

DECEMBER 2025

CITYVIEW

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INSTALLATION IN PROGRESS

The Des Moines Art Center's installation department takes us behind the scenes to see what it is like working in the museum's shadow.

FEATURE STORY
Robert Hullihan's Christmas classic, "Twas the Night Before," returns.

BUSINESS JOURNAL
Learn about the hustle and heart that fuels Des Moines' pop-up business scene.

REMEMBERING BILL KNAPP
Michael Gartner shares stories of Des Moines' most impulsive and persuasive problem solver.



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FROM THE PUBLISHER

In the shadows

We all hear about the people who work behind the scenes, but we rarely see them. That's the idea. Some folks like to be front and center — and they should be. Others appreciate being in the support role, making sure the final presentations are precise.

We see this with the stage crews who set up for concerts. We know about the camera crews who cover sporting events. And some of you may even understand the work that so many people do with this magazine to get it ready for you each month. The same is true at the Des Moines Art Center, where the works of art are the attraction. Even so, a number of people are involved in the installation, and they enjoy their roles in working to ensure that these wonderful works are presented in the best possible scenarios.

For a moment, we take them out of the shadows, and we share their stores in this issue of CITYVIEW.

Our Christmas classic

I first shared the “Twas the Night Before” story in CITYVIEW 18 years ago. Michael Gartner reached out and told me about this wonderful piece from 1977 by Bob Hullihan, a writer for The Des Moines Register. Gartner, who was the editor then, asked Hullihan to write a Christmas story for the newspaper. Hullihan obliged, and it ran in the Register. Years later, when Gartner co-owned The Tribune in Ames, he ran it there as well. He encouraged me to do the same, and I did. In CITYVIEW. In the Daily Umbrella. And in the Guthrie County Times Vedette.

So, why would I run a 43-year-old story over and over again in so many publications? The answer is in the story itself. It is about tradition. It is about the old and the new. It is about change. It is about respect. It is about understanding. Bottom line, it is a beautiful Christmas story made even better by the creative images that Brian Duffy made for me to accompany it.

I hope that in another 18 years, this story is still publishing — somewhere, somehow. Most importantly, I hope you enjoy it today as much as I do and can make its reading a tradition for you and your family as well.

Merry Christmas to all of you, and thanks for reading. ■

Shane Goodman
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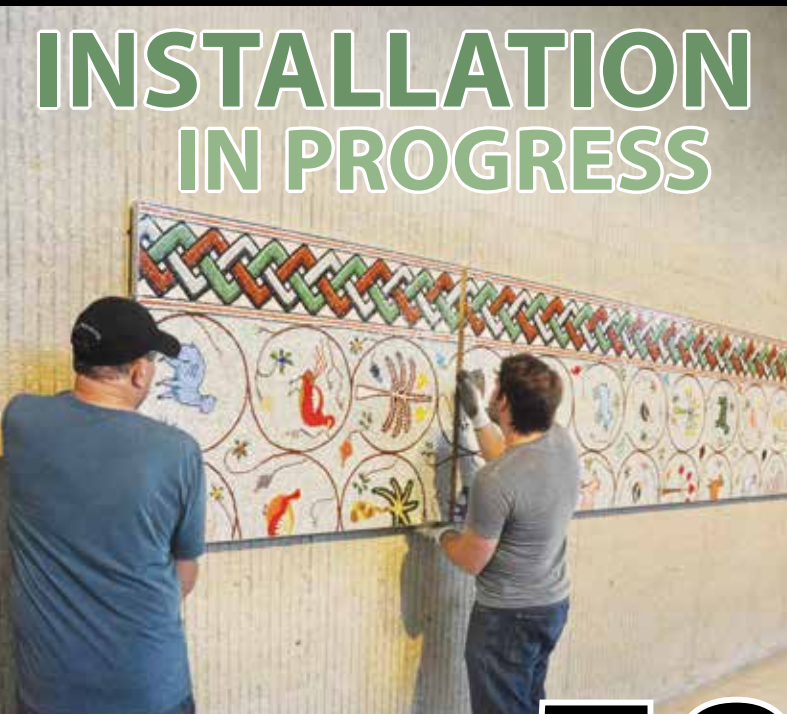
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HOME GAMES

SATURDAY, DEC. 6

TEDDY BEAR TOSS

2-for-1 Confluence Beers (Until puck drop)

SUNDAY, DEC. 7

KIDS TAKEOVER DAY

Youth Jersey Giveaway (First 1500 Kids 12 & Under)

FRIDAY, DEC. 19

WINTER WONDERLAND

Hlavaj Bobblehead Giveaway (First 1500 Fans)

SATURDAY, DEC. 27

CHRISTMAS VACATION

Christmas Vacation T-Shirt Giveaway (First 1500 Fans)

TUESDAY, DEC. 30

\$1 DOG NIGHT

\$1 Hot Dogs (End of 1ST Intermission)

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31

NYE BASH

Postgame Fireworks Show & Winning Wednesday



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ASK CITYVIEW

By CITYVIEW staff

Ask CITYVIEW anything by emailing editor@dmcityview.com.

Q. When are businesses required to become handicap accessible?

A. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in 1990, specifically relating to title III: "The ADA is meant to ensure that people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of life. Almost all types of businesses that serve the public, regardless of their size or the age of their buildings, must follow the ADA."

The general requirement says businesses that serve the public, which range from restaurants, hotels, shops, gyms, daycares, office buildings and warehouses, must be accessible for those with disabilities. The accessible design standards, revised in 2010, set minimum requirements for "newly designed and constructed or altered State and local government facilities, public accommodations, and commercial facilities to be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities."

This means that any new construction or businesses that were built before 1993 that are receiving alterations must reach the new standards. This means the buildings must have accessible routes and accessible entrances. Ramps and thresholds must meet certain requirements. Doorways need to be widened and have certain handles. And restrooms require a handicap-accessible bathroom, to name a few of the requirements.

