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CITYVIEW'S

# BUSINESS JOURNAL



## MORE THAN JUST FUN AND GAMES



By Lindsey Giardino

For many companies, corporate games are a way to boost morale and bring coworkers together in meaningful (and often unexpected) ways.

Organizations like DLL Finance, Corteva Agriscience, and Zirous have found the joy in these types of events and the impact they can make on workplace culture.

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Learn how companies boost employee engagement through involvement in corporate games.

The DLL Finance dodgeball team won gold at the Des Moines Corporate Games.



## FEATURE

**A wellness culture in action**

At DLL Finance, a global finance company with a location in Johnston, there's a dedicated Wellness Committee. This group focuses on enhancing the mental and physical wellbeing of members (aka employees) by exploring ways to support a positive workplace and culture of healthy lifestyle choices.

The Des Moines Corporate Games is one of the ways DLL puts that into action. For the past eight years, DLL has fielded a team to participate in at least one of the approximately 25 events offered — activities like bags, pickleball, bowling, and track and field. DLL's overall goal is to provide the maximum number of teams and encourages members to get involved in unlimited participation events such as yoga, the fitness walk, and the cycling tour ride.

Last year, the company achieved its highest participation rate yet, with 64% of its local office joining in at least one event.

The popularity of the games at DLL has grown over the years, thanks in part to the focused work of its Wellness Committee.

"Prior to the past few years, we struggled to fill rosters and often had to ask repeat members to fill team spots," Emilie Herter, asset sales specialist, explains. "We are now very fortunate to be in the position of getting to choose teams and having a higher interest level than the team capacities in most cases."

DLL sets goals at the beginning of each season (the Des Moines Corporate Games runs from late May through July 31) and aligns them with incentives for participants. Members receive a team shirt with a new design each year, opportunities to win gift cards via a raffle, and occasionally even additional paid time off.

In addition, DLL supports volunteer participation through the games by partnering with organizations like LifeServe to donate blood and Meals from the Heartland to package meals.

Beyond the Des Moines Corporate Games, DLL's Wellness Committee also hosts internal tournaments like bags and pickleball.

Ultimately, participating in events like the games helps cultivate a culture of collaboration at DLL that goes beyond the office.

"It's a great opportunity for members to engage with other teams and members they wouldn't have reason to outside of their job role," Herter says.



The Corteva Agriscience 4x100 team races.

**Grassroots fun**

Troy Henrich has a unique role, as he helps manage two membership-based Wellness Centers on the Corteva Agriscience campus in Johnston, serving employees, retirees and contractors.

"Think of it as your typical corporate fitness/wellness center," Henrich explains. "We offer 'in-the-box' programming like personal training and group fitness, but we also deliver 'out-of-the-box' programming, which is where events like the Des Moines Corporate Games come in."

Since COVID, there has been a greater emphasis on programs like these, especially due to hybrid work schedules. A three-person team, including Henrich, coordinates all of it.

"Some companies approach the Des Moines Corporate Games with HR or leadership support, but, in our case, it's a true grassroots effort driven by committees or just folks with passion for the games," he says.

Corteva joined the games in 2017, seeing it as a morale boost during a time of significant organizational change (DuPont Pioneer went through a merger and was spun off into Corteva Agriscience in 2019).

In that first year, Corteva simply hoped to generate interest. Once teams formed, responsibilities were divided among staff, and captains were appointed to help with communication.

"That structure seemed to work well and is still in place today," Henrich says. "This year marks our eighth year, and the impact has been undeniable, full of team building, camaraderie, pride and stronger employee connections."

In 2021, Corteva launched an internal version of the games called the Heart of Nature Games



Corteva Agriscience employees in action.

(HONG).

"We had originally hoped to launch in 2020 as a 'mini DMCG,' but COVID delayed us," Henrich explains. "In 2021, we officially kicked it off to reconnect employees and bring fun back to campus, and it's grown ever since."

When HONG first launched, teams were based on building locations. As employees moved around more, teams were reorganized by the first letter of employees' last names.

Now in its fifth year, HONG offers 11 events, including two campus runs/walks, yoga on the lawn, dodgeball, tug-of-war, bags, kan jam, pickleball, bocce ball, doubles ping pong, trivia and a group bike ride.

Interest in employee participation is strong. For the Des Moines Corporate Games, approximately 250 employees typically take part. HONG, held on campus and during the workday, draws closer to 375 participants.

"We award medals, prizes and a traveling trophy," Henrich says. "People love medals, seriously."

Outside of HONG and the Des Moines Corporate Games, Corteva also organizes teams for local races like the Drake Road Races, Grand Blue Mile, Johnston Mayor's Run, and the IMT Marathon events.

