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FROM THE PUBLISHER

The Halloween spirit

If you have not yet decided on a Halloween costume, you might want to hurry up. You can't wear that Elvis costume every year.

In this issue of CITYVIEW, we do our best to help you capture some of that Halloween spirit that you may not have had since you were a kid. Don't worry. It's not too late. You still have some time to get that costume together.

Choosing a costume as a kid was not high pressure, as most of us simply wore whatever our parents had for us. For me, it was usually a hand-me-down from my siblings. I really didn't care. As an adult, though, the pressure in choosing a Halloween costume intensified. I could no longer strap on a plastic mask and call it good.

Through the years, my wife and I had some costume hits and some costume misses. The biggest miss was in our younger years when we dressed as mummies, wearing white long underwear tops and bottoms and covering each other with strips of white bed sheets. It seemed like a great idea — until we had to go to the bathroom.

Another year, we went with a group and dressed as the "Gilligan's Island" crew. Jolene and I were Mr. and Mrs. Howell. And, yes, I carried the teddy bear.

A few years later, we tried Goldilocks and the three bears with another couple. It didn't work. We looked like a little girl and three giant mice.

Jolene and I also did stints as the farmer and the cow, the hunter and the deer, the Lone Ranger and Tonto, and Farrah Fawcett and Michael Jackson. One year, when she was pregnant, we went as a priest and a pregnant nun. In hindsight, that was not a good idea.

The best costumes we ever had, though, were when we dressed as the couple that was throwing the party we attended. We pulled that one off twice.

I encourage you to join us and get into the Halloween spirit this year. Attend a costume party or event, or just dress up and entertain the kids who are trick-or-treating.

And if you struggle to come up with a costume, well, there is always Elvis. ■

Shane Goodman

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ASK CITYVIEW

By CITYVIEW staff

Ask CITYVIEW anything by emailing editor@dmccityview.com.

Q. What is the USPS's reason for removing mailboxes outside post offices?

A. The reader who wrote in with this question stated that the mailbox outside of the West Suburban branch on N.W. 108th Street in Clive was removed to fix a broken lock, but the post office later stated that the mailbox is not returning. Then, two mailboxes were removed outside of the main post office on Second Avenue in Des Moines. This left one mailbox for people planning to go north after dropping off mail. This caused confusion for those who wanted to turn left and go south after mailing a letter, causing drivers to go the wrong way down Second Avenue.

The reader spoke with a front-counter agent at the main post office. The agent said they were aware and alarmed by this. She also stated that postal employees are not responsible for the removals, and the order came from Washington, D.C. The agent said the postal workers' union is fighting to get the box on Second Avenue returned.

The removal of the blue mailboxes is due to several reasons, according to the USPS. The main reason for the change has been due to security concerns, as this operation is part of "Project Safe Delivery."

Q. How long can an elected official run for office while still holding a job in government?

A. Elected officials across Iowa have been announcing races left, right and center ahead of the 2026 midterms. Rob Sand, the state's auditor, is running for governor. Ashley Hinson, IA-3 House representative, is running for the senate. Are they required to resign from their current positions while running for another office?

In some states, the answer would be yes. In Iowa, it is no. Five states have "resign to run" laws: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii and Texas. Arguments for the measures include that they should not divide their time in office between their official duties and their personal advancement, and officeholders can unfairly leverage their present position against other candidates.

Arguments against say this can disproportionately affect those for whom public service is a full-time job. For these individuals, quitting their present position to campaign may not be a financially viable option. It can also make elections less competitive, because they can discourage local and down-ballot officeholders from seeking higher offices. Also, the U.S. Constitution does not require an officeholder to resign from another office in order to run for Congress.

Q. Is the construction on Fleur Drive completed?

A. Yes. ■



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters are edited for space, spelling and clarity.

Readers appreciate Highway 44 story

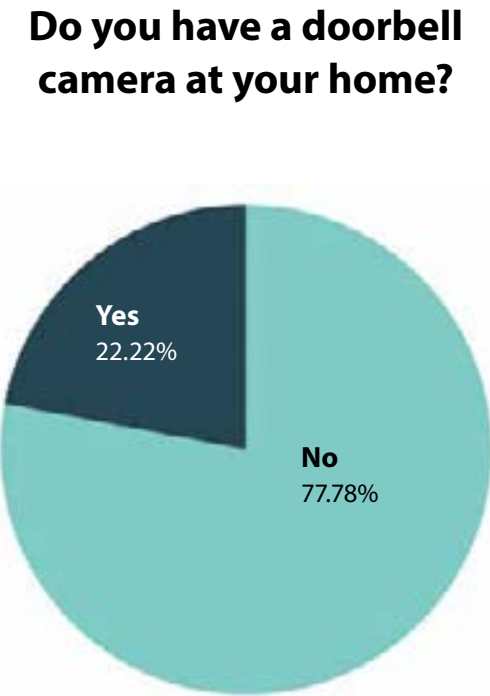
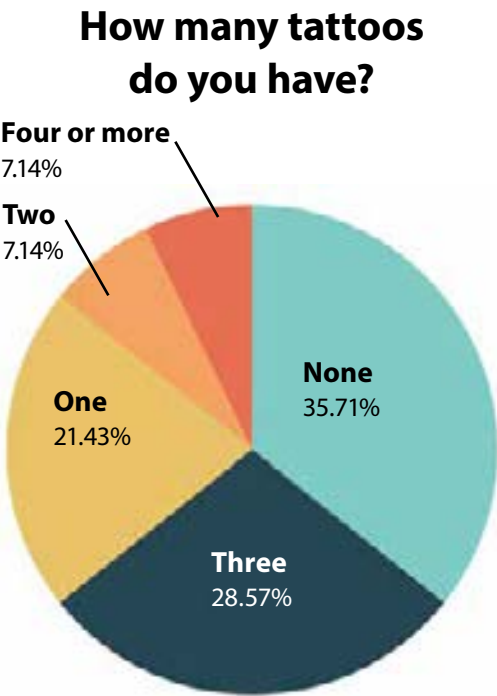
I wanted to note my appreciation to you and to Joe Weeg for the Highway 44 piece (Traveling Highway 44, September 2025). It brought to mind my experiences on part of this path when I was teaching at Dallas Community/Dallas Center-Grimes High from 1976 to 2012. I commuted on this road, and I, too, witnessed the dramatic changes over the years. In the late 1970s, the “highway” was a school-bus-driver’s nightmare. (I even took Highway 6 until the “widening” of 44 to remove the narrow lanes and curb-like shoulders.) Now, whenever I head to Grimes for all the available businesses, it seems a vast commercial area. (Dallas Community became Dallas Center-Grimes around 1979-80, I believe, and in earlier days Grimes students attended the schools but received no mention in the district’s name.) I hope Jim Boll told you of the “Boot Hill” days and its local fame. - Steven Sales

I wanted to tell you how much I enjoy reading your magazine each month. I look for it either at Campbell’s Health Store or at US Bank. Great job on distribution! I especially enjoyed this month’s article on Highway 44 (Traveling Highway 44, September 2025). I was in the yellow page directory advertising business for more than 30 years. I spent many days and months traversing rural Iowa, as well as 12 states, selling advertising for our many directories we published at Hanson Directory. I like the variety of restaurant coverage, bars and so many of your intro pages. Keep up this outstanding publication. - Jeff Cobb

POLL POSITION



Results from last month’s poll at www.dmcityview.com



FACEBOOK COMMENTS



cityview magazine
(comments unedited)

CITYVIEW magazine: Do you use a traditional alarm clock or rely on the one on your phone?

- Leah Burns:** Coffee pot lol
- Jeff Hoffman:** Phone
- Julie Luepke:** Both
- Lori Anderson:** Phone
- Michael Leland:** Phone, but only when I need to get up earlier than usual. 90% of the time I wake up on my own in plenty of time to get ready for work.
- Brad Lovell:** I use Alexa
- Eric Loveland:** The one in the crib
- Brian Kinnaman:** iPhone
- Anthony Garza:** Traditional rooster

CITYVIEW magazine: When was the last time you ate at a Cracker Barrel restaurant?

- Christopher Lee Yelenick:** Never
- Noah Barnard:** Not since they fired brads wife !!! After 11 years of faithful service !!!
- Cyndi JoAnn:** Early 2000s

- Bill Thyberg:** Neva
- Michael Frederick:** Last year I think? My buddy insisted on it for breakfast. I can't imagine being enough of an easily manipulated chud to be actually upset about the logo change though.
- William Schumacher:** 25 years ago I bet.
- Jen Bailey:** A couple years ago post-colonoscopy.
- Stephanie Gonzales:** Maybe 3 or 4 years ago
- Jennifer Dane:** A few weeks ago!
- Michael Leland:** Honestly can't remember. At least 15-20 years, probably.
- Carol Wiss Huisman:** Years ago.
- Meta Gary Monte:** I stopped going there as soon as I was born.
- Manny Atwood:** 1992
- Hollie Harlea Dee:** NEVER! Gross
- Josh Yelland:** Couple years, it was decent
- Julie Nelson Adams:** Several years. Food was mediocre and restaurant was too loud.

RETWEETS



(comments unedited)

- @groby500000:** do you mind if i wear my black t shirt covered in pet hair to your fine dining establishment
- @sydurbanek:** I've never met a medical receptionist that I believed wanted me to live
- @ok_but_still:** getting limb lengthening on my arms so i can reach even further and more rudely across the dinner table
- @OldTVReference:** Love the phrase “expecting a baby” because it implies you could end up with something else instead
- @reidahad:** sharing wired earphones is a forgotten form of intimacy
- @jswtreeman:** Your honor my client would like to plead Oopsy Daisy
- @dexteristwisted:** Beastie Boys didn't fight for your right to party so you could drink Michelob ultra
- @imightbefunny1:** Gen Xers were given middle names like our parents were ordering off a three-item menu: Marie, Ann, or Lynn.
- @ianabramson:** When you compare the size of a gummy worm versus a gummy bear, it starts to paint a horrific picture of the gummy universe
- @daymanmankoosha:** still beyond me that Americans will act shocked that Middle Easterners can be Christians...bro it was Jesus of Nazareth not Jesus of New Jersey how is this news

STRAY THOUGHTS

BY RANDY EVANS

A man you've never met had advice you should never forget

The circus packed up and left town — leaving Norma Jean, all 6,500 pounds of her, on her side under the tree.

During decades as a journalist, I had countless conversations with interesting people — future presidents, wannabe leaders, governors, business executives, religious thinkers, crooks, and ordinary folks who made a difference in their own corner of the world.

With soldiers headed to our cities and chaos in our nation, now is a good time to remember one difference-maker. My memories of Wade Meloan remain sharp almost 50 years after I met the retired druggist in the Mississippi River town of Oquawka, Illinois, just upriver from Burlington.

On my first trip to Oquawka, I quickly learned it was no secret Wade had a much younger girlfriend. She was 30. Wade was 65. Her name was Norma Jean.

Wade and Norma Jean did not spend a lot of time together. Fate has a way like that. You see, Norma Jean was a showgirl. She traveled and performed for people's enjoyment, especially children.

Don't get the wrong idea. Norma Jean was not grooming kids. She just made them laugh.

Wade's wife, Mary, was quite understanding about his affection for Norma Jean. Mary was a delightful person and was charmed by her husband's feelings for this other woman.

Let me be blunt here. Norma Jean, as we might say in polite company, was big-boned. She had leathery skin, and you could not help but notice her long nose.

Sadly, by the time I first met Wade, Norma Jean was gone. She died a tragic death four years earlier. But Wade simply could not put her out of his mind. She had stolen his heart.

Norma Jean was a star of the Clark and Walters Circus, which had come to Oquawka to perform in the city park in 1972. It was a small circus — a one-elephant circus, in fact. And Norma Jean was its premier pachyderm.

Several hours before the show was to go on that summer day, Norma Jean was chained under a tree in the park when a storm moved overhead. Lightning struck the tree and snuffed out her life in a flash.

The circus packed up and left town — leaving Norma Jean, all 6,500 pounds of her, on her side under the tree. It fell to the folks of Oquawka to figure out how to dispose of the headline attraction. They brought in a backhoe to dig a 12-foot-deep grave, right there in the park. They rolled Norma Jean into the grave and filled the hole.

Everyone moved on with their lives — everyone except Wade Meloan.

A month or so later, Wade drove past the burial plot and was troubled that nothing had been done there. So, he planted grass. He placed a small plywood marker on the grave and erected a little picket fence around the

plot. Each Memorial Day, he gathered unsold wreaths at the local grocery store and placed them on Norma Jean's grave.

But Wade thought the old girl — that's what he called her, "the old girl" — deserved to have a nicer marker. He told me, "When Norma Jean got it, that was the end of the show for the circus. The guy lost his business. But it was tough on the elephant, too."

Wade thought a circus star needed a proper grave marker, and one larger than life, just like she was. He talked up his idea around town. It took four years of coaxing, but people recognized Wade was right. They knew his heart was as big as Norma Jean's.

He raised about \$800 for a proper tombstone, and on the eve of Memorial Day in 1977, five years after Norma Jean's demise, the new tombstone was ready. It was impressive — 8 feet tall, 12 feet wide, handmade from slabs of fieldstone, with a granite insert with Norma Jean's birthday and date of death, and a display case recounting her career.

The dedication ceremony attracted tens of people. Wade even arranged for another elephant to attend. During the ceremony, this visitor named Okha carried a large wreath of daisies with her trunk and gently placed it on Norma Jean's grave. Okha then propped her front feet up on the stone monument and trumpeted loudly.

It was a touching tribute, except for the business card Okha left on Norma Jean's grave.

Wade summed up that wonderful day: "Everyone was so darn nice. It gives you a warm feeling in this cold world. I think we did her proud."

There is something else about Norma Jean's life and legacy, due in no small part to this guy you did not know. A website called Find a Grave catalogs thousands of graves across the United States. If you click through to cemeteries in Oquawka, Illinois, you can find a photo of the tombstone for Wade and Mary Meloan, with a little elephant carved in the corner. There is something else on Find a Grave for Oquawka — a listing for "Norma Jean Elephant Burial Site."

I have returned to Oquawka through the years. I find the community refreshing. It reminds me of the town where I grew up. It reminds me people are basically good. It reminds me we are all here on this earth, as they would say in show business, for a limited engagement.

So, we should remember Wade Meloan and his advice: Make the best of every day you have.

As he told me many years ago, "If you can't go through life helping people — even if it's an old dead elephant — then there's no use being here." ■

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



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GUEST COLUMN

BY MICHAEL GARTNER

Remembering Ned Chiodo

Ned Chiodo could be grouchy and grumpy. He could be quarrelsome and argumentative. And, on bad days, he could be irritable and irascible. And, always, he was stubborn.

And he was a really good guy.

He was a good guy because he cared about the city and the county and the state. He was a good guy because — street smart and book smart — he knew how to get good things done and to get bad things stopped. He was a good guy because he was fun to have breakfast or lunch with because he knew so much and was such a good story-teller.

And he was a good guy because he was, well, Ned Chiodo.

Chiodo, who died (for the second time) at age 83 on Sept. 4 of a massive heart attack at Methodist West hospital, was a Southside Italian who, like some of his pals, would rise to get his hands on the levers of government here.

But Chiodo wasn't one of those guys who grew up in poverty. His dad owned the Union Tavern at Second and Locust downtown, all but next door to the Trades and Assembly Hall where several unions were headquartered and to the City Growers Market, where many Italians worked and others marketed their produce.

So he was steeped in Democratic politics from the time he was small.

Like seemingly every boy who grew up on the south side, he was also steeped in the finer points of baseball and basketball and football. Still today, if you go to an Iowa Cubs game or a Drake basketball game with any of those guys, you'd think each was a former Major League manager or NBA coach. And, of course, they were all better umpires from the bleachers than the man behind homeplate.

And while he loved all sports — he volunteered as an assistant coach and scout for his alma mater, Dowling High School — golf was where he excelled. As a young man, he managed the driving range and miniature golf course the family had installed on a plot of land it owned on East 14th Street — and in 1971, while still in his 20s, he made a deal to manage the non-golf operations at Blank Golf Course, the city's new nine-hole course on the south side. In 1973, he became a PGA-certified golf pro.

"He was a really good player," his son Jeff said the other day. Indeed, he shot five holes in one along the way.

In 1976, he ran for the Iowa Legislature as a write-in candidate in the primary to get on the Democratic ballot for a legislative seat, and he won by more than 500 votes. He then went on to serve in the Iowa House until 1985, and then was elected to a term as Polk County Auditor.

After leaving elective office, he set up a very successful lobbying and political consulting company.

And then he died.

He was in failing health — he had been diagnosed with amyloidosis, a relatively rare disease that strikes about 14 out of every million Americans. It can affect any organ — wherever the abnormal protein, the amyloid, lands — and with Ned it mainly affected his heart. He underwent a stem-cell transplant at the Mayo Clinic in 2005, and later, while still at the Mayo Clinic, his heart stopped. He had no heartbeat for three minutes before doctors brought him back, Jeff Chiodo remembers, adding, "I was with him both times he died."

In fact, Ned Chiodo was given what amounted to a third chance. Most people diagnosed with amyloidosis live but a few years. Chiodo lived 20. He was believed to



have been the longest-survivor of the disease.

After he got better, Chiodo decided he could run Blank better than the city did. He was right. The city had been subsidizing its golf operations at Blank, Waveland and Bright Grandview with several hundred thousand dollars a year. So about 20 years ago, he and his son Jeff made a deal to operate all three courses — by then, Blank had been expanded into an 18-hole course, a course Ned Chiodo helped design. So, they made a deal with the city.

It turned out to be a good deal for everyone: the city eventually was making several hundred thousand dollars annually on the golf operation, and, by all accounts, the Chiodos did OK, too.

And so did the golfers. "We rarely get any complaints" about Ned's operation, a city official says.

The city and Jeff Chiodo seem about to extend the deal for 15 years.

• • •

Chiodo's funeral was at St. Anthony's Church, where he grew up and where his younger brother, Frank, would one day become the monsignor in charge. Ned is survived by his wife, Marilyn, his four sons — Frank, Jeff, John and Joe — and 11 grandchildren, most of whom would never have known him if he hadn't come back from the dead 20 years ago.

Friends would occasionally rib him about that day he died the first time. "Geez, Ned," they'd say. "You've been given a second chance. Maybe you could be a nicer guy this time around." They said it lovingly.

Chiodo would just smile a bit, and then harrumph. ■

Michael Gartner was born and raised in Des Moines. Along the way, he has been a top editor at The Wall Street Journal, editor and president of The Des Moines Register, president of NBC News, majority owner of the Iowa Cubs and co-owner of CITYVIEW. In 1997, he won a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing while at the Ames Tribune, where he was editor and co-owner.



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CIVIC SKINNY

BY CITYVIEW STAFF

Who buys \$3 million homes? What company was fined \$125,000 for gambling violations? How long do felons serve in Iowa?

Ever wonder who buys those \$3 million homes?

Wonder no more. Here are six homes with some of the highest sale prices we found this year. Two sold for \$3 million. Two were in West Des Moines. Two were in Johnston. One was in Clive. One was in Urbandale. But, who's counting?

On Feb. 4, the home at 1726 Glenleven Terrace, West Des Moines, sold for \$3 million from the **Tamara Gaye Deyarman** declaration of trust to **Big Bear Real Estate**. The home has three bedrooms, five bathrooms, 4,268 square feet and comes with a backyard pool. The house sold in 2019 for \$1.7 million.

In May, the home at 7395 N.W. 100th St. in Johnston sold for \$3 million by **ASG Development LLC** to **Aaron Jones**. Jones, an attorney at Belin McCormick who focuses on mergers and acquisitions and intellectual property matters, now owns this new home with seven bedrooms, five and a half bathrooms and a 25-acre lot. The home has a pool, a piano and a home theater.

In June, an Urbandale home at 14140 Maple Drive sold for \$2.6 million. The 3,367-square-foot, four-bedroom, five-and-a-half bathroom home was previously owned by Des Moines native and former

Major League Baseball pitcher **Jeremy Hellickson**. He sold it to former Iowa Realty CEO **Michael Knapp**. This home has a pool, a theater room and a gym.

The newly constructed home, built in 2024 at 5095 Grand Ridge Drive, West Des Moines, was purchased for \$2.53 million in January by **Chelsea and Steven Wood**. Details on the number of bedrooms, bathrooms and square footage of the home were unavailable.

The most recent sale on our list is the home at 7580 N.W. 100th St. in Johnston, which sold in September for \$2.525 million. Former chief human resources officer at Principal Financial Group, **Jon Couture**,

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CREDIT UNION



CIVIC SKINNY CONT...

now managing director and chief human resources manager at Vanguard, sold the home to **Heather McGee**. Couture purchased the property in 2023 for \$2.475 million. The home has five bedrooms, five and a half bathrooms and 4,360 square feet. And, yes, it has a pool.

Another West Des Moines home, this one at 3870 Timberline Drive, sold for \$2 million from the **Bradley Brody** estate to **Terry Aikin**. Brody, before his passing in 2024, was the chairman of the UnityPoint Health System. The four-bedroom, four-and-a-half-bathroom, 3,907-square-foot home also has a theater, a gym, and an outdoor pickleball court. ...

At the July 11 meeting of the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission, which oversees racing and gambling in the state of Iowa, a hearing was held regarding Betfair Interactive US LLC, the U.S. division of the British gambling company. Betfair, a popular sports wagering company, and FanDuel are both owned by Flutter Entertainment. The hearing included five violations of the Iowa Code. According to the meeting minutes, “counts one through four all involved impermissible wagers. Count five involved a responsible gaming issue as well as an issue of not following internal controls and representations made to the Commission and the public.”

Ben Roth, the director on the regulatory team for FanDuel, represented the gambling company. He said in response to the violations, “FanDuel has worked to remediate the various root causes through a combination of manual remediation efforts that include increased training, more detailed checklists, and automation wherever possible to avoid the potential for manual error.”

Several members of the IRGC board had stern words for Roth. Commissioner **Amy Burkhart**

responded, saying, four of these counts were not self-reported but rather issues IRGC staff caught during a compliance check, wanting to know how staff decides who and when to conduct these compliance audits and checks.

Commissioner and Vice Chair **Mark Campbell** asked why count five took 64 days to notify staff. Roth explained the complexity of the issue and how the company was doing its own investigation to determine how customers might have registered themselves through roundabout methods.

That answer was insufficient, according to Commissioner **Alan Ostergren**, who said the delay in reporting the issue was not acceptable to him. He said, although the fix was made two days after the incident, the commission was not notified for 64 days, and he saw no technical reason as to why the IRGC could not have been notified within 72 hours.

Chair **Daryl Olsen** said in the last two years that Betfair has had two stipulations come before the commission, four to the gaming board, and now, an additional five counts. “Sloppy at best,” Olsen said. He also stated, that had this been one of the brick and mortar casinos in Iowa, the commission would be hammering them, and that this cannot continue to happen.

The end result? Betfair Interactive U.S. LLC was fined a total of \$125,000 by the IRGC. ...

Felons in Iowa do their time. According to a study conducted by Simmrin Law, Iowa imposes the longest prison sentences for felony robbery in the U.S. Using data from the U.S. Sentencing Commission’s 2024 Federal Sentencing Statistics, the average sentence for a robbery in Iowa was 110.33 months. The next closest was Mississippi’s average sentence of 30.40 months. The national average is 8.56 months. ■

READER SUBMISSION

BY JULIE ALLYN JOHNSON

Ode to The Ritual Café, Downtown Des Moines

Bohemian waystation for 20 years —
peace symbols, feminist aura, their
decidedly granola menu.

Smoothies and bars, quiches and cookies,
oolong tea and Mayan mochas.
Open-air ambience when its oversized,
street-facing doors were raised on high.

Incense and black candles. Protest posters,
upping awareness, on every wall.
Gold velveteen sofa in one corner atop an
elevated platform,

where would-be poets, philosophers and
truth-tellers felt safely cocooned,
opining random words to an attentive,
unrandom assemblage.

In an earlier era, they’d be called out as
losers, draft-dodgers and freaks.
Perhaps, the former — and the latter —
might still apply ... to some.

... .

Shuttered. CLOSED PERMANENTLY,
Google says.
Where, now, will all the hipsters gather? ■

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Shadow senator sees energy, momentum for statehood, an unintended Trump legacy

He is a United States senator.

Ankit Jain ran for election in 2024 and won — and he represents 702,000 people as one of two Washington, D.C. “shadow” senators.

But this senator can’t vote in the Senate — and he doesn’t get paid. Jain’s office isn’t on the capitol grounds but rather a half mile away in the John A. Wilson Building, the center of D.C. local government.

President Trump’s federalization of local law enforcement, a deployment of the National Guard and other officials that Jain describes as an “occupation” of his city, drives the long-running case for D.C. statehood — and likely will be the legacy of Trump’s power grab, albeit one the president did not intend, Jain said in a phone interview with Political Mercury.

“I think he is in a counterintuitive way,” Jain said. “This would not be possible if we were a state. In no other state could the president take control of the local police force. The only reason he can do it to us is because of our lack of statehood.”

Wyoming (577,000) and Vermont (643,000) are less populous than Washington, D.C. Alaska (733,000) is roughly the same population.

“What this is showing is just exactly that, what the impacts are on the ground of us not being a state,” Jain said. “I do think that the next time we have a Congress that is actually willing to support D.C. — and a better president — that this is just making it that much more likely that D.C. becomes a state. It only takes a bill to be passed out of Congress and signed by the president to make D.C. a state.”

The sight of tanks near Union Station, just blocks from the Capitol, a short walk from the Senate Office Buildings, jars Senator Jain each time he observes the military presence.

“You are just seeing these military troops in civilian parts of the city, and it feels like you are a little under occupation when you see that,” Jain said. “You see the tanks on the streets.

“What are we defending? The Uber pick-up lane outside of Union Station?” Jain said.

“It’s terrible and scary to see this happening,” Jain said. “You see them in the Metro station. I saw them at Metro Center the other day, and then you are just seeing all these social media clips of masked agents just taking people down with no explanation. You are always wondering where they are going to be. Are they going to be where I am next?”



Washington, D.C. Shadow U.S. Sen. Ankit Jain

Jain, 32, D.C.’s first citywide elected Asian American, and the first Indian American to serve as a D.C. shadow senator, said Latinos in the city are the most frightened demographic among his constituents now as Jain says federal officials cite all manner of reasons to pull Latinos over for immigration questions.