Q. What happens when there's a tie in a local election?

A. In the event of a tie during a vote, the Iowa Code 50.44 states: "If more than the requisite number of persons, including presidential electors, are found to have an equal and the highest number of votes, the election of one of them shall be determined by lot. The name of each of such candidates shall be written on separate pieces of paper, as nearly uniform in size and material as possible, and placed in a receptacle so that the names cannot be seen. In the presence of the board of canvassers, one of them shall publicly draw one of such names, and such person shall be declared elected. The result of such drawing shall be entered upon the abstract of votes and duly recorded, and a certificate of election issued to such person, as provided in this chapter."

In the "Candidate's Guide to the Regular City Election," provided by the office of the Secretary of State, if a write-in candidate wins but does not want the job, he or she must resign. If there is a tie after that, "determined by lot," essentially, names out of a hat, is the process. This is more common in small towns that receive a small number of write-ins.

"If a letter of resignation is submitted within 10 days of the final canvass, the city clerk notifies the person who received the next-highest number of votes. If there is a tie vote for the next-highest number of votes, the board of supervisors draws lots to determine the person who received the next-highest number of votes. If the next highest vote-getter accepts, the person is considered the duly elected officer." ■

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters are edited for space, spelling and clarity.

Appreciated the theater coverage

Great article in the mag on theaters. Would love to see it continue as to more about River Hills Riviera, Merle Hay and more!" - Ryan Burger

Renew the credits

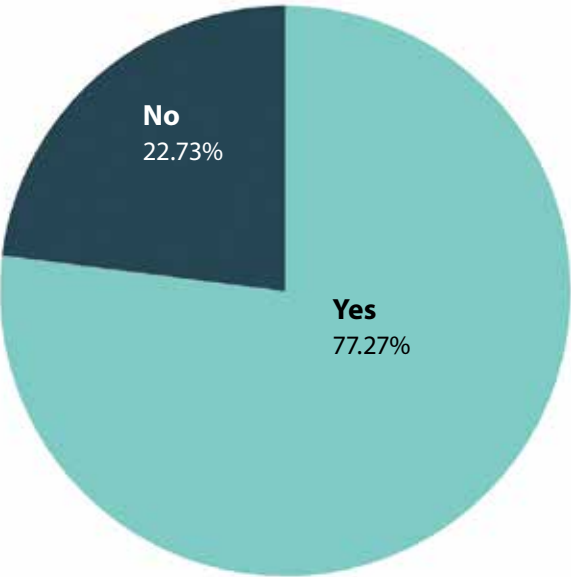
Metro Des Moines restaurant workers love our jobs and work hard to help our regular customers and visitors to our community enjoy their dining experiences. Many of us work two or three jobs to support our families. Most restaurants do not provide group health insurance. Many of us purchase our own insurance through the Affordable Care Act marketplace. Insurance purchased under this legislation is eligible for tax credits which help make it more comparable to group insurance rates. Unless Congress renews these credits they will expire at the end of this year. Without the credits policy costs are expected to double. Please ask your Member of Congress to renew the credits so we can continue to devote our attention to helping people maximize their dining experiences in our amazing city free from worries about our families healthcare. - Troy Bishop

POLL POSITION

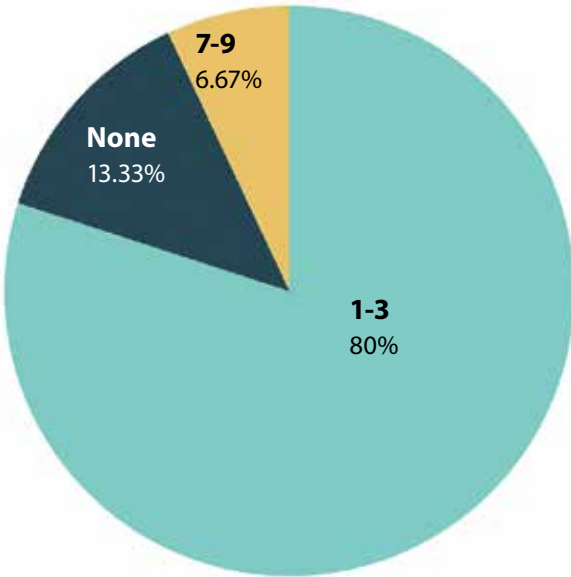


Results from last month's poll at www.dmcityview.com

Do you plan to get a COVID shot this year?



How many pairs of shoes or boots do you buy in a year?



FACEBOOK COMMENTS



cityview magazine
(comments unedited)

CITYVIEW magazine: Name the best concert you ever saw at the Iowa State Fair.

- Bill Thyberg: Righteous Brothers in the rain
- Kandi Felice: I Love the 90's Tour & Pitbull! (Sorry couldn't choose just one)
- Joel Donaghy: Stevie Ray Vaughn with Greg Allman opening. Iowa Jams in the late 1980s not technically during Iowa State Fair, but some of the best bands of that era played.
- Stacy McKee Bjork: Kiss!
- Barbara Johnson: Always fun to go the Rock and Roll Reunion concerts hosted by Dic Youngs on the first Friday of the Fair every year.
- Diana Felice: Kid rock
- Daniel Brauer: Tied for me! 2024 Jelly Roll 2025 Megan Moroney
- Cathy Reed-Kinzie: Beach Boys and Boston
- Becky Lea: Kid Rock. Rod Stewart
- Julie Nelson Adams: Rod Stewart 1984
- Cooter Augustine: Bad company and Lynyrd Skynyrd in 95
- Gary McKibben: Outlaws/Kansas 1977
- Lisa M. Hanrahan: Dixie Chicks on the free stage!!!!
- Jonas Merritt: Nickleback/Puddle of Mudd
- Marci Longren: Toby Keith
- Marta Neill: Chicago
- Erica Polson: Nickelback with Puddle of Mudd hands down

RETWEETS



(comments unedited)