Henrich says that a strong, active culture existed at DuPont Pioneer even before he joined the company 14 years ago.

"My team and I just tried to complement and build on that," he says. "Joining the Des Moines Corporate Games made perfect sense for the external engagement and friendly competition, and launching HONG allowed us to tailor events to our campus and workforce. It's been a great mix of fun, wellness and



inclusion.”

Henrich says participation in team events like these makes a big difference in company culture.

“Whether they’re playing or cheering from the sidelines, there’s positive energy that carries into the workplace,” he says. “It’s improved morale, boosted employees’ connections, and helped us grow participation in other initiatives.”

That said, hosting employee games isn’t without its challenges. Henrich identifies hybrid work as the biggest one.

“In-person communication is harder now, so we rely more on email and Microsoft Teams,” he explains. “Plus, most employees are on-site only three days a week, which compresses schedules and adds complexity. Early planning, clear communication and keeping things light and fun have helped us stay successful.”

Overall, Henrich says he is proud to see such strong participation.

“I love that employees are willing to show up, compete and cheer on their coworkers,” he says. “For me, some of the best moments have come from HONG. Just watching folks from around campus have fun, laugh, compete and get to know their

coworkers is very rewarding. That’s what it’s all about: connection and fun.”

From shot put to team spirit

At Zirous, a tech firm in Des Moines that partners with mid-sized businesses to solve technical challenges, employee engagement is key. Chief People Officer Jenni Hipwell says a major part of her role is understanding how to keep people involved and enjoying Zirous beyond just the work itself.

One of their biggest initiatives? The Des Moines Corporate Games.

Zirous aims to participate in all the events, but one of the biggest draws is track and field at Drake Stadium, which brings out more than 20 employees. Hipwell usually competes in shot put.

“It’s something fun you normally wouldn’t do,” she says.

The company, which currently has approximately 120 employees, started participating seven years ago. Since then, interest has grown significantly from a team-building perspective, as it allows people to get to know their colleagues outside of work and connect with folks from across the organization.

“The competitiveness of our coworkers really shines out,” Hipwell adds. “It’s a lot of fun and has helped get everyone on our team involved in



Zirous staff participate in a variety of events at the Corporate Games.

different capacities.”

The games have also inspired broader community engagement efforts. Zirous adopted a section of the Jordan Creek Trail, which they clean quarterly. They also participate in volunteer activities such as Meals from the Heartland and blood donations with LifeServe, all of which initially stemmed from their involvement in the Des Moines Corporate Games.

They have even competed in charity events like Kickin’ for the Cause, a kickball tournament fundraiser.


And Hipwell says the ripple effects are felt in everyday workplace dynamics.

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Two 20Th Point, LLC	Amana	Iowa	01	\$52,000	3	1	1	New	Retail Trade
Dharma Hospitality Inc	Coralville	Johnson	01	\$350,000	0	11	11	Existing	Accommodation And Food Services
Parkinetics Playground LLC	Hills	Johnson	01	\$148,200	2	0	0	New	Arts, Entertainment, And Recreation
Elite Edge Athletics LLC	Cedar Rapids	Linn	01	\$758,800	2	0	2	New	Educational Services
Securetec Corporation	Cedar Rapids	Linn	01	\$19,200	0	3	3	Existing	Administrative And Support And Waste Management And Remediation Services
The Golden Pheasant Steakhouse	Remsen	Plymouth	04	\$410,000	0	0	11	Existing	Accommodation And Food Services
Red Anchor Asian Buffet Inc	Altoona	Polk	03	\$1,872,000	9	0	0	New	Accommodation And Food Services
4J'S Printing LLC	Clive	Polk	03	\$287,800	3	14	14	Existing	Manufacturing
3330 University Ave LLC	Des Moines	Polk	03	\$676,900	10	1	1	New	Health Care And Social Assistance
3330 University Ave LLC	Des Moines	Polk	03	\$521,700	10	1	1	New	Health Care And Social Assistance
GSH Food Services, Inc	Des Moines	Polk	03	\$300,000	24	0	8	Existing	Accommodation And Food Services
Pints By Beth,LLC	Des Moines	Polk	03	\$235,800	1	1	1	New	Manufacturing
Foot And Ankle Institute, PLLC	Des Moines	Polk	03	\$147,500	2	1	1	Existing	Health Care And Social Assistance
B Coffee LLC	Grimes	Polk	03	\$515,000	1	25	26	New	Accommodation And Food Services
Pria Logistics LLC	Johnston	Polk	03	\$49,500	0	100	100	Existing	Transportation And Warehousing
Barista's Bouquet LLC	Urbandale	Polk	03	\$150,000	1	5	5	New	Accommodation And Food Services
Skin Iowa	West Des Moines	Polk	03	\$550,000	8	1	8	Existing	Health Care And Social Assistance
B & C Moore Enterprises LLC	West Des Moines	Polk	03	\$218,000	3	0	0	New	Health Care And Social Assistance
Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy	West Des Moines	Polk	03	\$152,000	0	0	7	Existing	Professional, Scientific, And Technical Services
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## ON THE MOVE

Send information on new hires, promotions, expansions, openings and other business news to [editor@dmcityview.com](mailto:editor@dmcityview.com).