“It seems like what we are seeing mostly up until now is an immigration raid in D.C.,” Jain said. “That’s been the biggest impact. I feel really bad for the Latino community, which I know has been terrorized by this.”

Jain, who assists D.C. residents with interaction with federal agencies and voting members of Congress on many matters, said his constituents are afraid to leave their homes, and he added that reservations at restaurants are down, among other impacts on the local economy.

“It’s hard to see it and not be able to do a whole lot at the moment,” Jain said.

If Trump were trying to solve criminal-justice issues, the president would make sure the ranks of judges and prosecutors were filled in the district, Jain said.

“What the president is doing is not actually intended to solve any problems in D.C.,” Jain said. “It’s a show of force, an attempt to gain some headlines, and to use the crime problem as an excuse to take total control of D.C.

and try to institute his far-right agenda on D.C. He’s using us as a test case about how the MAGA agenda can work in cities. It’s easy for him to do it to us. We are not a state.”

Defenders of the president’s D.C. troop deployment say crime is down — a lot — there. The Trump Justice Department also is investigating earlier crime data from the Metropolitan Police — data Trump officials say was skewed to paint a rosier picture of the nation’s capital.

“Meanwhile, they are sending these federal agents into touristy parts of the city like the National Mall and Dupont Circle and areas like that,” Jain said. “You don’t see officers deployed in any of the high-crime areas east of the river.”

“The president said it was the first time in living memory that D.C. had a week without murders,” Jain said. “That is a total lie. We’ve had multiple weeks without murders just this year.”

Paul Strauss is the other Shadow U.S. Senator for D.C. ■

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



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ON THE WAUKEE SIDE OF WEST DES MOINES

COMING UP

SUBMIT ENTRIES AND PHOTOS TO EDITOR@DMCITYVIEW.COM

NOTE: The following events and attractions are subject to cancellation or changes. Before attending, be sure to check with each event individually to verify details.

THINGS TO DO

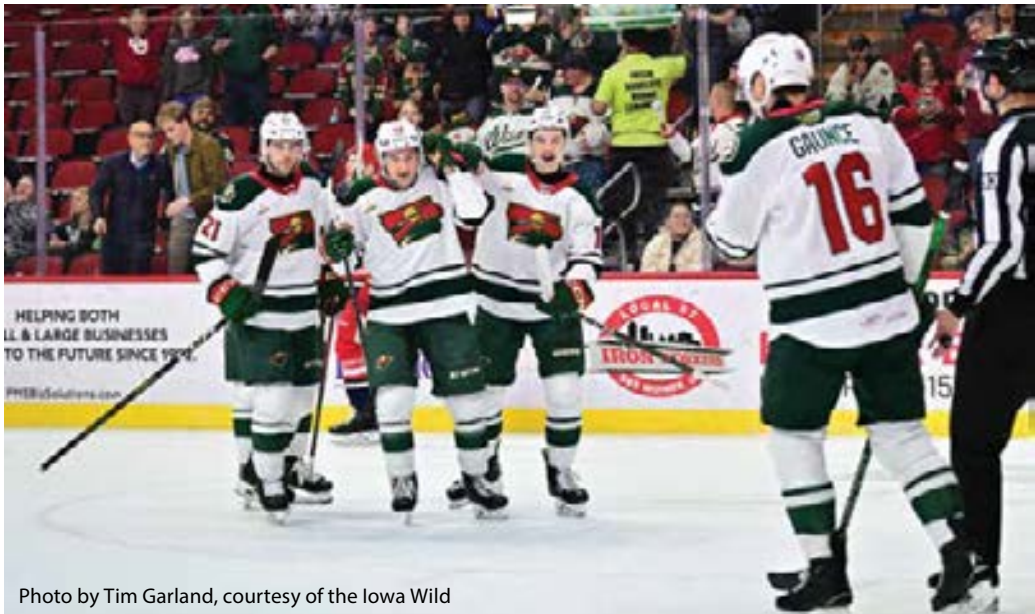


Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of the Iowa Wild

IOWA WILD

Casey's Center, 233 Center St., Des Moines

www.iowawild.com

Home games:

- Oct. 11 vs. Chicago Wolves at 6 p.m.
- Oct. 12 vs. Rockford Icehogs (Chicago Blackhawks) at 5 p.m.
- Oct. 28 vs. Grand Rapids Griffins (Detroit Red Wings) at 7 p.m.



Photo submitted

SCI'S BIG BLAST

Science Center of Iowa, 401 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway, Des Moines

www.sciowa.org

Oct. 18

55 Years of Science, Wonder and Community. Celebrate the past and present of one of Des Moines' best attractions.

DRAKE FOOTBALL

Drake Stadium, 2719 Forest Ave., Des Moines

www.godrakebulldogs.com/sports/football

Home games:

- Oct. 4 vs. Valparaiso
- Oct. 18 vs. Davidson

LITTLE GIANT BEER SUMMIT

El Bait Shop, 200 S.W.

Second St., Des Moines

www.elbaitshop.com

Oct. 4

El Bait Shop's love letter to local craft breweries, held in its parking lot. The parking lot will be full of local beers, ciders and mead. A great way to warm up during the early fall season. Admission is free with punch cards available on site.

MAINFRAME STUDIOS

900 Keosauqua Way, Des Moines

www.mainframestudios.org

Mainframe Studios hosts "First Fridays" every first Friday of the month, featuring a changing theme, with the artists' works on display alongside live music and food.

- Oct. 3: Pen & Ink

CASEY'S CENTER

223 Center St., Des Moines

www.iowaeventscenter.com

- Oct. 4: Adam Sandler
- Oct. 5: Jonas Brothers: JONAS20 Greetings From Your Hometown at 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 9: Brandon Lake: King of Hearts Tour at 7 p.m.
- Oct. 14: Paul McCartney at 6:30 p.m.
- Oct. 19: Gabriel Iglesias
- Oct. 24: Sexy Red - Midwest Fall Jam at 6:30 p.m.



Photo courtesy of Capital City Gaming Con

CAPITAL CITY GAMING CON

Hilton Garden Inn, 205 S. 64 St., West Des Moines

www.capitalcitygamingcon.com

Oct. 17-19

Des Moines' very own board game convention. Buy, play, test and enjoy board games of all types. The halls of the Hilton Garden Inn are transformed for a board game fanatic's paradise. There are also tournaments and other prizes available to win throughout the weekend.

LEPRECHAUN BAGS TOURNAMENT

Sully's Irish Pub, 860 First St., West Des Moines

www.friendlysonsiowa.com

Oct. 11

The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick of Central Iowa present the Leprechaun Bags Tournament. Registration begins at 11 a.m. Play starts at noon. \$30 per two-person team. Cash payouts for top three teams.



DES MOINES JAZZ
HALL OF FAME GALA

Community Jazz Center of
Greater Des Moines,
1326 Walnut, Des Moines
www.cjc-dsm.org

Oct. 26

The Des Moines Jazz Hall of Fame honors
for 2025 will be awarded to trombonist,
educator and arranger Paul McKee and
guitarist Willie Shay, with other honors
presented throughout the night.

Photo courtesy of Community Jazz Center of Greater Des Moines

DMLS 2025 GEM, JEWELRY,
MINERAL AND FOSSIL SHOW

Iowa State Fairgrounds, 3000 E. Grand Ave.,
Des Moines

www.dmlapidary.org

Oct. 18-19

The world of lapidary spans many different areas. The Des
Moines Lapidary Society event brings all of those worlds
to you with their incredible works of art, jewelry, minerals
and fossils. There will be displays, demonstrations,
speakers, activities for children and more.



Photo courtesy of Explore Madison County

MADISON COUNTY
COVERED BRIDGE
FESTIVAL

Winterset Square, Winterset

www.exploremadisoncounty.com

Oct. 11-12

Take in the iconic sights and enjoy this local festival
at the same time. Discover Madison County's rich
history and iconic covered bridges. Enjoy food and
art vendors, a car show, a parade and more.

DES MOINES BUCCANEERS

MidAmerican Energy RecPlex,
6500 Grand Ave., West Des Moines

www.bucshockey.com

Home games:

- Oct. 3 vs. Chicago Steel at 7:05 p.m.
- Oct. 4 vs. Chicago Steel at 6:05 p.m.
- Oct. 24 vs. USA NTDP at 7:05 p.m.
- Oct. 25 vs. USA NTDP at 7:05 p.m.



Photo courtesy of Spirit Seekers Fair

SPIRIT SEEKERS FAIR

Unity Center of Des Moines,
414 31st St., Des Moines

www.unitydesmoines.com/spacerental

Oct. 18

This free-entry event is an opportunity to explore a variety
of holistic wellness offerings and connect with local
practitioners dedicated to mind-body-spirit health.



HAUNTED HOUSES

SLAUGHTERHOUSE

500 Locust St., Des Moines
www.slaughterhousedm.com

LINN'S HAUNTED HOUSE

Linn's Supermarket,
3805 Sixth Ave., Des Moines
www.linnshauntedhouse.com

PHANTOM FALL FEST

Adventureland Park,
305 34th Ave. N.W., Altoona
www.adventurelandresort.com/discover-adventureland-resort/Phantom-Fall-Fest

SLEEPY HOLLOW SCREAM PARK

4051 Dean Ave., Des Moines
www.sleepyhollowscreeampark.com

BARNUM CARNIVAL OF FREAKS

97 Indiana Ave., Des Moines
www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100093051134399

FUTURE NIGHTMARE

3800 Merle Hay Road, Suite 1251
www.futurenightmares.com

BUSINESS JOURNAL



A small business **WELLNESS PROGRAM** that is working

RE/MAX Concepts shows how employers can improve both productivity and the lives of their employees.

By Todd Razor

Wellness programs don't have to be all "one-size-fits-all."

If the head office in Windsor Heights is any indication, the signs at RE/MAX Concepts point to it being a nice place to work. There is plenty of natural light, private offices, accessible conference rooms and cubby holes. New paint and the recent addition of hardwood floors in the elevators and common areas provide a modern feel. Bold motivational prints with messages like, "Work Hard. Be Nice." provide hints into the culture RE/MAX Concepts has built, and strives toward, at its locations as a professional real estate services organization.

Jaimee Moore, director of operations, Bekah Kentfield, director of agent services, and Shane Torres, a principal owner at RE/MAX Concepts (photo submitted)

FEATURE

Limiting turnover and improving job satisfaction

A new industry report draws attention to how employers can improve both work productivity and the lives of their employees.

In recent decades, the popularity of wellness programming has expanded. Particularly in office settings, society has come a long way from the proverbial water cooler next to a coffee pot or break room. In recent years, it has become more common on some sprawling corporate campuses to find bustling employee cafes, on-site cardio centers, even auditorium-style conference centers and gymnasiums amid the rows of offices and workstations.

But what does employee “wellness” have to do with limiting turnover and improving job satisfaction? For smaller businesses, where leaders often wear a lot of hats and spend most of their time making the company run, how can that work?

Businesses like RE/MAX Concepts are proving it is possible through implementing and monitoring what is working day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year.

Respect for employees' work freedom and independence

Shane Torres got into the real estate industry and started with RE/MAX Concepts in 2009. He found success in the field, and, in 2016, the company was acquired with Torres becoming a principal owner alongside business partners Matt Mauro and Ou Meksay.

Their director of operations, Jaimee Moore, had already been on board as an employee for five years when the new owners started. Since then, the company has expanded to 20 locations — up from six when Torres originally started — spanning Iowa, including the Quad Cities area, and part of Illinois, and St. Petersburg, Florida.

The business has 55 full- and part-time people across all locations. Moore has watched it blossom to more than 475 independently licensed real estate agents as well.

The culture at RE/MAX Concepts is centered around respect for employees' work freedom and independence. The company didn't intentionally set out to create a “wellness” program. It just kind of happened that way. Their approach naturally evolved based on situations and the needs of their staff.

The owners and business leaders like Moore keep their ears to the pavement, have a pulse on morale, and connect with their teams daily on what is happening on the ground. It's something the current leadership has encouraged from the start, keeping the team members aligned and knowing they are supported.

Start with communication of benefits

When Torres and team took the reins, one of the first topics that popped up was medical benefits administration. There was no formal program in place, and they soon discovered people on staff with extraordinary needs.

Moore spearheaded taking on the role, and RE/MAX Concepts brought on a partner, facilitating an annual insurance benefits offering. The company started paying a portion of the employees' premiums. Today, managing benefits and niche wellness programming has become a shared responsibility. Moore and Bekah Kentfield, director of agency services, tag team the effort.

Providers are available year-round to speak with employees about insurance planning and help them find information about financial tools for retirement savings. Every year, a licensed professional comes in and provides information on benefits like IRAs, helping some people feel more secure.

A new role

Workplaces play a significant role in people's lives, having an effect physically and mentally. Research shows that the pandemic helped clarify the relationship between work and “well-being.” COVID time sped up a lot of things, including RE/MAX Concept's approach to wellness initiatives.

Like most everyone, they did not anticipate the work-from-home dynamic and other changing norms post-pandemic. The company had already been developing a hybrid model, and that was accelerated out of necessity. It became an option for employees and part of the wellness philosophy that stuck.

For Torres and the team, they found putting power in the hands of their employees, many of whom have families and different lifestyles, is the way to go. The scheme allows people to work from home four days a week with one day in the office on-site. It's empowering, Torres said, because, on days when there is no mandatory, in-person meetings or events, employees can have greater flexibility over their own schedules and lives.

He agrees with a family-first, people-first leadership style. Staff development and hard work will always be important, he says, but not by



Michelle Kelley, director of education, Jaimee Moore, director of operations, and Megan VanArsdale, a RE/MAX Concepts transaction coordinator

sacrificing work-life balance. They want to foster a team atmosphere that provides that leeway without creating a negative impact on the ability to meet business needs.

Getting together

Straight forward social behaviors, like welcoming new team members, sharing meals, or helping one another with tasks, help create less isolation and greater inclusion. RE/MAX Concepts has made a conscious and consistent effort to gather together in person despite the company's growing size and remote work options.

They foster teamwork through regular check-ins, collaborative projects, and even activities such as simply hanging out together playing arcade style video games in the café. They say volunteering creates stronger connections, too.

A staple is the onsite breakfasts hosted regularly for agents, and staff members are always welcomed, too.

There is a series of annual events employees can look forward to or get involved with. “Family day” attendance on the first Thursday of the Iowa State Fair has increased steadily over the past seven years, and “movie day” the first Saturday after Thanksgiving has been going strong for more than a decade.

Every February, staff members and their spouses or significant others are invited to the company dinner and awards party with other appreciation events and holiday parties planned annually. Additionally, Moore notes many staff members communicate daily via chat, email or phone. Monthly all-staff meetings and department meetings help ensure face time isn't neglected.

FEATURE

Building traditions

Torres said he sees many companies struggle when they have given up on these types of in-person interactions and networking events. He stresses the importance of getting together in person and making families feel welcome.

When these types of activities and expectations are set around regular and periodic interactions, it doesn't just make a business stronger, he explains, it reinforces bonds that make people feel good, contributes to their health and personal well-being, strengthens the culture even more, and makes them want to stay.

Torres said they do fun team-building exercises and personality profile workshops, too, which help employees understand their motivations and develop effective communication strategies that contribute to desired business outcomes and stronger retention.

The team has brought in massage chairs for workers, and they encourage physical fitness routines in ways that relate to their employees' personal preferences. Whatever they want to do to keep in shape or prioritize athletics is up to them. With more than a dozen dispersed locations, RE/MAX Concepts generally lets that activity type fall into the category of individuals' goals and how people choose to spend their time away from work.

"We try to get them together as much as possible. And, even with our size, we do a pretty good job," Torres said.

Moore says when connection and trust become part of daily work life, wellness grows naturally across the whole business.

"Seeing them person to person matters," Moore continues. "The balance of the two is why we have had such success."

Meeting peoples' needs

The research suggests employees who are happier in the workplace and feel valued are the ones who tend to perform better and stick around longer. The wellness conversation isn't always easily definable.

On a basic level, the company wants a strong culture where their employees know they are cared for and reminded of the fact they can turn to the company for an assist in challenging times. Owners and managers can set the tone by listening to concerns and demonstrating those values through everyday interactions.

Katie Stewart, an agent services representative, shared how she was supported during a time of transition. She said she likes the work and the people. She also appreciates knowing that her voice carries weight and that the leadership wants to know

her insights.

"I moved back to my home state, and instead of parting ways, Concepts offered a 100% remote position for me," Stewart offered. "I was ecstatic to continue to work for them. One thing I value is the leadership team valuing our wellness."

"My manager will check in to make sure my workload is not too much and ask if I need help with anything, regardless of how busy she is. It doesn't matter how busy the leadership team is, they have a willingness to help and let you know that you are heard."

Wellness concepts

Torres and Moore said, once they become aware of a need, the company wants to be known as an employer that is willing and, when able, ready to respond and help set up support and, in some cases, provide direct assistance.

RE/MAX Concepts has supported people's wellness journeys in ways such as helping employees who were going through difficult pregnancies. They were able to grant extended maternity leave, even prior to giving birth, easing the burden and displaying concern for the safety of mother and child. It additionally eliminated some financial worries.

A former employee faced high-risk medical issues and was turned down multiple times for insurance, and she was able to opt into the company's plan after becoming pregnant. The company soon received letters and emails with thank yous, announcing the birth of a healthy baby.

A while back, Megan VanArsdale, a transaction coordinator, had a sudden health crisis, also meaning she would be absent from the office for a few months. A manager called immediately, assuring the company would do "whatever it takes" to make a difficult situation easier.

"I know me being out of the office for that long made things tough in the office for a few people," VanArsdale said. "I was never treated badly for it, though. I had so much support from everyone at Concepts. That experience made me so grateful for everyone... and something I'll always remember."

Why people quit

The bulk of employees who decide to quit jobs don't cite lack of compensation as the reason.

The Society for Human Resource Management points to 2024 survey data that indicates competitive pay and benefits packages should remain a priority for human resources leaders. However, more than 32% of those departing said toxicity in the workplace



Bekah Kentfield, director of agent services, leads a presentation for real estate agents at RE/MAX Concepts in Windsor Heights as Michelle Kelley, director of education, looks on.

was a driver behind their decision to quit.

The problem with the data is that only a little more than 15% of employers noted it as a factor. Over half who quit noted "personal reasons."

The American Psychological Association's 2024 Work in America survey findings suggest most respondents feel they matter at work. More than 86% of respondents noted they want to know that the work they are involved with is making a positive impact on society. Nine in 10 employees agree they are proud of the work they do.

Torres noted a dedicated nonprofit organization that is 100% independent of his brokerage, was established. Concept Cares Foundation has its own multi-member board "making our local community a better place."

That's an avenue for making people feel good about giving back, too, not to mention an annual Thanksgiving basket fundraiser they do every year.

Torres says it is another piece of a wellness puzzle that has led to worker satisfaction and long-term employee retention.

When people are going in the same direction and are supportive of one another, smaller companies can leverage a more flexible approach, and that is more than OK.

"We don't have a specific program per se," Torres said. "It evolved as situations presented themselves." ■

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414 E. ARMY POST ROAD, DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-05-19
SALE PRICE: \$390,000
SELLER: ARMY POST HOLDINGS LLC
BUYER: F5 HOLDINGS AP LLC
ACRES: 0.319
SQUARE FEET: 3,426



1428 E. OVID AVE., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-05-19
SALE PRICE: \$1,095,000
SELLER: EASTGATE HOLDINGS LLC
BUYER: F5 HOLDINGS EG LLC
ACRES: 1.544
SQUARE FEET: 13,000

4830 MAPLE DRIVE, PLEASANT HILL
SALE DATE: 2025-05-19
SALE PRICE: \$865,000
SELLER: PLEASANT HILL HOLDINGS LLC
BUYER: F5 HOLDINGS PH LLC
ACRES: 2.000
SQUARE FEET: 14,751

1076 21ST ST., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-05-19
SALE PRICE: \$293,500
SELLER: ENA INVESTMENTS LLC
BUYER: GASSETT, BRANDON
ACRES: 0.241
SQUARE FEET: 2,651

175 S. NINTH ST., SUITE 605, WEST DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-05-20
SALE PRICE: \$310,000
SELLER: IRVING LLC
BUYER: CONTE TCV PC
ACRES: 0.044
SQUARE FEET: 1,920

3906 N.E. 126TH AVE., ELKHART
SALE DATE: 2025-05-21
SALE PRICE: \$960,000
SELLER: ELKHART PROPERTIES LC
BUYER: EXPLORE INDUSTRIAL-ELKHART 1 LLC
ACRES: 4.317
SQUARE FEET: 0

3325 GANNETT AVE., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-05-22
SALE PRICE: \$600,000
SELLER: ARMY POST DEVELOPMENT LC
BUYER: KATECHO REAL ESTATE LLC
ACRES: 13.945
SQUARE FEET: 0



801 DEE ST. S.E., BONDURANT
SALE DATE: 2025-05-22
SALE PRICE: \$2,537,100
SELLER: KC DT LLC
BUYER: PHARMCO PROPERTIES TWELVE LLC
ACRES: 1.726
SQUARE FEET: 9,600



1000 73RD ST., SUITE 23, WINDSOR HEIGHTS
SALE DATE: 2025-05-27
SALE PRICE: \$145,900
SELLER: BROOKE FARM LLC
BUYER: DECATUR COUNTY PROPERTIES LLC
ACRES: 0.138
SQUARE FEET: 1,525

312 FIFTH ST., WEST DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-05-28
SALE PRICE: \$178,000
SELLER: PEC PROPERTIES LLC
BUYER: CUTLER PROPERTIES LC
ACRES: 0.166
SQUARE FEET: 5,033



224 FIFTH ST., WEST DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-05-28
SALE PRICE: \$292,000
SELLER: PEC PROPERTIES LLC
BUYER: CUTLER PROPERTIES LC
ACRES: 0.127
SQUARE FEET: 8,199

101 BROWN ST., RUNNELLS
SALE DATE: 2025-05-28
SALE PRICE: \$87,000
SELLER: RMK CONTRACTING LLC
BUYER: MORGAN, DONALD
ACRES: 0.190
SQUARE FEET: 3,000



308 FIFTH ST., WEST DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-05-29
SALE PRICE: \$587,000
SELLER: DIGMEUP ENTERPRISES LLC
BUYER: CUTLER DEVELOPMENT LLC
ACRES: 0.166
SQUARE FEET: 2,469

6001 THORNTON AVE., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-05-30
SALE PRICE: \$1,373,664
SELLER: AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT LC
BUYER: NEXT PHASE DEVELOPMENT LLC
ACRES: 9.015
SQUARE FEET: 0

2617 PATRICIA DRIVE, URBANDALE
SALE DATE: 2025-05-30
SALE PRICE: \$700,000
SELLER: URBAN PROPERTY LC
BUYER: J&C VENTURES LLC
ACRES: 0.454
SQUARE FEET: 7,120

1814 S.E. FIRST ST., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-06-02
SALE PRICE: \$1
SELLER: DONNA JO ANANIA TRUST
BUYER: ANANIA III, MICHAEL J
ACRES: 0.200
SQUARE FEET: 0

820 LYON ST., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-06-04
SALE PRICE: \$3,755,000
SELLER: LYON ST LLC
BUYER: CAPITAL CITY APARTMENTS LLC
ACRES: 2.286
SQUARE FEET: 43,524

NO ADDRESS LISTED
SALE DATE: 2025-06-04
SALE PRICE: \$3,737,448
SELLER: BROADLAWNS MEDICAL CENTER
BUYER: K&J PROPERTIES LLC
ACRES: 8.778
SQUARE FEET: 0

1201 N.E. GATEWAY DRIVE, GRIMES
SALE DATE: 2025-06-05
SALE PRICE: \$530,000
SELLER: DSRK LLC
BUYER: BURK HOLDINGS LLC
ACRES: 1.518
SQUARE FEET: 0

NO ADDRESS LISTED
SALE DATE: 2025-06-05
SALE PRICE: \$225,000
SELLER: ABE I LLC
BUYER: HOLT SALES & SERVICE LLC
ACRES: 93.045
SQUARE FEET: 0

2601 E. 14TH ST., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-06-06
SALE PRICE: \$160,000
SELLER: CAMPUSTOWN DENTAL LLC
BUYER: STEPHEN, BRADY
ACRES: 0.177
SQUARE FEET: 1,389



111 11TH ST., DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2025-06-06
SALE PRICE: \$835,000
SELLER: WADE INVESTMENTS LLC
BUYER: 111 11TH ST LLC
ACRES: 0.400
SQUARE FEET: 7,920



250 N.W. 43RD PLACE, DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2025-06-10
SALE PRICE: \$120,000
SELLER: ANAGO OIL COMPANY INC
BUYER: 4306 NW 2ND STREET LLC
ACRES: 2.375
SQUARE FEET: 7,325

6655 N.E. 15TH ST., DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2025-06-10
SALE PRICE: \$1,250,000
SELLER: DRA PROPERTIES LC
BUYER: CAPCO 6655 DSM LLC
ACRES: 1.071
SQUARE FEET: 10,800

7600 S.W. 22ND ST., SUITE 106, DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2025-06-11
SALE PRICE: \$209,000
SELLER: MOSAIC PROPERTY GROUP LLC
BUYER: GRIFFIN LAND INVESTMENTS LLC
ACRES: 0.110
SQUARE FEET: 1,500



17 MAIN ST., S.E., BONDURANT

SALE DATE: 2025-06-11
SALE PRICE: \$275,000
SELLER: BAD FRIEND LLC
BUYER: BLAHA, KATIE
ACRES: 0.106
SALE DATE: 2,145

NO ADDRESS LISTED

SALE DATE: 2025-06-11
SALE PRICE: \$523,000
SELLER: GHOLDS LLC
BUYER: ALTOONA PROPERTIES LLC
ACRES: 3.000
SQUARE FEET: 0

5780 WEST PARKWAY, JOHNSTON

SALE DATE: 2025-06-11
SALE PRICE: \$250,000
SELLER: RAL LC-JOHNSTON SERIES
BUYER: J4 NORTH LLC
ACRES: 1.206
SQUARE FEET: 0



210 COURT AVE., DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2025-06-11
SALE PRICE: \$1,550,000
SELLER: NORRIS PARTNERS LLC
BUYER: 210 COURT AVE LLC
ACRES: 0.067
SQUARE FEET: 5,808

4231 UNIVERSITY AVE., DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2025-06-11
SALE PRICE: \$300,000
SELLER: FITZGIBBONS HIPP, JULIA
BUYER: DSM ORTHODONTICS REAL ESTATE LLC
ACRES: 0.209
SQUARE FEET: 2,704

NO ADDRESS LISTED

SALE DATE: 2025-06-12
SALE PRICE: \$390,000
SELLER: UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY
BUYER: FOOD BANK OF IOWA
ACRES: 3.267
SQUARE FEET: 0 ■

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Price: \$2,940,300
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Paul Bouwers, Jason Uhlenhake, Ben Buenzow, Tyler Fromm, Chad Lyons, Taylor Carey. Not pictured: Faith Dorn-Spiece, Steve Plym

Borrower Name	City	County	Cong. District	\$ Amount	Jobs Created	Jobs Retained	Existing Jobs	New Vs. Existing	Business Type
Bare Med Spa	MASON CITY	CERRO GORDO	02	\$500,000	4	17	17	EXISTING	Beauty Salons
Teggatz Enterprises, Inc.	MASON CITY	CERRO GORDO	02	\$150,000	4	5	31	EXISTING	Janitorial Services
twiNz, LLC	WAUKEE	DALLAS	03	\$350,000	4	4	4	NEW	Golf Courses and Country Clubs
Fortis Co LLC	West Des Moines	DALLAS	03	\$680,000	0	14	14	NEW	All Other Personal Services
J&B Properties of Dubuque, LLC	DUBUQUE	DUBUQUE	02	\$1,922,000	7	15	15	NEW	N/A
Pretty Nails and Spa LLC	Iowa City	JOHNSON	01	\$226,000	2	2	2	EXISTING	Nail Salons
D&L Self Storage LLC	Lisbon	LINN	02	\$157,000	2	0	0	NEW	Lessors of Miniwarehouses and Self-Storage Units
Knapp Time Dairy	Larchwood	LYON	04	\$797,000	1	0	1	EXISTING	Dairy Cattle and Milk Production
Knapp Time Dairy	Larchwood	LYON	04	\$506,000	1	0	1	EXISTING	Dairy Cattle and Milk Production
TechniGolf, LLC	DES MOINES	POLK	03	\$290,000	1	1	1	NEW	All Other Amusement and Recreation Industries
1:1 Walkthrough, LLC	DES MOINES	POLK	03	\$93,000	2	2	2	NEW	Architectural Services
Goldman Properties LLC	Grimes	POLK	03	\$683,000	3	0	6	EXISTING	General Automotive Repair
AAL FITNESS LLC	URBANDALE	POLK	03	\$25,000	0	3	3	EXISTING	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
Cedar Valley Information Technology Service	WEST DES MOINES	POLK	03	\$110,000	1	0	4	EXISTING	Other Computer Related Services
Cedar Valley Information Technology Service	WEST DES MOINES	POLK	03	\$50,000	1	0	4	EXISTING	Other Computer Related Services
MULTISPECTRAL SYSTEMS LLC	BETTENDORF	SCOTT	01	\$15,000	0	0	1	NEW	N/A
NAIL TEK LLC	DAVENPORT	SCOTT	01	\$50,000	1	0	4	EXISTING	Nail Salons
PACFAB SERVICES LLC	DAVENPORT	SCOTT	01	\$15,000	0	0	2	NEW	All Other Miscellaneous Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing
Tees All N LLC	Norwalk	WARREN	01	\$31,500	0	1	1	NEW BUSINESS	Transportation Equipment and Supplies (except Motor Vehicle) Merchant Whole

TRANSACTIONS FROM AUGUST 2025

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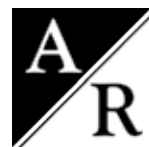
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ON THE MOVE

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Hansen to lead human resources for Iowa Department of Corrections

The Iowa Department of Corrections announced the promotion of **Dawn Hansen** to the position of human resource director.