- @KillaMinga: you be fighting for ur life financially then all your toiletries run out at the same time
- @thetolerantweft: I went up to a gorilla at the zoo today and he tapped on the glass when he saw me. Unbelievable. There must be no signs prohibiting that on his side
- @rosiekennedyxx: "Ew you let your dog sleep in your bed?" Buddy I'd let him shoot a gun if he wanted to
- @sof38639124: i don't understand how doctors can work in new york with that big apple.
- @ybfanbact: it's funny as hell that vegans still drink water like bro that's a fish's house
- @369sosa: gave a homeless man \$20 I lowkey need that back
- @missesmochi: "Not dishwasher safe" You'll be ok in there. Just do your best. Do what the other dishes are doing.
- @persistantz: when you're dating a sorcerer more experienced in magical spells than you are and you realize there's a problematic mage gap
- @mariana057: Netflix needs to stop asking if I'm still watching and start asking if I moved the laundry to the dryer yet.
- @undergoldd: dentists will really look you in the eye and ask you if your free 9 months from now on monday at 2pm ■

STRAY THOUGHTS

BY RANDY EVANS

Des Moines school board owes explanation for this good-bye gift

Between now and June 30, the district will give Robert Lundin approximately \$114,200 to do work that ended Oct. 6.

While the text of the Iowa Constitution lacks the prominence of that adopted by our nation's Founding Fathers, people from Ackley to Zwingle and points in between should track down a copy and give it a read.

Buried away in the document adopted by Iowa voters in 1857, they will find Article III, Section 31, or what has come to be known as the public purpose requirement. That section says, in essence, that state and local governments are barred from spending public money unless there is a public purpose for those expenditures.

My public-school education tells me that section prohibits the use of taxpayer money to continue to pay someone for work after their performance ends unless the government entity provides justification of the public purpose served by those payments.

Where I come from, going-away gifts do not serve a public purpose. And this brings me to the Des Moines Public Schools and recent news headlines.

On Nov. 18, the school board convened a closed session. The purpose, its agenda stated, was "to evaluate the professional competency of an individual whose appointment, hiring, performance or discharge is being considered when necessary to prevent needless and irreparable injury to that person's reputation."

At the conclusion of that private discussion, the board voted to accept the already-tendered resignation of Robert Lundin, the district's chief academic officer, effective June 30, 2026.

Lundin was a "strategic consultant" before joining the Des Moines schools in May 2024. For reasons it never been made public, the district placed him on paid administrative leave last Oct. 6. He has not worked since then.

As part of a "separation agreement" that was made public the day after the board "evaluated" Lundin and accepted his resignation last week, the public learned his paid administrative leave will continue until the school year ends next June 30.

For those keeping track of dollars and cents, Lundin

pocketed six weeks' salary while on administrative leave and now will continue to collect a salary at an annual rate of \$195,658 for seven more months.

So, between now and June 30, the district will give Lundin approximately \$114,200 to do work that ended Oct. 6. That is roughly equivalent to what two Des Moines teachers are paid for working the entire school year.

The school board has given no explanation why it will pay this money to an administrator who will have only worked about three months of his 12-month contract — or how he has earned that compensation for days he will not work or provide services to the Des Moines Public Schools.

The board offered no explanation of its rationale — or of the supposed public purpose for that expenditure.

Phil Roeder, the director of communications and public affairs for the DMPS, said in an email to me, "This separation was a mutual decision and not based on any discipline or misconduct by Dr. Lundin."

OK. But if a \$50,000-a-year teacher asks to be released from a contract in the middle of the school year, the district will not pay the teacher through the end of the school year the way Lundin will get paid. Instead, the district's master contract and policy manual warn teachers the district will assess those who resign early a \$1,500 fee for breaking their contracts.

This is not the first time the school board has embarrassed itself with a lack of transparency and candor with taxpayers. In 2022, when Tom Ahart resigned as Des Moines superintendent with one year left on his contract, the board entered into a similar separation agreement. In that instance, the Ahart agreement cost the taxpayers nearly \$400,000 in compensation for the year he did not work.

Beyond the public-purpose requirement of the Iowa Constitution, a few other factors in Lundin's departure should concern Iowans.

State law requires government employers to make public what are called "the documented reasons and

rationale" for the demotion of a government employee, for the person's termination or for the employee's resignation in lieu of termination.

If Lundin's resignation truly was voluntary, as DMPS leaders claim, then why give him a lucrative good-bye present?

Why did the school board need to meet in closed session to discuss his job performance, since his resignation was dated four days prior to the board meeting? No reasonable employer evaluates the performance of an employee who has quit.

Was the board going to refuse to accept his resignation — even though the separation agreement had already been written and signed by Lundin?

And if his departure was not his decision alone, then where are the "documented reasons and rationale" that lawmakers said must be made public when a "resign or else" directive is given?

Without facts and openness, only the school board members and Robert Lundin know what led to his administrative leave and then his resignation. Only the board knows whether it was as cavalier as it looks to fork over a \$114,000 gift from taxpayers as he departed.

Almost 50 years ago, W. Ward Reynoldson, Osceola's folksy Supreme Court justice, wrote about a "plain judicial intent to permit the concept of 'public purpose' to have that flexibility and expansive scope required to meet the challenges of increasingly complex social, economic, and technological conditions."

But in tough economic times and tight budgets for public schools, it hardly seems possible that complex conditions support stretching the term "public purpose" to encompass parting gifts paid to highly compensated public employees, especially when they are allowed to ride quietly into the sunset without completing the work they were hired to do. ■

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





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GUEST COLUMN

BY MICHAEL GARTNER

Remembering Bill Knapp

One afternoon 50 years or so ago, when I was president of The Des Moines Register and Tribune, Bill Knapp called me.

“What are you doing?” he asked, and before I could answer, he said: “I’m on my way to pick you up. We need to raise \$250,000 this afternoon to save Tiny Tots. I’ll explain in the car.”

He explained in the car. Tiny Tots was a nonprofit day-care center on the near-northside run by a wonderful but not very business-savvy woman named Evelyn Davis. It had some rundown space in a former school, and it was deeply in debt, which he had just discovered.

