuts. Really, the only thing that comes in here pre-prepared is shredded but uncooked hash browns,” Austin said.

Not everything was that all that simple. Burgers got a bit extreme. A breakfast burger was served on a croissant with bacon jam, a sunny side egg and hashed browns. The house burger included two patties, bacon, an egg, avocado, grilled onions and mushrooms, lettuce, tomato

and condiments.

My favorite dish was the chicken and waffles sandwich, with fried tenders between two waffles, served with a large bowl of five fresh fruits — Belgian style. Austin said his No. 1 recommendation is sausage gravy and biscuits, one of the breakfast items sold all day and night.

Sprockets has a large patio that will be popular in warmer weather. Parking is free and plentiful. Happy Hour includes half-price drinks and appetizers. Tuesdays feature \$2 tequila shots. The full bar includes a lot of top-shelf choices. In fact, Elijah Craig was my “well drink” Bourbon. ■

Jim Duncan is a food writer who has been covering the central Iowa scene for more than five decades.

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BELLY UP TO:



EAT & DRINK

Backpocket Pin & Pixel

Duckpin bowling and arcade games at Johnston Town Center

BY JACKIE WILSON

A popular brewery, Backpocket Brewing, opened a satellite location in Johnston in January. Backpocket Pin & Pixel is located at Merle Hay Road and 62nd Street in the newly constructed Johnston Town Center.

The new digs differ from Backpocket's original Coralville location. The "Pin" portion includes duckpin bowling, while the "Pixel" offers retro arcade games. And of course there's beer, which they've been brewing since 2008.

Owner-operator Jake Simmons says the place is for all ages.

"It's family-friendly, but not in the Chuck E. Cheese sense. You could have a 50th anniversary party or 5-year-old's birthday party."

Here's a quick lesson on duckpin bowling. Duckpin is on a smaller scale than regular bowling. The lanes are shorter, and players aren't required to wear bowling shoes. The ball is small enough for kids to handle. The place has six lanes at \$6 per game, and play time is first come, first served.

A walk inside the modern building showcases its industrial, streamlined design. The tall wood ceilings give it a unique look, along with an Chihuly-inspired glass light fixture. Additionally, Simmons built bar lights in his garage.

Huge garage doors on both the front and back can open up to outdoor patios. However, on a cold winter

evening, the doors were shut tight.

The bar and dining area are separated. One half includes arcade games and bowling; the other half includes the bar and seating area.

Backpocket serves about 15 of their beers on tap, including the popular Slingshot, along with a couple domestic beers. Beer prices run around \$6 to \$7, depending on size. Ask for a sample or try a flight of beers. They offer a limited wine selection, a few craft cocktails, non-alcoholic drinks and a tasty root beer float. A menu with about a dozen food items includes street tacos, pizza, smash burgers and "bytes" appetizers, such as wings and pretzels. Entrees run from \$9 to \$14.

Everything is self-service, as there are no waiters. Simply order at the bar for food and drinks, and a flashing pager indicates when the food is ready. According to Simmons, Backpocket's business model is unique in its tipping, where all employees share in the tips, including the bartenders, cooks and staff.

"Everyone is equal. We want people to know their job is not more valuable than the other," he said.

Got a pocket of quarters? Head to the arcade for some retro games, including Pac-Man, NASCAR racing, skee ball, air hockey, foosball and pinball. You won't get a row of tickets to redeem for a plastic trinket — instead, you will savor the satisfaction that you beat your buddy's time in NASCAR racing.



On a Tuesday night, patrons included holiday partygoers, retirement celebrants and a few kids tagging along with their dad. You could hear the occasional thud and thwack sounds from the duckpin bowling.

If you want to drink beer and relive your foosball glory days, you don't have to do it in your parents' basement. Head over to Backpocket Pin & Pixel instead. ■

A NEW NORMAL

COVID after 3 years

A look back on the pandemic — and a glimpse of the future

By Sofia Legaspi Dickens

Masks hanging from rearview mirrors. “Unprecedented times.” Clear plastic partitions. “Stop the spread.” Social distancing stickers scattered on floors.

Look around and you’ll find echoes of a global health crisis, its onset now three years in the past. Many of us disinfected our groceries, connected with others through screens, taped paper hearts in our windows. Others lost their health, their jobs, friends and family.

While the pandemic’s impact

differed for each individual, many experiences were shared during a time when life was ruled by an unknown virus that forever altered the fabric of daily life — affecting healthcare, workplaces, schools, restaurants and every aspect of society.

As the world walked through uncertainty, leaders held to the oft-repeated maxim of accepting the “new normal.” The question remains: What is the new normal? And where do we go from here?

DID YOU KNOW?

3M’s global production of N95 masks totaled approximately 2 billion units in 2020 and 2.5 billion in 2021, compared to 630 million in 2019.

Photo by Sofia Legaspi Dickens

The front lines

“When COVID hit...”

So begins a new chapter of many personal histories. When the novel coronavirus reached Iowa, it wasn't a surprise. Medical teams had begun to brace themselves as Europe and other metropolises underwent their initial surges. Among them: Dr. Amerlon Enriquez, a pulmonary and critical care specialist who spent many long days in the ICU.

“The atmosphere was mostly dread,” he recalled. “We're going to battle, and we don't have the right gear, we don't have the right equipment, we don't have the right artillery to combat this.”

At the same time, Enriquez said, the impending health crisis provoked an air of challenge among his colleagues.

“This is our calling. We're trained to do this, even though we don't know what we are entering,” he said. “Ready to strap your boots and fasten your belt.”

Instead of boots and a belt, their armor came in the form of polyester and latex: a gown, double masks and gloves. Sometimes, a face shield. Other times, a larger facepiece akin to a football helmet.

“It's hooked to a hose in the back with a respirator, so you're like an astronaut going into the room,” Enriquez said.

LONG COVID

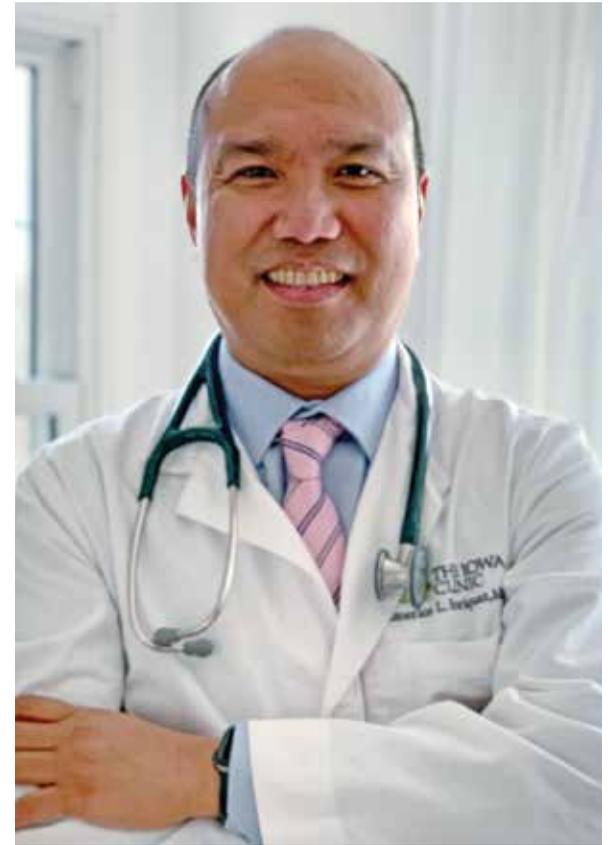
Long COVID, long haulers, post-COVID conditions — whatever it may be called, 7.5% of adults in the United States have experienced fatigue, hair loss, fever, or a range of persistent respiratory, neurological, heart and digestive symptoms. Little is known about this condition that affects nearly one in five American adults who have had COVID-19.

Source: CDC

Rinse and repeat. For patients in isolation, hospital staff donned new gear for each visit. Rounding took time. Delirious patients needing care couldn't receive it at a moment's notice.

“We said to our nurses, ‘Your safety first,’” Enriquez said. “You can't save any more people if you get COVID also, so don't rush in the room without the proper protection. Don't be a hero.”

Heroic or not, serving on the front lines of a pandemic had its obvious risks. At the end of each day,



Dr. Amerlon Enriquez is a pulmonology and critical care specialist in the Des Moines area. Photo submitted

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An example of a powered air purifying respirator (PAPR) used by Enriquez during the pandemic. Photo by James Gathany/CDC

Enriquez's wife urged him to change clothes at the door before entering their home.

"There are days after work where you go, 'Do I have the virus? Should I sleep in a different bedroom?' So there were days where we did that. We were so uncertain of what was happening."

Enriquez recalled his first time intubating a patient: laryngoscope in hand, peering directly into the patient's mouth and larynx, praying his flimsy mask would somehow protect him.

"There's no cure, no protection for us, no vaccine, so you're always dreading that you'll also get the virus."

There's nobody to take care of you except you."

Still, at the end of each day, at least Enriquez could go home. Like many, his hospital had reached capacity. Only the sickest of the sick were admitted, and with visitors prohibited, many died a lonely death.

"So the nurses took the responsibility, especially if we had a dying patient, to be in the room to hold the patient's hand when they die," he said. "I think, to me, that is dedication to the fullest degree."

As days passed, plans of attack changed quickly: intubation, antibiotics, hydroxychloroquine, and the list goes on. Enriquez's hospital even participated in a Mayo Clinic study involving blood transfusion from recovered patients. It didn't work.

Of course, hindsight is 20/20. Knowing now that the virus is rarely transmitted from clothes and surfaces, Enriquez said he could have done without the constant anxiety. But if there's anything he really could have changed, he said, it would have been the controversy.

"The community was divided because it was politicized. I mean, just doing a mask," he said. "And don't get me started on the vaccine."

Today, a strained healthcare system is still struggling to recover. After many nurses burning out and others retiring early, a shortage continues.

"The good thing is that we learned a lot from this," Enriquez said, citing everything from research on oxygenation to lung physiology. "And maybe also the attitude of the people to respect each other's beliefs."

Working from where?

Like many companies, local marketing agency Blue Compass switched to a remote workplace in March 2020. For an office that had operated fully in-person, the shift to remote was relatively seamless, albeit not ideal.

"It's difficult to fully understand someone when they are rendered as pixels on the screen; there's something special about being in person with someone," said CEO Drew Harden, pointing out barriers to communication and spontaneous brainstorming.

Amid the apprehension and confusion of those early days, Harden wondered whether clients would cut budgets or pause projects. His biggest concern, however? The company's culture.