Dawn Hansen

Mercy College of Health Sciences appoints Zurface as VP for mission and campus culture

Mercy College of Health Sciences has announced the appointment of **Amanda Zurface**, JCL, as its inaugural vice president for mission and campus culture. Zurface has more than two decades of service and leadership within the Catholic Church. Her career spans diocesan and parish leadership, nonprofit formation and communications. She has served as vice-chancellor of the Diocese of Pueblo, diocesan postulator for the cause of Sister Annella Zervas, OSB, and as the outreach and content specialist for Covenant Eyes. She is also the founder of Joy Seeker, a Catholic nonprofit focused on restorative care and human flourishing.



Amanda Zurface

Mercy College of Health Sciences names Salyers as dean of the Joyce E. Lillis School of Nursing

Mercy College of Health Sciences announced the appointment of **Vincent L. Salyers**, EdD, RN, ANEF, FAAN, FNAP, as the inaugural dean of the Joyce E. Lillis School of Nursing. Dr. Salyers brings more than 30 years of academic and clinical experience to one of Iowa's largest nursing schools.

R&R Realty Group welcomes Less to brokerage team

R&R Realty Group welcomes **Rachel Less** to its brokerage division, R&R Real Estate Advisors (REA), as a commercial real estate representative. Less graduated from Drake University in 2023 with a degree in healthcare administration and public health. She began her career in sales with Konica Minolta, where she gained experience working with customers and developing new business. At R&R Realty Group, Less will work alongside the brokerage team to connect customers with spaces that meet their needs and serve their long-term goals.



Rachel Less

Housing Solutions Alliance announces Romig as director

The Polk County Blueprint for Housing Solutions Alliance (Housing Solutions Alliance) has named **Doug Romig** as director to lead and oversee activation of The Blueprint to Address Homelessness (The Blueprint). The Blueprint is a five-year strategic vision plan that reflects community-defined priorities for improving services and resources within the homelessness response system throughout Polk County.

Romig has more than 30 years of experience working in local and regional government. Most recently, Romig was the director of parks, recreation and community programs for Thornton, Colorado. Notably, 25 years of his career was spent with the City of Des Moines, where he served as housing services director.



Doug Romig

Des Moines University appoints Good to board of trustees

Des Moines University Medicine and Health Sciences has named **Robert Good**, D.O., MACOI, to its board of trustees. A 1977 graduate of DMU's College of Osteopathic Medicine, Good adds decades of experience in internal medicine and a record of leadership in health care and medical education to the board.

"Dr. Good's deep understanding of osteopathic medicine and his passion for developing the next generation of health professionals make him an outstanding addition to our board," Angela L. Walker Franklin, Ph.D., DMU president and CEO says. "As an alumnus and a philanthropic partner, his insight and vision will help guide DMU's continued growth and mission-driven impact."



Robert Good

Iowa Cultural Coalition hires first executive director

Matthew McIver, longtime arts leader and advocate, stepped into the part-time role in August following a competitive hiring process. McIver moved to Iowa in 2008 as part of the team that launched the innovative Des Moines Social Club, a multidisciplinary arts organization that garnered national attention. More recently he served as artistic director of Iowa Stage Theatre Company, an award-winning theater organization in central Iowa, and consults with nonprofits and businesses to strengthen their stories under the banner of McIver Communications.

"The mission of the ICC has never been more important," Lindsay Bauer, president of the ICC Board, said. "Arts and culture are vital attractors of talent to Iowa, and build quality of life, economic investment and stronger communities. But our creative sector has faced unprecedented challenges in recent years, from a difficult recovery from the pandemic to shifting state and federal legislatures that place burdens and hardships on this valuable sector. So at this crucial time the board took the step of hiring our first staff, and we couldn't be more excited to have Matt take this role." ■

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THE RETURN OF

Halloween

Do the holiday right this year by attending one or more of these hauntingly good events.

By Kristian Day

Since 1938, trick or treating in Des Moines has taken place on Oct. 30, commonly called "Beggars Night," in hopes to deter bad behavior from taking place on Halloween night. Never in my lifetime did I think I would see the return of trick-or-treating on Halloween night. I am not going to waste anyone's time on the local history of "Beggars' Night," as seemingly every media outlet in this city has covered it during a slow news cycle around the spooky season. I, too, am guilty.

Halloween and Independence Day have been my favorite holidays for as long as I can remember. Neither holiday forces you to face off with your racist uncle or your pacifist niece across a giant table while you attempt to choke down a meal. It's 100% about having fun, staying out late and, when it comes to Halloween, having a good scare. I have great memories of being dressed as a vampire, carrying a big pillowcase around my neighborhood and filling it up with candy to the point that it was too heavy to keep going.

The Midwest does Halloween right. If you grew up in a small town and went trick-or-treating as a kid, you might remember the streets and sidewalks being flooded with younglings in costumes. Houses would also be decorated like there was a best in show contest on every block.

I decided to celebrate this year as "The Return of Halloween." After 87 years, we finally get to celebrate the haunting holiday properly. So many Halloween-related activities are happening in our city that I obviously can't name all of them. One big note, though, is saying RIP to Misfits Karaoke, which previously took place at Beechwood Lounge on Halloween weekend. It won't be happening this year, but let's hope it will return someday. Meanwhile, make these events and activities part of your Halloween happenings.



TOUR A HISTORIC CEMETERY

Originally called "Woodlawn" cemetery, the **Glendale Cemetery** land was purchased from Ebenezer J. Ingersoll in 1886. I run through the grounds at 4909 University Ave. several times a week. The cemetery is full of hills and has areas dedicated to both veterans and our Jewish community. It is a great place to get lost in, and the newly renovated reflection pond is a nice touch. The territorial Canada geese have claimed much of the ground as their turf, so beware if you hear a hiss in the tall grass. The last time I went through the house that sits on the inside of the 48th Street entrance, it was for sale — just in case you want to live in a cemetery.

Date: Oct. 11, 10 a.m. to noon. Tickets: \$10.

I love **Woodland Cemetery**, 2019 Woodland Ave. It was one of the first places I explored when I moved to Des Moines in 2007. On my 40th birthday this year, I did my morning walk through the ground on the old brick roads. I was obviously coming to terms with my age and where my next stop would be. The people who built this city are buried here. It's a great place to escape to when you need to cool off or just need quiet time. A fox even ran past when I was on my midlife reflection stroll.

Date: Oct. 4, 1-3:30 p.m. Tickets: \$10.



CHECK OUT A HAUNTED HOUSE

Most locals know about **The Slaughterhouse**, 500 Locust St., Des Moines, but not everyone knows about **The Haunt Speakeasy**, located in the center of The Slaughterhouse. Proprietor Ian Miller showed me the speakeasy side of this venture last year, and it was incredible. The place feels like it is straight out of the 1990s Addam's Family mansion. Like all things Miller, there are secret puzzles and games wrapped up in the experience. So, you can either go and enjoy a spooky beverage, or you can dive into the long form game that Miller has concocted. Who knows, you might have a key to the bar by the end of it all. **Location: 500 Locust St., Des Moines.**

Linn's Haunted House is the oldest operating haunted house in Des Moines. I wrote about it last year, but Merlyn Linn has been doing this for more than 40 years in the basement of Linn's Supermarket in Highland Park. If anything, you need to go to breathe in four decades of Halloween nostalgia.

Location: 3805 Sixth Ave., Des Moines

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ATTEND A HALLOWEEN EVENT OR FESTIVAL

Halloweenapalooza in Ottumwa may be a little far away for some of you, but it is Iowa's only horror movie convention, as it looks like Nightmare Weekend will not be returning this year. The current guest lineup has a "Fright Night" reunion featuring Amanda Bearse, Willam Ragsdale and Stephen Geoffreys. The two-day event also has a film festival, author panels, puppet show, live trivia, live podcasts, vendors, a blood drive and a craft room.

Dates: Oct. 10 and Oct. 11 at the Bridge View Center, 102 Church St., Ottumwa.

One of the many live events from Halloweenapalooza 2023. Courtesy of Halloweenapalooza



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VIEW A HORROR FILM

FEATURE STORY

Halloween season isn't complete unless you check out at least one horror movie on the big screen. While most of these screenings are in town, I recommend paying attention to what will be playing at the Valle Drive-In in Newton. At the time of this writing, they didn't have an October schedule out but they normally have at least one weekend with a horror double-feature. Check these movies out as well.

"Sleepy Hollow" at Flix Brewhouse, 3800 Merle Hay Road, Suite 1300, Des Moines, **Oct. 1, 6:45 p.m.**

"Misery" 35th Anniversary with TCM Festival Q&A at The Varsity, 1207 25th St., Des Moines, **Oct. 14, 7 p.m.**

"The Rocky Horror Picture Show" with Live Shadow Cast at The Varsity, 1207 25th St., Des Moines, **Oct. 17, 10 p.m.**

"Scooby-Doo" with Audience Interaction at The Varsity, 1207 25th St., Des Moines, **Oct. 21, 7 p.m.**

The Fright Zone presents **"Nightmare on Elm 3: Dream Warriors"** at The Varsity, 1207 25th St., Des Moines, **Oct. 23, 10 p.m.**

Invincible Czars Present: **"Phantom of the Opera"** at The Fleur Cinema, 4545 Fleur Drive, Des Moines, **Oct. 28, 9 p.m.**



LISTEN TO LIVE MUSIC

Thrash of the Titans and **SuperKnot** – Black Sabbath Tribute at XBK, 1159 24th St., Des Moines. While I am not huge fan of cover bands, this one looks interesting. Thrash of the Titans will be covering Anthrax and Slayer while SuperKnot is covering all Sabbath tunes. I am surprised there hasn't been any Ozzy or Sabbath tribute shows in town yet, especially when Misfits karaoke was a popular event around Halloween time here. **Date: Oct. 11, 7 p.m.**

Sunday Before Samhain featuring BanjoKat, Luke S. Williams and Cameron McCallister at Lefty's Live Music, 2307 University Ave., Des Moines. Spooky folk music the weekend before Halloween. While I have not listened to any of these acts, I can only hope they sound like Timber Timbre (solid spooky Canadian folk music). **Date: Oct. 26, 9 p.m. \$10.**

Night Stories and Traffic Death Annual Halloween show at XBK, 1159 24th St., Des Moines. If you love punk rock and dance music, be sure to check out this special night. Richie Daggers will also be spinning records all evening. Costumes are highly encouraged. **Date: Oct. 31, 7 p.m. \$15.**



Greg Wheeler and Philip Young of "Night Stories." They only perform during the month of October. Courtesy of Night Stories

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KRISTIAN DAY’S SELECT HALLOWEEN MOVIES AND ALBUMS

MOVIES

FEATURE STORY



“Halloween IV: The Return of Michael Meyers” (1988)

Most all of you have seen the original. With “Halloween III” finally gaining notoriety, you likely indulged in it as well. But how about “Halloween IV”? This late 1980s slasher captures the Halloween atmosphere perfectly. The opening title sequence breaks away from the normal jack o’ lantern variations of the previous three movies. Haddonfield, Illinois, could have been anywhere in Iowa, or at least it felt that way growing up.




“Trick ‘r Treat” (2007)

This one is on my mind because I finally picked up the 4k UHD, and it is the best way to watch the movie. Multiple storylines are intertwined and out of linear order. I also recommend checking out the short animation “Season’s Greetings.” This was the genesis of this film and the origin of the mascot character of “Sam.”



“Trick Or Treat” (1986)

This movie also just had its 4k UHD re-release last year, and it was long overdue. If you like 1980s heavy metal and horror movies, this is the film for you. Next to “The Howling II,” this is the movie I have talked about most with people. Backwards messages coming from a one-of-a-kind record leads to the resurrection of a dead rock star who wants revenge. An incredible premise. Gene Simmons of KISS has a role as a radio disc jockey, and he plays it all too well. Plus, if you miss Ozzy Osborne as much as I do, he has an amazing cameo in this movie as an evangelical preacher.




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"Bram Stoker's Dracula" (1993)

When was the last time you watched this movie? It's time. This was Francis Ford Coppola's last great movie. It is big budget Hollywood, but it still feels handmade. The movie is as much of a love story as it is a horror flick. An incredible cast includes Gary Oldman, Keanu Reeves, Wynona Ryder and Anthony Hopkins — and don't forget Tom Waits' unforgettable performance as Renfield. The art direction and music are also their own characters in this movie. Flashbacks are sometimes played out with puppets. Castle Dracula is such a fortress, and every scene in Transylvania is drenched with cold dread.



"Cemetery Man" (1994)

This is my deep cut. I first saw this Italian masterpiece late at night on HBO in the 1990s. It is a tragic love story like "Dracula," but it takes place in modern times. And, instead of vampires, it is about zombies. Rupert Everett plays a graveyard groundskeeper, and Anna Falchi is a widow he falls in love with while attending her husband's funeral. The zombies are not the main storyline. They exist in this world that Francesco Dellamorte (Everett) inhabits while pining for "she" (Falchi and she doesn't have a name in the movie). Like "Dracula," this movie has a strong gothic atmosphere.



ALBUMS



Singer and songwriter Justin Beahm of "The Phantom Lightkeeper."
Courtesy of Reverend Entertainment

"Shore Ghosts" by The Phantom Lightkeeper (2025)

Timing on this one couldn't be better. Justin Beahm from Marion, Iowa, crafted this perfect mix of surf guitar and doom metal. He shared demos with me in June of this year. In October, Waxwork Records will release this first album. It is dreary, cold and drenched in reverb. I recommend checking this out.



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“My Animal Original Soundtrack” by Augustus Muller (2023)

Boy Harsher’s August Muller atmospheric synth/ vaporwave makes you feel like you are ghost walking through an empty neighborhood. I don’t want this list to be a bunch of synthesizer music, but I can’t ignore how good this record is during spooky season. I would also say check out the movie, which is solid but a little weird for the average viewer. Think George Romero’s “Martin” but with werewolves.



“The Texas Chainsaw Massacre Original Soundtrack” by Tobe Hooper and Wayne Bell (1974/2024)

It took 50 years, but we finally have a proper release of this soundtrack. The themes on this are so raw that they cut deep into the spine. It was recorded in Tobe Hooper’s living room using simple synthesizers and children’s toys processed through tape delays and reverb. Most people have seen the movie, but hearing the isolated music tracks is an experience.



“Headless Cross” by Black Sabbath (1989)

Here is my left field pitch. I love Ozzy Osborne, but this Tony Martin era Sabbath rules. This is the most cult record they have produced and is my favorite in the post-Ozzy era. The song, “Devil & Daughter,” was inspired by the Dennis Wheatley horror novel, “To The Devil a Daughter.” (Hammer Films also produced a film adaptation starring Christopher Lee.) The title track song is my favorite. If you are into 1980s metal, this is your jam.



“Black Sabbath” by Black Sabbath (1970)

This was the first Black Sabbath record I purchased. The opening thunderstorm that leads into the church bells of dread and opens the gates to the doom-drenched guitars will haunt you upon first listening. This album mixes the working-class blues sounds of Birmingham and the post-war fears of Vietnam. (The theme shines more in their following album, “Paranoid.”) ■



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CITYVIEW'S SENIOR ANSWER BOOK



When is a good time to move to a senior living community?

Deciding to move into a senior living community is one of the most significant transitions many older adults and their families face. It often comes after thoughtful reflection, weighing personal needs, lifestyle goals and long-term well-being. While the decision may feel overwhelming at first, it can ultimately provide peace of mind, security and a renewed sense of connection.

For many, the idea begins with recognizing that maintaining a home independently has become challenging. Tasks like cooking, cleaning, yard work or managing home repairs can become burdensome. At the same time, families may notice subtle changes — forgetfulness, less social interaction or difficulty with mobility — that suggest additional support could be beneficial. These moments can spark conversations about the advantages of senior living.

One of the most appealing aspects of a senior living community is the opportunity for social

engagement. Loneliness is a growing concern among older adults, and isolation can negatively affect both mental and physical health. In a community setting, residents have easy access to activities, clubs, fitness classes and new friendships. This sense of belonging helps many feel revitalized and connected in ways they may not have experienced in years.

Safety and health care are also key considerations. Senior living communities are designed with accessibility in mind, often featuring features like emergency response systems, wellness programs and on-site staff available around the clock. For those with evolving health needs, many communities provide tiered levels of care, allowing residents to transition smoothly from independent living to assisted living or memory care if necessary — without uprooting their lives.

Equally important is the sense of freedom these communities provide. By letting go of the demands

of homeownership, seniors often discover they have more time and energy for what truly matters to them. Whether it's pursuing a hobby, volunteering or simply enjoying a relaxed pace of life, the focus shifts from obligations to opportunities.

Of course, the decision involves emotions as well as practicalities. Families should approach the conversation with sensitivity, patience and openness. Touring different communities, talking with staff, and experiencing daily life there firsthand can help ease anxieties and clarify the right fit.

Ultimately, moving into a senior living community is not about giving up independence — it's about gaining the support and environment needed to thrive. For many, it's the start of a new chapter filled with comfort, connection and possibility. ■

Information provided by Laura Coco, Executive Director, Ramsey Village, 1611 27th St., Des Moines, 515-274-3612.

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How can families provide the best care for seniors at home?

Caring for an aging parent at home can be both rewarding and exhausting. For many adult children, the challenge is compounded when they are also raising kids of their own. It often feels as though there is no pause in the day, and self-care is usually the first thing to fall by the wayside. While compassion is at the heart of caregiving, creating a thoughtful plan and having support in place makes the experience more sustainable for both seniors and their families.

At-home care is about more than keeping up with medical needs. It is a balance of practical help, companionship and encouragement that allows older adults to maintain their independence. This might include preparing meals, keeping the household tidy, helping with dressing or bathing, and offering reminders to take medications on time. It can also mean providing transportation to medical appointments, lending a hand with errands, or

simply sitting down for conversation that stimulates the mind and eases loneliness. For some, more specialized support may be needed, such as assistance for those living with Alzheimer’s or dementia, or overnight care to ensure safety during the night.

The most effective way to provide this type of care is to begin with a personalized plan. A clear plan maps out daily routines, goals, and the type of help that will best preserve a senior’s independence. It might outline when meals are prepared, who attends doctor visits, or how often social activities are encouraged. By tailoring care in this way, families can be confident that support matches the unique needs of their loved one rather than following a one-size-fits-all approach.

Caregiving also extends beyond the immediate household. Acting as an advocate is often one of the most valuable roles a caregiver can play. From coordinating medical appointments to helping

with hospital or rehabilitation transitions, advocacy ensures seniors do not slip through the cracks of a complicated healthcare system. This kind of support can prevent unnecessary moves to more costly levels of care and allows seniors to remain in their own homes longer.

Providing care for seniors is never a simple task. It requires patience, organization, and a great deal of compassion. But with the right balance of practical help, personalized planning, and advocacy, it is possible to create an environment where older adults feel safe, supported and respected. For families, this means the peace of mind that their loved ones can continue to live independently and with dignity for as long as possible. ■

Information provided by Leslie Herron, owner, Happier At Home, 33604 Old Portland Road, Adel, IA 50003, 515-335-4186, www.happierathome.com/locations/care-at-home-iowa, centraliowa@happierathome.com.



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Why should we pre-plan our funerals?

Pre-planning a funeral is one of the most thoughtful and practical steps people can take for their loved ones. While it may seem like a difficult or uncomfortable topic to address, making funeral arrangements in advance helps alleviate emotional and financial burdens during an already challenging time.

At its core, pre-planning involves making key decisions about one's final arrangements before the need arises. This can include choosing between burial and cremation, selecting a casket or urn, deciding on a cemetery or final resting place, and outlining the type of service preferred — whether it be religious, secular, traditional or a celebration of life. Pre-planning can also involve writing an obituary, choosing music or readings and designating who should speak at the service.

One of the primary benefits of pre-planning

is the relief it offers family members. Grieving loved ones are often overwhelmed by the number of decisions that must be made within a short timeframe. When arrangements have already been made, families are spared from guessing about what their loved one would have wanted and are better able to focus on honoring their memory.

Financially, pre-planning can also be advantageous. Many funeral homes offer pre-payment plans that allow individuals to lock in current prices, protecting against inflation and future cost increases. Pre-paying may also help prevent family disputes over costs or financial strain. However, it's important to research the terms of any pre-paid funeral plan carefully and ensure the funds are secure and transferable, should circumstances change.

Beyond practical matters, pre-planning can also

be a deeply personal and reflective process. It allows individuals to make their wishes known and ensures their values and beliefs are respected. It can even prompt meaningful conversations with family members, fostering understanding and connection.

In conclusion, while planning a funeral in advance may not be easy, it is an act of foresight and love. It brings peace of mind to those making the arrangements and provides clarity and comfort to those left behind. Whether done through a funeral home, with the help of an estate planner or using online tools, taking the time to pre-plan is a powerful gift to your family — and yourself. ■

Information provided by Blair Overton,
Iowa Funeral Planning, 515-218-8103,
www.iowafuneralplanning.com.



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Have you met your deductible?

Each January, health insurance deductibles reset. Any progress made toward meeting your deductible this year starts over, which can affect how much you pay out-of-pocket for care and supplies in the new year. For those who have already met their deductible, the last few months of the year provide an opportunity to use benefits before that reset occurs.

When deductibles are met, insurance often covers equipment and supplies at a higher rate — sometimes with little or no cost to the patient. This is why year-end is a good time to review ongoing health needs and take care of them while coverage is at its peak. Some items worth considering include:

- **CPAP machines and supplies** – Staying current with masks, tubing, and filters helps maintain effective therapy.
- **Continuous glucose monitors (CGMs)** – These tools support better daily diabetes management.
- **Scooters and power wheelchairs** – Mobility equipment can enhance safety and independence.
- **Other medical supplies** – Refilling prescribed items now helps avoid gaps in the months ahead.

It's easy to check deductible status — most insurers provide this information online or through recent account statements. Knowing where you stand allows you to schedule visits, order supplies, or arrange treatments with confidence before the plan year closes. To be eligible under 2025 deductibles, products must be delivered on or before Dec. 31, 2025. Orders placed but not delivered by that date may apply toward 2026 deductibles, and delivery timelines can be affected by shipping or backorder delays.

Taking these steps before year-end is not just about saving money — it's also about ensuring continuity of care. Meeting health needs now can prevent delays, support better outcomes, and provide peace of mind heading into the new year. ■

Information provided by Autumn Kline, Director of Sales and Marketing, NuCara Home Medical, 1801 Second Ave., Des Moines, 515-243-2886, www.nucara.com/home-medical.

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Simplify Medicare insurance enrollment

Navigating Medicare enrollment can feel overwhelming, but breaking it down into manageable steps helps avoid common mistakes like missing deadlines or choosing the wrong plan.

Step 1: Know when you're eligible

You're typically eligible for Medicare at age 65, or earlier if you have certain conditions like kidney failure or a qualifying disability. If you're already receiving Social Security or Railroad Retirement Board benefits, you'll be automatically enrolled in Parts A and B. Otherwise, you'll need to sign up manually.