We made the rounds downtown. Knapp explained to a Principal executive that many of these kids came from single-mom families. “If Tiny Tots shuts down,” he said, “the moms stay home to take care of the kids. If the moms stay home, you lose a lot of good workers.” He argued to Dwight Swanson, I think, who then ran the utility, that he had to — just had to — forgive the \$100,000 or more Tiny Tots owed in past utility bills, explaining the bad publicity if Tiny Tots had to shut down because the utility had cut off the heat. He explained to me that since we were raising the money, the Register and his company had to be big givers, too.

By the end of the day, debts were forgiven, the money was raised. Tiny Tots was saved. That’s one Bill Knapp: Impulsive and persuasive problem solver, don’t stop till you’ve done the job. Don’t take “no” for an answer. Take care of the needy. Help kids.

• • •

About 20 years ago, he and I were having lunch at the Cub Club. He had had knee surgery, and something had gone wrong — an infection or something — and he had been in the hospital for a long time, in great pain.

“You know how sick I was?” he said. “I was so sick I wasn’t even thinking about real estate.” For Knapp, that was sick.

From scratch, he had built the largest real-estate company in Iowa. As he built it, he was focused on little else. He expected his agents to work as hard as he did — an impossibility — and to embrace his work ethic. He didn’t waste valuable time playing golf, and he didn’t want them to, either. (He later relented, and, in fact, took up the game.)

As he ventured into land development, he brought that same focus. And as he got interested in reviving downtown, he became just as passionate. (But he didn’t always get his way. The elder John Ruan — like Knapp, a bantamweight small-town boy who built his own empire, didn’t always see eye to eye with Knapp. The two could argue and curse each other in the back room for an hour, then agree on something and walk out, almost hand-in-hand, as if they’d just had a friendly beer. Both were great for Des Moines.)

That’s the second Bill Knapp: Ruthless is too strong a word, but clearly dedicated and ultra-competitive and strong-willed in business. He kept track of who crossed him, but he kept that list to himself. “I never let someone know I’m mad at him,” he said one day over lunch. “I just wait and eventually get even.”

• • •

He was a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat. He was very close to Governor (and then Senator) Harold Hughes and to Governor Chet Culver. He was staunchly behind Fred Hubbell and was close to Tom and Ruth Harkin. He admired Tom Vilsack. It is hard to find a Democrat with a chance who didn’t have a big check or two from Knapp.

He was very close to John Mauro, the Polk County Democratic supervisor who, in effect, ran the county for a few terms. They were an odd couple with a genuine friendship — not just a politically convenient one. Knapp, with his luxurious homes, his Rolls-Royce and limousines, his costly clothes and millions of dollars, Mauro with his workingman’s viewpoints and his county salary and his avoidance of publicity

and shunning of social events and the city’s power structure. But they had the same values, and their bond was strong — maybe because neither wanted anything from the other.

But there were exceptions. One time a generation or so ago, Knapp let it be known that he was for Terry Branstad for governor — one of the many times the Republican was elected, but the first time with Knapp’s backing.

About that time, Mauro and Knapp and I were having lunch at the Drake Diner, and Knapp was on the defensive. “Does your wife know about this?” Mauro asked, knowing that Susan Knapp was a big Democrat. How can you do this? You’ve always supported Democrats. Who’s next — Trump? (Or maybe it was another Republican name.) It was good-natured, but it was also merciless.

Knapp, who was developing some land in Madison County across the Raccoon River from West Des Moines, finally blurted out: “Goddammit, I’ve supported every single Democrat for governor every time, and I never got a thing. At least with this guy, I got a bridge.”

That was the third Bill Knapp: Solidly Democrat, extraordinarily generous with campaign contributions, a believer deep in his bones on gay marriage and abortion and civil rights and human rights — but a little practical sometimes when it came to real estate. Or bridges.

• • •

There were other Bill Knapps, of course. The boy who had a hardscrabble life growing up in the Depression in tiny Allerton, Iowa, in Wayne County. (Decades later, when Des Moines adopted the bland motto “A Surprising Place,” Knapp scoffed: “Hell, Allerton is a surprising place.”) The 17-year-old who joined the Navy and promptly was sent to Okinawa, where during the famous battle he ran a landing craft that ferried Marines to the beaches and brought back bodies of the dead. The grieving father whose cherished 48-year-old son died way too soon. The man who took an interest in Drake University, giving it millions, buying land around the university and cleaning it up to make it lively and safe, and leading major fund-raising efforts.

With his renovation of the Drake neighborhood, “he contributed more to the life and sustenance of Drake than any Drake president,” says a professor who taught there for years.

The hard-charging Knapp mellowed as he got older — the death of his son changed him profoundly — and giving away money wisely became almost as important to him as making a real-estate deal shrewdly. Though he never quit looking for those deals. He never seemed surprised at his success — he was a confident man — but he did seem surprised that he had lived so long.

And it was a long life. When Bill Knapp died at home on Nov. 15, he was 99 years old. ■

Michael Gartner was born and raised in Des Moines. He is 87 years old. 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 minority owner of Big Green Umbrella Media. In 1997 he won a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing while at the Ames Tribune, where he was editor and co-owner.



Twelve drummers drumming...

...To the nation's 14,000 air-traffic controllers — especially those who kept working without pay after the politicians closed down the government while continuing to get their own pay...and to the quarter-million or so of Iowans — including 50,000 in Polk County — whose SNAP benefits were cut off by those same politicians... And to the countless volunteers working to get food — and Christmas presents, too — to the needy in the state. ...

Eleven pipers piping...

...for Monica Holt, moving in from New York to become the new chief at Des Moines Performing Arts, where she has big shoes (literally and figuratively) to fill as Jeff Cheloesvig retires after a spectacular 30-year run...and Samantha Mosser, moving over from the Omaha office to become president of Bankers Trust... for Trina Flack, the appropriately named new boss at Catch Des Moines, succeeding Greg Edwards, who built the convention-and-tourist organization over 25 years...and a welcome home to new Des Moines librarian Melissa McCollum. ...