Many business leaders endeavored to maintain employee connections during the pandemic, but Harden took it further. He frequently video-chatted with his dozens of team members — individually — just to check in and let them know he was there. Morning meetings began with words of encouragement for a different team member each day, later compiled

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JOB RECOVERY

Iowa Workforce Development reported in November 2022 that Iowa had recovered its job losses — 170,000 — across all industries since the beginning of the pandemic.

Drew Harden is the CEO and co-founder of Blue Compass, one of many companies that navigated remote work during COVID. Photo by Sofia Legaspi Dickens

on cards and mailed. On numerous occasions, Harden and his business partner drove to employees' homes to drop off gifts or lunches.

"We never told them we were coming, so it was always a crazy surprise, but everyone enjoyed it," Harden said. "It was just really important for us to maintain the sense of joy and communication that we always had, especially through that uncertain time."

As 2020 went on, Blue Compass employees slowly started returning to the office, and, by early 2021, everyone had returned. Harden had never asked them to.

"I think our positive culture eventually led people back," he said.

Three years after the global shutdown, Harden said the pandemic added flexibility to how their office operates. Employees now have the option to work from home on Fridays.



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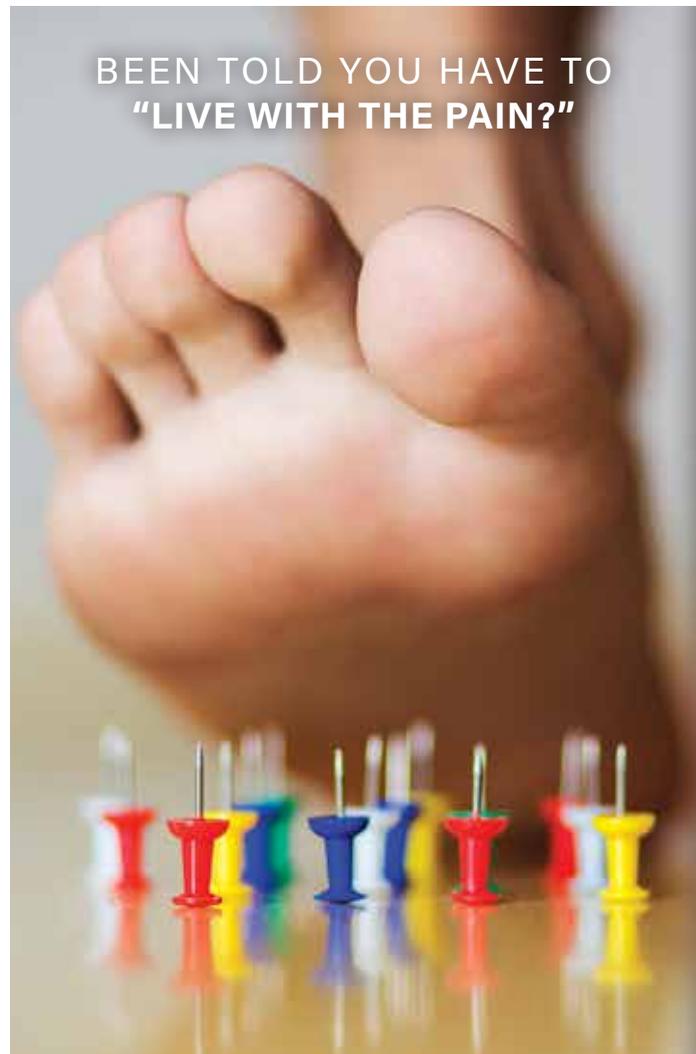
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Teams have more video chats and online tools in their arsenal. But, largely, Blue Compass remains in person.

“There’s nothing wrong with working remotely; it’s a great solution for many people,” Harden said. “But it’s very difficult for an organization to differentiate themselves when everyone works remotely — because working at your kitchen table at one job is very similar to working at your kitchen table for another job.”

Not all companies came out the other side of the pandemic as unaltered as Blue Compass. As the workforce continues to embrace hybrid/remote alternatives, many Des Moines offices remain half-full. Downtown cornerstones like Nationwide and Wells Fargo have left their buildings for good.

Weekly reports from property security company Kastle show that workplace occupancy rates continue to hover around 50%. Nonetheless, Harden believes all three options — remote, hybrid and in-person — are here to stay.

“The pendulum has swung really far toward remote, and many employers thought that was a benefit that everyone wanted. But over the past couple of years, everyone has realized that remote isn’t always everything it’s cracked up to be, and people have started to want in person more. All three approaches have their pluses and minuses. I think it depends on the organization, which one they choose, but all three will continue.”

Lessons learned in education

For Iowa’s K-12 public schools, spring break in 2020 lasted much longer than planned. When news broke in April that the 2019-2020 school year was finished for good, schools moved quickly.

Some districts, like Des Moines Public Schools, finished the year with online classes. Others, including West Des Moines Community Schools, provided voluntary enrichment opportunities for students.

“Those early days were really focused on: How do we support students? How do we even consider education for the remainder of the school year?” recalled Laine Mendenhall-Buck, a spokesperson for WDMCS.

That summer, schools formulated their game plans. By July, schools were required to submit their Return to Learn plans to the state. What normally would have taken several months to strategize in materials, curriculum and logistics were decided in a matter of weeks. Districts developed COVID-19 dashboards to track positive cases and exposure. Classrooms were rearranged and online/hybrid alternatives determined.

At every step, they encountered barriers: How would they continue to support students’ nutritional needs? What about families without reliable Wi-Fi access? Students without laptops?

And at each barrier, a new solution: Arrange meal



Valley High School honored the Class of 2020 at Valley Stadium, with three separate ceremonies postponed to June 2020. Photo courtesy of Brian Abeling/WDMCS

pickup stations. Partner with internet companies to provide low-cost access. Install Wi-Fi extension towers at school buildings. Distribute thousands of Chromebooks to families across the metro.

“I think one big takeaway, overall, is that we had to think outside the box and be creative in how we were going to problem-solve,” Mendenhall-Buck said. “That really has extended beyond those early days because it made us change the way that we thought about learning.”

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Whether students liked it or not, they were given an opportunity to work independently and take ownership of their learning. “That kind of agency that students learned about advocating for themselves, learning what their learning style was, is something that has carried over throughout the years since COVID first began.”

Of course, Mendenhall-Buck was careful not to underplay the academic, social and emotional consequences of losing two months of learning and routine. Data shows student misbehavior has escalated. Academic performance has declined across the board. Educators burned out.

“I think it’s really difficult for us to understand the full impact to both students and staff,” she said. “You don’t just set aside the hard things that are happening at home when you walk into a classroom. So what we’re learning is we really need to embed that social-emotional support — that trauma has happened to students and to staff.”

The full effects of a disrupted educational system continue to be discovered. Still, three years later, students have largely persevered through an experience unlike any other.

“In an uncomfortable and unusual situation,” said Mendenhall-Buck, “students were resilient and adapted.”

Restaurants recover

“Adapt” was the mantra of the restaurant industry in 2020. Even for seasoned restaurateur Paul Rottenberg, nothing could have prepared him for March 17, when the entire industry came to a screeching halt.

“Moving at full speed, and then the next day, having everything be 100% dark — I think that was the most substantial thing initially, just being stunned by the magnitude of the situation,” said Rottenberg, founder of Orchestrate Hospitality and several Des Moines establishments.

Prior to COVID, Orchestrate comprised 700 employees across its properties.

“In 2020, in one moment, one press conference, they were all unemployed. And I was unemployed,” Rottenberg said. “We were pretty sure that some, if not all, of our businesses would end up going under.”

Naturally, online orders, takeout and delivery became an “astronomical amount of business.” During the lonely days of lockdowns, communities rallied around local eateries, supporting them from home by ordering in. But it wouldn’t have been enough to carry the industry through, according to Rottenberg.

“Most of us still wouldn’t be here if we hadn’t gotten government assistance,” he said. Nationally, more than 100,000 business owners received a portion of the \$28.6 billion allocated to the Restaurant Revitalization Fund. “It never dawned on me as a

BY THE NUMBERS

48% Change from 2019-20 to 2021-22 for out-of-school suspensions in Iowa public schools

88.3% Percentage of full-time teachers retained from the school years ending in 2021 to 2022, compared to 93.6% between 2020 and 2021

190 Number of exceptional and high-performing rated Iowa schools in 2021, compared to 219 the year before

Source: Iowa Department of Education Annual Condition of Education Reports and Iowa School Performance Profiles

HOSPITALITY

For more on the changing hotel industry, see feature story “Be our guest” in CITYVIEW’s Business Journal, January 2023.



restaurateur that the government was going to come in and bail me out... And I couldn't have been more happy, grateful."

The consequences of departing from dine-in have been substantial. In some Orchestrate restaurants, online ordering fees cost \$100,000 more than pre-pandemic. Add that to the climbing cost of paper products — not to mention its effects on the environment.

"I think it's going to take years to recover from the climate impact of all this garbage now that we're sending out every night for takeout and delivery," Rottenberg said. "It's disheartening."

Another factor is labor costs, which increased by up to 20% at Orchestrate. While growing price tags have been a wake-up call for consumers, Rottenberg cited the higher value of labor as one of the positive results of the pandemic.

"I think COVID did what the government couldn't get done, which is get people's wages raised in our industry and other industries that traditionally relied on low wages."

Yet, restaurants continue to struggle with a shortage of willing workers. After layoffs at the onset of COVID, around 50% of Orchestrate employees returned. Today, the company operates with 500-600 employees, compared to its pre-pandemic staff of 700.

With many seasoned employees retiring early, the industry is also dealing with a new generation of employees: with less experience, more demands and a new sociology.

"We have to go back to hiring people and learning how to train people," Rottenberg said. "You have managers that need to be retrained on how to manage in this new employee-controlled environment, where the employees are the ones calling the shots."

In part, Orchestrate's reduction in staff may be ascribed to hybrid/remote work and the changing downtown landscape.

When Rottenberg started operating in downtown Des Moines, north of 30 years ago, business was largely concentrated around lunchtime, serving a weekday workforce of 60,000. Weekend business was rare, and evening business confined to Friday and Saturday.

"Now we have an economy where we have to live almost entirely off evening business because lunch business is very weak," he said, observing that lunch has moved to the suburbs, where people now both live and work.

Looking back, few areas of society were as hard hit by COVID as the restaurant industry, but Rottenberg doesn't see it as all bad. He said he believes the industry has increased its preparedness for unknowns, scrutinized performance areas — and emerged managing businesses better.

"When you're doing OK, you tend to get lax. So you have a wake-up moment, and then you start looking at everything and realizing the way you were doing things was easy, and you went on autopilot. And now you have to rethink every aspect of what you do.