Your Initial Enrollment Period (IEP) spans seven months — starting three months before your 65th birthday and ending three months after. If you're still working and have group health coverage, you may delay Part B without penalty and enroll during a Special Enrollment Period.

Step 2: Understand your Medicare options

Medicare includes:

- Part A (hospital insurance)
- Part B (medical insurance)
- Part C (Medicare Advantage, offered by private insurers)
- Part D (prescription drug coverage)

Original Medicare (Parts A and B) is accepted by most providers. Medicare Advantage plans bundle coverage and may include extras like dental or vision but have limited provider networks.

Step 3: Prepare your documents

To enroll, you'll need your Social Security number, birth details and current health insurance information. If you're adding Part B later, you'll need your Medicare number and a specific form.

Step 4: Enroll during your IEP

You can sign up online via the Social Security Administration (SSA), by phone or in person. If you or your spouse worked for a railroad, contact the Railroad Retirement Board. After enrolling, you'll receive a Medicare card and welcome packet.

Step 5: Fill coverage gaps

Medicare doesn't cover everything. Consider:

- Medicare Supplement (Medigap) for deductibles and coinsurance
- Dental insurance for oral health needs
- Hospital Indemnity insurance for hospital stay benefits
- Critical Illness insurance for serious diagnoses
- Short-term Care insurance for extended care needs

Step 6: Review annually

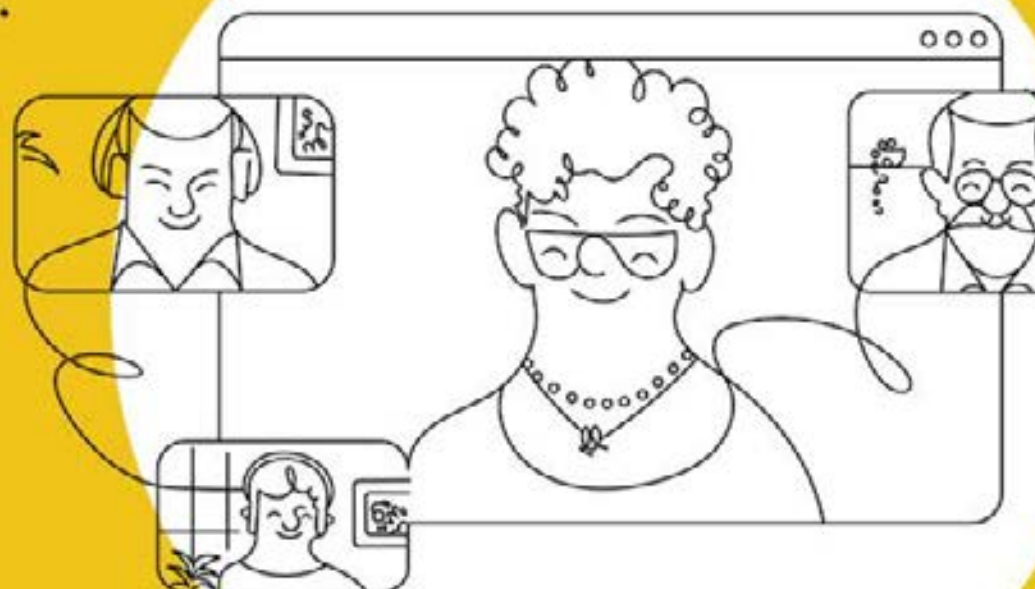
During Medicare's open enrollment (Oct. 15 – Dec. 7 each year), reassess your coverage to ensure it meets your evolving health needs. ■

Information provided by Wellabe, www.wellabe.com.

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- How to sign up for Medicare, step by step
- Options for filling Medicare coverage gaps
- How often to review your Medicare needs

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FALL 2025

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THE DISH

6 MONTHS IN A WHIRLWIND

DES MOINES FOOD SCENE

GROWING FASTER AND BETTER

THE VALUE STALKER

LOCAL FAVORITES





6 months in a whirlwind

By Jim Duncan

The last half-year brought a cyclone of change to the food world. Most ominously, the new Cold War initiated a new siege in our fields of grain. A Chinese national working at the University of Michigan was caught smuggling a killer fungus into America. Two other Chinese students at Michigan were implemented in a plot to destroy U.S. corn, wheat, barley and rice crops and to make those who ate those crops violently ill. Then U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that 277,000 acres of American farmland is now owned by Chinese entities. Surprised? Smithfield and Syngenta are, too.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration flexed its brain initiating the first government efforts in nearly a century to remove poisons from our food system. Citing unprecedented and soaring rates of autism, obesity and diabetes, the FDA persuaded state after state, with Iowa going first, to ban synthetic dyes that Europeans banned decades ago.

Then they took on junk food. They persuaded Coca Cola to make a real sugar alternative to the high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) sweetened beverages that began in 1984 in tandem with rising diabetes and obesity rates. (Real sugar triggers a satiety response that HFCS does not. That is why people drink fewer and smaller servings of real sugar drinks than HFCS. At least, that is the theory.)

Corn growers don't like that anymore than they like being blamed for Des Moines' woeful water quality. People are finally listening to authorities other than Farm Bureau on that subject — now that Iowa has the second-worst rates of new cancer for two years running.

In less woeful news, Big Grove partnered with The Land Institute to make beer out of Kernza, a promising new trademarked grain similar to wheat invented to include several environmental benefits. Plus, it is a perennial.

Pacific northwest cherries had their best year ever, and Des Moines supermarkets responded with the lowest prices in years. CBS News explained that was because of lack of rainfall during the ripening and harvesting seasons. (Expensive helicopters must be used after rains to try to dry the cherries.) Other stone fruits soared in price. That was likely because of an unprecedented growth in the tree-killing rodent populations in central California.

IN CORPORATE NEWS

USA restaurant bankruptcies hit the highest level in decades (excluding 2020) last year. **TGI Fridays**, **Rubio's Coastal Grill** and **Red Lobster** were among chains that filed for Chapter 11, closing hundreds of restaurants. The pace of bankruptcies slowed this year, but **Denny's**, **Applebee's** and **Hooters** closed locations. The company that owns **Bravo Italian Cucina** in Jordan Creek filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. **Krispy Kreme** ended its partnership with **McDonald's** saying it wasn't helping their (KK's) bottom line. McD's experienced its worst quarterly sales drop in the U.S. since 2020.


LOCAL MOVES AND MILESTONES

Americana closed in September after 14 years... David Baruthio opened **Cafe Madeleine** as a unique prix fixe experience: two sittings, three nights a week, one menu, no substitutions... **Aposto at Cafe di Scala** turned 20 in July... Amara Sama opened Jamaican-West African bar and grill **The Palms** on Ingersoll... Christine Johnson reopened her Chicago style soul food cafe **Joppa Experience**, this time on Sixth... **Habesha Ethio-Eritrean Restaurant** opened at 3500 Merle Hay Road featuring a weekend Ethio coffee service... The heirloom **Cronk's** cafe in Denison closed and is up for sale... Kevin Liu closed the venerable **Mandarin Noodle House** in Johnston. That was the last place in town with a traditional Chinese menu... Ravi and Girija Menneni opened **Saffron Indian Restaurant** in the Mandarin Noodle House space... The Iowa Beef Industry Council's 2024 Iowa's best burger contest winner closed its doors - **JJ's Tavern & Grill** in Ankeny is no more... The legendary **Fog City Diner** in San Francisco closed permanently the end of 2024. It was the inspiration for the Drake Diner in Des Moines, which lives on... **Istanbul Cafe** opened marvelously in the space best known as Stella's Blue Sky Diner... **Masao** opened in East Village with state-of-the-art sushi and a ridiculously good European menu by Phil Shires... Carter Annett bought **Jesse's Ember's** and reopened seamlessly, even adding lunch service... **k-Pot** opened an outlet in Jordan Creek with the longest lines we have seen since the first Chik-fil-A opened here... At press time, **Casey's** of Ankeny was one of the top five stocks on the S&P 500 for 2025. ■

A reintroduction to RELISH

When we began publishing RELISH in 2005 we thought that important things had no voice in mainstream food media. Things like free range livestock, label disclosure, farm to table dining, and dumbing down the legal definitions of words like organic, natural, humane and pure. In our first year, we advocated for an Iowa bacon festival; looser regulation on brewing and distilling to encourage an Iowa industry; buying fresh and local; and practical farming. We are 20 years older now and those original missions have been flown. Today we think that food readers are looking for value and pride in the local food scene. This newly designed RELISH will focus on those things. ■





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DES MOINES FOOD SCENE

— GROWING FASTER AND BETTER

Des Moines is a special food town, any way you look at it.

By Jim Duncan

Des Moines is now the fastest growing city in the Midwest. As we kick off our third decade at RELISH, we think it is time to make the case that our food scene is also growing faster and better than those of our Midwestern peers.

Two restaurant dinners in late July showed two marvelous aspects of the food scene's maturity here. One was a celebration of Aposto at Café di Scala's 20th anniversary. The other was a non-corporate wine dinner at Ruth's Chris. The former was a thank you tribute to Tony Lemmo's friends and customers for helping him launch his 21st century version of Calabrese cuisine. The latter was a \$2,500 per person extravaganza featuring the coveted 100 Acres line of wines. Both dinners were served to full capacity without any advertising.

Lemmo is the great grandson of Teresa Lacona, whose recipes directly inspired the menus of Noah's Ark, Mama Lacona's and Bambino's and became the epitome of Calabrian Iowa, which dominated fine dining in Des Moines from World War II to today. His Café di Scala moved that tradition into a venerable Victorian mansion in Sherman Hill.

Ruth's Chris is a renowned national steakhouse chain that rejected the metro for decades. Today, its West Des Moines store is one of the two largest in the entire chain. Their wine guy, Johnny Krohn, moves more wine than any other Ruth's outlet. The eight-course dinner featuring 100 Acres accompanied another \$500 per person wine dinner the same month. Both were sanctioned by the corporate department, but neither was held under its aegis. Both sold out so easily that more such extravagant dinners are expected.



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GRAZIANO'S HAS ANCHORED THE SOUTH SIDE OF DES MOINES FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY.

"I think that corporate was a little stunned when they saw how successful our numbers were," Krohn told RELISH.

The Aposto dinner recruited former Café di Scala chefs Phil Shires, Shawn Benningsdorf, Cory Wendel, Joe McConville and David Ryan to prepare five dishes. It also included a course each by Lemmo's late mother Lou Ann, current chef Cole Gruis, and Lemmo himself with a nod to his uncle, Frank. That emphasized Aposto's incubator effect of Des Moines' restaurant scene. Its eight courses featured halibut in snapper bone broth; duck confit; eggplant; cavatelli; pasta made with squash, carrot and beets and truffles; and stuffed ausilio peppers with seeds derived from some that early Italians brought to Des Moines.

Benningsdorf and Ryan have moved out of town, but Shires now mans the kitchen at Masao, a "state-of-the-art" fusion restaurant in East Village. Wendel now owns the burger-as-life-style Lachelle's cafés with adjoining taverns The Fitz and The Alpine. McConville was co-founder of pizza chain Gusto and has a hand in Breakfast Club and Anna Dolce. Just as Aunt Jenny's was an incubator for the great Italian restaurateurs of the second half of the 20th century, Aposto at Café di Scala looks to be its third millennium counterpart.

Krohn limited seating at the two big Ruth's Chris wine dinners to 13 and 22.

"When you are opening lots of expensive wines, you have to limit the guest list. Otherwise, you lose money fast because wine has a short life span after a bottle is opened."

Nevertheless, the eight-course dinner came off flawlessly. Three courses featured USDA prime aged steaks, one duck breast, one striped bass and one oysters and caviar. The amuse bouches included octopus. Dinner was prepared by Sydney Hendricks, who, like Krohn, came to Ruth's from Proudfoot and Bird.

The Aposto dinner was an homage to the past. The Ruth's Chris dinner was an expression of decadence not usually associated with Des Moines. Between them, they represented the magical eclecticism of today's Des Moines dining scene. Rooted in history that is mostly Italian, the food scene here in 2025 has sprouted into things as different as Aposto's garden and Ruth's wine cellar.




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HEIRLOOM DES MOINES

Italian roots gave the city something to brag about when Des Moines still equated Italians with immigrants here. (In the mid 20th century, civil rights leader Joe Lacava said, “I was raised Italian before we were white people.”) The northern southside became an Italian, and mostly Calabrian, enclave.

Southside Italians broke out of their isolation by dominating the club and restaurant businesses in Des Moines between Prohibition and the 1960s. Babe Bisignano’s Babe’s, his brother Chuck’s namesake restaurant, Joseph Cimino’s Wimpy’s, Noah Lacona’s Noah’s Ark, Pete Riccelli’s Riccelli’s, Johnny Compiano’s Johnny and Kay’s, Rocky Compiano’s Rocky’s, Ralph Compiano’s Ralph’s, Jimmy Pigneri and later Bobby Tursi’s The Latin King, Joe Tumea’s Tumea & Sons, Joe and Red Giudicessi’s Christopher’s, Charlie Baratta’s Baratta’s, Mike Lavallo’s several places, the Bianchi family’s Hilltop, and Vic Talerico’s Vic’s Tally Ho were a few of the places that southern Italians brought to town. And that excludes the many pizza joints they also created.

When the Des Moines Civic Center hosted its first-ever sold-out event in 1980, they commissioned a survey of the audience. One question asked, “What else in Des Moines is worth driving more than an hour? The No. 1 answer was “Italian restaurants.” Noah’s Ark, The Latin King, Baratta’s, Chuck’s, Christopher’s, Tumea & Son’s, and Bianchi’s Hilltop are all still here. Sons and grandsons of Italian immigrants have added Lucca, Exile, La Mie, Scornovacco’s, Sonny’s, Basil Prosperi’s, Centro and Prime & Providence.

Also, to our scene’s great fortune, visionary thinkers like Bruce Gerleman and Kurt Blunck saved a lot of wonderful, historic buildings from the



GEORGE FORMARO AT CENTRO’S 800-DEGREE COAL-BURNING OVEN.

wrecking ball. Restaurants moved into newly designed, century-old real estate. Lucca, Centro, CABCO, Malo, Django, Bubba’s, Alba, W Tao, Splash, Egg Roll Ladies, Proudfoot & Bird, Mulberry Street Tavern, Stuffed Olive, and Masao are some restaurants that inhabit historic buildings.

Because most of the early Italians in Des Moines raised gardens, the phrase “garden fresh” is not bluster here. Aposto and Oak Park have multiple, magnificent gardens on the restaurant properties from which they harvest your dinner. President John Kennedy told Iowan Hugh Sidey, “It’s a shame they raise just corn and beans because that Iowa soil looks good enough to eat.” In Des Moines, you nearly can.



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COSMOPOLITAN DES MOINES

On the other hand, state-of-the-art architecture added modern gems like Oak Park, Prime & Providence, 801 Chop House and La Mie at the Des Moines Art Center. And the man who did the most to create the great Des Moines food scene of today is late Governor Bob Ray. By sheer force of personality, “The Gov” pushed Iowa into welcoming boatloads of refugees from Vietnam after larger states had refused them.

When the great food writer and TV host Tony Bourdain played a sold-out Civic Center show, he began by musing, “Wow, you have a lot of fantastic Vietnamese restaurants, Des Moines.” Yeah, we do. We also have an international food market that has been called “an Asian Eatery” and “a Midwestern Ranch 99.” Those references are to supermarkets that include full-service butchers, full-service fresh fish markets and all kinds of exotic foods, including fully prepared foods. C Fresh Market is all of that, and where else can you find pizzelle (cow’s penis), bulk chicken feet, duck tallow, quail eggs, smoked pig’s heads, or Beijing duck in the deli? Plus, the market has a fabulous Vietnamese restaurant, Pho 515. The store is undergoing a 10,000-square-foot expansion and hopes to be fully renewed by the end of the year.

Gov. Ray’s expression of welcoming directly influenced the immigration and restaurant developments of other cultures. Our Mexican scene took off in 1988 when Eufracio Mayorga opened Iowa’s first Latino grocery store and our first Mexican restaurant modeled on the Zacatecas-Jalisco-Michoacan cuisines that Des Moines has come to love more than even Italian restaurants. Comedian Willie Fratto Farrell jokes about how many Mexican restaurants he has to pass to find an Italian restaurant on today’s southside of Des Moines.

Thai, Lao, Burmese, Japanese, Nepalese, Pakistani, Indian and Korean restaurants all thrive now as much in the suburbs as the inner city. MinGaLaBar in Urbandale is as fine a Burmese restaurant as one will find in San Francisco, Chicago or New York. Probably in Rangoon, too. Ankeny has two top-end Thai restaurants — Silk Elephant and Siam Table — plus a Singaporean restaurant that specializes in street food — Hawker’s Kitchen. There are exponentially more Indian restaurants in Waukee, West Des Moines, Johnston, Ankeny and Clive than in Des Moines



IOWANS GO WHOLE HOG. C FRESH MARKET ROASTS FIVE TO SIX OF THESE EVERY WEEK.

now. Most are Deccan and Madras inspired.

Des Moines is home to three excellent Peruvian cafés — Tulpa, Panka and Uchuu. Peruvian cuisine is the ultimate fusion cuisine with Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and indigenous influences. It comes from the ocean and the mountains. Music often breaks out.

Our late-night food culture is unique. Whenever road crews check into town for a long-running Broadway show, former Civic Center Director Jeff Chelsvig told us that they are mainly interested in two quirky places to eat — Zombie Burger and Fong’s Pizza.

Iowa beers and pizza cover every style in the world. Big Grove took over an old Chevrolet dealership. Exile brews in a downtown heirloom that used to be a shampoo factory. Centro cooks pizza in an 800-degree coal oven.

Des Moines restaurants initiated top holiday events. Zombie Burger has a Halloween parade. Hessen Haus, a fabulous German restaurant, held the city’s Oktoberfest until it outgrew downtown. Exile’s Christmas decorations are a tourist draw.

DES MOINES BRINGS THE OCEANS TO TOWN

The miracle of Fed Ex delivers fresh daily fish, from Hawaii, the Caribbean and both coasts to Waterfront Seafood, Splash, Masao, Prime & Providence and several sushi restaurants. Des Moines markets like Hy Vee, C Fresh, Fresh Thyme and Whole Foods have made locals familiar with formerly exotic fruits like custard apples, jackfruit, dragon fruit, rambutans, lychees, durian, guava, longan and even mangosteen,



LA MIE LAMINATES THEIR CROISSANTS A DOZEN TIMES.

which used to be so rare in the U.S. that they fetched \$50 each on the San Francisco black market just 20 years ago.

And that rich black dirt that John Kennedy admired produces the best sweet corn, tomatoes, apples, squashes and peppers on Earth. Visit one of the great farmers markets of Des Moines, Iowa City or Decorah, and you can hear the mighty music of tomato names — Cherokee Purple, Brandywine, Green Zebra, Opalka, Moonglow, Jaune Flame, Trifele, Wapsipinicon Peach, Hungarian Heart, etc.

Des Moines chefs love to work with these foods. Dozens of local restaurants will develop their own version of sweet corn chowder in summer and of squash soup in fall and winter. Iowa cider houses are as great as anywhere. Some, like Fishback and Stephenson in Fairfield, go to extremes like raising their own cattle on apple mash to make hamburgers.

Iowa dairy is very special with the most concentrated number of organic farms in America within 30 miles of Kalona. You can buy milk so freshly grazed that it is yellow from the chlorophyll in summer from Radiance, Kalona or Pickett Fences. You can taste the difference immediately. AE dairy is so good that James Beard double winner Eric Ziebolt imports its sour cream dips to the east and west coasts.

Des Moines is a special food town, any way you look at it. ■

WHISKEY

101

Bubba owner Chris Diebel
dives into the world of
whiskey.

By Cyote Williams

Have you ever sat down at a restaurant and opened the drink menu, only to be shown a page full of whiskey options with absolutely no idea what to choose? Have you strolled through the aisles of a liquor store looking for something to sip on at home with various bottles of brown spirits from floor to ceiling, only to leave with a six-pack instead?

Knowing what type of whiskey suits your taste buds, how to order it, what whiskeys go best in certain cocktails, and which one would best suit your home bar are all questions that whiskey novices want answered. After all, there are bottom-shelf and top-shelf brands. Rye, bourbon, scotch, American, Canadian, Irish, Scottish, and even Japanese whiskeys, all with their own distinct tastes, prices and personalities.

We wanted these questions answered, so we turned to one of the most knowledgeable whiskey minds in Des Moines. Chris Diebel is the founding partner of Bubba, a downtown southern food restaurant staple. It is also home to one of the best whiskey selections in the city.



Chris Diebel





BUBBA'S LIST OF COCKTAILS, SCOTCHES AND MORE SHOULD BE TASTED IN BULK. PHOTO COURESY OF BUBBA

BOURBONS, RYES, SCOTCHES, REGIONS AND MORE

Whiskey takes shape from its flavor, colors and process. Diebel says bourbons are his game, and his expertise in the spirit reaches each drop of the dark liquid.

“I really focus on bourbon— and to a lesser extent, rye, and that is a native spirit to the south — and so it made sense for Bubba to have a real focus on bourbon. Bourbon tends to be a little sweeter, and, I think, a little bit more approachable than some of the other ones out there, so I think it’s a really great place for folks to start exploring the whiskey world as a whole. Whereas scotch can be peaty and smoky and really taste specific to certain people, bourbon oftentimes is a little bit more palate-pleasing to the newly initiated,” Diebel said.

What are the main differences between these variations?
“The core differentiator is the use of corn. With bourbon, the mash bill, or the recipe, has to include a minimum of 51% corn — and 51% or more ryes for ryes,” Diebel said.

That sounds like something Iowans can get behind. Diebel says the real differences for bourbons and ryes is in what the other 49% is made of.

“Corn products tend to be a little sweeter and mellower, whereas rye gives you some of that spice. The more malted barley is in it, the more you’re likely to get a toasted cereal note in the final product,” Diebel said. “When you think about an Irish whiskey, some scotches, those are malted products. The barley is going to be what comes out.”

As for why something might taste different if it’s from a different region, several other elements might change the flavor.

“There’s a lot of interesting stuff coming out of different Asian countries. They’re using different aging techniques with different woods that’s imparting different flavors as well. So, the sky’s really the limit. I would also say it’s a common misnomer that all bourbon has to come from Kentucky, and, certainly, that is the undisputed home for most bourbons. You can make a bourbon anywhere as long as it’s 51% or more corn. And that’s why you see places like Cedar Ridge right here in Iowa that are making bourbon, or in my home state of Texas,” Diebel said.

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- 2 oz. bourbon (we use Old Forester)
- 1 ½ oz. Mint Simple Syrup
- Splash Seltzer



INSTRUCTIONS

- Combine bourbon and simple syrup in a Julep cup filled halfway with crushed ice stir until chilled
- Top with more crushed ice to form a small dome and add mint garnish

Glass: Julep Cup with crushed ice
Garnish: Large Bunch of Mint Sprigs (slap them first to get the oils active)

Courtesy of Bubba

OLD FASHIONED

- 1 ½ oz. bourbon of your choice
- ¾ oz. simple syrup
- 3 dashes Angostura Bitters



INSTRUCTIONS

- Combine all ingredients in a mixing glass with ice and stir until chilled
- Strain into a rocks glass over a fresh large cube of ice and garnish with orange twist expressed and then dropped into the glass

Glass: Rocks
Garnish: Large orange peel

Courtesy of Bubba

KNOWING WHAT YOU ARE TASTING

The best way to taste whiskey? That is an art form in itself. Diebel says to remind yourself that the first sip is going to burn. Do not let that discourage you from slowing down and taking another sip, properly, to enjoy the flavors. The first step is to start with a lower-proof whiskey.

“Start with a lower proof and then work your way up. You don’t want to blast your palate right at the beginning,” Diebel said.

Starting without ice and a lower proof to begin with helps to acclimate yourself. Then, you can add a few drops of water or an ice cube. The lower the proof, the quicker it becomes diluted. When whiskey becomes diluted, it makes it easier to drink. Diebel recommends this for people just getting into whiskey.

“Oftentimes, seasoned whiskey drinkers want a slightly higher proof, because it’s going to hold up to the ice longer in the summer months. In the summer months, I like a lighter whiskey, even with rocks,” Diebel said.

Lower-proof whiskeys and whiskey cocktails are better enjoyed in the summer heat, whereas a higher proof, or a scotch, with its spice, is better enjoyed in the colder fall and winter months, he says.

When it comes to identifying smells and tastes, Diebel has a few tips.

“I like to tell people, you want to take a big, deep breath with your mouth slightly open, and then you’re going to inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. You really do start to pick up some of those (in this case, Old Forester bourbon) caramel notes, maybe a little honey suckle. Take a sip, hold it in your mouth before swallowing for a few seconds, and let it coat your tongue. The roof of your mouth, the whole palate, you are going to feel a little bit of a burn on the first one, but that’s really just getting everything ready to really enjoy it.”

Diebel recommends that beginners use a whiskey tasting mat when trying to identify different flavors. These will give you keywords that can help you define what it is you are tasting.

“Whether that’s wood notes or floral notes or caramel notes, chocolate notes, cherry notes, dark fruit versus dark berry fruit versus stone fruits, there are readily available graphs out there that help you with those phrases until you’re comfortable with it on your own,” Diebel said.



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BUYING WHISKEY OUT AND AT HOME

Sitting down at a restaurant, opening the drinks menu, and being flooded with several pages worth of different whiskeys to choose from can feel intimidating. Even a singular page can give people pause, causing them to go back to what they already know.

“That’s why, on our menu, we try to use some brief tasting notes throughout. You see that under each one, it gives you a quick tasting note description, and then also the price. Quite frankly, nothing’s enjoyable if it’s too expensive for your budget. So, what I always think is first look within your budget and then start doing research on what the top-rated whiskies are in that price category,” Diebel said. “There are really great, readily available products that don’t break the bank.”

You would think Diebel, as a business owner, would want you to splurge on the higher-priced items. While he likely would not say no to someone ordering top-shelf whiskey, he advises finding out what you like best first.

“I would highly encourage people, rather than coming to a restaurant and splurging on the highest-priced item, to go and do your homework first and cut your teeth on more affordable products, and then, once you’ve learned what you’re tasting and what your personal preferences are, you can go out and splurge on occasion,” Diebel said.