Ten lords-a-leaping...

...for Drake athletic director Brian Hardin, who knows how to hire coaches, raise money and draw in fans... and to new Drake basketball coach Eric Henderson. . .and Joe Woodley, who took over Drake football and won a league title after going 72-and-5 at Grand View and to Woodley's successor at Grand View, former defensive coordinator E.J. Peterson, who went undefeated this fall in his first season...and for Iowa State's phenomenal Audi Crooks and her basketball coach, Bill Fennelly, now in his 30th year at ISU. ...

Nine ladies dancing...

...for Craig Owens, moving over to run the Harkin Institute after building Drake's John Dee Bright College...for Randy Wehofer, promoted to general manager of the Iowa Cubs in his 18th year there... and Sam Bernabe, who is stepping aside after a lifetime with the team...for the Goodmans — Shane and Jolene — who built a thriving media business in an era when media companies don't always thrive...And Celeste Tilton, too. ...

Eight maids-a-milking...

...and hoping you can make better friends next year, for R.B., T.B., G.C., and M.A., — the anonymous men onetime sports broadcaster and full-time con

artist Marty Terrell allegedly scammed for \$1.5 million or more, according to a federal indictment charging the glib Terrell with 11 counts of wire fraud. ... Presumably, Terrell is "deeply remorseful" this Christmas, as he said he was five years ago when he was sentenced to 41 months in prison for similar crimes. ...

Seven swans-a-swimming...

...for bloggers who inform and enlighten — Laura Belin, still the best and hardest-working political reporter in the state, and Dave Busiek, the retired TV guy who brings his strong values and clear writing to his columns on the media...and to Chuck Offenburger, the state's biggest cheerleader, who pops up everywhere...and, especially, to Randy Evans, who fights for openness in government and free speech for the censored and intimidated...and, luckily, he's aided and abetted by Mike Giudicessi, the best First Amendment lawyer in the Midwest...and Central Presbyterian interim pastor Sarai Rice, whose sermons should be piped into every household. ...

Six geese-a-laying...

...for the very pleasant Nichole Hansen at the Iowa Economic Development Authority...and for the architects at BNIM who designed the great new Two Rivers Park to be accessible for all handicapped — not just those in wheelchairs. And for MidAmerican Energy, which developed the nine-acre park on the east bank of the Des Moines River downtown...for the breakfast regulars at the Waveland Cafe...and the irregulars, too...for the cheerful Aaleah Johnson and her equally cheerful mom, who make sure the newspapers are at the door bright and early. ...

Five golden rings...

...for Rob Barron, who will be great as a new Des Moines city councilman. . . and former county personnel boss Jim Nahas, who walked away from his lawsuit with his reputation intact and more than \$4 million...and to his lawyers, Mike Carroll and Nick Mauro...to whoever makes the pasta at Christopher's... and the steak sandwiches at Skips...and the salmon at the Waterfront...and the soup at Palmer's...and the malts at the Drake Diner. ...

Four colly birds...

...for Iowa Public Television, which binds the state together with a common set of facts and stories the

way the Register did 50 years ago. With everything from "Masterpiece Theater" to the state wrestling tournament, from the "PBS News Hour" to "Market to Market," from "Clifford the Big Red Dog" to "Ken Burns Documentaries," it provides the same base of information to the druggist in Cherokee and the farm-equipment worker in Waterloo and the teacher in Creston and the Governor in Des Moines. ...

Three French hens...

...to Al Weber and a handful of others who have started up a free community newspaper in Ames, where news is plentiful. . .and to Amanda Lepper and Ellyn Grimm, who started Dog-Eared Books in Ames five years ago...and to Steve Schainker, who has guided Ames as city manager for more than 40 years. ...

Two turtle doves...

...for the newly married Ronald Autry and Bailey Mathis...for Marilee Mitchell, a dog whisperer...and the very organized Katie Miller. . .for retired Supreme Court Justice Bob Allbee. . .and Diane Graham and Ann Selzer and Susan Voss and Sally Pederson and Anjie Shutts and Ruth Harkin — who have led the way for others. ...

And a partridge in a pear tree...

...for three Iowans who died too young: 59-year-old Claire Celsi, who left her mark as a politician and a human being...and 54-year-old sportswriter and dogged reporter Bryce Miller...and Jay Byers, also 54, longtime head of the Des Moines Partnership who was barely getting started as Simpson College president... for Mark McCormick, greatly successful as a lawyer and jurist — but not so much as a politician — whose intellect was rarely matched in or out of court...for pastor Chet Guinn, who worked hard to save young souls and old buildings...and R. W. Nelson, who with his wife, Mary, turned the germ of an idea into a gem of a company, building Kemin Industries into a billion-dollar company that they managed to keep in the family...for Ned Chiodo and Chuck Rohm. . .and Bernie Saggau, who ran the state's boys athletic association for nearly 40 years with a hard fist and a soft heart. . .and Denny O'Grady, who sounded as if he were on the radio even when he was making pronouncements in the barber shop...for Bill Knapp, a good citizen, a good businessman and a good guy who gave away money almost as fast as he could make it... and, always, for the first Christopher. ■

CIVIC SKINNY

BY CITYVIEW STAFF

Biggest campaign donations. Register and Business Record subscribers. Grad job market is 'low and slow.'

Elections were in full swing across the nation and Iowa in November. City council seats were up for grabs, with one race finishing incredibly close, and school board elections were interesting once again. But who is donating to these campaigns? And how much?

Three Des Moines city council elections took place for Wards 1 and 2 and the at-large seat. By far, the closest election was for the at-large seat between incumbent **Mike Simonson** and **Endi Montalvo-Martinez**. Simonson narrowly won the race with 51% of the vote to 47% for Montalvo-Martinez.