## Kunkel joins First National Bank's Ankeny commercial team

First National Bank announced the addition of Michael Kunkel as the newest commercial banker serving the Ankeny market. With experience in commercial banking and relationship management, Kunkel brings a strong background in business development that aligns with First National Bank's continued growth strategy in the Ankeny and greater Des Moines Metro markets.

## Mojaddam named new DMU chief information officer

Des Moines University Medicine and Health Sciences has appointed Erfan Mojaddam, Ed.M., as its new chief information officer. He will start his duties on Sept. 15. Mojaddam brings nearly two decades of experience in educational technology, data innovation and digital transformation, including leadership roles at Stanford University and the University of California at Berkeley.



Erfan Mojaddam

## Ballet Des Moines appoints Trope as artistic director, Mattingly as resident choreographer

Ballet Des Moines continues to add to its roster of prominent leaders in the dance world with the appointment of Eric Trope as the company's incoming artistic director. Trope, who recently served as Lexington Ballet's artistic director for the company's 50th season, took the AD role at Ballet Des Moines on July 1.



Eric Trope

Ballet Des Moines simultaneously announced a new role for current artistic director, Tom Mattingly, who will move into the role of resident choreographer for the next three years.

## DMU appoints Bisaga-Carr and Hurst to alumni board of directors

Des Moines University Medicine and Health Sciences has appointed two new members to its



April Bisaga-Carr



Emily Hurst

Alumni Board of Directors: April Bisaga-Carr, D.O., 2003, and Emily Hurst, D.O., 2005, FACOI.

## Aureon announces leadership team



Chris Burns



Holly Veeder



Aric Birchmier

Aureon announced a strategic executive realignment with the appointment of three key leaders: Chris Burns as chief operating officer, Holly Veeder as chief transformation officer, and Aric Birchmier as chief revenue officer. Together, they form a unified leadership team focused on delivering integrated services and accelerating companywide transformation.

## UCAN hires Boggess as executive director

The Urbandale Community Action Network (UCAN) announced that Eileen Boggess has accepted the position of UCAN's executive director. Eileen, a longtime resident of Urbandale, was formerly the director of the Urbandale Food Pantry and is currently working for the Des Moines Women's Club.

## MidWestOne announces board of director updates

MidWestOne Financial Group, Inc. announced updates to its board of directors. Tracy McCormick will now serve as the Chair of MidWestOne Financial Group, Inc., and MidWestOne Bank. She is the chief financial officer and a director of Mill Creek Development Company, an urban planning and development company in Pasadena, California. Andre Perry will be joining the MidWestOne Financial Group, Inc. and MidWestOne Bank Board of Directors. Perry is the executive director of Hancher Auditorium and the University of Iowa Office of Performing Arts and Engagement.



Tracy McCormick



Andre Perry

## WDM Chamber announces two staff promotions

The West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce announced the promotion of Everett Mullican and



Everett Mullican



Meredith Murphy

Meredith Murphy. Mullican, a West Des Moines native, joined the WDM Chamber as marketing and communications coordinator in 2023 and was promoted to marketing and communications manager in May of 2025. Murphy, originally from Shawnee Mission, Kansas, joined the WDM Chamber as talent attraction coordinator in 2022. She was promoted to talent attraction manager in 2023 and now serves as director of future workforce as of July 1.

## Calkins joins Meyocks as director of social media

Meyocks has hired Kelli Calkins as director of social media. In this role, Calkins will oversee social media strategy, content development and influencer campaigns for the agency's client roster of food, agriculture, health and mentor brands.



Kelli Calkins

## United Way of Central Iowa welcomes new board members

The United Way of Central Iowa Board of Directors announced its new board chair, Monica Friedman, and the addition of the following seven new members who began their two-year terms on July 1: Ryan Downing, Lance Henning, Brian Israel, Kevin Larkin, Chief Michael McTaggart, Cathy Padilla and Brandon Qualley.

## Des Moines Art Center announces deLima as director of installations

The Des Moines Art Center announced the appointment of Jonathan deLima as director of installations. deLima brings more than 20 years of experience in the contemporary art world, with a background in exhibitions, managing collections and developing impactful art programs. ■



Jonathan deLima