For your home bar, Diebel recommends having at least one lower proof and one higher proof bourbon and one rye. Diebel mentioned Larceny bourbon as one that won’t break the bank under 100 proof. He also mentioned Bulleit, a Kentucky brand of whiskey that has both bourbons and ryes that



RUSSELL’S RESERVE, KNOB CREEK, MAKER’S MARK, LARCENY AND BULLEIT ARE ALL GREAT OPTIONS FOR A HOME BAR. PHOTO COURTESY OF BUBBA



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MANHATTAN
ON THE ROCKS



- 2 oz bourbon
- 1 oz Sweet Vermouth (our favorite is Carpano Antica)
- 3 dashes Angostura bitter

INSTRUCTIONS

- Combine all ingredients in a mixing glass with ice and stir until chilled
- Strain into a rocks glass over a fresh large cube of ice and garnish with brandied cherry

Glass: Rocks

Garnish: Brandied or candied cherry (My favorite are the brand Luxardo Cherries, and, at home add a barspoon full of their cherry juice in the mix as well.)

The Black Manhattan riff replaces the Sweet Vermouth with and Amaro (Averna Amaro is one of my go-tos for this) and gives it a very aromatic and rich twist to the traditional recipe.

Courtesy of Bubba

are friendly on the wallet and are also good in cocktails. Russell’s Reserve was mentioned as another solid option that can be found at grocery stores. Diebel also named Knob Creek and Maker’s Mark as other reliable options for those starting their own collection at home.

If you are planning to use bourbons in a cocktail, Diebel says to go with something on the more affordable side. That includes cocktails at restaurants when asked what kind of whiskey you would like used in an old-fashioned, Manhattan, or whiskey sour.

“I don’t love it when people use really expensive whiskeys to make cocktails. I would prefer that they use something a little bit more readily available and save that highly allocated product for people who want to try it in its purest form,” Diebel said.

If you’re going to make those drinks at home, Diebel also had a few tips.

“I also like to think in terms of those higher proof or ‘hot’ whiskeys, balancing them with a sweetness. That might be where you come in with a Manhattan or an old-fashioned, because it’s going to have some simple syrup or a sweet vermouth in it, and that balances the sweet, balances the heat. A light whiskey is certainly great for a Julep, but it’s going to blend into the drink a little bit more because it’s not as hot,” Diebel said. ■



GET COMFORTABLE WITH MORE AFFORDABLE WHISKEY OPTIONS BEFORE REACHING FOR THE TOP SHELF. PHOTO COURTESY OF BUBBA

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Creamy tomato soup is rich with sun-ripened flavor



By Jolene Goodman

There is something special about cooking with ingredients grown from your own backyard. Recently, I was watching our grandson at my daughter and son-in-law’s house. He and I ventured outside to check on their garden and discovered a bumper crop of tomatoes. Since the weather was cool, I decided that a batch of tomato soup for dinner would serve the harvest well. Our grandson, just 8 months old, is already a curious observer in the kitchen. He keeps me company from his high chair, happily armed with a dozen measuring cups to toss and a few snacks to keep him content. This creamy tomato soup, made with an abundance of fresh-picked tomatoes and a blend of herbs, is rich with sun-ripened flavor. Paired with a golden, melty grilled cheese on homemade sourdough, it was the perfect fall dinner — simple, cozy and made even sweeter by sharing it together with my grandson. ■



Information provided by Jolene Goodman, vice president of Big Green Umbrella Media.

CREAMY TOMATO SOUP RECIPE

Total time: 45 minutes
Servings: 4

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3-4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive or avocado oil
- 2 pounds fresh tomatoes (about 6 large), blanched, skins off and chopped
- 2 cups chicken broth (low sodium preferred)
- 1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- 1/2 -3/4 cup heavy (whipping) cream
- 2 tablespoons honey
- Salt and pepper, basil, oregano — more of everything than you think
- Pinch of rosemary
- Fresh basil or parsley (optional, for garnish)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Heat oil over medium heat.
- Add onion and sauté for about 5 minutes until soft.
- Add garlic and cook all for 2 more minutes.
- Add tomatoes and cook for 10 minutes.
- Add chicken broth and bring to a boil.
- Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes, uncovered. Stir occasionally.
- Blend until smooth by using an immersion blender and scooping the mixture into a traditional blender.
- Return soup to the pan.
- Add whipping cream and honey and stir. Season with salt, pepper, basil, oregano and other herbs of choice.
- Simmer for 5 more minutes.
- Serve immediately. Garnish with fresh basil or parsley. This pairs well with a grilled cheese sandwich on sourdough bread. Enjoy!



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SCAN ME
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The Value Stalker

By Jim Duncan

One quarter of the way through the 21st century, we are convinced that people who read food news are looking for value more than anything else. As we begin our third decade of RELISH, this new section of the magazine plans to hunt it and breathe it and shout it out loud.

While other local media do that when a celebrity shows up, we will tell you where Greg Abel eats. Who dat? Abel is Warren Buffet's handpicked successor at the ultimate value hunting enterprise of all time — Berkshire Hathway. As reported in CITYVIEW and The Daily Umbrella, Abel is a fan of Lucca in Des Moines' East Village, a restaurant we think epitomizes Des Moines value-oriented culinary identity.

In Iowa, we support extravagances, like we write about in the Food section of this magazine. We support ethnic cuisines like very few other states. We support farmers who support practices that do not poison our rich black earth and water. And we support tradition. But we crave value.

Enter RELISH's Value Stalker. We have it on the best authority that the most popular part of our food section in The Daily Umbrella is our "deals of the day." We read the supermarket ads and report on their best deals. We do the same with restaurants from 801 Chop House to Eastside Eddie's. We test and recommend new products from state-of-the-art dehydrators to new kinds of peanut butter and honey.

The Daily Umbrella should be required reading for value stalkers in Des Moines. It is free, and all you need to give up is your email address. Then it will be delivered to your mail box by 6:30 a.m. each weekday.



THE PROTEIN HUNT

Vegans come and vegans go (their numbers in the U.S. have reduced three years in a row), but in Iowa people have always looked first at meat and seafood for their protein hunt. Meat shopping changed utterly here in 2000 after Walmart butchers successfully unionized in Jacksonville, Texas. The chain, which has used the word "price," not "value," in all variations of their motto, simply fired all their butchers and went exclusively to prepackaged meat of dubious origins. Other supermarket chains followed suit.

Against the wind, Fareway stores remained centered around their butchers' expertise and face-to-face communication. They only sell USDA Choice or Prime beef. No other chain here does that. Fareway even has stores in Ames and Beavertdale that go further with their emphasis on their butchers.

Other chains stock USDA Choice and Prime but rarely ever advertise specials that include it, Fresh Thyme excluded. We also believe that Fareway looks for consistent value in their pork.

Poultry is a matter of preferences. Fareway sources chickens that are larger than those in other stores. Many people believe that air chilled chickens are healthier and give better value. That is because water processing adds weight and health risks that one cannot taste. Smart Chicken is 100% air chilled and is sold at Hy-Vee and Price Choppers.

Among chains, Hy-Vee excels at seafood. Fresh Thyme offers sales specials on seafood items that are so good we think they are loss leaders — like the \$5 rotisserie chickens that Sam's Club and Costco use to drive memberships. But Hy-Vee has more variety, and their seafood is all sourced through Ankeny, guaranteeing freshness here. Only select Hy-Vee stores have butchers and

fishmongers. Those that do operate on another level than those that don't or than other chains.

Fresh Thyme has the best advertised deals on certain cuts of USDA prime beef or lamb, but only on occasions. McBee's offers a great selection of frozen beef, lamb and goat parts in their Lamoni store. I know local chefs who go there for things like lamb pancreas, aka sweetbreads. Mostly, that store attracts more fans of the BRAVO soap opera about the McBee family.

B&B Grocery, Meat and Deli is the oldest butcher shop in Iowa. It has been in the Seavastopol neighborhood since 1922 and in its current location since 1962. Joppa Experience owner Christine Johnson told us that it is the only place that can fill her need for oxtails in bulk. B&B takes as many as 500 orders for Christmas Eve standing rib roasts. They age meats to customer requirements of any length. They deal directly with local farmers on beef purchases.

Old Station Craft Meats in Waukee challenges the notion that pork should be white, something that was bred into pigs in the early 1980s when Big Pork went with a "the other white meat" ad campaign. That was after the American Medical Association passed a resolution, by two votes, to label cholesterol as the top cause of heart disease. That led to horrible ideas like replacing dairy products with trans fats in the diet. Old Station only deals with Heritage breeds of pig like Berkshire with deep red color, rich marbling and higher fat content.

Old Station beef comes from two superb farms — Grass Run, which is 100% range fed, no grains at all, and Upper Iowa Beef, known for humanely raised animals. Old Station also deals in elk, bison, veal and lamb.

The Good Butcher deals exclusively with Iowa farmers and takes the Old Station model deeper. They excel at salumi and jerky products that they make, the only company around that has facilities to do that. Their freezer and counter show high-end cuts — Mangalitsa pork, wagyu beef, local lamb, elk, bison, venison.

C Fresh has the largest, and by far most exotic, butcher shop and seafood shop. They also roast ducks and pigs. About six whole hogs a week are roasted to a crisp skin and tender flesh. These hogs are sourced from the heritage Berkshires of Winneshiek County's Lynch Livestock. C Fresh fish all come in frozen on the boat and includes many species (eel, pompano, snake fish) one never sees in chain supermarkets. They also have live lobsters and blue crabs. Waterfront Seafood has been air-freighting the best seafood and fish from all over the world for half a century.

LOCAL PRODUCTS OF EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

Des Moines is fortunate to have many Italian dressings choices from local sources with good reputations before getting into the retail sector. We are convinced that Graziano's Italian dressing is on a higher level. For starters, it uses EVOO exclusively, not just mixed with seed oils like most others, including those like Newman's that advertised as "olive oil dressing" before they had to change that name because they also used more seed oils. Plus, Graziano's uses fewer ingredients overall. Its distribution has recently expanded. Graziano's excellent bottled sauces (five) are also on more shelves beyond the southside.

NOSTALGIA SHOPPING

When Dr. Pepper followed the rest of American soda makers and substituted high fructose corn syrup for real sugar in the 1980s, they also continued to make the original recipe in their mother factory in Waco, for local distribution only. People began traveling to Waco for the good stuff. A Waco CVB docent told me that “real Dr. Pepper” was the town’s No. 3 tourist attraction, behind only the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame Museum and Baylor University. Now, you can get it in Des Moines. The venerable B & B Grocery, Meat & Deli stocks it amongst their best-in-town selection of vintage sodas.

Dutch ovens, though never out of use, are the essence of nostalgia. People who sell stuff on TV are constantly inventing new forms of Teflon products, but few remember their grandmas cooking in anything but cast iron Dutch ovens. Nothing regulates heat better for slow cooking.

Dutch ovens come in all shapes, colors and sizes. The ideal Dutch oven heats evenly on a stovetop, is heavy-bottomed enough to retain heat within the oven, can be transferred between those two places fairly easily, and features a tight-fitting and heatproof lid that is great for both braising and browning. Wall Street Journal Buy Side concluded that experts’ favorite Dutch oven is the Le Creuset Round Dutch Oven, particularly the 7.25-quart version.



Des Moines has a Le Creuset outlet store where unpopular colors and such sell at true bargain prices. I know one Prairie Meadows horse racing fan who always treats himself to a new Le Creuset product when he wins.

Still, Le Creuset is the top of the line. For a lower-price option, WSJBS believes Lodge’s Essential Enamel Cast Iron Dutch Oven (\$99 for 6 quart model at Bass Pro Shop and Target) delivers performance well above what its price tag would suggest. And, if you’re not married to the idea of an enameled Dutch oven, you may find Great Jones’ The Dutchess (\$205 for 6.75 quart model at Great Jones) for an oval shape.



PRESERVING

Because this is our autumn issue, we tested a few dehydrators and decided that Excalibur’s Select Digital Dehydrator was the best value for our needs. It is \$179 at the Excalibur website and offers a temperature range of 85°-165° F and a timer for up to 60 hours, allowing you to efficiently dehydrate a wide variety of foods, including meat, fruit and herbs. With 7.2 square feet of drying space and eight chrome-plated trays, it provides ample room.

THIS STUFF IS THE BEST, PASS THE WORD

Wall Street Journal Buy Side does serious research to pick superior products of myriad stuff. Here are a few of their recent verdicts about the best of kinds in food and drink.

- Best overall drip coffee maker – Oxo 9 Cup, \$230 at Williams Sonoma.
- Best cocktail glasses for your home bar, tall - Stolze’s New York Collins glasses, set of six, \$39 at the webstaurant store.
- Best cocktail glasses for your home bar, short, stout and versatile – Viski’s crystal Negroni tumblers, set of two, \$22 at Walmart.
- Best cocktail glasses for your home bar, metal – Barfly’s julep cup, \$14 at Walmart.
- Best cocktail glasses for your home bar, shaken drinks – Cocktail Kingdom’s Leopold coupe set of 6, \$50 at Amazon.
- Best cocktail glasses for your home bar, classic V – Riedel’s vinum martini glasses set of two, \$79 at Amazon.
- Best cocktail glasses for your home bar, whiskey sipping – Glencairn’s whisky glasses set of two \$25 at Walmart.
- Best wine preservation tools - Coravin Timeless Three Plus, \$249 at Coravin.

Traditionally, when a bottle is properly opened and exposed to air, it becomes oxidized, which means it will likely only hold up for so long. For certain wines, it is weeks, and for others, a matter of hours. Coravin Timeless Three Plus is a tool used to pour a glass of wine without actually opening the bottle. The brand’s site says the gadget can preserve wines for “weeks, months or even years.” ■



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CITYVIEW's

Wedding

GUIDE



Common wedding questions answered

Most of us have been to at least one wedding before, but planning our own can be different. As a guest, you can just show up, and even if you have agreed to help out in some way, your duties will be minimal. When it is your own wedding, you might be unsure where to start. Here a few common questions (and answers) to help you.

Do I need a wedding planner?

Of course, it is possible to get married without a wedding planner. If you have a limited budget, hiring a wedding planner is going to cut into that, leaving much less to spend on the wedding itself. However, if you choose not to hire one, you give yourself more work to do. You can get around this by making a list of what you want, trying to keep it as simple as possible and asking friends and family you trust to help you.

Where should I get married?

The choice is yours. While a church might be the most obvious option, you can get married anywhere that offers weddings and even get permission to marry at some of the most stunning outdoor locations. So long as you look into getting the right permission and ensure the wedding is legally binding beforehand, the only limit is your budget.

How much food and drink should I serve everyone?

Some weddings seem to go on all day. If the ceremony is performed in the morning, the couple and their guests might hold an afternoon gathering with a buffet and light refreshments, before the big evening celebration begins. This means feeding people twice. However, if you only have a limited budget, you can get around this by having an afternoon ceremony, followed by the evening celebration, and only have to feed people once. Although a free bar might sound nice, there are always people who don't know when to stop. The better suggestion is to serve everyone a drink when they arrive at the evening celebration, and/or with their meal, but leave them to buy their own drinks from the bar.

What information do I put on the invitation?

The obvious details are the date, location and time. Although, if you have a dress code or theme, you could also include that. Even if you have already told people in person, it's a good idea to let them see it on the invitation, too. You should also mention if the invitation is only for the person named, or if they can bring someone. This allows you to limit how many people you have to provide catering for and prevents guests from bringing strangers to your wedding if you prefer to stick to close family and friends. When you send the invitation, also include an RSVP card, so people can let you know if they plan to attend. You might want to include a tick box for any dietary requirement, so you can plan accordingly.

If you're not sure, always ask!

These are just some of the questions you may have regarding planning for the big day. So, if you're still unsure about anything, remember that married friends or family may be pleased to pass on their knowledge if you ask for their help. ■



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Fall in love with a smart wedding budget

(NewsUSA) The to-do list for newly engaged couples can be daunting. Finding a venue, booking a caterer, choosing a dress — there are many details that need to be factored into a wedding budget, regardless of who is paying. Starting a new life together is a perfect opportunity to establish solid financial habits that will serve you well throughout your marriage. A CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional can help couples develop a smart plan to manage engagement and wedding expenses. Setting priorities early on can help avoid conflicts as the big day approaches. Start by considering these four elements of planning for wedding expenses:

Make a list

Write down everything you both need or want for your dream wedding. That includes items large and small, from the number of guests to the types of flowers or favors.

Rank the list

Now that you have your list, put things in order of priority. Assign a number to each item in order of importance, such as a live band, sit-down dinner or elaborate cake. Or start by sorting needs and wants into categories, using 1 as most important, 2 as moderately important and 3 as least important. You will need to agree on the most important items, whatever those may be.

Budget the list

Assign an estimated price to each category or item, according to how much you are able and willing to spend. Consider cutting back on flowers in order to fund a sit-down dinner, for instance, or opt for a buffet-style dinner so you can invite more guests.

Listen to the lists

This is the time to be a good listener. Hear what your partner has to say about needs and wants; what is important to one of you may not be as important to the other. Financial compromise is a skill that will serve you throughout married life.

Data from loan services show that approximately 45% of couples racked up debt to pay for their wedding, and that ultimately the debt resulted in consideration of divorce. Nip that risk in the bud by avoiding debt when you assess your wedding expenses. A CFP® professional can help you think outside the box and guide you in making smart financial choices during the wedding planning process. Visit LetsMakeAPlan.org for more information about managing wedding expenses and planning your financial future. ■



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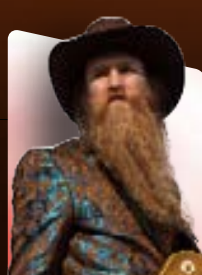
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The steps involved in securing

wedding venues, licenses

Getting married is an exciting time in a couple's life together. Wedding planning is the next logical step after the engagement announcement, and while couples often get swept up in planning their dream parties, it is important to note that ultimately the ceremony is the star of the day.

Before booking a wedding reception venue or getting one's heart set on a particular date, couples need to secure their ceremony sites as well as apply for a marriage license. In some instances, ceremonies are held at the same site as the wedding reception, while some couples choose to tie the knot in their church or synagogue. Each of these types of ceremonies will be governed by the schedule of the house of worship or civil site.

Finding a venue

Once couples choose a wedding date, it is a good idea for them to visit their ceremony site of choice to check the calendar. It helps to have some flexibility in the wedding date in case the first choice is unavailable. Although summer weddings used to be the most popular, today's couples are tying the knot more often in September and October than other times of year.

Even though a couple's wedding is special and unique to them, ceremony locations handle hundreds of weddings. Couples must recognize that competition for certain venues may be steep, so it helps to keep more than one venue in mind when planning a wedding.

Getting a marriage license

While laws may vary from state to state within the United States, getting a marriage license generally involves filling out the application and paying a fee at the county clerk's office. Both applicants are typically required to bring identification, such as a driver's license, passport or birth certificate. There may

be a waiting period between submitting the application and the license being issued. Couples can pick up the license or have it mailed to them.

A marriage license is not the same thing as a marriage certificate. The marriage certificate typically becomes available after the ceremony has taken place and the witnesses and officiant have signed off on the proceedings.

Getting married is a multistep process that begins with determining where the ceremony will take place and acquiring a marriage license. With these items in check, couples can focus on creating memorable wedding days. ■



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AROUND TOWN

PHOTOS BY CITYVIEW STAFF



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Whatcha Smokin? — the answer

The surest sign of authentic American barbecue is the sight of a wood pile.



Wood piles are the surest sign of good BBQ.

The art of smoking animal flesh came late to Iowa. The Hawkeye state's climate produced so much ice that our forebearers built ice houses to preserve our perishable foods. Smoking was a southern thing out of necessity. Before electric refrigeration, preservation required ice, salt or smoking, and salt had limited uses restricted to dried and dehydrated foods.

Smoking in the American south evolved into multiple cultures depending on available proteins and woods. Carolina is richly endowed with pig meat, hickory and oak. Pine and pecan influenced smoking further south and west. Texas raised more cattle and depended on post oak and even mesquite.

The smoking art came to Iowa through transplanted southern and Caribbean families. By the current century, gas smokers and environmental edicts changed the smoking art, in ways purists disparaged. Restaurants that cared about purity moved to isolated areas too small to have such encumbrances to the art as health codes and safety codes — like Luther. Wood piles disappeared or moved to the competition circuit.

The surest sign of authentic American barbecue is the sight of a wood pile. Whatcha Smokin? (WS) has multiple wood piles, covered in old fashioned water basins like the ones that cows and hogs used to drink from, back when hogs were allowed to grow up outdoors. WS even has backup wood piles.

Everything about WS is huge. It includes three large buildings, a giant courtyard/picnic area, an adjoining park and a staff of mostly young workers in numbers that rival those of the entire town of Luther. Parking lots accommodate as many as 48 cars each. On one Saturday, we counted parked cars from four other states and as many Iowans from outside Boone/Story counties as from them.

WS is a tourist attraction on the scale of the Amana Colonies, without the feeder system of an interstate highway. The food is much better at WS, too. The wood piles are responsible. I recently heard a guy in the bathroom exclaim, "It sure does smell good," before others made him laugh about the situation he was complimenting.

WS was founded in a motorcycle shop on Highway 17 by a transplanted Texan and, even under new ownership, its style and greatness resemble that of the best BBQ towns of central Texas — Luling, Llano, Taylor and Lockhart. That means that the star of the show is beef. Brisket is served both lean and fatty as in central Texas.



WHATCHA SMOKIN? BBQ
403 Iowa Ave., Luther, 515-257-7490
www.whatchasmokinbbq.com
Tuesday – Sunday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.
except Thanksgiving.

Our favorite burnt ends of pork belly, fatty brisket with cornbread, slaw and beans.

Because WS works closely with local producers, and Iowa has not been a top cattle state for more than half a century, pork is well represented with pulled shoulders, baby back ribs, loins and crafted sausages, which are a very central Texas thing. Turkey breast is also represented. Nine different rubs and five different sauces are offered. Unsmoked burgers and pork tenderloins are also on the menu.

Side dishes are made on premises and include smoky beans, not-too-sweet slaw, jalapeno creamed corn, mac and cheese, fries, delectably crunchy cornbread, cheesy potatoes, cottage cheese and a seasonal one. Desserts are special including banana pudding, oatmeal pie, Pickett Fences' free ranged ice cream, peanut butter cream brownies and a pie of the week.

Daily specials all draw regular customers — brisket tacos on Tuesdays; brisket burnt ends on Wednesdays; pork belly burnt ends on Thursdays; hot honey homemade pimento and brisket sandwiches for Friday lunch and smoked prime rib for dinner; dino-sized beef ribs on Saturdays and smothered burritos or \$5 Iowa twinkies (cream cheese, pulled pork, Ranch dressing and bacon wrapped jalapenos) on Sundays.

WS is not expensive. A six-ounce serving of meat with two sides plus cornbread and pickles starts at \$16. Because everything about WS is really big, WS offers a Big Feed special that includes three pounds of meats, four pints of sides with pickled cucumbers and red onions for \$90.

Whatcha Smokin? is the answer to a lot of good questions. ■

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

Gloria Henriquez at Tullpa

Over bowls of ceviche and plates of chicharron of calamari and yucca, we talked about the restaurant business, the immigrant experience in Iowa and the marvels of Peruvian cuisine.

Gloria Henriquez is a military nurse turned restaurateur. She also heads up the Iowa Latino Hospitality Council (ILHC) — a spinoff of the Iowa Restaurant Association (IRA) and Iowa Hospitality Association. We asked her to lunch recently and met at her Peruvian café Tullpa on Merle Hay Road.

Over bowls of ceviche and plates of chicharron of calamari and yucca, we talked about the restaurant business, the immigrant experience in Iowa and the marvels of Peruvian cuisine. Iowa Latino Restaurant Week was finishing its second season of bargain-priced dinners and lunches when we met. **Priced considerably lower than Des Moines Restaurant Week's deals, did its specials bring in new customers?**

"Yes, I think so. We added three new restaurant members since last year, so that suggests it's working. I went to two other places — Old West on Fleur and Fiesta in West Des Moines — during the week, and they were very busy.

"Speaking for Tullpa, we have seen some new faces, but our problem with traffic is the same as the rest of the year — location. We are in a strip mall on Merle Hay Road. Cars drive too fast here to notice things. One customer told me that she drove past us twice a day for three years before she saw our place. Busy streets like Merle Hay make strip malls invisible. People only notice big things like McDonalds. I didn't know that going in."

Is that one of the things the ILHA helps with?

"Absolutely. We all do better communicating with each other."

How did ILHC start?

"That would be Blanca Plascencia. She is owner of El Fogon and won the IRA's American Dream Award in 2022. She told me that she was amazed to look out on the awards audience and not see a single other Latino. That motivated her. She got (IRA head) Jessica Dunker's ear and then Antonio Berber (Fiesta), Arturo Mora (Roots 95), Jimena Rojas (Blue Bean) and myself decided to join IRA but form our own separate group."

How many Latino restaurants are there in Iowa?

"Over 600. That's why we needed representation. We are separate but also have full IRA membership. That's so helpful with education — like alcohol service protocols and sources of help like Iowa Workforce. They are fabulous help. Such connections inspire restaurant workers to become owners. It's really hard for immigrants to assimilate, particularly if we start here without knowing English."

Can you talk about your personal immigration

experience?

"I was raised in El Salvador, went to military school there and became a military nurse. I knew no English except medical English when I came to Iowa in 1999, so I got myself to language school. I couldn't get a job nursing, so I started working in fast food."

How did a Salvadoran happen to open a Peruvian café?

"In Iowa, Latino families fuse. My sisters married men from other Latino countries, so my extended family here is now Peruvian, Ecuadoran, Columbian and Central American. Family get togethers are a big thing for us, and food is a huge part of that.

"To tell the truth, Peruvian cuisine is superior. It's so complex — the essence of fusion. Peruvian is part Chinese, part Japanese, part ocean, part mountains, part Spanish, part native, part nobility, part slave."

It's certainly caught the eye of the world. Maido in Lima was named "numero uno" at last year's 50 Best Restaurants in the World awards in Las Vegas. The great Japanese chef Nobuyuki "Nobu" Matsuhisa was chef in Lima for the family of Mariela Maya of Des Moines' Panka. Then he moved to New York and caught attention of Robert DiNiro, who financed his expansion. Now there are nearly 100 Nobu restaurants all over the world, plus ten hotels.

"Chinese influences came to Peru even before Japanese. Chaufa is the national dish as much as anything. It's basically Chinese fried rice. Chinese brought the wok to Peru, and Peruvians love stir fries. They throw everything in the wok. That's so Peruvian, so fusion."