"As an industry, I think we're in for a long realignment. I'm glad I'm not just starting out. I think it's going to be tough. But humans are pretty damn good at figuring stuff out." ■



Paul Rottenberg has been embedded in the Des Moines restaurant and hospitality industry since the 1980s, with eateries like Centro, Django and Zombie Burger falling under Orchestrate Hospitality's umbrella. Photo submitted

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Toto... is waiting for you

Wells Fargo tour with Journey

Some songs are so familiar, the first time you heard them is ingrained into your memory. Humming the melody and singing them word for word, you know every riff and drum beat, harmonizing at the top of your lungs each time you hear the songs.

“Africa” by Toto is one of those songs, recently hitting one billion streams on Spotify. Earlier this year, Toto celebrated an accomplishment few bands have achieved in the modern era. Cumulative streams of the ensemble’s repertoire now exceed three billion plays, more than one billion of which emanate from “Africa.”

The 1982 album “Toto IV” won six Grammy awards and produced four Top 40 hits, including “Rosanna.” Toto has sold more than 40 million albums in their career. If you want to listen to “Africa” live for the first time — or the 42nd time — then get ready as Toto opens for Journey on March 28 at Wells Fargo Arena.

Lead singer Joseph Williams spoke to CITYVIEW in advance of their tour.

Original members, Williams and Steve Lukather, are joined by band members: bassist John Pierce (Huey Lewis and The News), drummer Robert “Sput” Searight (Ghost-Note, Snoop Dogg), keyboardist/background vocalist Steve Maggiora, keyboardist Dominique “Xavier” Taplin (Prince, Ghost-Note), and multi-instrumentalist/vocalist Warren Ham (Ringo Starr). This line-up marks the 15th incarnation of Toto, when considering band members or sidemen who joined or exited.

Williams and others band members have toured off and on for the past 45 years. During one break from the band, Williams sang for the first “Lion King” movie, when the young adult Simba sings “Hakuna Matata.”

Williams said winning and being nominated for Grammys and other awards has been the highlight of his career.



Lead singer Joseph Williams, fourth from left, with fellow Toto band members. Photo submitted

“Winning the Grammy was an amazing, special thing,” he said. “It was the biggest highlight and so incredible early on to get that.”

Williams comes from a musical family. His father is composer John Williams, who is one of the most decorated composers of all time. John Williams has been nominated for more than 100 awards, winning dozens, including Grammys and Oscars for musical composition in “Jaws,” “Star Wars,” “E.T.,” “Indiana Jones” and more.

Williams said his father didn’t necessarily guide his rock ‘n’ roll career; however, he supported all his endeavors.

“I was into rock ‘n’ roll — he wasn’t. Dad helped my entire life. He understands music; he’s been my greatest teacher.”

Over the years, Toto developed a new fan base consisting of all age groups.

“The group Weezer put out ‘Africa.’ Younger people questioned where the song came from. We’ve had a resurgence from that festival,” he explained.

Decades ago, when he first began performing, he didn’t think the band would persevere.

“I was surprised I was able to have a career in music. I had no idea I’d end up with Toto,” he reflected.

Last year, he recorded a new DVD, “With a Little Help from My Friends,” which captured a livestream recording during the pandemic. Numerous musicians helped virtually over four months.

His life outside of touring and music is pretty simple. He enjoys spending time with his family, including hanging out with his young grandson and his daughter.

At the end of a concert, Williams is “pretty jacked up” and admits he’s “starving.” It takes him a few hours to wind down, yet he feels a sense of accomplishment no matter where he performs.

By the time the next concert rolls around, he’s ready to experience that feeling of elation.

“We can’t wait to get out and play. We are thrilled to do live shows,” he said. “We love Des Moines fans and appreciate your loyalty. We’ve got new music, concerts and we can’t wait to give it all to you.” ■

SOUND ADVICE

BY JACKIE WILSON

Kenny Aronoff, of Rolling Stones’ “100 Greatest Drummers of All Time” list, formerly with John Mellencamp and Ringo Starr, performs with friends at DMACC West’s ciLive! event on March 9 at 5 p.m. He’s joined by guitarist **Brent Woods**, who has played with Sebastian Bach and Randy Rhoads; along with bass guitarist **James LoMenzo**, who played with Ozzy Osbourne, Megadeth and David Lee Roth. The event

is free. For more info, visit dmacc.edu/ciweek/Pages/presenters.aspx.

The Pink Floyd Laser Spectacular returns to Hoyt Sherman Place on March 19. Paramount’s Laser Spectacular is a smash hit multi-media laser and light show, featuring the original recordings of Pink Floyd. Tickets cost \$34.50-\$49.50 and are available at the Hoyt Sherman Place box office or at ticketmaster.com.

The iconic **Gas Lamp** (former Blues on Grand) located at 1501 Grand, announced their closing on July 9, 2023. They cite revitalization of the area, which doesn’t include the Gas Lamp. The venue has hosted hundreds of talented blues, rock and alterative musicians throughout its history. There’s still time to attend a show before they call it quits. Catch the **Unfortunate Sons** performing on March 11 for an early 4 p.m. show. Tickets are \$10. ■

FILM REVIEW

BY DAVID ROWLEY

'Sharper' is a tangle of overlapping storylines and surprise reveals

Four people from different walks of life are willing to go to extremes for the things that they want.

Meet Tom (Justice Smith), a sensitive guy who spends the day surrounded by classic novels and first-edition collections while reading in his bookstore. How is this possible? Didn't "You've Got Mail" officially kill the mom-and-pop book stores?

Well, his family is loaded. Duh.

One day, Sandra (Briana Middleton), a Ph.D student looking for a copy of "Their Eyes Were Watching God," walks in. The two shyly strike up a flirtation, bonding over Japanese food.

After that, the two begin going out frequently, but this is when "Sharper" makes its turn from rom-com to dark con.

The majority of "Sharper" is spent shifting these funds around. The standard scheming offers few surprising twists from the con artists, and twist-repetition keeps the audience from being too surprised by this film.

Throughout this story, we switch between characters Tom, Sandra, Max (Sebastian Stan) and Madeline (Julianne Moore). Unfortunately, each new character is less compelling than the prior.

Tom and Sandra dominate the first 20 minutes of "Sharper," starting the film off on a high note that's largely due to Middleton's disarming performance and the dreamy, romantic look of the film. But this look fades abruptly into something slightly darker once the jig is up.

After the opening, "Sharper" takes a journey back in time, filtering the action through a different character's point of view in each chapter. Presenting the same story in multiple flashbacks depending on POV inherently creates an air of mystery and disorientation. This is famously done in "Pulp Fiction" and infamously done in Season 4 of "Arrested Development." We're kept at a distance from the characters on purpose, and we're never quite sure what we're watching, or what's led these characters to this moment.

Unfortunately, this only works for so long.

Max's motto of "you can't cheat an honest man" allows him to keep remorse at bay for his con man lifestyle, especially since accumulating money is the most important part of his life. Although Max comes out as a huge, arrogant lunatic, Stan may deliver the best performance of the picture in that character. Max may or may not have some genuinely sinister truths concealed behind the surface.

When the past finally catches up with the present,



"Sharper"

R | 112 minutes

Directed by: Benjamin Caron

Starring: Justice Smith, Briana Middleton, Sebastian Stan, Julianne Moore, John Lithgow

the sheer amount of misdirections we've been subject to turns the movie into the ouroboros. The film has trained us not to trust anything we see and to search for breadcrumbs of the truth. Regrettably, it runs out of clever ways to fool us in the process.

As the script gels into a hollow mystery, the characters lose their ability to keep us on our toes. Stan, dripping with a reliable sleazy charm, is too slick to be trusted. Smith is handed a couple of turns that are so far afield there's no real question about his intentions. And Middleton, up until a point a joy to watch, stalls out because of a script that doesn't quite know what to do with her character.

The only actor who's able to remain even the slightest bit of an enigma is Julianne Moore as Madeline, a woman set to marry billionaire Richard Hobbes (John Lithgow). In a film where we purposefully spend so little time with each character as to keep their motivations a blur, Moore still manages to inject a bit of vulnerability that makes you believe you can trust her — for a while, anyway.

As the film twists and turns to its illogical conclusion, Moore falls victim to the same weak "twist" as her fellow actors. The film's third act struggles to satisfyingly scam the audience.

Movies about con artists can be huge entertainments if you can buy into the con being played. If the filmmakers let you in on the game too early, or if they keep changing the rules every 20 minutes, you start feeling like a mark for watching. "Sharper" becomes such a tangle of overlapping storylines and surprise reveals that you assume the movie is building to a big, ingenious payoff worthy of its cast and gloss. What it settles on does not stem from clever misdirection but rather a rushed attempt at surprise. It's a long con game that wants to be as intricate as chess but plays out more like Jenga. ■

PREVIEWS

BY DAVID ROWLEY

"Inside"

R | 105 minutes

Director: Vasilis Katsoupis

Starring: Willem Dafoe, Gene

Bervoets, Eliza Stuyck

Isolation is a terrifying

concept. Humans are naturally social creatures. When a person is deprived of interacting with others for an extended period, one tends to go a little nutty. If you've seen "The Lighthouse," you already know that no one knows this better than Willem Dafoe. Helmed by Greek filmmaker Vasilis Katsoupis, the indie project follows a seasoned art thief named Nemo (Dafoe) as he attempts to pull off a heist at a luxury and high-tech penthouse somewhere in the vicinity of Times Square in New York City. When the robbery inevitably goes south, Nemo is trapped inside the apartment without essentials like water or food (you can't eat art), and must channel all his efforts and cunning into staying alive. (Cue the Bee Gees.)



"65"

PG-13 | 100 minutes

Directors/Writers: Scott Beck,

Bryan Woods

Starring: Adam Driver, Ariana

Greenblatt, Chloe Coleman

To put it simply, this is a

movie where Adam Driver faces off against dinosaurs. Get your popcorn ready. After a catastrophic crash on what's assumed to be an unknown planet, pilot Mills (Adam Driver) quickly discovers he's actually stranded on Earth — 65 million years ago. Now, with only one chance at rescue, Mills and the only other survivor, Koa (Ariana Greenblatt), must make their way across the familiar yet unknown terrain riddled with dangerous prehistoric creatures in an epic fight to survive.