Starting at January of 2025, Simonson received 181 contributions for a total of \$170,016.02, putting the average contribution to his campaign just short of four digits at \$939.32. The largest contribution came from **Virginia Lauridsen** at \$10,000. He also had 11 contributions of \$5,000. In addition, Simonson received \$1,000 from a slew of legacy names in Iowa

including former Iowa Governor **Terry Branstad**, **Christine Lauridsen Sand**, **Connie Wimer** and **Jim Cownie**.

Campaign donations for Montalvo-Martinez were quite the opposite. He received a total of \$10,573 from 116 contributions, putting the average donation at \$91.15. Montalvo-Martinez had three contributions at the top of his list that were un-itemized as of press time: \$1,350, \$1,289 and \$1,102. The highest donations with names attached were \$600 from **Jorge Montalvo** and \$580 from **Victor Martinez**. Getting 47% of the vote was not a bad showing for a first-time candidate running against some of the city's and state's deepest pockets.

In Ward 1, **Rob Barron** won with 61% of the vote against **CeCe Ibson**, who received 30%, and **Dudley Muhammad** with 6%.

Barron received 427 contributions for a total of

\$63,407.99 at an average of \$148.50 per donation.

He received two donations of \$5,000, one from Momentum Des Moines, an urbanist political action committee, and **Fred Weitz**. He also received \$3,000 from **Tim Urban**, \$2,500 from Laborers' PAC and a \$500 donation from **Tom Harkin**.

Ibsen gathered 88 donations totaling \$19,960. Her largest donations came in the form of two \$2,000 donations from **Michael Franken** and **Jordan Franken**. She had four \$1,000 donations from the Citizens to Elect Strobe-Boggus, **Kiernan Wagner**, **Johanna Chanin** and **Roberta Kahn**.

Josh Mandelbaum won his Ward 3 seat back, running unopposed and receiving 94% of the vote. Despite no meaningful challenger, Mandelbaum received 291 donations since the start of 2025 for a total of \$74,283.32. His largest donation came from **Fred Hubbell** for \$5,000. He received four \$2,500 donations,

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CIVIC SKINNY CONT...

one each from the Operating Engineers Local 234 Political Fund, Laborers’ PAC, **Jill Mandelbaum** and North Central States Carpenter PAC.

In the Des Moines Public School Board races, incumbents **Ryan Howell** and **Skylar Mayberry-Mayes** won their respective seats, running uncontested. The two at-large seats were won by **Sara Hopkins** at 38.44% and **Maria Alonzo** at 38.30%. **Marcus Coenen** came in third at 21.33%.

Howell’s largest donation came from **Cheryl and Michael Giudicessi** at \$500. Mayberry-Mayes’ largest donation was from **Vernon Johnson** at \$1,000.

Hopkins received five donations more than four figures including \$2,500 from Iowa - REALTORS Political Action Committee, \$1,500 from **James C. Conlin**, \$1,000 from the Laborers’ PAC, \$1,000 from **Tiffany Bomer**, and \$1,000 from **Nicole Syverson**.

Alonzo’s largest donation came from **Araceli Jimenez** at \$1,056. She also received \$500 from the Iowa Unity Coalition, which is “dedicated to building political power within our diverse and underrepresented communities at every level of government via in the policies that drive our state forward.”

The West Des Moines Mayoral race also happened in November between winner **Russ Trimble** and challenger **M.J. Hoag**. Trimble won the race soundly, 73% to 26%, but still racked in quite a few donations.

Incumbent Trimble, facing a challenge from a political unknown in Hoag, received 339 donations totaling \$119,550 in 2025, an average of \$352.55. His largest donation was from **Gerald Kirke** at \$5,000. His next-highest donation came from Galloway Holdings LLC, a commercial property management company, at \$2,500.

Hoag received 23 donations for a total of \$2,140.44. His largest donation was \$1,000 from **Britt Gagne**. The West Des Moines Democrats also

threw their support to Hoag with a \$200 donation. ... In the Des Moines Business Record’s Oct. 31 edition, the weekly newspaper reported its U.S. Postal Service statement of ownership, management and circulation. Paid subscription newspapers are required to do this so they can receive postal discounts and tax-funded legal revenue that independent, free publications like CITYVIEW do not receive.

The report says the average total paid distribution for the Business Record is now 2,472 for the preceding 12 months and 2,272 for the issue nearest to the filing date. The average paid electronic copies for the preceding 12 months is 111 and drops to 94 in the issue published nearest to the filing date. That means, combined print and electronic paid distribution for the Business Record, according to their self-reporting, averaged 2,383 for the preceding 12 months and 2,366 for the issue published nearest to the filing date. Polk County has approximately 240,996 residential mailboxes and 15,098 business mailboxes, totaling 256,094 mailing addresses in the county. That means, assuming all the subscribers are in Polk County (which they are not), less than 1% of all address holders subscribe to the Business Record and about 16% of businesses do.

In The Des Moines Register’s heyday of the 1960s, the paid Sunday circulation reached more than 500,000. That number is a far cry from what it is today. The average total paid distribution for the daily Register is now 15,080 for the preceding 12 months and 14,232 for the issue nearest to the filing date. The average paid electronic copies for the preceding 12 months is 9,564 and drops to 6,288 in the issue published nearest to the filing date. The combined print and electronic paid distribution for the daily Register, according to their self-reporting, averaged 24,644 for the preceding 12 months and 20,520 for the issue published nearest to the filing date. As of 2023, there were approximately 2,607,526

households in Iowa. We will do the math for you. About 1% of the households in Iowa subscribe to the daily Register.

What remains interesting is that, despite having the Des Moines Register’s office located at 400 Locust, the statement of ownership, management and circulation states that the publisher is Kristin Roberts, and the editor is Michael Anastasi, both in New York. On the Register’s website, the executive editor is listed as **Rachel E. Stassen-Berger**, who was given the role in June of this year. ...

Glassdoor, a website where current and former employees share reviews and ratings about their workplaces, reported its work-life trends for 2026. The report touched on several trends and happenings, such as AI’s impact, return to work policies, layoffs and more. Des Moines received a mention in the report, and it wasn’t good.