I love Tullpa's "chaufa cinco sabores" with beef, chicken, fish, shellfish and Chinese vegetables. I like it better than Chinese fried rice.

"Peru is the only country in the western world that calls ginger by its Chinese name — kion."

Some of Peru's food treasures are uniquely Peruvian?

"The yellow chilies are. We use them in sauces, dressings and stir fries and stews. Peru has more potatoes than anywhere on Earth; and corns like 'mote' and 'culli,' which we use to make purple corn beverages like 'chica morada.' Those are unique. Some of the brandies are, too — pisco being the most famous. Peruvians began making it because the Spanish taxed their brandies too much."

What are Tullpa's most popular dishes?

"Iowa is meat and potato country, and 'lomo saltado' brings that. It's stir-fried beef steak with



tomatoes and onions that is served with fried potatoes. The only other dish that popular might be our empanadas — crunchy, flaky pastries stuffed with meats or cheese."

Why doesn't Tullpa serve pupusas, Salvador's most popular dish in the U.S.?

"Regulations. I thought it would be easy to move in here because it was already a Chinese restaurant. No. I had to make change after change to the kitchen. Pupusas were one thing I had to give up, too expensive to alter the grill for regulators. That's partially why I keep active taking the food truck out to farmers markets, fairs and festivals — to make pupusas. The festivals are great for building identity, especially the World Food and Music Festival and Latino Fest."

Sometimes Tullpa turns into a dance club?

"Particularly in the winter. We move the furniture after dinner then karaoke and dancing take the floor. We have a trivia night, too, to bring in new customers."

Henriquez took a long culinary trip this summer. Did she go to Latin America?

"No, Doha. It's an amazing food city. Everything is there, everything."

What are Henriquez's favorite non-Latino restaurants in town?

"I love Amruth. They are south Indians, wonderful family. One of my favorite things is goat, but I don't like it when it has too much aroma. Amruth gets goat tikka right. Love their dosas, too. I like all Indian restaurants, but Amruth is special. I also like Italian, and Des Moines has so many really good Italian places. I want to try all the chicken Marsalas in town." ■

BELLY UP TO:

BY JACKIE WILSON

Join da coach at 85 Bar West

You don't have to be a Chicago Bears fan to appreciate this Waukee bar — but it helps.

EAT & DRINK

Walking into the 85 Bar West, patrons are greeted with Chicago Bears memorabilia. Signs, team rosters, posters, pictures and pendants line nearly every inch of the bar.

Located at 432 E. Hickman Road in Waukee, 85 Bar West opened up in the fall of 2024. Its sister location in the East Village is dubbed a “dive bar” mainstay, yet owners wanted to expand and offer food at the new location.

The 85 refers to the year that the Chicago Bears won the Super Bowl. 85 Bar West also offers Chicago-themed food and drinks. It's family friendly, so kids are welcome.

Hit the spot for happy hour from Monday through Friday, 3-6 p.m. Get \$4 vodka house lemonades and Hamm's draft beer, \$5 house wines, \$6 vodka mules and \$8 espresso martinis. Purchase \$8 stadium nachos, two windy city hotdogs for \$10, or the buffalo chicken dip for \$7 (regular \$11).

Can't make it for happy hour? Catch a couple other specials. Mondays are 85 Burgers for \$10; Tuesdays are 85 Wings for \$10; and Wednesdays are Da Coach's Italian Beef for \$12 — all served with fries.

Got a late-night craving? Hit the spot starting at 8 p.m. for half-price apps on Saturday nights, followed by buy-one-get-one cocktails from 9 p.m. to midnight.

The menu's specialty includes Windy City all-beef dogs, including the plain frank, chili dog or the Chicago dog, which includes relish, pickle spear, tomatoes, onions, mustard and celery salt for \$12, with a choice of side.

Power bowls include various ingredients — make them veggie friendly or add desired meat. Mac & Cheese items include plain and creamy, BBQ chicken and buffalo chicken, from \$6-\$14.

Their “halftime” items include burgers, wraps, smash or smothered burgers and more, ranging from \$13-\$16. The Da Coach's Italian Beef includes thin sliced beef piled high with choice of hot or mild peppers on a hoagie bun for \$17, served dry or dipped.

End the night with a sweet treat — fried mini donuts, tossed in cinnamon and sugar. Add sauce or icing for an extra buck. Eight are \$6; or 12 for \$8. Make sure you order enough to share with your tablemates.

According to our bartender, a Chicago tradition is a shot of Malort served in a boot-sized shot glass with an Old Style. But, you might want to reconsider, as most patrons turn their nose at the bitter concoction.

If you're waiting in line for the restroom, take a look at the walls. They are plastered in original Chicago

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newspapers, covering the iconic Bears games.

A Bear-themed bar wouldn't be complete without the Chicago Bears game on TV. Now that football season is in full force, game nights offer various specials. Twenty wings for \$20 are perfect for sharing. If there is no Bears game on, and you want to watch another team, just let the waitstaff know as they carry the NFL ticket package.

You don't have to be a Bears fan to enjoy the tasty food, drink specials and lively atmosphere in Waukee's newest bar and restaurant — but it helps. ■



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RAW TALENT

New hockey coaches at the Iowa Wild and the Des Moines Buccaneers seek to develop their players for the future — and win now.

By Cyote Williams

"That's really what the goal is going to be here, is to get these young kids to follow a process, be committed to it, compete to the highest level, and integrate detail into competitiveness."

- Head Coach Greg Cronin

Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of the Iowa Wild

IOWA WILD

The Iowa Wild finished the 2024 regular season in sixth place in the Central Division with a 27-37 record on 62 points. Identical to the year before. At the conclusion of the season, then-head coach Brett McClean accepted a job with the Vancouver Canucks as an assistant.

The Wild’s job search landed Greg Cronin. Cronin was most recently managing the NHL’s Anaheim Ducks. Last season, under Cronin, the Ducks accrued an 80-point season, going 35-37-10. Those two seasons in charge for Cronin are a small blip compared to the entirety of his coaching career. The Arlington, Massachusetts, native has 38 years of coaching experience under his belt. Keep in mind, the oldest player in all of professional American hockey last season was 40 years old.

Cronin’s record as a coach in the AHL, the league the Wild play in, is impressive. His coaching stints across several teams have netted him a 242-165-51 record (.584) across 458 games. He also has had four Calder Cup playoff appearances, something the Wild have only done twice since 2018 (a COVID-canceled season in 2020 kept them out of the playoffs that season).

For Cronin, why come back to the AHL after two seasons coaching in the league above? The Iowa Wild front office was likely thrilled that a coach with his experience was available.

“I was trying to get a head job in the NHL, and I wasn’t given that opportunity. So, then I started to think about, do I sit the year out? There are coaches that will sit the year out and wait for an opportunity,” Cronin said. “But I’m a pretty active person. I love to coach. I really enjoy the American League. I think it’s a unique league in the sense that there’s certainly pressure to win. Everybody wants to win,



FEATURE STORY

“I just think for the fans that it’s going to be a different year. It’s going to be better, you know, we’re going to be more consistent, I would say so. I don’t want to say more goals and more of this and more of that, but I think it’s going to be exciting. It’s going to be fun to see what we can put together. And I know we have a really good group, so I’m super-excited.” — Bradley Marek

but I think the priority is to develop these young men into good people, which certainly contributes to being a better hockey player and a better teammate.”

A third-year returning player, Bradley Marek, is looking forward to learning under a coach as experienced as Cronin.

“I’m super-excited, for one, to get out there and meet him. He’s got so many years of experience, and he’s had success at both levels. He came from working his

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- ▶ All people ages 18 and over should be screened for hepatitis C at least once in their lifetime.
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way up in the background; he wasn't just given the opportunities he's had. He's a guy who appreciates hard work. And, I think, for me, that really hits home. I've had to prove people wrong my whole career, and I'm still doing that, but I love it, right? That's part of why we play the game," Marek said. "I think he kind of embraces that style in his coaching, and he doesn't put up with any crap, you know, which I think is good for us, being such a younger group. I'm super-stoked."

That early feeling from one of Cronin's players is good news for Wild fans who want to see the green and gold return to its winning ways after two seasons of finishing toward the bottom of the Central.

Cronin, who is approaching nearly four decades of professional coaching, has been around the block — and around the country — coaching various organizations. He has only been in Iowa a few short months but already has a solid impression of the team and the area's culture.

"What I found is that it kind of mirrors the people here in the Midwest. The people are very genuine, and there's an authentic nature to people here that I think is real special," Cronin said.

Coaching is a difficult job in any sport. Coaching in a league like the AHL, which is subject to lots of roster turnover, is even more challenging. As someone with experience in both the NHL and AHL, coaching college teams and even new organizations, Cronin has



Hunter Haight returns as one of Iowa's best producers last season. In 67 games, he scored 20 goals and had 14 assists. Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of the Iowa Wild

seen it all.

"Every job is a challenge," Cronin said. "It's a different type of challenge. I think I've taken those skills I've learned, and I've been able to transfer them into these projects. I've had these kinds of rebuilds throughout my career."

Pointing to his most recent coaching experience with the Ducks, his roster there was young. Younger

than some AHL rosters. The Ducks improved their record by 20 points from Cronin's first year to his second. He expects to now implement the same style and tactics he used in Anaheim.

"That's really what the goal is going to be here, is to get these young kids to follow a process, be committed to it, compete to the highest level, and integrate detail into competitiveness," Cronin said. "For me, we want

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CITYVIEW SENIORVIEW



Iowa Wild fans show up in droves despite two straight lackluster seasons. A fresh crop of talent and a new head coach have the team hoping to return to the playoffs for the first time since 2023. Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of the Iowa Wild

to create a fairly predictable growth set, a growth trajectory, so that the collaboration between the Minnesota Wild and the Iowa Wild coaching, management and development staffs. I think that will create some transparency in how we evaluate people.”

As for who Cronin and his staff are looking to develop, a few Wild players with successful performances from 2024 stick out.

Top point-getter from last season, Travis Boyd, is now with the Toronto Maple Leafs. That makes youngster Liam Öhgren the highest returning point-getter for the Wild. Öhgren scored 19 goals and had 18 assists last season. Cronin expects him to spend most of his time in Minnesota.

As for youth he plans on having for a majority of the season, Cronin mentioned Hunter Haight, a rookie last season who scored 20 goals and had 14 assists in 67 games.

Caeden Bankier played in 68 games, scoring 14 goals and dishing out 12 assists for the Wild last season.

Riley Heidt, who played in the Western Hockey League last season, scored 31 goals and provided 59 assists.

Cronin also mentioned Rasmus Kumpulainen as another solid young prospect who played in Finland last season.

“They’re raw, you know, we’ve got to work with them,” Cronin said. “They’ve been drafted because there’s some potential there that may help the Minnesota Wild in a year or two.

Cronin says everybody controls the speed of their process and their development.

“There’s patience, too,” he said. “Everybody develops at a different rate. That goes back to making sure that all these players are being coached the right way, so that when they do get the opportunity. They do well, and they play with confidence. They’re not surviving shifts. They’re going in there to impact a shift.”

In 50 games last season, Marek scored eight goals and provided five assists. This was his second year with the organization after playing in San Jose.

“I think we learned a lot with the guys coming back,” Marek said. “We know that we have to have a good start to the year. It’s so important, especially in such a good league. We went 0-7 our first seven games, like you’re not done, but it’s so hard to come back from.”

Marek is excited to have a coach like Cronin come into the locker room with a wealth of experience

“I think Coach Cronin is going to be on us, and he’s got such a good reputation, not only in this league but in the NHL. And, I think, being one of the older guys now, just keep telling the group that, you know, we need to just trust him and do what he says, because he’s had so much success and we can get off to the good start we need,” Marek said.

Marek’s profile page on the Iowa Wild website shows him punching another opponent. We asked if that is something that Wild fans can expect from him in 2025.

IOWA WILD HOME GAMES



Oct. 11 vs. Chicago Wolves at 6 p.m. | Opening night
 Oct. 12 vs. Rockford Icehogs (Chicago Blackhawks) at 5 p.m.
 Oct. 28 vs. Grand Rapids Griffins (Detroit Red Wings) at 7 p.m.
 Nov. 1 vs. Tucson Roadrunners (Utah Hockey Club) at 6 p.m. | Hockeyween
 Nov. 2 vs. Tucson Roadrunners at 3 p.m.
 Nov. 6 vs. Chicago Wolves at 10:30 a.m. | School Day Game
 Nov. 9 vs. Rockford Icehogs at 6 p.m. | Hockey Fights Cancer Night
 Nov. 14 vs. Charlotte Checkers (Florida Panthers) at 7 p.m.
 Nov. 15 vs. Charlotte Checkers at 6 p.m.
 Nov. 18 vs. Texas Stars (Dallas Stars) at 7 p.m.
 Dec. 6 vs. Manitoba Moose (Winnipeg Jets) at 6 p.m. | Teddy Bear Toss
 Dec. 7 vs. Manitoba Moose at 3 p.m. | Kids Takeover Day
 Dec. 10 vs. Rockford Icehogs at 7 p.m.
 Dec. 17 vs. Grand Rapids Griffins at 7 p.m.
 Dec. 19 vs. Grand Rapids Griffins at 6 p.m. | Winter Wonderland
 Dec. 27 vs. Chicago Wolves at 6 p.m.
 Dec. 30 vs. Texas Stars at 7 p.m.
 Dec. 31 vs. Texas Stars at 5 p.m. | New Year's Eve Bash
 Jan. 16 vs. Toronto Marlies at 7 p.m. | Local Heroes Night
 Jan. 17 vs. Toronto Marlies at 6 p.m.
 Jan. 21 vs. Texas Stars at 7 p.m.
 Jan. 23 vs. Milwaukee Admirals at 5 p.m.
 Jan. 30 vs. Milwaukee Admirals at 7 p.m. | Throwback Threads Night
 Jan. 31 vs. Milwaukee Admirals at 6 p.m.
 Feb. 13 vs. Springfield Thunderbirds at 7 p.m. | Women In Sports Night
 Feb. 14 vs. Springfield Thunderbirds at 6 p.m. | Pink In The Rink
 Feb. 24 vs. Milwaukee Admirals at 7 p.m.
 March 20 vs. Ontario Reign at 7 p.m. | ALS Awareness Night
 March 21 vs. Ontario Reign at 5 p.m.
 March 25 vs. Chicago Wolves at 7 p.m.
 March 29 vs. Rockford Icehogs at 6 p.m. | Crash's Birthday
 April 1 vs. Chicago Wolves at 7 p.m.
 April 3 vs. Rockford Icehogs at 7 p.m. | Racing Night
 April 15 vs. Grand Rapids Griffins at 7 p.m.
 April 17 vs. Manitoba Moose at 7 p.m.
 April 18 vs. Manitoba Moose at 6 p.m. | Fan Appreciation Night

"I mean, I'll do it if it's necessary," he said. "You know, this is a game of some violence and some tough play. But I don't think of myself as a goon or anything like that. I can play a 200-foot game. I just go into the year saying the same things to coaches and staff. I'll do whatever you need me to do. So if I gotta go fight somebody, to get some energy for the guys, or get the crowd into it a little bit more, that's what I'll do. If I gotta block a shot. I'll block shots or try my best to score goals. I think I'm more of just a 200-foot player that just does whatever it takes."

It sounds like the players are fired up already. As for Cronin, his goals and ambitions for this team are clear.

"I want to maximize the group, and I'm confident that if we can do that, we can make a playoff," Cronin said. "They've been struggling to make the playoffs for 12 years. I think they've only made it twice. So, our goal is to make the playoffs, and then, at the same time, develop these young kids and give the Minnesota Wild some depth." ■

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DES MOINES BUCCANEERS

After a mechanical issue before last season prevented the Des Moines Buccaneers from playing at Buccaneer Arena last season, the Buccaneers will once again call the MidAmerican Energy RecPlex in West Des Moines home for the 2025-2026 season.

The Bucs missed out on the playoffs, finishing the season on 55 points with a 25-32 record. The team made several changes to its staff following the season.

Derek Damon was named the 18th head coach in Des Moines Buccaneers history, as well as president of hockey operations.

“It’s an incredible honor to be named head coach and president of hockey operations of the Des Moines Buccaneers. This organization has a proud history, and I’m excited to build on that tradition with a commitment to development, culture, and championship-level hockey. I want to thank our lead owner, Michael Devlin, for his trust and support. I’m proud to be part of the Buccaneers family,” Damon said in a Buccaneers statement.

Damon was previously coaching the Iowa Heartlanders, a team in the ECHL in Coralville. The team is an affiliate of the Minnesota and Iowa Wild. Damon set and/or tied franchise records for longest winning streak and the longest home winning streak,



Des Moines Buccaneers defenseman Ryan Kroll. Photo by Bekah Benoit

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DES MOINES BUCCANEERS HOME GAMES



- Oct. 3 vs. Chicago Steel at 7:05 p.m.
- Oct. 4 vs. Chicago Steel at 6:05 p.m.
- Oct. 24 vs. USA NTDP at 7:05 p.m.
- Oct. 25 vs. USA NTDP at 7:05 p.m.
- Nov. 1 vs. Tri-City Storm at 6:05 p.m. | School Spirit Night
- Nov. 14 vs. Waterloo Black Hawks at 7:05 p.m. | Veterans' Appreciation
- Nov. 21 vs. Lincoln Stars at 7:05 p.m.
- Nov. 22 vs. Sioux City Musketeers at 6:05 p.m.
- Nov. 28 vs. Lincoln Stars at 7:05 p.m. | Black Out | Teddy Bear Toss
- Dec. 5 vs. Sioux City Musketeers at 7:05 p.m. | Bucs Fight Cancer
- Dec. 9 vs. Waterloo Black Hawks at 6:35 p.m.
- Dec. 13 vs. Waterloo Black Hawks at 7:05 p.m.
- Dec. 27 vs. Tri-City Storm at 7:05 p.m. | Hat and Mitten Drive
- Jan. 2 vs. Sioux Falls Stampede at 7:05 p.m.
- Jan. 3 vs. Green Bay Gamblers at 6:35 p.m. | Farmers Appreciation
- Jan. 4 vs. Green Bay Gamblers at 3:05 p.m.
- Jan. 17 vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints at 6:05 p.m.
- Jan. 30 vs. Lincoln Stars at 7:05 p.m.
- Feb. 6 vs. Omaha Lancers at 7:05 p.m.
- Feb. 13 vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders at 7:05 p.m. | Des Moines Barkaneers
- Feb 27 vs. Omaha Lancers at 7:05 p.m.
- Feb. 28 vs. Sioux Falls Stampede at 7:05 p.m. | Guns N Hoses
- March 1 vs. Waterloo Black Hawks at 2:05 p.m.
- March 6 vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints at 7:05 p.m.
- March 7 vs. Sioux City Musketeers at 7:05 p.m.
- March 17 vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders at 6:35 p.m.
- March 21 vs. Fargo Force at 7:05 p.m.
- April 4 vs. Sioux City Musketeers at 6:05 p.m. | Fan Appreciation Night

and he coached the Heartlanders to their first Kelly-Cup Playoff appearance in 2024-2025.

The Bucs also hired Kevin Schmidt as the new associate head coach and director of player development. Schmidt has chosen to follow Damon, as Schmidt was an assistant coach and goalie coach for the Heartlanders under Damon last season. Schmidt, similar to Damon, had an extensive career, bringing plenty of recent playing experience to the coaching staff.

Another addition to the coaching staff is Kenny Cogan, who joins as an assistant coach. Cogan was the assistant coach on the bronze medal-winning U.S. Men's U18 National Team at the 2024 IIHF World Championship.

The Bucs will be without their three highest point scorers from a season ago: Jack Kernan, Andrew Clark and Ben Kevan.




Ryan Seelinger returns after an impressive campaign in 2024. The forward scored 13 goals and provided 19 assists while playing in all 62 games. His 33 points ranked 87th among all USHL players.

Blake Zielinski also returns after a successful season, similar to Seelinger's. In 41 games, the New Jersey native scored 13 goals and had 19 assists for 32 points.


Max Weilandt returns in goal. The Bucs were an above .500 team with Weilandt between the sticks, winning 19 games and losing 12. He finished the season with a 3.17 average of goals against and a save percentage of 88.7%.

The Bucs signed Ryland Rooney for the upcoming season as well. Rooney scored 33 goals and provided 36 assists in the Minnesota State High School League at just 16 years old. ■

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FILM REVIEW

BY DAVID ROWLEY

Terrifying non-horror movies to give you waking nightmares all October long

When you are deciding what to watch this month, challenge your expectations and ignite your adrenaline like never before with these non-horror freaky flicks for all ages.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Think the horror genre has a monopoly on fear? Oh, dear reader, how wrong you are. Prepare to have your pulse racing with these non-horror horror movie masterpieces. Far from the typical terrifying fare, each film is a genre-defying tale into the heart of dread. The following eight movies demonstrate, with unnerving precision, that what goes bump in the night is not confined to shadowy corners of haunted houses.

“The NeverEnding Story” (The Roku Channel)

“The NeverEnding Story” uses the fantastical realm of Fantasia as a mirror for the internal landscape of a child’s trauma. It is a coming-of-age story in its focus on Bastian’s emotional journey but a horror film in its exploration of core themes. The true “neverending story” is the battle against the void of despair, both in our world and within ourselves. The film horrifies not with what is there but with the concept of what is not — the loss of meaning, memory and hope. It is a chilling allegory for the fragility of imagination in the face of overwhelming sadness.

“The Secret of NIMH” (Amazon Prime)

Another animation full of scares, “The Secret of NIMH” explores terrifying concepts that live-action might struggle to convey so poetically. The true secret of NIMH is not intelligence, but trauma. The film horrifies by showing the grotesque and dangerous consequences of tampering with nature and the lingering terror of a past that refuses to stay buried. It is a nightmare dressed in the soft light of magic — but a nightmare, nonetheless.

“Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory” (Netflix)

“Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory” blends vibrant color and catchy music to deliver a deeply unsettling parable. Terror stems from the complete powerlessness of the children and their guardians in the face of Wonka’s whimsical sadism and his factory’s deadly machinery. (Looking at you, boat ride.) It is a nightmare about the dark side of desire, where a wish come true leads you not to a reward but into the lair of a madman who judges you worthy of a horrific fate.

“Grave of the Fireflies” (Netflix)

“Grave of the Fireflies” is an animate masterpiece that uses the medium not for whimsy but to amplify its



“Not a speck of light is showing / So the danger must be growing / Are the fires of Hell a-glowing? / Is the grisly reaper mowing?” (Lyrics from “The Wonderous Book Ride”)

horrors. The beautiful, painterly backgrounds contrast grotesquely with the children’s suffering, making their deterioration even more stark and unbearable. It is a drama in setting but a horror film in execution and effect. It does not just make you sad; it horrifies you by presenting a plausible, slow-motion apocalypse experienced through the eyes of its most vulnerable victims, leaving a scar that resonates long after the screen goes dark.

“Session 9” (Amazon)

“Session 9” is not a film about things that go bump in the night; it is a film about the silence that follows and what grows in that silence. It uses the tools of drama — character study, dialogue, performance — to horrifying ends. By meticulously dismantling its characters through atmosphere and psychological pressure rather than external threats, it achieves a level of terror that is far more realistic and frightening than any supernatural tale. It is a pure, uncut dose of atmospheric and psychological horror.

“Fallen” (The Roku Channel)

“Fallen” uses the framework of a detective story to lead the audience — and its hero — down a path of escalating dread toward an inevitable, horrifying truth. Its themes of pervasive evil, the fragility of the self, and the futility of fighting a force that is an integral part of the human ecosystem are pure horror in this otherwise thriller. The film terrifies not with gore but with the idea that the person next to you, or even you, could be a vessel for an ancient, malevolent entity, and there is absolutely nothing you can do about it. ■

PREVIEWS

BY DAVID ROWLEY

“Roofman”

R | 126 minutes

Based on an unbelievable true story, “Roofman” follows Jeffrey



Manchester (Channing Tatum), a former Army Ranger and struggling father who turns to robbing McDonald’s restaurants by cutting holes in their roofs, earning him the nickname Roofman. After escaping prison, he secretly lives inside a Toys “R” Us for six months, surviving undetected while planning his next move. But, when he falls for Leigh (Kirsten Dunst), a divorced mom drawn to his undeniable charm, his double life begins to unravel, setting off a compelling and suspenseful game of cat and mouse as his past closes in.

“One Battle After Another”

R | 161 minutes

Inspired by Thomas Pynchon’s 1990 novel “Vineland,” the film is part political satire, part black comedy, and part action



blockbuster. “One Battle After Another” follows a revolutionary group known as the French 75, who employ destructive and even violent measures to combat the corruption and tyranny of imperial America. Years after his wife and key French 75 member Perfidia Beverly Hills (Teyana Taylor) is apprehended by the unsettling Colonel Steven J. Lockjaw (Sean Penn), Bob Ferguson (Leonardo DiCaprio) returns to action and re-teams with his fellow revolutionaries when he and Perfidia’s daughter Willia (Chase Infiniti) become Lockjaw’s new target.

“Good Boy”

PG-13 | 72 minutes

“Good Boy” is a ghost story told from a dog’s perspective. After dealing with a health crisis, Indy and



his best friend/owner Todd (Shane Jensen) travel to a family home previously occupied by Todd’s grandfather in hopes of finding some restoration. While Todd is focused on making the place his own, Indy is perpetually on guard, either tracking shadows or dealing with nightmares seemingly involving the last dog, Bandit, who lived here. If you have ever wondered why your dog has been barking at shadows or unheard sounds, get ready for an answer you might not want to hear. ■

Princesses, 'Sweet Caroline' and psychological drama

Three diverse shows promise rewarding live theatre experiences.



"Disenchanted! The Hit Musical Comedy" flips fairy tales on their heads at the Temple for Performing Arts Oct. 14-19. Photo credit: "Disenchanted" Marketing Department

A trio of diverse shows anchor the October performing arts scene in central Iowa. From fairy tale endings with many a twist to an introspective juke box musical to a richly textured story of coping with family trauma, the offerings promise rewarding live theatre experiences.

For anyone who has aged into adulthood and thought about all the fairy tale endings they had endured as a child, the Temple for Performing Arts Comedy Series offers an appealing epilogue. From their oral folk tale origins of often dark stories, Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm committed these tales to paper. Modern versions were more sanitized, most notably by Disney, but their appeal has spanned time.