"Creed III"

PG-13 | 116 minutes

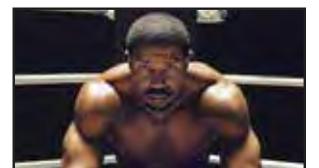
Director: Michael B. Jordan

Starring: Michael B. Jordan,

Tessa Thompson, Jonathan

Majors

Despite coming to terms with his family history, the past isn't done with Adonis Creed just yet. Fast forward seven years since the previous film, and everything seems to be going right for Donnie (Michael B. Jordan). He's the light heavyweight champion, his wife, Bianca (Tessa Thompson), is a successful musician in her own right, and everything is going great with their daughter, Amara (Mila Davis-Kent). And that's when Damian "Dame" Anderson (Jonathan Majors) shows up. Damian and Donnie were childhood friends, but while the young Creed found success in the ring, Damian wound up in prison for 18 years. Now, he's out — and he's got some issues with his former friend. A boxer himself, Damian feels robbed of his career, and he's here to take Donnie's life and everything he's got. Once brothers, these two rivals will have to settle their differences inside the ring. ■



Swan song as an ode to Iowa

A focus on the community that created and has supported the Art Center

Jeff Fleming is retiring from his directorship at the Des Moines Art Center in late April. That makes the new 75th anniversary exhibition his swan song. Because he came to Des Moines a quarter-century ago as a curator, we asked him how involved he was with the show, whose curators were Laura Burkhalter and Mia Laufer.

“We started planning this two years ago. I said I wanted a focus on the community that created and has supported the Art Center. This was intentionally named a ‘center’ rather than a ‘museum,’ because founders primarily wanted it to be place for the community to come together. It was my intention that this show focus on the Iowa community that fostered that sense of togetherness and the artists who were a part of that community. After that, Laura and Mia did all the imagining, editing and heavy lifting to create the exhibition.”

This writer grew up three blocks from the center. Pre-teen, I scaled the walls of the Saarinen wing to sneak into concerts by Dave Brubaker and Stan Getz because I couldn’t afford the ticket prices. (I made \$1 a week picking up daily trash at the AC Ice Cream store directly across the street from the center.) As a journalist/observer of the center since 1988, I have criticized the lack of attention to Iowa artists in the years before Fleming became director. Does this show give the lie to that?

“I think you answered your own question. Laura and Mia did that for me, whether they were trying to or not. The biggest change in my 25 years here, and 18 as director, has been about giving a voice to those who previously lacked one — women voices, queer voices, etc.”

Tilly Woodward is a Grinnell artist who grew up on a farm and famously paints photo-realistic still life portraits of things that grow in the earth. This 75th anniversary show features two portraits, exponentially larger than Woodward’s usual works, of AIDS victims when that disease was a death sentence.

“Laura and Mia had to pick those two out of a very large series we bought on the subject from Tilly. They are amazing even if you don’t know her usual works, maybe even more so if you do.”

Much of this show implies mentorship. Grant Wood attracted three other artists in the show to Iowa when he taught at the University of Iowa. They continued to attract others. Jules and Cornelis Rutenberg



Kirschenbaum did the same at Drake two decades later. The 75th anniversary show celebrates those two universities’ art departments, including Philip Chen at Drake whose art melds with architecture and physics in a Leonardo (the inventor, not the Mona Lisa admirer) mode.

I ask what acquisitions (now called “accessions” in “woke” speak) did the center make in Fleming’s run that he is most proud of? He turns around and points at the only piece behind the desk in his office, a stunning silhouette by Kara Walker. He thinks twice before he speaks. “I love them all. My answer is whatever the last one was.”

Because this writer is primarily a food writer, and because Fleming is a serious food guy, what were some of his favorite dining discoveries coming here from North Carolina and New York City?

“Early on, our family went to Waveland Diner. The menu mentioned ‘noodles on mashed.’ I ordered it on the spot. It’s still on the menu there, but I hardly see it anywhere else. Graziano’s is a museum class place — grocery, deli and more. I took Cicely Brown to Machine Shed. I didn’t know she and all her entourage were



vegans. They were lovely about it. Most celebrities who have been here have been wonderfully gracious. I will not mention the others even ‘off the record.’ ”

(I asked Brown what she ate at Machine Shed. “Lots and lots of cocktails,” she said.)

Despite the evidence that Burkhalter and Laufer bring to this show, Fleming has been, by far, the most supportive director ever of Iowa artists. ■

IOWA ARTISTS

Olesya Maupin

Renowned Kazakhstani artist forges new career in U.S.

BY JACKIE WILSON

Artist Olesya Maupin is well known for her beautiful paintings in her hometown of Almaty, Kazakhstan, which borders Russia. As she invites me into her basement studio in Ankeny, she explains how her artwork began appearing in public buildings.

As a 5-year old girl, she and her mom were sitting on a bus, and she drew a picture with her fingers on the frozen window. A woman told her mom that Olesya had talent.

“She draws very good pictures,” recalls Maupin.

Her mom purchased art supplies, and Maupin attended art school and obtained a master’s degree in teaching fine art. She was a professor of art for the University of Almaty.

Her art career catapulted when her sister, who was an art dealer, was in charge of obtaining art for public ministry buildings in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan.

She sold her original art and painted reproductions, which appear all over Kazakhstan’s Parliament, Senate and Minister of Justice public buildings. She became well known for her versatility and teaching, as she paints oil, watercolor and acrylic.

Her artwork, considered valuable, was used frequently as payment for services. When she required an exit visa, the process was difficult and costly; officials were known for extortion. She began bartering her paintings as payment.

“We got first-class service after they accepted my paintings,” she said.

Another time, Maupin’s mother was in a hospital in Almaty. She gave one of the doctors a painting for her mother’s two-week hospitalization.

“I bartered with my paintings. Paintings are like a bank account,” she explained.

Olesya moved to the United States after meeting her future husband, Alan, online 10 years ago. As she settled into her Ankeny studio, she immediately connected with a community of Russians in Iowa.

Although having experienced fame as an artist in Kazakhstan, she had to start over in the U.S. She’s displayed her art at the Ankeny Art Center. She teaches art for public and private students and classes. Her clientele list has grown to include Russians and Ukrainians living in the area, along with Americans eager to commission her work.

Her detailed work is stunning and uses many modern techniques. She’s experimented with drip paintings, similar to Jackson Pollock.

“I used a ketchup bottle to drip the paint,” she said.

She feels the population in larger American cities are more interested in original artwork.

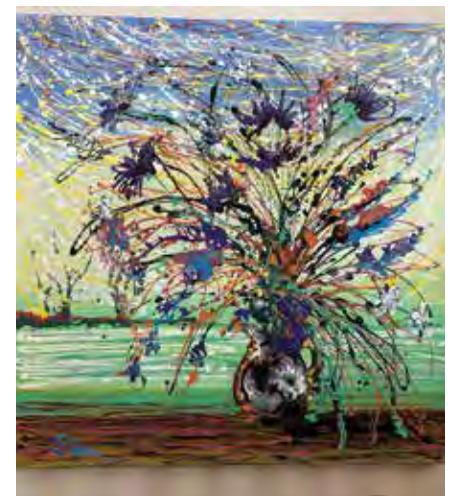
“In the Midwest, people don’t spend as much for art. They go to TJ Maxx to get art. In my country, more people like art and understand how important it is to have original art.”

Teaching artists is her strongest asset, she said.

“I try to simply explain. Teaching — I have a gift.”

As she paints daily, she juggles time with her art and caring for her son, who has a mild form of autism.

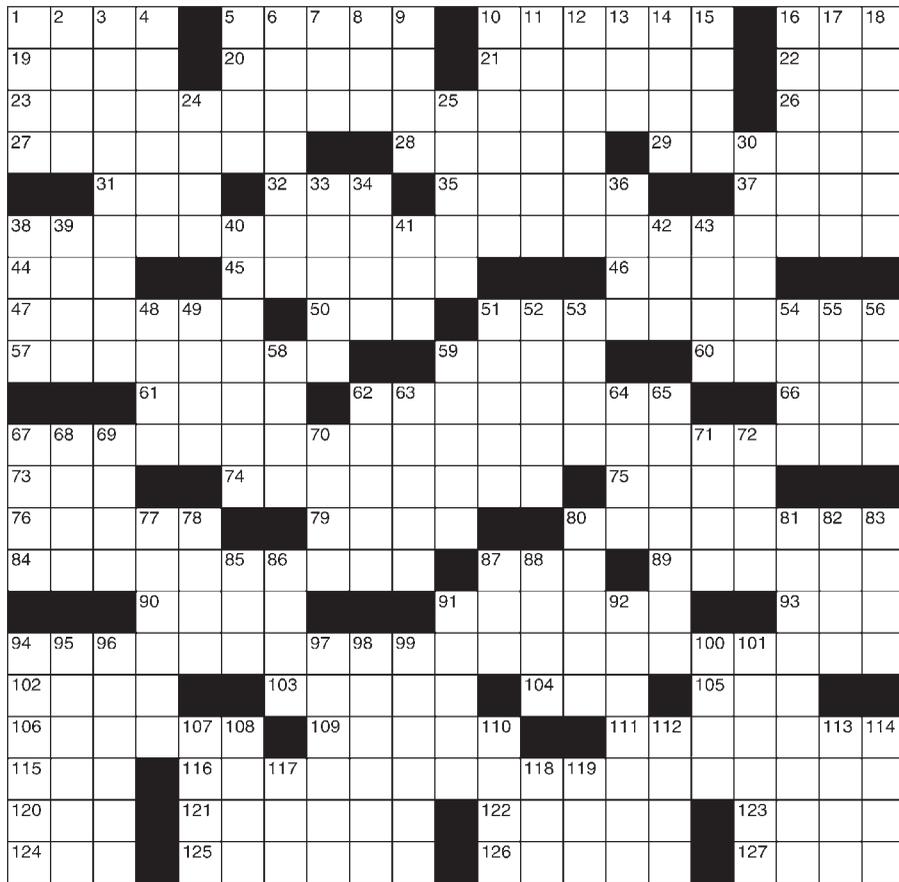
“What I do makes me very happy. It’s like therapy. I don’t question life when I do art. My art makes me happy.” ■