Glassdoor provided a table for “up and coming cities for new grads” that charted the relationship between annualized early-career wage growth and 2025 average early-career salary. Des Moines landed in the worst of its four labels, “low and slow.” Since 2020, it ranks Provo, Utah, as having the highest average annual growth at 7%, and an average salary in 2025 of \$61,164. A scroll to the bottom of the table finds Des Moines, ranked 69th with 3.4% average annual growth and an average salary in 2025 at \$59,842. Des Moines’ 3.4% growth rate was sandwiched between Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Birmingham, Alabama. ...

There is some positive news for new grads, at least those who attended Iowa State University. ISU climbed five spots to rank in the top 10 of The Princeton Review’s 20th annual ranking of undergraduate schools for entrepreneurship studies. The ranking is based on a survey of administrators at nearly 300 schools in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Europe that offer entrepreneurship studies. ■

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POLITICAL MERCURY

BY DOUGLAS BURNS

How 'Better Not Bitter' Iowa author coped with the death of husband

I've covered a lot of traffic-crash deaths.

"Walking down the track, picking up body parts gives you an appreciation for the power of a train," an Ames police sergeant told me in the early 1990s in the hours after a collision, just along the Union Pacific Railroad line, in the central Iowa city that is home to Iowa State University.

Once, as a reporter for the Ames Tribune, I beat the police to a fatal crash on Highway 30 east of Ames. The woman driving had a Bud Light bottle next to her in a car that had somehow been vaulted by the collision 20 yards or more into a barren, wind-swept winter cornfield. I ran to help and saw injured and dead passengers in two vehicles. The paramedics arrived. The helicopters, too. I wrote the story and could not sleep for days. I still see the woman with the Bud Light bottle in my nightmares.

Then, there was a motorcyclist who failed to stop on Lincoln Way in Ames and slid into of a pickup truck waiting for a red light. His head impaled on the tailpipe. It was gruesome.

In the early 2000s, while at the Carroll Daily Times Herald, I wrote a column — The Carroll County Death Lottery, whose kid is next? — about the once-seeming annual death of a teen around graduation and prom. Cell phones and a changing culture curtailed that, for the most part, as newspapers today don't report on as many fatal alcohol-fueled crashes as we did.

All of this is by way of background to explain why the last thing I wanted to read was a book about a drunk-driving death — a murder, really — because a vehicle with a drunk driver is a weapon.

So, for weeks, Michelle Cowan's "Better Not Bitter" sat buried three or four books deep in my in-the-process-of-reading living-room coffee table stack, right under half-finished books on U.S. Grant and the amazing "Strange Angel" and a trilogy on drug gangs.

Cowan, now a resident of northwest Iowa, lost her husband to a drunk-driving murder in the Omaha area in 2009. The driver who killed Joe had a blood-alcohol level twice the legal limit. I didn't want to read about this topic. All the stories are sort of the same, right?

Hardly.

Having met the author at the Okoboji Writers' Retreat, I decided to give the book a chance — largely based on my respect for the fact that Cowan actually finished the book. Lots of people show up with ideas. It's rare to see someone bring in a completed project. Cowan did. Count me as impressed.

I started reading, and the afternoon turned to evening. I read the 200-page book in one sitting.

Cowan's narrative pace is captivating, and the staging

of the tragedy, the events and feelings and fallout before and after is extraordinary. The book is, in a word, inspiring.

You get to know Joe. Really know him. Cowan creates a rich, deeply moving portrait of this most-relatable man, his life and death, and then what she believes is his afterlife.

"It was ironic that Joe's death was alcohol related, since in all the years I was with him, he rarely drank," Cowan writes. "I could probably count on one hand the times he drank any form of alcohol. And, yet, alcohol was responsible for his death."

The book is largely about how Cowan and her daughter worked to build a new normal. But, there is a political element.

The death took place in Nebraska where there is no dram-shop law allowing adult victims of drunk-driving crashes and their families to sue bars and other establishments that over-serve alcohol. Iowa does have a stronger dram shop law, so if the crash had happened a few miles to the east, across the Missouri River, in Council Bluffs or Crescent or Missouri Valley, Cowan and her family could have gone after the bar — in this case, the K Lounge in Omaha. "Dram" is a term of measurement for alcohol linked back to 1700s England where bars and pubs were called "dram shops."

In one of the cruelest turns in the book, Cowan writes about reading a memorial in the Omaha World-Herald announcing a potluck lunch and sharing of memories about a departed customer.

"The potluck was for the driver who killed Joe," Cowan writes.

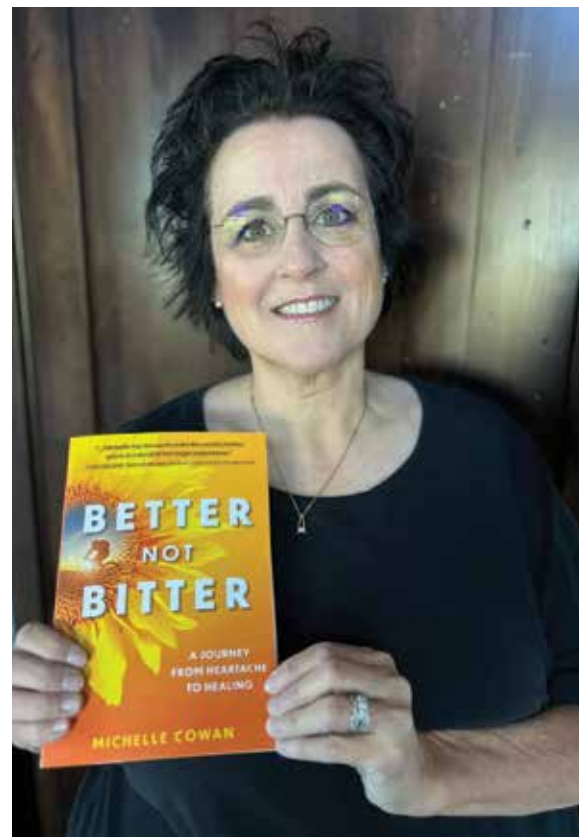
"And now I was reading that a local watering hole had a gathering to honor the driver's life," Cowan continues. "The K Lounge was the bar where she was drinking prior to the crash."