"Disenchanted: The Hit Musical Comedy" will deliver laughter, sass and plenty of hilarious Broadway-esque song styling as audiences delight in the "rest of the story" continuation of what happened after those childhood fairy tale endings.

Emily Qualmann, as Sleeping Beauty, shared glimpses into the perfect entertainment escape.

"'Disenchanted' was off-Broadway 10 years ago, and now we're taking it across the country. It was a smash hit, sold out in New York City. It's about what happens to the princesses after their 'happily ever after.' This show is for Disney adults and not-Disney adults, because it has your favorite fairy tale characters, but it also turns it on its head. There's a line in the show, 'And they lived happily ever after — well, not exactly.' It ('Disenchanted') shows how Belle is doing living in a

castle with a bunch of furniture talking to her. Or, how Sleeping Beauty can't stay awake for her final song."

This show beckons groups, couples and first-daters to immerse themselves in an evening of edgy musical comedy hilarity. Nurtured from its origins as a Fringe Festival offering in Orlando, Florida, in 2011 — just a hoot and a holler from its Disney World inspiration — into the national touring show it is now, Qualmann caps her commentary about the fate of the princesses: "At the end of the day, they are left to clean up after these princes."

Taking an introspective approach to the usual juke box musical, "A Beautiful Noise: The Neil Diamond Musical" brings its national tour to Des Moines Performing Arts for a week. Lisa Renée Pits (Doctor) shared insights into what elevates this show to a more nuanced understanding of its namesake.

"(My role) is what intrigued me. I play Neil Diamond's therapist, and it is through our sessions that we take a look back through his life, where he was when he wrote particular songs, what was happening in his personal life as well as his musical career journey. For all of the Neil Diamond fans who love the music and the glitter and the sequins and the band, they're going to get that. In addition, there's this wonderful two-character play within this huge musical that talks about this very important subject matter, and that is mental health."

Iowa Stage Theatre Company continues its theme

BARE BOARDS CHATTER

Ankeny Community Theatre

Oct. 3-15. "Blithe Spirit"

Central Iowa Wind Ensemble

Oct. 12. "City of Lights: Cafes, Cabarets, and Cathedrals"

Des Moines Performing Arts – Temple Comedy Series

Oct. 14-19. "Disenchanted! The Hit Musical Comedy"

Iowa Stage Theatre Company

Oct. 17-26. "Buried Child"

Des Moines Performing Arts

Oct. 21-26. "A Beautiful Noise: The Neil Diamond Musical"

CAP Theatre (Class Act Productions)

Oct. 24 – Nov. 2. "Beetlejuice Jr."

Des Moines Symphony

Oct. 11. "The Goonies in Concert (40th anniversary)"

Oct. 18-19. "Dvorák 6 & Chopin"

Broadway Cabaret

Oct. 26. "Always the Hero, Never the Villain," (produced by Michael Howland) at St. James Celebrations, 9774 G24 Highway, Indianola

of family dynamics this season with the drama "Buried Child." The co-artistic directors, Davida Williams and Alex Wendel, shared insight about this show.

"Since its inception in the late 1970s, 'Buried Child' was a commentary on our relationship with — and disillusionment of — the American dream. Everyone has family trauma that they have had to process, maybe in their own home, or a story of a distant relative. We have this innate draw towards those we either share blood with, or shared a home with, and that opens us up to being hurt by them the most. That might be a cynical way of looking at family bonds, but it's really one of the things that drives 'Buried Child,' and we think will open the most conversations."

Considered a haunting American classic, "Buried Child" promises to continue Iowa Stage's penchant for engaging theatre. ■

John Busbee produces The Culture Buzz, a weekly arts and culture radio show on www.kfmg.org, covering Iowa's arts scene with an inclusive sweep of the cultural brush. He received the Iowa Governor's Arts Award for Collaboration and Partnership in the Arts.



The only constant thing in life

The biggest local gallery opening this month will be “The Female Gaze” Oct. 10 at Olson-Larsen.

Change is running amok in the art world. Galleries have reigned as supreme discoverers and arbiters of new and great things since the 19th century. Now, that seems to be changing, at least in cities where street traffic is influenced by crime problems.

LA Louver, one of Los Angeles’ most famous galleries, announced in September it will close its physical space in Venice, California, after 50 years — to pivot to private dealing. It is the third notable gallery with a Los Angeles presence to close this year after Blum and Clearing.

For half a century, LA Louver had run its gallery out of Venice, where it maintained a celebrity roster that today counts artists ranging from Alison Saar to Deborah Butterfield. In an interview with Art Newspaper, owner Peter Goulds said the cost of maintaining a presence at the world’s top art fairs contributed to the gallery’s demise. He said he had thought about “the deterioration of the gallery model” and noted that it cost the gallery a total of \$600,000 to participate in Art Basel’s editions in Hong Kong and Switzerland.

Local scene

Des Moines galleries that operate on the traditional model of several exhibitions a year with both new and established artists seem to be doing just fine. Opening nights of new exhibitions draw large, happy crowds to Olson-Larsen and Moberg. The former represents artists with ties to the Midwest. The latter began with only Des Moines artists and has grown into an international gallery that still represents locals. Those new exhibitions are social events that draw audiences from long distances. Steven Vail and Liz Lidgett galleries operate on more individual models eschewing regular new exhibitions for viewings by appointment. Yet, both maintain gallery hours and represent international and local artists.

The biggest local gallery opening this month will be Oct. 10 at Olson-Larsen. That’s part of Valley Junction’s Fall Gallery Night, a tourist attraction that began in 1997. The show is called “The Female Gaze” and includes Luca Cruzat, Rachel Deutmeyer, Barbara Fedeler, Mary Jones, Ingrid Liligren, Kristen Martincic, and Susan Chrysler White. Cruzat, Liligren and Martincic are new to the gallery.



Luca Cruzat, “Portrayal of a Woman,” Collagraph and colored pencil, 42 x 27”

Value redefined

In another, even stranger, mode, the value of authenticity in art is evaporating. For many younger consumers, knockoffs are no longer shameful but actually cool. In 2021, the Brooklyn arts collective MsCHF purchased a \$20,000 Andy Warhol print and then built a machine to make 999 forgeries. The group’s so-called Museum of Forgeries then sold all 1,000 prints to the public, with no way for buyers to know whether they were buying a fine art original or a copy. Art News reported “there was a world of difference between the two, yet none was discernable.”

China’s most famous artist, Ai Weiwei, who was most gracious while visiting Des Moines in connection with projects with Des Moines Art Center, has made a piece of art out of 650,000 Lego bricks in 22 colors to emulate Monet’s “Water Lilies.” Lego refused to sell to Ai, so fans donated the bricks. The finished work cost \$280,000. A law professor writing for Business News says he did the exact same assemblage with Legos that cost him \$250.



Barbara Fedeler, “Revenna” from the Icon Woman series, collage and gouache on vintage wallpaper, 5 x 7”

Touts

Aliza Nisenbaum, current Des Moines Art Center artist in residence, brings extraordinary color and vibrancy to this year’s Day of the Dead installation at DMAC. Through Jan. 11... Chopin brings extraordinary romanticism to Des Moines Symphony’s October shows of other Chickasaw and Czech motivations. Oct. 18-19.

Curtain call

Des Moines Community Playhouse announced its lifetime achievement award winners. Honorees include: Melissa K Chavas-Miller, first show “Rodgers & The Sound of Music,” 1996; Rosalie Gallagher, a Playhouse board member since 2003; Joy Kripal, first show “A Christmas Carol,” 1986; Larry McKeever, first show “Ring Round the Moon,” 1955; Mariam McKeever, first show “The Ponder Heart,” 1961; Gerry Neugent, Playhouse board member beginning in 1990; Mary Lou Neugent, first show “The Trial of Tom Sawyer,” 1985; Irma Solar, first show “Fools,” 1984. ■

Ravalla's crocheting hobby has endured

Retired Realtor learned the skills from her grandmother.

Crocheting, knitting and sewing are nearly lost arts. With a glut of online shopping, buyers don't feel the need to spend hours making something when they can easily find it on the internet.

Yet, for Sandi Ravalla, her hobby of crocheting has endured — and even progressed — through the years.

Ravalla crochets stuffed animals, soft cuddly figurines and “lovies” for kids. These super-soft, huggable animals are crocheted and made with plush yarn or chenille fabric.

Traditional animals, such as stuffed teddy bears, cats and dogs, are popular. She began making trendy “stuffies,” which combine a small security blanket with the plush stuffed animal head. With some items, she crochets eyes to avoid any choking hazards with buttons.

Ravalla creates unusual stuffed animals, at the request of her grandkids, who keep her updated on current trends. She has made axolotls and Pokémon characters, such a Pikachu. SpongeBob, the Grinch and Bluey are also popular. Ravalla formerly used patterns to create the animals. Now, she examines an item and easily crochets it.

“I can usually figure it out,” she admits. “I don't use patterns anymore.”

In addition to plush toys, she also crochets kid's sweaters, market bags, dishcloths, keychains and more. She will also sew custom requests for various patterns and colors.

Ravalla learned to crochet from her grandmother, who raised her.

“She was always making baby booties and bonnets,” she recalls. “The most I could do was crochet a chain of yarn.”

When Ravalla was pregnant, she made a baby blanket. She then crocheted various items throughout the years. After she retired as a Realtor, a stockpile of crocheted stuffed animals needed homes. She set up an Etsy account and currently sells items at craft shows.

When she first began crocheting, she used a tight, detailed stitch for her items. About three years ago, she began using plush yarn. The plush and blanket yarn is



Edgewater Holiday Mart

Nov. 1, 2025, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

9225 Cascade Ave., West Des Moines

In addition to Zavalla's plush, the Edgewater Holiday mart includes art, crafts, candy, baked goods and more.



made using larger stitches, although the yarn is more expensive.

“People love these. It's so soft and cute,” she explains. “I started making everything with this material because that's what people buy.”

At home, her sunroom and spare bedroom are filled with supplies and stuffed plush toys. She estimates she spends about eight hours a day, at least five days a week, crocheting.

“When I'm crocheting, I'm also thinking of the next design,” she reflects. “I don't keep track of how many I've done.”

One of the main reasons she makes items is to see children's reactions.

“Kids give me the most joy. When I'm at a show, the kids' faces just light up. They love it so much,” she reflects.

She prices items compared to Etsy, minus any shipping charges. Most items are one of a kind.

“It's not just a toy; it's a handmade heirloom,” she says. If you don't get it, it's gone.”

For more information about her work, email zavalla1955@gmail.com. Or, find Zavalla's work at the Blake Fieldhouse in Indianola, Oct. 26; Edgewater Holiday Mart, Nov. 1; Glad Tidings Church, Nov. 23; and Valley Community Center, Dec. 7. ■

The Hesitant Traveler's Travel Guide

I'm a little tired, a little settled, and a little inflexible in every sense of that word.

"Let's go to Vienna!" "Let's go to Sarajevo!" "Let's go to Belfast!"... says my wife.

And my go-to response? The very first loving words out of my mouth? Are...

"NOOOOOOOOOO WAY!"

You see, my wife wants to see the world. I get it. We spent all our working years and kid-raising years never leaving Iowa (except for her stint with the UN in The Hague — which counts for something, doesn't it?). Now that we are old, she wants to make up for lost time by going to see museums and castles and cafes and vineyards and mountains and oceans and the Eiffel Tower sparkle with lights.

Nope. Not for me.

I'm 71 years old. I've seen the Girl with a Pearl Earring. I'm a little tired, a little settled, and a little inflexible in every sense of that word.

But, my wife scares me. So, I always accompany her as a very hesitant travel companion. Which is the reason for this small guide, for those few like me who are just a bit dubious of this whole travel thing and would rather just go drink coffee on the back porch.

VIENNA

Picture this my fellow sufferers...

The opera aria soars across the square, past the fresh water station and the tall clock, across an angled street, and round the table of the Viennese gentleman who is drinking one glass too many, all the way to our table. We are sitting quietly with our wine outside a small cafe on this busy corner at the end of a workday in Vienna.

The opera singer has a white cane in one hand and a small tip container in the other. He stares straight ahead. Blind, it appears. His voice booms with power and vibrato. I imagine he has no choice but to be great in this town. It's Vienna — the home of Mozart and the grave of Beethoven. It's a town that boasts of Schubert and Strauss and Mahler and Haydn. To sing in Vienna is to sing in the Big Leagues.

And, for the next hour, the blind man sings over the competing sounds of buses and trucks and cars and loud people. He stands tall, gripping his white cane,

oblivious to the world. Unbending and unrelenting.

Well, that wasn't horrible. But was it enough to overcome my dithering and skepticism about travel? Hmmmm.

SARAJEVO

Excellent. You're still here. Now imagine this...

Like spilled milk, the graves from the Bosnian war wind down the side of the mountain into Bascarija, the old town in Sarajevo.

Sarajevo's shell-pocked buildings and mortar-scarred streets still remain witness to the more than 500,000 bombs that fell on the town during the long siege of the city. A time that still hangs heavy.

From our perch, we smell cooking meats and strong spices coming up from the old town. Delicious smells. We walk slowly down through the narrow streets, tasting our way toward the river.

Eventually, we walk past where Archduke Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, were assassinated. This unassuming spot is only famous because the Archduke's driver took a wrong right turn. Yup, you heard me correctly, a wrong right turn.

And, if that wasn't enough bad luck, the assassin, still carrying his gun and grenade and cyanide tablet from an earlier failed assassination attempt, looked up at just the right moment to see the Archduke take that wrong right turn — directly in front of him. Everything aligned in that one fateful moment.

And World War I started.

This infamous street corner is tiny, a little dirty, and a frequent stop on walking tours. Today, a street dog takes his afternoon nap on the historic spot. Yup, a street dog.

And, this is why you now have to cross the river to the cafe on the left bank and order real Bosnian coffee. If you are not clear-eyed about the quirkiness of history, you will be after drinking that strong punch in the gut. As for travel hesitancy, is it also history? Stay tuned.



BELFAST

And, the final destination for all of us still dragging our travel feet...

It's raining in Belfast. Not that fun misting rain that frequently hits these North Sea countries. Nope. This is an Iowa rain. Hard and cold and drenching.

We are here because my Dublin daughter and her Scottish partner are off listening to a band in downtown Belfast. So, we are set free to wander the streets of Belfast. Alone. Parents off leash, is the way we see it.

But it's pouring rain. We walk to the river, wet and a bit dispirited.

But, wait! Look at that. There are crowds and street performers and make-shift tents and a Ferris wheel. It's a street fair!

And the rain relents.

See, there's a pirate walking on stilts. And, there are mimes dressed as sailors. And, there are costumed old-timey swimmers. And, there's food and drink and the good cheer of people undeterred by tough weather. And, the rain comes and goes and comes.

We dip into a pub and order a pint. An older man sits on a stool at the front. A guitar near his side. Drinking a coffee. Eventually, he is joined by an even older leprechaun-looking man carrying a fiddle. After some laughter between the two, they settle in and begin to play. Traditional Irish music. Jigs and reels. Instrumental music and storytelling songs.

On this cold and wet day in Belfast, we are momentarily in heaven.

"Well, that's enough of that," as my mom used to say when things got to be too much fun. But, is it finally enough of my travel hesitancy?

Got me.

But, just today my wife said, "Joe, what about the Bahamas in November?"

"No way!" was my go-to first thought. But, really?

So, my underwear is rolled into my spare shoes and my backpack is next to the bed and hesitancy is buried deep under my one flowery Hawaiian shirt. But, do I really have to swim with pigs? ■



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.



Johnnyswim showcases multidimensional talents

Abner Ramirez and Amanda Sudano Ramirez strive to be authentic.

A reality cooking show, a podcast, live concerts and a new musical are all part of Johnnyswim's multidimensional talents, and the duo is attracting fans from all walks of life. They are set to perform a concert at Hoyt Sherman Place on Oct. 6.

Johnnyswim consists of Abner Ramirez and Amanda Sudano Ramirez. The name Johnnyswim originates from Amanda, who, as a child, had a goldfish named Johnny. The goldfish died, and she refused to believe it was dead and yelled "Johnny — swim!"

The married couple began singing and writing music in 2005. Their song "Home" was chosen as a theme song for the HGTV show, "Fixer Upper." They've starred in their own reality shows, "The Johnnyswim Show" and "In the Kitchen with Abner and Amanda."

They released a new album, "When the War Is Over," in early 2025. The album entails a season of hardship after Amanda was diagnosed with long COVID and Abner suffered with mental health struggles.

"We were dealing with pressure on all sides of our life. The album talks about our journey. Not always knowing where life takes us, but being stronger for it," Amanda explains.

The deluxe album version comes out in October and features five other songs.

"We didn't feel like those songs fit the storyline of the album. One song we wrote 13 years ago. We used to do New Music Monday, and someone pointed out they loved the song. We re-wrote that, and it's part of the deluxe album," Abner explains.

They has also written the music and lyrics to a new musical, "One Day." The global opening is in Edinburgh in 2026. The musical is based on a novel

by David Greig, which was also a movie and a Netflix show. The musical is about a couple who get together one day each year.

"We're a husband-wife duo, who would be a complement to the story, as it reflects us, too," Abner explains. "The universe conspires to get us together, just like in the musical."

The couple say writing a musical has been a lifelong dream.

"About 10 years ago, Amanda and I began sitting together on a beach to dream about what we hope to accomplish. One of them was to write a musical," he recalls.

Amanda hails from a musical background. Her mom was singer Donna Summers and her dad, songwriter Bruce Sudano. Abner's family were Cuban immigrants. Abner's dad knew of him dating Amanda and how they were raised in different backgrounds.

"The important thing is that we were both raised similarly, which is leading life by passion, leadership and service," he explains.

He recalls how he was in New York with Amanda's parents, who offered to accompany them on a road trip to a concert.

"She (Donna) wanted to come with, as she said, 'You'll never get the time back,' he reflects. "These are the good old days, and I've always remembered that. Seasons come and go."

As bandmates with three kids at home, the pair spends a lot of time together, yet it is a comforting feeling.

"Every creative thing we do, we have to express ourselves. There's a vulnerability attached to our work. We risk just as much to open up. It's a safe place," Abner says.

Often, their writing doesn't only occur in the



Photo courtesy of Chloe Enos

studio; it's sitting at home.

"She's cooking, and I'm in the other room, and we come up with a song idea. More than 75% of our writing comes from hanging out at home," Abner explains.

This fall, they are launching a fan club, which consists of cooking, reality show, music and podcast all rolled into one. They says their shows appeal to all ages.

"Half of the people don't even know who Donna Summers was," Amanda says.

Abner adds, "We don't have a laser focus of fan demographic. We have a wide swath of ages, backgrounds and ethnic fans. We have kids at their first concert in their 20s next to someone in their 70s singing along."

In whatever capacity of performing, Johnnyswim strives to be authentic.

"Our goal is to make music that speaks to us," Abner reflects. "We want to be true to who we are." ■

SOUND ADVICE

BY JACKIE WILSON

The 2025 **Iowa Blues Challenge** at Lefty's Live Music takes place Oct. 5 starting at 1 p.m. The competition decides who will represent Iowa in the 2026 International Blues Challenge in Memphis. Musicians include **Berdo & Jones**, **The Chuggaluggers Band**, **Weary Ramblers**, **The Other Brothers**, **The Crawling Kingsnake**, **Izzy Starchild and the Psychedelic Rose**, **Vorvick & James** and **HomeBrewed**. Free admission.

Take advantage of warm fall days at the **Des Moines Biergarten** at Water Works Park. The Local Bands, Brews and Bikes continues on Sundays from 1-4 p.m. On Oct. 12, **Andrew Hoyt** and Oct. 19, **Soul Searchers**.

If you're a fan of the Allman Brothers, you'll appreciate this band, **Southbound - A Tribute to The Allman Brothers Band**. Founded by local guitarist

and vocalist James Biehn, when you hear favorites, such as "Ramblin' Man" and "Midnight Rider," you will think it was the real band. Catch them at xBk Live on Nov. 2 starting at 4:20 p.m. Tickets for the all-ages show are \$15.

It's Halloween month! Hit the free Halloween Bash Oct. 31 at the Back Roads Lounge in Johnston, where **Sister Sara** performs. ■

‘It’s a feel-good tired’

Tom Perrine has volunteered at Tallgrass Theater Company for more than decade.

While the Des Moines Civic Center and Des Moines Performing Arts often take the spotlight for theatre in Des Moines, a few local community theatres are also flourishing in the metro. One of those is Tallgrass Theater Company in West Des Moines. Few have done more for the theatre’s advancement than Tom Perrine.

Perrine and his husband, Bob, own Frame Works in Johnston. While Perrine’s day job deals with hanging and framing art, his volunteer work allows him to help direct, act and set the stage for another kind of art.

We interrupted Perrine from working on the set of “Blithe Spirit,” a play Tallgrass was producing.

“Today’s my day off. So, what am I doing? I’m at the theatre. I’ve always done theatre. My college degree is actually in theatre, but it’s kind of hard to make a living doing theatre, so I’ve always volunteered,” Perrine said.

Bob was volunteering for Tallgrass at the time. Before then, he had spent time volunteering for several other theatres including the Des Moines Playhouse, Stage West and Drama Workshop. Eventually, Bob convinced him to do some work with Tallgrass.

“I did a lot of backstage stuff. I ended up directing for them, and then, through a series of Tallgrass changing — me evolving — I was offered the role of artistic director. I’ve been doing that since 2013,” Perrine said.

It has been a match made in theatre heaven ever since then for Perrine and Tallgrass.

“There’s something about Tallgrass that really sings to me. It’s very welcoming. Almost everybody in the community who works here refers to it as the Tallgrass family. I’m now part of the Tallgrass family, and that is very true. We look out for each other; we treat each other well. It has just become the place where I want to spend my time,” Perrine said.

During his time with the theatre, Perrine has seemingly done it all.

“I have directed, I have painted, I have designed sets. I have done costumes. I have done emergency repairs on costumes. I cleaned the bathrooms when we moved into this building,” Perrine said.

Not only did Perrine have a hand in those aspects, he also played a major part in building the stage the plays are performed on, including the chairs patrons sit in.

“We were at a different location, and they were not



going to renew our lease where we were. So, during COVID, we shut down, and everything we owned we stored for about a year and a half, and then we found this space. When we were preparing to turn this into a theatre, we did everything. I helped put up the walls. I helped paint. I helped assemble stuff. We bought 150 of these chairs. They were in pieces. We had to put all those together,” Perrine said.

One of the reasons Perrine enjoys Tallgrass as much as he does is its program, the Dream Project. Aspiring screenwriters, directors or actors submit their “dream” show to Tallgrass, and the board considers putting on a production for them. The first of its kind was “True West,” performed in 2013.

“I think the fact that we still produce those dream projects has been incredibly satisfying,” Perrine said. “I’ve had the pleasure of directing one of those dream projects. I’m very, very proud of that.

Perrien says this allows them to help people in the community who have a dream — if it fits with Tallgrass — to make it come true.

Another reason why Perrine feels so connected to Tallgrass is how much he has seen it develop right in front of him.

“Where we were before was not easy. We shared



the space. We were very limited in what we could do. We had no building, no shop area,” Perrine said. “Everything we stored was in a basement, so we had to carry everything down a winding staircase to get to the basement, and, usually, when we got it back out, it was covered in mold. So, the fact that we were able to raise enough money to build a theatre and rent this space, that’s a huge, huge thing for us. Plus, you know, in theatre, it never gets old. It’s different every day.”

Perrine plans to continue to volunteer at Tallgrass until he simply can’t anymore. Even if he might relinquish his title of artistic director sometime soon, he will continue to give his time to the west side theatre.

“I will still be here. I will still work. I’ll still do whatever I can. Volunteering gives me energy, even though it saps you. Like, I’ll work at my frame shop eight to 10 hours, go home, eat something, and come here and work till midnight. And, even though I’m tired, it’s a feel-good tired,” Perrine said.

He recommends anyone interested to volunteer at Tallgrass. Even if you do not want to be on stage or direct, the group takes help backstage, on boards, or even as ushers. Perrine says he and the Tallgrass family welcome volunteers with open arms. ■

Fjetland appreciates her dog's support and companionship

Miniature goldendoodle is treated to pampering and spa days.

Sylvie, a miniature goldendoodle, looked longingly into my eyes as she jumped up to sit on my lap during our People and Pets interview. Since I couldn't pet her and take notes, she settled in by my feet instead.

Owner Megan Fjetland says Sylvie is charming and likable.

"She loves everybody. She's a cuddle bug, and she's everyone's best friend," Fjetland says.

Fjetland admits that Sylvie might be a bit spoiled. She takes Sylvie to Happy Tails Dog Daycare. The daycare has hosted dog parties for her birthday.

"They send me updates and pictures during the day. He looks like he's having a ball," she explains.

Sylvie is also treated to pampering and spa days.

"With the dog being hypoallergenic, we take her to EarthWise Pet," she says. "It's great resource for her. They have natural foods and treats, too."

Sylvie came from a breeder in Humboldt. When the family first got her, they had another dog, Berkley, a cocker spaniel poodle.

"She came at the perfect time for the family," she says. "She learned the ropes from the older dog."

Fjetland has had dogs her whole life; unlike her husband, Grant.