PUZZLES

Find answers at www.dmcityview.com/the-games

TOTALLY OUT OF IT



- ACROSS**
- 1 Four-string guitar
 - 5 Bits of land in el agua
 - 10 Luca Brasi in "The Godfather," e.g.
 - 16 Soft infant food
 - 19 Life -- know it
 - 20 New Mexico or Colorado county
 - 21 Useless
 - 22 Division of history
 - 23 Start of a riddle
 - 26 Mantra syllables
 - 27 Old-time cleaning cake
 - 28 Tennis' Safin
 - 29 Not skilled in at all
 - 31 Heavy weight
 - 32 All -- sudden
 - 35 Spoken
 - 37 French movie theater
 - 38 Riddle, part 2
 - 44 President Biden
 - 45 Speaks
 - 46 Singer Turner
 - 47 Tell el -- (Nile excavation site)
 - 50 It fills la mer
 - 51 Riddle, part 3
 - 57 Becomes familiar with anew
 - 59 Per-unit price
 - 60 Mortise insertion
 - 61 Ambulance VIPs
 - 62 Decorative dashboard finish
 - 66 Chain in biology
 - 67 Riddle, part 4
 - 73 China's Chou En --
 - 74 Like many soda bottles, volume-wise
 - 75 Purposely ignore
 - 76 Book of charts
 - 79 IRS form IDs
 - 80 "-- is a virtue"
 - 84 Riddle, part 5
 - 87 In honor of
 - 89 Small river
 - 90 -- -mutuel betting
 - 91 Oxygen-requiring bacterium
 - 93 Start for center or Pen
 - 94 End of the riddle
 - 102 Square yardage, e.g.
 - 103 Instant replay option
 - 104 Expressive rock genre
 - 105 -- Leppard (rock band)
 - 106 Mythical man-goats
 - 109 "In the red," e.g.
 - 111 Division of history
 - 115 Concorde, e.g., in brief
 - 116 Riddle's answer
 - 120 Grassland
 - 121 Henner of "Taxi"
 - 122 -- Island (Providence's state)
 - 123 Old TV's -- May Clampett
 - 124 Work unit
 - 125 Workout wear
 - 126 Planted
 - 127 Some deli loaves
- DOWN**
- 1 Cry noisily
 - 2 Ghostly pale
 - 3 Real bargain
 - 4 Electric eye, e.g.
 - 5 "The Tall Corn State"
 - 6 Leave for a short time
 - 7 Spy novelist Deighton
 - 8 Exhibit works
 - 9 "... or -- told"
 - 10 Drag racer
 - 11 New York home of Cornell
 - 12 Relative of a stickpin
 - 13 Raging crowd
 - 14 PDQ's cousin
 - 15 Emperor after Claudius I
 - 16 City on the Illinois River
 - 17 Ralph Lauren competitor
 - 18 Pale hue
 - 24 Actress Skye
 - 25 Main parts of churches
 - 30 Fuel rating
 - 33 Galas
 - 34 On the Red, e.g.
 - 36 Former senator Trent
 - 38 Open slightly
 - 39 City in Alaska
 - 40 Four-piece band
 - 41 Writer Capote, to pals
 - 42 Org. in many spy novels
 - 43 Make a ski mask, maybe
 - 48 Lagoon surround
 - 49 Christen
 - 51 Core group
 - 52 Frisky swimmer
 - 53 Uncool sort
 - 54 About
 - 55 Lower-class, to Brits
 - 56 Growl threateningly
 - 58 Warning initials above an internet link
 - 59 Hair bases
 - 62 Actress Kate of "Grey's Anatomy"
 - 63 Of sheep
 - 64 "Casablanca" woman
 - 65 Prized buy for a coin collector
 - 67 Nail on a paw
 - 68 Pledge
 - 69 Brand of sneakers
 - 70 Didn't win
 - 71 Hang it up
 - 72 App that asks "Where to?"
 - 77 Frolicking
 - 78 Move back and forth
 - 80 Open tourney, often
 - 81 Necessarily
 - 82 Sleeveless cloak
 - 83 Arabian chief
 - 85 Pooch noise
 - 86 Misters
 - 87 Agent's cut
 - 88 "... there -- square"
 - 91 Something hilarious
 - 92 Fabric with raised designs
 - 94 Grapple with, slangily
 - 95 Slate clearer
 - 96 Attachment to a dog or cat collar
 - 97 "House" actress Wilde
 - 98 Old-time Ford
 - 99 NASA countdown term
 - 100 Ferber of fiction
 - 101 -- regions (Hades)
 - 107 Crater edges
 - 108 Novelist Irwin
 - 110 Corp. VIPs
 - 112 Squeezed (out)
 - 113 Be in power
 - 114 Jubilant cries
 - 117 Exist
 - 118 "So that's your trick!"
 - 119 Wrecker's job



"What my _____ ever saw in you, I'll never know."

SCRAMBLERS

Unscramble the letters within each rectangle to form four ordinary words. Then rearrange the boxed letters to form the mystery word, which will complete the gag!

- Dormant
PLEASE
- Target
PINTO
- Cinch
SECTOR
- Fasten
TAPES

TODAY'S WORD

SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

		3		1				6
9			8	2				4
	1	6	5			9		
		2		5		3		
	9			3	4		7	
5			6			8		2
8					7		1	
6		1		8				9
	4		1			7		

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY: ◆

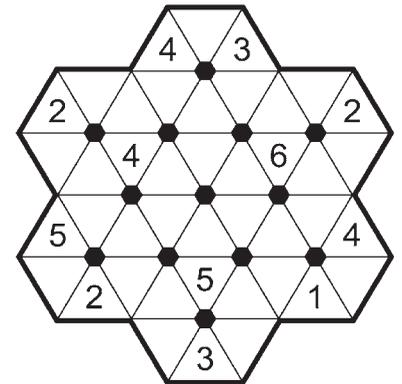
- ◆ Moderate ◆◆ Challenging
◆◆◆ HOO BOY!

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SNOWFLAKES

by Japheth Light

There are 13 black hexagons in the puzzle. Place the numbers 1 - 6 around each of them. No number can be repeated in any partial hexagon shape along the border of the puzzle.



DIFFICULTY: ◆◆◆◆

- ◆ Easy ◆◆ Medium ◆◆◆ Difficult

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GO FIGURE!

by Linda Thistle

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

	+		×		21
×		×		×	
	-		×		21
+		-		-	
	-		×		25
17		26		16	

DIFFICULTY: ★

- ★ Moderate ★★ Difficult
★★★ GO FIGURE!

1 3 4 5 5 6 7 8 9

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WHAT THE...

Think you're funny?

Send us your best caption...

Email to celeste@dmcityview.com — **BE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR NAME**

Next month's photo:

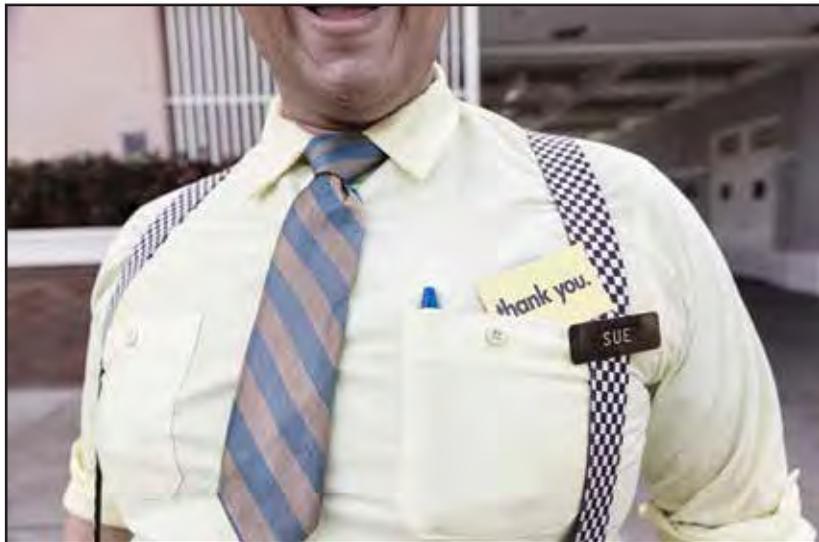


PHOTO COURTESY OF GRATISOGRAPHY

This month's winner

“Here's one dude who excels at reading between the lines.”
— Dennis Moore



Runners-up

“Keep looking on the bright side dude — gray goes with almost any color.”
— John Flater

“Aaron Rodgers has to wear a disguise to every NFL interview.”
— Mary Wedewer

“Arthur had some issues with his new prescription lenses, at the horse track he only saw zebras, at the football game the referees were wearing checkered shirts, and the candy striper he was dating was suddenly wearing just a solid pink uniform. But he was finally able to read between the lines.”
— Mark Alvord

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A red ball mystery

And I'm still wandering around forgetful in aisle 14.

"Could I help you, hon?"

I don't know. As an old man, the bright florescent world of Target presents several unique challenges — like where in this giant warehouse is the darn thing I'm looking for, particularly when I can't exactly remember what that darn thing is that I am looking for, and I can't call my wife to ask her what that darn thing is that I'm looking for because I left my phone at home against her strict orders to have my phone on my person at all times so as to be able to receive other strict orders from her, and, by the way, is that the smell of hot pretzels, whose very existence proves that there is a loving God.

"I'm fine," I say.

"You just let me know, hon, whatever you need."

And Cathy Howard goes back to work.



As many of you know, there is a mystery to the Merle Hay Mall Target. Let's go back in time a bit.

In the 1930s, Iowa was deep in the Great Depression. President Franklin D. Roosevelt set up the WPA — Works Progress Administration — to pay unemployed people to work. One of these programs under the WPA was the Federal Writers' Project. Their goal was to put together a guidebook for every state and territory — including Iowa. So, in 1938, Iowa writers and editors and journalists and historians and librarians wrote a guidebook called "The WPA Guide to Iowa."

This book is chock full of wonderful tidbits like, "Today no point in the State is more than twelve miles from a railroad." Wow, imagine that instead of Interstate 80. Or "Hotels are available in most towns and in all cities. Rates usually vary from \$1.00 to \$3.50

per day." Heck, I'd be willing to go as high as \$4.00.

Or "Beds of coal underlie approximately 20,000 square miles in 20 counties. It has been estimated that, according to present needs and rate of consumption, there is enough coal to supply the State for more than 4,000 years." I mean, who knew we were all coal barons?

But the book also mentions Merle Hay Mall, or, more correctly, the earlier incarnation of Merle Hay Mall:

"ST. GABRIEL'S MONASTERY, NW. corner Merle Hay Rd. and Douglas Ave., belongs to the Passionist Order. The priests of this order, founded by St. Paul of the Cross in Italy in 1720, live a life of rigid discipline. Their major duty is to conduct missions in the Catholic churches in their area. The monastery, built of brick and cement in 1922, is Gothic in design, with a cruciform plan."

This means the present day Target at Merle Hay Mall sits on the grave of a former monastery.

Which gets us back to the beginning...



"My Target is extremely friendly. Everyone helps out, from the store director on down." Cathy Howard later joins me for coffee to talk about the store.

"There are a lot of young employees at my Target. I see the younger employees as my kids, and they take care of me. They are very patient and don't treat me like I'm stupid for being older."

Cathy smiles and pulls out a card she saves given to her from another employee at Target that reads: "Don't tell anyone, but you're my favorite person to work with."

Cathy wipes her eyes.

"What about the customers?" I ask.

"I'm an older person, and if I see some older people struggling, I think, that's me. I want to help them."



"And what about Target being a former monastery?"

"I did know something like that and, by the way, there are ghosts at work. My girlfriend and I were working one day, and this little red ball went rolling past us. And it was just the two of us. Pretty soon, the red ball came around in a circle and went around again. Three or four times. And since then, my girlfriend will see a little red ball just sitting somewhere in the store."

And there you have it.

See, the typical day for a Passionist monk, according to the Passionist Historical Archives (a-day-in-the-life-of-a-passionist), began at 2 a.m. with prayer (matins) and prayer (lauds), more prayer (prime) and prayer (tierce), reading prayers, walking alone, prayer (sext) and prayer (none), then eating. Did I mention praying?

And now you understand the red ball. Duh. It's just the ghost of a monk finally able to let loose, mess around, and be himself.

As for Cathy...

"My future? Someday I'll be the Target greeter with my little walker. I had cancer in 2006. Lost all my hair. I never had hair that I liked. I had my first treatment, and my hair fell out. That bothered me."

Cathy pauses and looks off.

"At John Stoddard Cancer Center, Peggy, I don't know if she still works there, helped me pick out a wig. Back then I worked at Bakers Square with the old revolving oven. I'm pulling pies off and then go to the office to cool down. My boss notices my hair is on fire. My boss starts cutting it off. And I tell her to stop — my wig won't grow back."

And Cathy laughs uproariously at the ridiculousness of it all.

"I am what I am. I'm not embarrassed to be myself."

Apparently, this is true of both Cathy and the monk who is finally feeling his oats.

As for me, I'm still wandering around forgetful in aisle 14 — wondering if I dare return home shamefaced and empty handed, although I do have this large pretzel in my right hand.

And look... is that a red ball? ■

Joe Weeg spent 31 years bumping around this town as a prosecutor for the Polk County Attorney's Office. Now retired, he writes about the frequently overlooked people, places and events in Des Moines on his blog: www.joesneighborhood.com.



Reimagined musical '1776' seeks true independence for all

Most of us have had that moment of unintended personal accountability when our words are thrown back in our faces. It's a very uncomfortable learning experience. So, what happens when a country has one of those moments? Such is the power of the reimagined musical, "1776." Studying history can make us uncomfortable. It should. It can make us feel deeply upset, even make us feel angry. If studying history makes one feel proud and happy, that person likely is not studying history. The real power and strength of the words of America's founders will only come when they are applied to all in America.

In 1969, as a prelude to America's rising bicentennial fever, a sassy new musical from Sherman Edwards based on Peter Stone's book became the patriotic darling of musical theatre. "1776" hit the bare boards, garnered warm reviews, and racked up three Tony Awards, including Best Musical, marching along for 1,217 performances.

Under the directorial vision of Diane Paulus ("Waitress") and Jeffrey L. Page ("Violet"), American Repertory Theater at Harvard University/Roundabout Theatre Company's new production of "1776" "reflects multiple representations of race, gender, and ethnicity." This bold reawakening of many core qualities from those founders are delivered with soul-piercing impact, humor and humanity by a cast comprised of people who identify as female, trans and non-binary.

The results promise to be a freedom-seeking story of microcosmic magnificence, as it delivers messages that those original commitments have not yet fulfilled. There is plenty of growing to do before the true American ideal becomes reality. The names are familiar in this show, led by historical luminaries such as John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Dickinson and John Hancock. Through Paulus' and Page's transformative lens, these historical figures, and the rest of the ensemble, awaken audiences to fresh understandings. The power of those words needed some dusting off.

Portraying the voice of the people

Brooke Simpson, who portrays the Courier, is a full-blooded member of the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe and was raised in her tribal communities. Her cultural legacy is all she knew growing up, including singing in church with her parents. This formed her creativity as a performance artist. Those early years in song led her to success with appearances in "The Voice" and "America's Got Talent," and she continues her singing career by



The National Tour Cast of "1776." Photo by Joan Marcus

producing multiple popular singles.

Simpson described this production as "a complete re-imagining of how we look at our history and wrestle with it and let it challenge us."

Zeroing in on her role and its special place in this script, she continued, "The people telling that story, and the bodies telling the story, look like people who weren't even invited to that conversation all those years ago. You're seeing diverse people of all different backgrounds... on that stage telling the story of how America became America.

"The courier is the one representing the people out there in the field. Also, there are so many things tied into our show to also acknowledge the nation that was already here before America put up its 'Coming to' sign, which is indigenous people."

She is proud to not only carry her culture in her heart but "to have pieces of my culture represented on that stage, it means so much.

"Something I love about this show is that we're not hiding from the truth. If we keep trying to tuck our history under the rug, there's no way we are going to learn our lessons from it. That's how we learn, grow and move on. Yes, it's tough to look at what our history may be, but we have to stick with that and wrestle with that in order to learn from that and move on and grow."

Experiencing this "1776" will resonate deep within its audiences, hopefully striking chords of greater understanding and inclusion.

Playhouse is stepping out with riotous musical

Getting their kinky on, the Des Moines Community Playhouse presents its next big musical, "Kinky Boots."

OVERHEARD IN THE LOBBY

Class Act Productions (CAP Theatre)

Through March 5. "Singin' in the Rain JR"

Des Moines Community Playhouse – Kate

Goldman Children's Theatre

Through March 12. "The Hundred Dresses"

Pura Social Club

March 4. "Reprise Cabaret"

Carousel Theatre Company

March 10-19. "Rumors"

Des Moines Performing Arts

March 14-19. "1776"

Des Moines Community Theatre

March 17-April 2. "Kinky Boots"

Des Moines Performing Arts

March 30 - April 16. "The Lion King"

A musical not often tackled by community theatres, the Playhouse has successfully produced such challenges.

A unique costume challenge for this show, as attested by veteran award-winning Playhouse staff costume designer Angela Lampe, is the footwear needed for this show. She recently shared her costuming mountain to climb in Facebook: "Okay folks! Here we go! The first pic is of my Kinky Boots footwear spread sheet. It may or may not be complete but the show needs a bare minimum of 73 pairs of boots or shoes." The lead actor wears a size 15, no less. Folks in town have been eagerly awaiting this musical. The bonus will be witnessing the parade of boots that Lampe successfully corralled for this show. ■

John Busbee is a creative project developer, critic, playwright, author, producer and media professional. He has produced his weekly show, *The Culture Buzz*, on KFMG since 2007.



DES MOINES FORGOTTEN

BY KRISTIAN DAY

Cup O' Kryptonite

"The smell of the coffee was fantastic. That smell alone would give you a jolt of energy."

I moved back to Iowa from Colorado in 2007. I settled in Des Moines on the south side without knowing anyone. I had a dodgy (but also cheap) apartment on Fleur between Gray's Lake and the airport. Smartphones really weren't a thing yet, and Tom at Myspace was still in charge of social media. I had a job in West Des Moines, which seemed like a haul back then. Most of my time was spent figuring out what I could do to convince myself that I made a positive albeit impulsive decision to move to Des Moines. There were three things I liked doing in my free time: running, reading comic books and going to



Photos courtesy of Matt Johnson



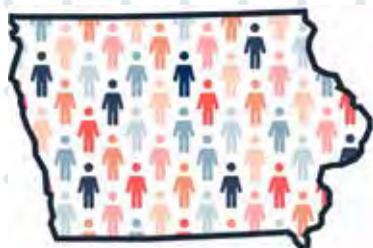
punk shows. I figured out running quickly because it was summertime, and I learned my way around our city on foot. It took me a minute to figure out the music scene because I didn't yet know where shows happened. That obviously worked itself out.

It was my second week living in Des

Moines when I drove to the Fleur Cinema to catch a movie and saw a sign for Cup O' Kryptonite. It was a comic shop and coffee house all in one, located at 4521 Fleur. Today, coffee shops are seemingly attached to everything, providing a cheap amenity that can make most any business a hair better. But



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DES MOINES FORGOTTEN CONTINUED

I am the type of person who wants to hang out and browse for a while. And I don't like to just walk in and buy a bunch of comic books just to take them home and be disappointed — especially when they were more than \$4 an issue.

The first time I stepped inside Cup O' Kryptonite was the summer of 2007. I remember walking in and hearing a familiar sound on the TV. The 1991 version of "Godzilla vs. King Ghidorah" was playing. The Heisei era of the Godzilla films give me goosebumps every time, and here I was standing in a comic book shop in Des Moines with that playing on the screen. I vaguely remember the color scheme of the place — red and blue with splashes of green. The place had visual cues from Superman and his only source of weakness, Kryptonite.

What really got me excited was a small, horror comic section toward the back. I was in the height of my horror fandom days back then. "The Walking Dead" was not yet a TV series, but its run as a comic book series was going strong.

Another strong memory was the trade paperback library that customers could borrow from just like you would in a library. I had never seen anything like that and haven't since. Trades are expensive, but it was the best way to read an entire storyline without buying 20

different single issues.

Matt Johnson started Cup O' Kryptonite in the summer of 2002 with inheritance left to him by his grandmother after she passed away. He wanted a place where people felt comfortable to come and hang out for a while. The original location was on Fleur Drive near the Fleur Cinema and Hy-Vee. This was before there was the Starbucks a block away.

"We could make a lot of money off lattes. Comics are only going to bring in so many people during the week. Coffee can bring people in every day," Johnson says.

Matt's sister was an interior designer and came up with the Superman color scheme for the place. When asked if the Superman color scheme was intentional, he can only respond with, "That sounds right."

"I remember my first time walking into the Cup," says Mike Kieler of Altoona. "The smell of the coffee was fantastic. That smell alone would give you a jolt of energy. People were sitting at the tables either working on a laptop or reading a comic, all of them with a coffee in front of them. The walls were covered with comic book and movie-related memorabilia. The comic section was just the right size. There were shelves on the walls where the latest editions could be grabbed, and there were long boxes along the floor of back issues.

I spent a good amount of time flipping through new issues and thumbing through the back issues."

Cup O' Kryptonite remained in its original location for 10 years before moving to 2608 Beaver Ave. in Beaverville where it did away with the coffee side of the business.