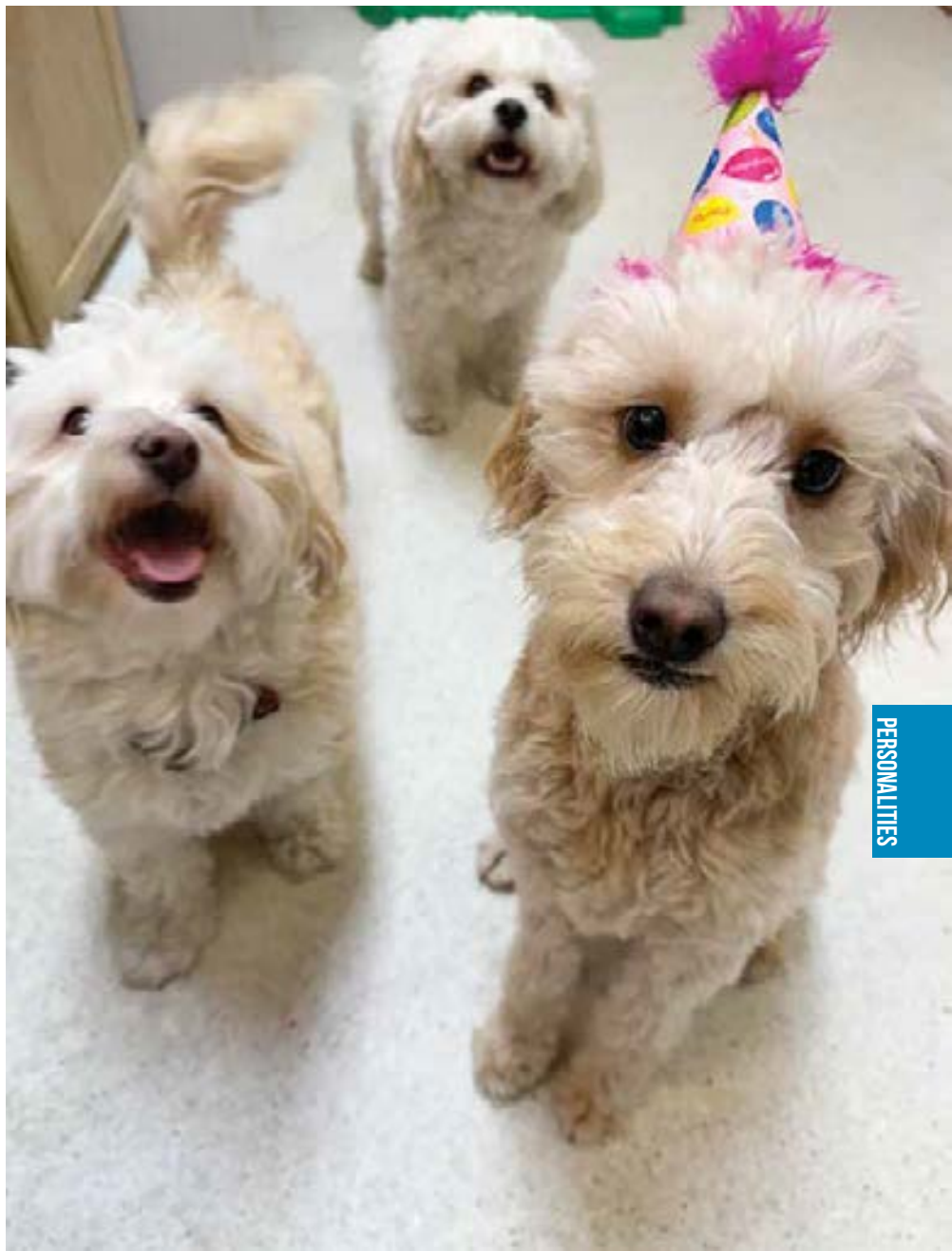
"We had to ease him into getting a pet," she explains. "He was anti-dog, and now she is the dog he didn't want and he loves her."

As a child, her family had a beagle and a golden retriever. When she moved on her own, she got her first dog, a cocker spaniel poodle named Berkley. She has noticed different breeds and their temperaments.

"The beagle was always dependable. Goldens love everybody," she reflects. "My poodle was very territorial. He took my husband in," she laughs.

When she works from home, her dogs offer support and companionship. During the COVID pandemic, the dogs were warm and affectionate.

"The world was crazy outside, and on the inside we had a dependable dog," she says.



Fjetland says having dogs at home are good for her two kids.

"Dogs teach responsibility and accountability. Kids help with chores by feeding her and cleaning up after her. She's all of our responsibility. Having dogs is a huge benefit with growing kids at home," she explains.

Sylvie constantly wants to play and interact with the family.

"She's super attentive. She will sit and protect the backyard," she explains. "When the kids wake up, she's always wants to play."

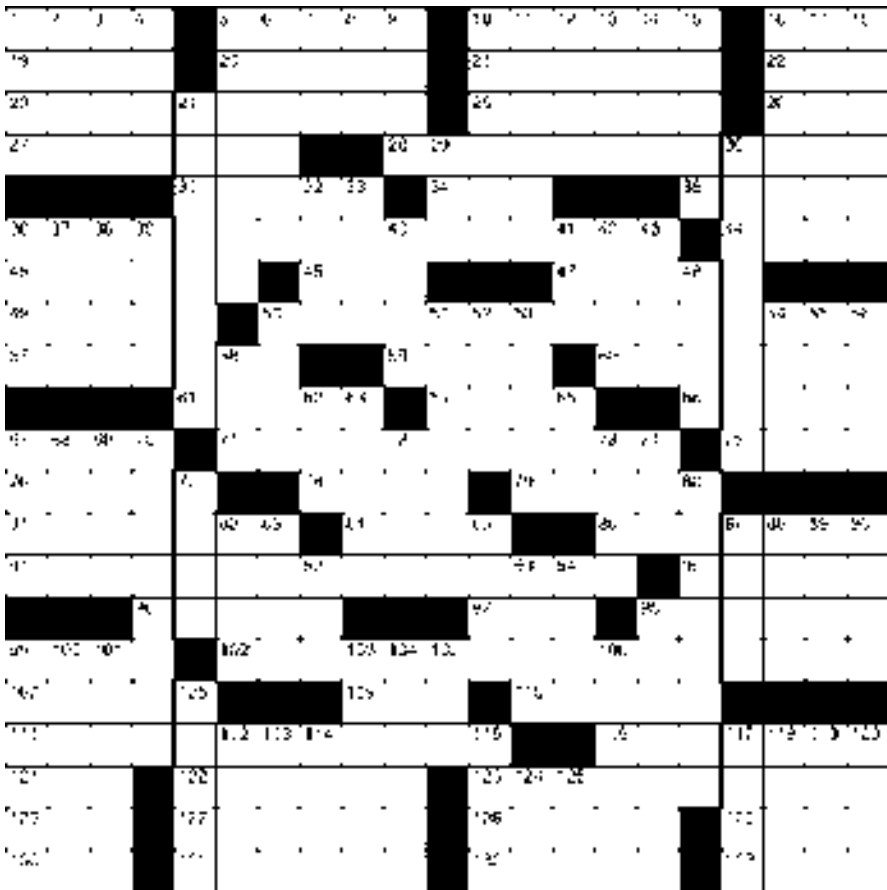
Fjetland says the best thing about Sylvie is how she helps everyone feel better.

"If someone has a bad day, she scans everyone. If they are upset, she knows. She has a way about her and can read people," Fjetland says. "She goes over and gives them a big hug or sits with them." ■

PUZZLES

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

DROP OUT



- ACROSS**
- 1 Dish list
5 Attorney --
10 Tidies up with a broom
16 Even score
19 Salt Lake City team
20 Stock market disaster
21 Audrey of "Amelie"
22 Hostelry
23 Arrive like rain
25 Goof-ups
26 Many a pro bono TV ad
27 Enclose, as a yard
28 Fail to complete a task
31 Brand of candy wafers
34 Lose power
35 Considering everything
36 Become a responsibility for
44 Grove growth
45 1965-69 veep Humphrey
46 Simile center
47 "Veni," in English
49 Home of the Dolphins
50 Blow it when success is very close
57 Bitter conflicts
59 Totally wreck
60 Navy leader
61 "Ararat" actor Koteas
64 Indian queen
66 Escargot
67 Poking tools
71 Stop being noticed
75 Spyro -- (jazz group)
76 Pipeline problems
78 Boat deck wood
79 Suddenly bright stars
81 Stray
- 84 Say a Hail Mary, say
86 Considered comparable
91 Collapse
95 Fierce look
96 Holy city of Islam
97 --Z (totally)
98 -- Mae (loan offerer)
99 "Superfood" berry
102 Be overlooked
107 Flag sewer Ross
109 La.-to-Mich. dir.
110 Seize forcibly
111 Fizzle out, as an endeavor
116 New word
121 Bullfight cry
122 View with astonishment
123 Autumn foliage ... or what happens at the starts of eight answers in this puzzle?
- DOWN**
- 1 Bungle
2 Raison d'--
3 Vegas light
4 Gomer Pyle's org.
5 Most sore, as muscles
6 With 32-Down, Dick Tracy's cover-up
7 -- Vegas
8 Query
- 9 "-- you do it?"
10 Baby on "Family Guy"
11 Time merged with it in 1990
12 Currency of Austria
13 Princely prep school
14 Left, at sea
15 Raw fish dish
16 Gratuity holder
17 Shoe part
18 Empower
24 Largest of the Canary Islands
29 Strange
30 Going into
32 See 6-Down
33 Kick out
36 Units of resistance
37 Opposite of day, in Dijon
38 Ski lift variety
39 Hot-rod engine
40 Oz lion portrayer Bert
41 Family gal
42 Bi- cubed
43 1982-2005 Saudi king
48 "-- the word"
50 "Likely story!"
51 Cries of discovery
52 Perjurer, e.g.
53 Former U.N. head Kofi
54 Hauling cart on a farm
55 Jungle den
56 "-- Enchanted"
58 "Xanadu" band, in brief
62 Astern
63 Curry of the NBA
65 Oath reply
67 Alan who played Pierce
68 Have a bawl
- 69 Soft rock?
70 Minor battle
72 Long-eared hopper
73 Rd. crossers
74 "Chi- --" (2015 Spike Lee film)
77 Fill up fully
80 Sweetums
82 Savoir faire
83 Engrave
85 "Awright!"
87 Penne -- vodka
88 Bath powder
89 Actor Estrada
90 Poor grades
92 Road goo
93 An Aleutian island
94 -- scale (mineral hardness gauge)
98 Executes a "Page Up," e.g.
99 -- and Costello
100 Sri Lanka, formerly
101 Certify (to)
103 Red-tagged
104 Part of USA
105 H.S. proficiency exam
106 "The Father of Geometry"
108 Safe robbers, in slang
112 Suffix with silver or table
113 Capital of Samoa
114 Give a whoop
115 Get an -- effort
117 Apollo's org.
118 State bluntly
119 Apparatus
120 Glimpse
124 Comedian Gasteyer
125 Luau handout

SCRAMBLERS

Put the letters in the squares to form words. You may use each letter only once.

Across
TANTUM
GENTIL
Covine
MEIDES

Down
TANTUM
GENTIL
Covine
MEIDES

Today's Word

SUDOKU

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

Place a number in the empty squares so that each row, column, and 3x3 square contains each of the numbers 1 through 9 exactly once.

DIFFICULTY: ♦♦♦♦♦

♦♦♦♦♦ MODERATE
♦♦♦♦♦ CHALLENGING
♦♦♦♦♦ HARD

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SNOWFLAKES

by Laphett Light

There are 13 black hexagons in the diagram. Place the numbers 1 through 6 in each of them. No number can be repeated in any partial hexagon of the diagram. The number of the puzzle is 13.

DIFFICULTY: ♦♦♦♦♦

♦♦♦♦♦ MODERATE
♦♦♦♦♦ CHALLENGING
♦♦♦♦♦ HARD

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GO FIGURE!

The goal 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.

	+		÷		= 2			
+		-		+				
	-		+		= 13			
+		+		+				
2	1		;		= 1			
=		=		=				
13		11		19				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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WHAT THE...

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PHOTO COURTESY OF PIXABAY

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- Sue Beachem



PHOTO COURTESY OF GRATISOGRAPHY

Runners-up

"The bride's bouquet toss was way off target!" - Debra Lane

"Should I trim my beard, or water my face? I hate mornings!" - S. Hatten

"Bloom where you are face planted." - Deb Epp

"Doctor, I do have a green thumb, but this is ridiculous." - Chris Taylor

"Jeremiah's sudden floral breakout sent him to the dermatologist. Hopefully they will find the root of the problem." - Mary Wedewer

"A horrible case of planter faceiitist." - David J.

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BOOK REVIEWS

COURTESY OF BEAVERDALE BOOKS

'King Sorrow'

This is a big book — an epic doorstopper with multiple narrators, a winding timeline, and a torrent of emotion that's rarely uplifting. In other words, it is not for the faint-hearted. And, yet, if you're brave enough to crack it open, you will find a mesmerizing tale of bad ideas, beautifully flawed characters, and a bountiful mix of horror and fantasy that absolutely shines.

College student Arthur Oakes has found himself in a bind, but, luckily, he has an eclectic mix of friends ready to help him solve the problem. Their solution is to summon a dragon. This isn't a fairy tale, though, and the six friends soon find themselves tangled in a cycle of debt and sacrifice they couldn't have foreseen. And, it only gets worse from there.

Literary horror may sound like an oxymoron, but Hill consistently proves to be a master of both. Despite the massive page count, the story feels brisk and the dialogue is brilliant and snappy. I love a found family tale, and there is a lot of heart here — underneath the horror. My only complaint is that this novel may have ruined dragons for me forever. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



By Joe Hill
10/21/25
896 pages
\$40
William Morrow

'The Everlasting'

I keep telling myself that Alix Harrow can't possibly write anything more beautiful or poignant each time a new book comes out. And, yet, every time she outdoes herself and sweeps me even more deeply into her thrall. Maybe that makes me biased, but the heart wants what it wants.

I have to be cautious with my synopsis. This is very much a book that thrives in its secrets. At its heart, it is an epic story of love lost and found, and then lost again. It is a story about stories, myths and finding the truth even when it hurts more than the lie. Una is a legendary heroine trapped in time, and Owen is a historian tangled in the web that is her story. Their story replays and resonates across time, and the impacts of their love will change everything.

I want a story that breaks the mold, something that doesn't shy away from the hard parts — a story with something real to say. I found all of that and more intertwined with some of the most achingly beautiful writing I have ever encountered. This book is a masterpiece and is easily my favorite of the year. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



By Alix Harrow
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CARS IN THE CITY

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Redesigned Nissan Kicks is zippy and easy to maneuver

Subcompact SUV is at a price point buyers will love, too.

BY JACKIE WILSON

From the same car manufacturer that introduced the Datsun, Nissan continues to evolve in providing fuel efficient cars.

The Nissan Kicks debuted in 2018 and replaced the Nissan Juke. Kicks is newly redesigned in 2025 to include a couple inches more room than the previous year's model. Kicks is a subcompact SUV with a price point that buyers love. This year, it ranked the seventh best subcompact by Car And Driver Magazine (the best is the Chevrolet Trax). The base model starts at \$23,325, up to \$32,000 with more features.

I test drove the top level — a 2025 Nissan Kicks SRAWD-CVT, which rings in at \$32,110. The Aspen White with black trim is a popular look. Kicks also has a couple unique colors including Artic Ice Blue and The Yuzu Yellow. However, the Yuzu Yellow with black trim looks like an Iowa Hawkeye fan vehicle, so I'm guessing Cyclone fans might avoid this color combo.

The Kicks, with its two-liter engine, is a zippy little car, and it is easy to maneuver. It is an ideal size for a driver with a small family. The back seat is surprisingly roomy and holds three average-sized passengers easily. Back seat passengers get cup holders, phone plug-ins, plus a bonus — it has rear floor heater ducts. Most back seats only have the vents located a bit higher, so this feature keeps toes toasty in the winter.

As a music lover, my first task is to crank the stereo. That's part of driving experience, right? For this model,



10 Bose speakers provide that thumping bass I crave. As I hummed along to an AC/DC song, I felt like the speaker booming next to my ear. I was right, as it was about an inch from my ear. Bose speakers are installed in both of the front seat headrests for an amazing sound experience.

I loved the deep cupholders in the center console. I recently rode in someone's SUV, and every time we took a hard turn, my cup wobbled in the shallow cupholder, nearly spilling out the contents each time. In the Kicks, tall cups remain secure.

The sport leatherette seat with red and black cloth is a sturdy option. Yet, inside the car it looked like an orange color surrounding the shifter. This color seemed out of place, like it was a bright orange hue so drivers can better locate the shifter.



The 12.3-inch touchscreen is embedded seamlessly in the dash. Car makers are getting better at toning down the touchscreens. Early touchscreens often appeared as an afterthought, as if they precariously perched a laptop on top of the dash.

This model includes safety features including lane departure, lane assist and emergency braking. I'll have to assume it works, as I've never encountered the sonar emergency braking feature. I suppose that means my driving is decent.

The Kicks gets about 30 miles to the gallon, combined highway and city. If you are looking for a subcompact at an affordable price point with many features and decent gas mileage, kick it up a notch with a Nissan Kicks. ■

DES MOINES FORGOTTEN

BY KRISTIAN DAY

Beggars' Night lore

Razor blades in apples, poisoned candy, pins and needles inside soft candy and laxative chocolate bars

With trick-or-treating returning on Halloween night in Des Moines after 87 years, I am going to take us on a deep dive into the lore, rumors and old wives' tales that may have contributed to the creation of "Beggars' Night."

You have likely heard many of them before: razor blades in apples, poisoned candy, pins and needles inside soft candy, and laxative chocolate bars.

From age 6 to 13, I would receive a lecture from my mother about the candy I would trick-or-treat for. A Halloween episode of "Roseanne" from 1992 featured Roseanne taking a bite of chocolate and pretending that it contained a razor blade, causing her mouth to bleed profusely. It was a comedic bit that also struck a bit of fear. The show took place in the fictional town of Lansing, Illinois, and was supposedly an hour from Chicago. At the time, I lived in Rock Island, Illinois, about two and a half hours from Chicago. It was practically the same town.

This was also the era when internet was sparse, and there were no social media or instant news. Shows like "COPS" and "America's Most Wanted" both informed and terrified audiences. The world could easily be seen as a scary place. Unfortunately, some of the Halloween stories were used as cover-ups.

In 1970, 5-year-old Kevin Tonston from Detroit consumed his parent's heroin and died. The parents attempted to cover it up by sprinkling bits of the heroin on his Halloween candy. The New York Times ran with this story on Nov. 7, creating a frenzy. The mother said Kevin had spent the night at home with his brother. He ate Halloween candy and then suddenly began to sweat and breathe heavily. He eventually fell asleep and never woke up. Lab tests showed heroin was in his Halloween candy. However, it was eventually discovered that his parents tried to cover up the unfortunate disaster.

Ronald "The Candy Man" O'Bryan (also known as The Pixy Stix Killer) was convicted in 1974 for poisoning his 8-year-old son with potassium cyanide-laced Pixy Stix that he hid inside his trick-or-treat bag on Halloween night in Pasadena, Texas. O'Bryan was an optician and served as a deacon at his church, sang in the choir and drove a school bus. During the trial, he attempted to use urban legends of poisoned Halloween candy as his defense. He cited "The Mad Poisoner," but there were no facts proving the stories to be true. He was convicted in 1975 for capital



Kristian Day (the vampire) and a friend from an elementary class Halloween celebration in 1993.

murder and was executed in 1984.

On a lighter note, in 1959, a California dentist distributed candy-coated laxative pills to trick-or-treaters. No one was seriously harmed. I may have attempted to do this, if laxatives weren't so expensive.

Most of the illnesses kids would get from Halloween would be from candy going bad or homemade treats not being properly prepared. Harm was not the intent, but things happened, and it was easily passed off as, "They will be fine in the morning." It was the 1970s and 1980s, after all.

Some of these myths were a distraction to the real danger, which was — and still is — kids getting hit by cars. Children are running around on the streets

and having a good time, and none of them look like a real person. Looking out my windows on Polk Boulevard, I see motorists driving 40 mph like it is no one's business, yet the DMPD puts a speed camera on Ingersoll and hands out tickets to folks going 36 mph in a 25 mph zone.

Have a happy Halloween. The city is going to be alive this year, so take it all in — carefully. ■

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



Geocaching takes Metz all over the globe

A geocache may be located next to you right now.

Geocaching is a hobby that can be enjoyed by people of all ages and skill levels. It is a real-life treasure hunt that can be played across the globe. Using GPS or a smartphone, participants search for geocaches in various locations. You could find the cache in a tree, behind a fire hydrant, or even inside of a sign displayed at a soccer field. Few know more about caches in central Iowa and around the country than Mark Metz.



Mark Metz

“You find a container. It can be as small as your pinky, to the size of an ammo can, to something even bigger, hidden, usually camouflaged in some way. And you take out the log and you write your geocaching name, you put it back together and put it back exactly as you found it,” Metz said.

Some are as simple as stated above. Others require puzzle-solving to open.

Ironically, Metz stumbled onto what would become his favorite hobby purely by accident.

“I was actually looking through my iPhone for solo games. I found geocaching, and then I went out and I started doing it,” he said.

Metz started out slowly, eventually ramping up his participation. He has traveled the entire lower 48, and even several countries, finding geocaches all over the globe. One of his first events was at Honey Creek in Moravia, called a MOGA, a Midwest Open Geocaching Adventure. These include competitions, new geocaching spots and the chance to meet other geocachers.

Metz met a local geocacher at the event who took him under her wing. Since then, he has become fully entrenched in the world of geocaching.

“Going to events is where I really got into geocaching, because then you could meet other people, they tell stories of their geocaching, you make friends. I’ve gone to quite a few national events as well, which they have all over the world,” Metz said.

Caches are everywhere for those who are willing to look, Metz says, adding that you might need some tools or smarts to help you find the more difficult ones. Since caches can be hidden almost anywhere, people have to get creative.

“If there’s a cache up in that tree, you might have some sort of grabber that could grab it and bring it down, or you might have an extendable ladder to get you up there to get the cache, you know, tweezers or mirrors,” Metz said.

Rules state where a cache can and can’t be located. It needs to be a certain distance away from railroad tracks, it needs to be within 528 feet of another geocache, and, if it’s going to be on private property, you must get permission from the landowner first.

Metz has several memories that stick out in his mind, from his first find to where he has traveled. One instance almost cost him his car.

“I went after a geocache, and I didn’t put my car in park. My car went over, and it ended up down in the ravine, and it was stopped by a rock. I had to get it pulled back out. The only thing that it damaged was a dent in the bumper, but I did go back and I got the geocache after he pulled it out,” Metz said.

Metz is also a former board member of the Iowa Geocachers Organization. The group hosts events all year long, including brunches, Halloween activities and



Christmas events, which are quickly approaching. They post their events on their website at www.iowageocachers.org.

One of the main reasons Metz enjoys this hobby so much is that he enjoys traveling. Metz and his brother even geocached in the Arctic.

Metz started in 2011. As of the time of this interview, he was one away from 16,000 finds. At one point, Metz had an 840-day streak of finding a geocache.

“There are geocaches everywhere. They’re under your nose,” Metz said.

There are also virtual geocaches that you can find where you otherwise would not be able to place a physical one. One is at the U.S. Capitol building, while others are at national parks and even the Pappajohn Sculpture Park.

Metz has advice for people who would like to get into geocaching.

“I teach people persistence. I show them a bunch of different kinds of containers so that they know what they’re looking for. I would say, start easy. Don’t go for something that’s way up in a tree. Don’t go for something that you have to canoe out to in the middle of an island, out in Raccoon River Valley Park, or something,” Metz said. ■

WALKS OF LIFE

Room for improvement

COMPILED FROM THE IOWA LIVING MAGAZINES

Residents share their home renovation experiences.

Live in a home for a while, and one is likely to start thinking, “If only....” If only the bathroom had a walk-in shower.... If only the kitchen had new cabinets.... If only the old flooring could be replaced.... If only the basement was finished.... If only a room could be added.... If only that longed-for home improvement project could be completed ... then the house would be just right. Residents who have taken the leap from thinking about it to tackling their dream projects share their experiences.



Aaron Wies
Three means more space

Aaron Wies says his family needed the extra space offered by their unfinished basement.

“When we learned that we were expecting our third child in December, we decided we wanted to go ahead and get it done before the baby arrived.”

Wies and his wife began planning how they wanted the basement to look. The layout included a living room space, a bathroom, a bedroom and a dry bar space. The construction crew took care of the framing, drywall, carpet, plumbing and the priming of the walls. Though a teacher through the school year, Wies does house painting in the summer. Because he had the necessary skills, he took care of most of the painting himself. The crew was just wrapping up the project the day that Wies baby number three was born.

Wies enjoys having extra space for his family of five.

“We now have an extra area to hang out as a family,” he shares. “The baby can crawl around on the carpet, and the kids have an area to put some of their toys.”

Source: Adel Living, September 2025; by Rachel Harrington



Dave and Amy Curtis
Major overhaul

After 25 years in their home — and as empty nesters now — Dave and Amy Curtis were trying to decide if they should downsize and move or remodel and update.

“We love our neighborhood and the mature trees and chose to take on the remodel project,” Amy says.

“We wanted to open up the floor plan more and finish these spaces so we would be drawn to them, and they would become used space,” Dave says.

Their plan was total demolition, removing the wall between the kitchen and dining room, and redoing everything in those spaces, as well as the entry hallway, half bath and stairway.

Dave is retired, and he enjoys DIY projects, so they knew he would be doing most of the work. Though the project is mostly complete, they have a large family room with a vaulted ceiling that is connected to the kitchen that they would like to paint.

“We’re really happy with it now,” Dave says. “Everything feels much more open and modernized. The dining room and living room definitely feel inviting and usable.”

Source: Johnston Living, September 2025; by Ashley Rullestad



Paul and Emily Marshall
Clean lines and extra space

Paul and Emily Marshall bought an original 2003 home at the end of July this year. Unfortunately, the previous owners had not been able to keep up with maintenance, and it needed a major refresh.

“The kitchen had a small 2-foot by 3-foot island and a small kitchen home office workstation against one wall,” Emily shares. “We wanted to add more seating area, so, during our demolition, we got rid of the wall between the living room and kitchen where the workstation area had been so we can add a large island with more seating.”

Other features to be added include a trash cabinet and two dishwashers, side by side.

“We have this feature in our current house, and it is the best thing ever,” she shares. “It helps not to have a sink full of dishes because the dishwasher is full. Some may think I’m crazy, but I say perhaps they aren’t the ones that cook much or clean their own kitchen much.”

The couple hopes to have their house ready to move into by the beginning of October.

Source: Winterset Living, September 2025; by Rachel Harrington



Dan and Mary Buscher
A shower upgrade

Dan Buscher is tall. With a 6-foot, 4-inch frame, he only had a few inches of headroom in the shower. He tolerated a cramped shower for 27 years before finally having it replaced.

Dan and Mary Buscher moved into their West Des Moines home in 1998. With the house built in the 1980s, the couple says it was time to update it. They renovated the kitchen and another bathroom. Then, it was time to refresh their master bathroom.

The old bathroom included dark wood and tile. Since it was on the north side of the house, they installed a heated floor.

A two-sink vanity was replaced with a new vanity that included extra storage space, with a small linen closet next to it.

They took out the old tile shower and replaced it with a fiberglass option. The biggest improvement was the extended ceiling so Dan had more headroom.

“It was time. For me, now I finally have room in the shower,” he says.

“It’s a pretty bathroom. I know I’ll like the heated floors this winter,” Mary adds. ■

Source: West Des Moines/Jordan Creek Living, July 2023; by Jackie Wilson

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