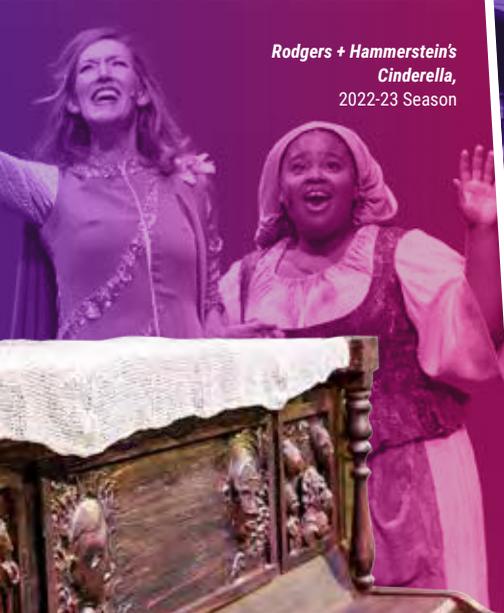
"I loved not having to get up at 6 a.m. every day to go make coffee. However, that's when it really hit me how much the coffee side kept the business going," says Johnson.

The Beaverville location didn't last long. When the store closed, Johnson went with it. A new incarnation, Cape's Kafe, opened in 2014 inside the Des Moines Social Club's Firehouse location and then closed again in 2018. Matt Johnson didn't continue. He is still a comic book fan and frequents Mayhem in Clive.

I still wish there was a comic book and coffee house place in Des Moines. As I have gotten older, I catch myself buying trade paperback collections and blasting through one cover to cover in one sitting. ■

Kristian Day is a filmmaker and writer based in Des Moines. He also hosts the syndicated Iowa Basement Tapes radio program on 98.9 FM KFMG. Instagram: @kristianday Twitter: @kristianmday





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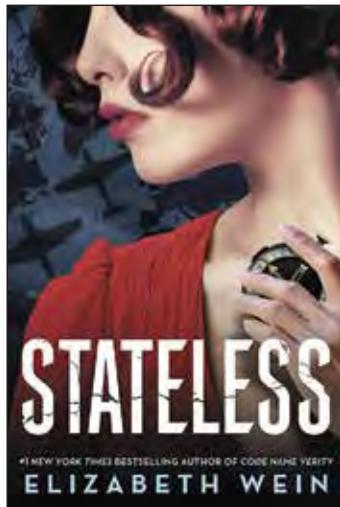
COURTESY OF BEVERDALE BOOKS

'Stateless'

I don't read much historical fiction, especially when it's set in the last hundred years or so. I like my fiction ancient. Yet, I make an exception for Elizabeth Wein books. There's just something about her carefully plotted, always thrilling stories that leaves me smiling.

Her newest book is no different. Set in 1937, just as World War II is beginning, a youth air race is garnering attention all over the world. Stella is a brilliant, young pilot and the only woman in the race. Together with her friends, she will face murder plots, mysteries, political intrigues and more in her bid to win the race and understand the explosive events unfolding around her.

This is a fast-paced, fascinating and well-researched book with heart-stopping action and a brilliant, totally satisfying ending. The writing is superb, and I fall a little in love with every character Wein writes. This is perfect for fans of strong protagonists, interesting quirks of history and truly spectacular mysteries. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



By Elizabeth Wein
3/14/23
400 pages
\$18.99
Little Brown Books

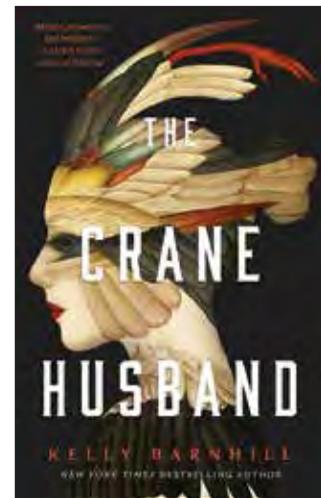
'The Crane Husband'

Sometimes the shortest books leave an impact far larger than they should. Kelly Barnhill has ripped me to shreds before, so I thought I knew what I was in for when I picked up this gorgeous little book. I was deliciously, heart-rendingly wrong.

Our protagonist is a practical, too-grown-up 15-year-old girl who has taken it upon herself to raise her younger brother, keep up with the bills, and wrangle her dreamy, fickle, artist mother. While the family farm falls to ruin, this unnamed girl tries her best to keep everything together. One day, her mother comes home with her newest love interest — a human-sized crane with a sinister air.

Knowing she has to do whatever it takes, our heroine subverts the fairytale tradition to save her family the only way she can. This is a brilliant, creepy rendition of a classic tale filled with real-life horror along with subversive magical realism. All of my favorite things in a tiny package. I can't wait to see what Barnhill does next. ■

— *Review by Julie Goodrich*



By Kelly Barnhill
2/28/23
178 pages
\$19.99
Tordotcom

Public Health
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MYTH

Syphilis is a disease of the past.

FACT

Syphilis in Iowa increased by more than 167% from 2019 to 2022.

Syphilis is a sexually transmissible infection (STI) that can cause long-term health problems. It's serious, and cases are on the rise in Iowa. Not everyone who has syphilis has symptoms, so people often don't realize they have it. That's why it's important for you to get tested regularly for STIs, including syphilis, if you're sexually active.

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CARS IN THE CITY



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Camaro convertible

Iconic muscle car since 1967

BY JACKIE WILSON

A Camaro in the late 1970s and early 1980s was one of my favorite cars. All the cool guys drove older model Camaro Z28s, Trans-Ams or Monte Carlos — any two-door that wasn't a parent's practical sedan. If you were dating a guy with a two-door, most had bucket seats. This meant sitting on a pillow nestled on the console to sit as close to each other as possible.

Yet, when I test drove the 2023 Chevy Camaro, I wasn't sitting in the sales assistant's lap. We cruised in the wind in our own seats on a balmy 55-degree February day.

The Camaro 1SS convertible is a powerful ride. Attempting a left turn on busy Hickman Road might take forever. When the assistant suggested I floor it, I obliged. Floor it? Heck, yeah!

With a 6.2-liter V8 engine, there's no hesitation. It takes off in a flash and hugs low to the ground, turning tight corners with ease.

The streamlined front dash includes an 8-inch touch screen, which doesn't overtake the sports car look with fancy features. It does offer a backup camera, keyless start and hands-free features. The suede steering wheel is a nice texture — just right for Iowa temps, as opposed to hot leather in the summer.

The bucket seats sit low but are not too low-slung or difficult to get out. Got passengers? Make sure they're petite. As an average gal with short legs, I climbed into the back seat. My knees awkwardly jammed into the back of the passenger's seat, and I could barely

straighten my legs. Anything more than a half-hour drive lands you with stiff knees and the inability to shimmy out of the backseat gracefully.

The Camaro is an adventurous, fast ride that doesn't resemble a teenager's car. The sharkskin metallic gray body pairs well with a black top. The SS5 split-spoke satin black wheels with a dual exhaust update the look. A push button folds the convertible top down easily into the back of the car.

According to the U.S. News and World Report, Camaros ranked sixth best in sports cars for 2023. The No. 1 sports car is still the Ford Mustang, as the two rivals have sparred for more than five decades for top muscle car bragging rights.

In 1964, the Ford Mustang was born, and Chevy quickly needed a sports car to compete with it. In 1967, the Camaro Sports Coupe was offered for \$2,466. If you're a classic car buff, you should have kept your 1968 Camaro instead of trading it in for a practical Ford Escort. Vintage Camaros in good condition today fetch more than \$100,000. Most Camaro models retained their value due to their iconic styling and speedy two-door rides among a sea of clunky SUVs.

Convertibles continue to attract attention. When I glance at the sport's car driver, I don't expect to see a cute guy — it's usually a nostalgia-seeking, gray-haired Boomer. Anyway, I don't think teenagers can afford the



\$54,800 price tag.

Top up or top down, the Camaro continues to be an iconic sporty ride. ■

Meet Tone the MoveMaker

Turning struggles into strength

Antonio Roddy is dedicated to progressing.

Raised on the south side of Chicago, he grew up in the shadow of skyscrapers and yachts along the affluent Lake Shore Drive. He wondered: Where was the divide?

“Coming from that, it always inspired the vibe to better myself, but I had to figure out how to escape the hood, the ghetto,” he said.

Now, Roddy — better known as Tone the MoveMaker — is an entrepreneur and artist at Mainframe Studios. His path here wasn’t easy.

“Where I come from, they told us we would be dead before 21. So, you kinda live life expecting to die, and then you realize, I think I’m gonna make it.”

Roddy’s life trajectory began to shift in 2009. While visiting his brother at Iowa State University, he noticed thousands of people milling about Campustown, eight vacant commercial spots on the block — and an opportunity.

“I knew at that moment: I’m gonna stay,” he recalled. “I’m gonna stay and try to open up and do something different than what I’m used to doing.”

And so, naturally, Roddy started a hot dog stand. While in Ames, he “stole an education” using a friend’s student ID, renting camera equipment, using computer lab software and absorbing lectures.

By the end of his time in Ames, Roddy had bought all those vacant spots on the block. On top of his hot dog stand, MunchieZ Snack Stop, he had produced a radio show, worked as a cameraman, and hosted parties and variety shows.

With business doing well, Roddy asked his best friend from Chicago to join him.

“But he made a mistake and tried to help me out. He tried to make some money, but he ended up going to jail with a kilo of cocaine,” he said. “At that point, I dedicated myself to helping people coming from my walk.”

Roddy moved to Des Moines in 2015 and secured a spot at Mainframe in 2020. His clothing company, Designed by the Streets, is more than that.

In his shop, Roddy packages T-shirts to resemble kilos of cocaine. When his friend gets out of jail, he’ll hand him a package and share his newfound mission: “Helping the streets turn their struggles into their strengths.”

Today, Roddy doesn’t take his history for granted. Growing up creative kept him out of trouble. He’d seen his friends make mistakes, and he learned from them.



Antonio Roddy operates Designed by the Streets out of Mainframe Studios, #102. Photo by Sofia Legaspi Dickens

“I never went to jail. I never went to prison because I’d seen my friends going. I never had a bunch of random kids because my friends did before me,” he said. “I get the real story in the back, when nobody sees the baby daddy crying.”

Time stood still for many during the pandemic, but Roddy worked harder than ever. He wrote a list of goals to hit before age 40 and began tackling them.

“Everybody’s got nothing to do, but I’ve been begging for extra time,” he said. “So I took advantage of it.”

Roddy’s list is shorter now. He learned embroidery. He secured equipment and launched a shop: the first in the nation to dye thread as it sews. He created the first augmented reality mural in Iowa. He’s become more fluent in business, photography and various industries. He’s shared his story with others. Through it all, he’s learned to be vulnerable.

“It’s the things that I never wanted nobody to know: that I used to be in the street, that I sold drugs before, and all that stuff,” he said. “It was insecurity, but I couldn’t help nobody unless I told that part.”

Growing up surrounded by violence, oppression and incarceration, acting tough was necessary for survival. Roddy taught other kids on his block to do the same.

“I used to think every place was like my

neighborhood in Chicago. When I came to Iowa, I thought it was like gangs everywhere, that I had to worry about if I cross this street or cross that street.”

His brother helped transform his mindset, but Roddy needed a new purpose, a new way to help people. Today, he uses his background to help the city address the issues he experienced. He works with kids from the street. He meets students where they are.

“The kids come to me because they can tell where I’m from,” he said. “It’s planting the seeds so that when they hit these forks in the road and they say, ‘What am I gonna do? Well, I talked to Tone before... and I think I can make it because I saw him making it.’”

Change can’t be forced — Roddy knows that. Instead, he leads by example: first, through his studio, where he nurtures creativity and community.

“Entrepreneurship and art lead you to self-improvement. It leads you to better mental health — you learn yourself. And then, once you learn yourself, you can see yourself doing certain things better. You make some art you didn’t think you could make, then you start saying, ‘Maybe there’s other stuff I can do that I thought I couldn’t.’”

Through the twists and turns of his life story, Roddy sums it up best: “I make moves for the people. That’s what I do.” ■

Award-winning corgis

Plus three cats

Walking into Shirley Harder's home, friendly corgis clamor for attention, almost saying, "Look at me! See how wonderful I am? Here's my toy — when can we play?"

Meanwhile, two of Harder's cats scatter to another room, while one cat, Phil, sits on his cat tower throne, oblivious to the spectacle.

Harder's life is full with her three corgis, Maisie, Kayla and Trick, along with three cats, Phil, Alyse and Harry.

The walls of Harder's home contain hundreds of championship ribbons, trophies and accomplishments representing the countless hours spent training both horses and her corgis.

As a veterinarian, she's adept with animals. Growing up, her family couldn't keep pets, due to her father's allergies. As a child, Harder recalls watching a Sunday Wonderful World of Disney movie, "Little Dog Lost," about corgis.

"I was fascinated with watching the Disney movies about horses and corgis. Someday, I would have a corgi," she said.

Her first dog was an Australian Shepherd. But once she graduated from veterinarian school, it's been corgis ever since. With an equine practice for 40 years, she loved working with horses and winning various competitions. Yet, after decades, the barn dust caused health issues, and she left the profession. Another veterinarian hired her, and she now offers rehab therapy for animals.

She began training her corgi, Cory (now passed), for various agility competitions through the Des Moines Obedience Training Club. And she's got the ribbons to prove it. Her current dog, Kayla, is her "superstar," qualifying for national tracking and rally awards five years in a row. Rally awards are numerous, and she's been awarded a MACH bar (Master Agility Championship — a prestigious award) signed by participants at the trials. Kayla is well trained, easy going with a solid disposition who also does pet therapy visits.

Harder said she cherishes her friendships with other dog owners.

"There's a sense of camaraderie with the dog owners, not a competitive nature. We laugh at the agility trial because dogs will be dogs. We see someone struggle and then the dog finally gets it. We're all happy, regardless of who wins. The friendships are invaluable."

Her cats "mostly" get along with the dogs. The corgis



Shirley Harder with Kayla, Maisie and Trick. Photos by Jackie Wilson



Some of Harder's many awards

chase the cats one minute, and the next minute, Phil and the corgis are cuddling. Harder recalled how she obtained Phil.

"I was in a grooming room, and the cat just sat and watched me grooming dogs," she said. "He's a cool cat. He loves everybody and takes new cats under his wings."

As Harder has spent countless hours training her dogs, the awards are important, but it's not the only reason she does it.

"It's a relationship with the dogs. You're spending time developing trust and doing something enjoyable. It's all about a bond."

Harder realizes it takes more effort to raise dogs than cats. It's kept her active, walking three animals daily.

"Dogs require a lot more work; cats are easier to take care of. It's all about the companionship. They are my motivating factor to get out of the house." ■

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3/03 KATY GUILLEN AND THE
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3/06 MONDAY NIGHT LIVE
2023

3/11 EL PERRO
2023 WITH DAN TEDESCO

3/12 CLEM SNIDE
2023

3/13 MONDAY NIGHT LIVE
2023

3/15 MIKE WITH 454 & NIONTAY
2023

3/16 ELISE TROUW WITH RYAN
2023 LOMBARD (OF LVMMAKING)

3/17 WITT LOWRY
2023 WITH LIVINGSTON

3/18 JESSE DANIEL WITH TYLER
2023 RICHTON AND THE HIGH BANK BOYS

3/20 MONDAY NIGHT LIVE
2023

3/22 MICHIGAN RATTLERS
2023

3/23 THE COUNSELORS OF EVIL
2023

3/24 GEEKY GARTERS BY
2023 NAUGHTY NERDS CABARET

3/25 WILLI CARLISLE
2023 WITH WILLY TEA TAYLOR

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BY SOFIA LEGASPI DICKENS

A journey of the mind

Hypnotist encourages meditation for change.

Bill Mogolov's journey began in 2004. The owner of a successful video company in Clive, one of his customers approached him with an idea: why not share his business expertise with the inmates at the local women's prison?

He was hesitant at first but eventually caved and agreed.

"And so, on a really cold January night, I found myself in a classroom inside the prison walls at the women's prison in Mitchellville. It was in an old classroom with creaky floors," he recalled. "Before the women came in for the first class, I remember thinking, 'What did I get myself into?'"

What Mogolov got himself into became "some of the best years" of his life, as he reflects back.

"I think it taught me a lesson that you should never judge a book by its cover, and it taught me that there's good in different people that we sometimes think are bad people," he said. "I learned that if you treat them with respect, and if they know you care about them, a lot of times they reciprocate, and you can really see them in a different light. And a lot of the people I had in the classes — I came to learn that they were basically good people, lots of them. They just made split-second decisions that changed their life, in some cases, forever."

Mogolov taught classes at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women for eight years, plus two years at the Polk County Jail. His classes expanded from the initial focus on business to include life skills such as personal finance, stress management — and guided meditation.

That's right: Mogolov is a certified hypnotist.

"I actually went to a school in Las Vegas and became a stage hypnotist. I did shows for almost three or four years," he said. "I didn't enjoy doing that so much. I liked entertaining, but I really

wanted to do something where I'd be helping people, more than entertaining them."

Fast forward to today. He no longer volunteers with inmates, and he's retired from his video business and part-time hypnosis practice. Now, he's on to something bigger.

"One of the things on my bucket list was to create a website where people could listen to recorded meditations," he said.

The guided meditations, which can be found at mindjourneys.org and most podcast streaming platforms, are 100% free with no strings attached.

"I didn't want to do the thing where you have to get emails and all that stuff," said Mogolov, whose sole motivation is simple: to help others.

Listeners, now from nearly 20 countries, can access recorded meditations geared toward relaxation and self-improvement. "Mind Journeys" guided by Mogolov might take listeners through a walk in the forest, along the ocean beach, or back to their childhood. Self-improvement meditations help listeners deal with everything from self-image to grief and forgiveness.

"We do live in a pretty stressful world, we have to admit. And so, I wanted to do something to help people with not only stress but different issues that they might be going through."

On occasion, Mogolov continues to teach classes. This May, he'll be holding a beginning meditation class at Drake University's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, open to the community.

A number of people are wary of hypnosis: envisioning a mysterious figure with a swinging pocket watch, ready to bombard their subject with unwelcome suggestions. To ease those fears, Mogolov pointed out that hypnosis has been around for centuries and is a proven



Bill Mogolov has spent a decade teaching guided meditation techniques. Photo submitted

science.

"When you are in hypnosis, you, the client, are always in control — never the hypnotist. That's the misconception," he said. "If the hypnotist gave you a suggestion you didn't feel comfortable with, you wouldn't accept it. And you can always wake up and walk away. They can never make you do something you don't want to do."

While some of Mogolov's recordings use mild hypnosis to relax the listener initially, he said they mainly focus on meditation or mindfulness — which don't incorporate suggestions.

"It's simply relaxing yourself, putting away all your worries and your concerns from the past and future, and just concentrating on the present.

"There's a lot of people in the world that have little things that affect their everyday lives and hold them back from leading healthy and rich lives, and I think this can help them a lot to deal with the things that hold them back." ■

get the **JOB**

Helpful tips for your employment search

Make your job work for you

(Family Features) For some people, job dissatisfaction is the result of a crummy boss or stifling work environment. For others, the problem lies much deeper; it's a need to reevaluate your career path and find a more suitable fit.

If you're considering a career change but not sure which direction you're headed, consider these words of wisdom:

Do some self-reflecting. Take time to give your current work situation a thorough analysis. Determine which elements you enjoy, what rubs you the wrong way and what you'd change if you could. Think about practical solutions to the problems you identify whether it's changing to a different role in the same field or exploring a new industry entirely. Avoid the temptation to focus on the negative. Rather, take plenty of time to consider the positive aspects of your current job, since that insight can help inform your next step. For example, if you enjoy the limited contact you have with customers, a job with more customer-facing interaction might not be

a good fit.

Ask for input. Sometimes loved ones hold the key to a happier career path because they can point out details you don't recognize. They might recall a time when you were most relaxed and happy, or they might point out talents or skills you take for granted. Often, these natural abilities are an excellent foundation for a career because you're well-equipped to be successful.

Consider your personal interests. Keeping your personal life and professional life separate isn't necessarily a bad idea, but finding a way to merge the two can be useful. This is especially true if you're able to combine training or skills with something you're passionate about. For example, if you're an avid outdoorsman, you might find great satisfaction in applying your business management background to work for a company that specializes in camping gear.

Understand what motivates you. Landing in the right job isn't just about having the right qualifications for a position that interests you. At the

end of the day, you'll feel most content when your job offers meaningful rewards. Motivators can be financial, or they might have more to do with the ability to learn and grow. Some people are willing to sacrifice a bigger paycheck to know they're making a meaningful contribution in a field they care about. Knowing what outcomes resonate best can help you find a more rewarding career.

Do your research. Changing your career path is a big move, and one you shouldn't take lightly. Before diving in, spend time looking into the field you're considering so you have a better sense of factors like growth opportunities, job availability, qualifications, compensation and more. If you find you aren't quite qualified for the job you think you want, explore what it will take to get there whether it's training, education or putting in your time to gain experience and work your way into the role you desire.

A career change may be just what you need to shift your life in the direction you want. Find more career advice at eLivingtoday.com. ■

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Shawn Kinnison

SIENA HILLS	TUSCANY
451 SW Ankeny Rd, Ankeny	1600 8th St SE, Altoona
welcomesh@edencrestliving.com	welcometuscany@edencrestliving.com
515-313-3814	



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LEGACY	TIMBERLINE
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