Cowan and her then teenage daughter lobbied the Nebraska Legislature for a change to the law on drunk driving liability, going so far to enlist the support one of the more admired men in Nebraska — then Nebraska Cornhusker athletic director Tom Osborne, a national-title-winning former football coach and congressman.

"Michelle has chosen to make the world a better place as a result of her tragic experience," Osborne says in a testimonial on the book cover.

Cowan, even with Osborne, runs into a wall of money and influence in the form of the liquor and restaurant lobbies who make the argument that individual responsibility should prevail.

Along the way, Cowan fights to remain positive — to help other people — an inspired trait you see in her



Author Michelle Cowan with her book, "Better Not Bitter," a chronicling of tragedy and the rebuilding of a family. Photo courtesy of Michelle Cowan

today.

What's really driven book sales of "Better Not Bitter" is Cowan's belief that there is afterlife communication with the departed.

"There were times that I knew I felt Joe around," Cowan writes of the years after Joe's death. "The energy was different and unexplainable things continued to happen in our home."

Cowan writes about assisted after-death communication (ADC) and how the strategy — "more commonly known as readings with psychic mediums" — has helped.

She details her own journey in this arena.

Perhaps there is another dimension out there. Cowan is convinced and makes a forceful case. Read and decide for yourself.

"Homicide is a crime that has a profound and lasting impact on the victim's family and friends," Cowan writes. ■

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



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COMING UP

SUBMIT ENTRIES AND PHOTOS TO EDITOR@DMCITYVIEW.COM

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

THINGS TO DO

TINSELTOWN LIGHTS UP WATER WORKS PARK

Water Works Park, 2251 George Flagg Parkway, Des Moines
www.waterworkspark.org/tinseltown-in-water-works-park
Through Dec. 14

Immersive light displays, festive entertainment and family fun return to brighten the season. Tinseltown at Water Works Park is a sparkling holiday celebration featuring immersive light displays that will transform the park into a mesmerizing winter wonderland. Also happening with the wonderful lights will be live entertainment, seasonal treats and activities for all ages.

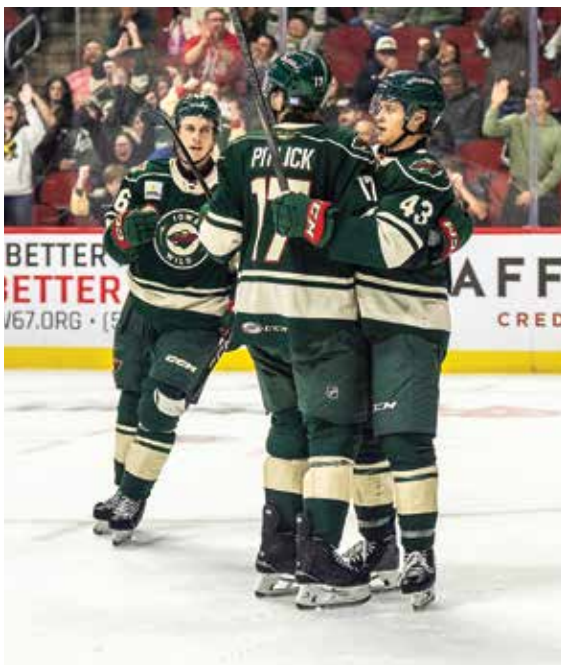


Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of the Iowa Wild

IOWA WILD

Casey's Center
233 Center St., Des Moines
www.iowawild.com

Home games:

- Dec. 6 vs. Manitoba Moose (Winnipeg Jets) at 6 p.m.
- Dec. 7 vs. Manitoba Moose at 3 p.m.
- 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.
- 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.



Photo courtesy of Brian Brandsgard

BIG GROVE VINYL MARKET

Big Grove Brewery, 555 17th St., Des Moines
www.biggrove.com
Dec. 21

From 1-4 p.m., there will be six vendors and hundreds of vinyl records, CDs, cassettes and more on display or on sale. Free admission.



Photo courtesy of Historic Valley Junction

JINGLE IN THE JUNCTION

Historic Valley Junction, West Des Moines

www.valleyjunction.com/valley-junction-events/jingle-in-the-junction-4
Dec. 4, 11 and 18

Many businesses extend their hours on Thursday nights while patrons enjoy the more than 100,000 lights that adorn the area's main street. There will be holiday shopping, trolley rides, reindeer, ice carvings, live performances, food and a visit from Santa.

24TH ANNUAL EAST VILLAGE HOLIDAY PROMENADE

Historic East Village, Des Moines
www.eastvillagedesmoines.com
Dec. 5, 12 and 19

While the festivities begin in November, the East Village will be lit up with festive fun and community cheer throughout most of December as well. The historic neighborhood becomes a winter wonderland. Winefest's Vino at Promenade with free wine samples on Dec. 5, Ugly Sweater Contest across East Village businesses on Dec. 12 and Drone Show with Santa Claus on Dec. 19.

BONDURANT INDOOR MARKET & VENDOR FAIR

Bondurant-Farrar Junior High School,
1201 Grant St. North, Bondurant
www.facebook.com/TheBondurantFarmersMarket
Dec. 7

The Bondurant Farmers Market hosts its indoor market and vendor fair this winter. There will be more than 100 local vendors with gifts, decor, food and more.

COMING UP

SUBMIT ENTRIES AND PHOTOS TO EDITOR@DMCITYVIEW.COM



Photo by Bekah Benoit

DES MOINES BUCCANEERS

MidAmerican Energy RecPlex, 6500 Grand Ave., West Des Moines
www.bucshockey.com

The Tier 1 USHL developmental hockey franchise continues to serve up a chance for amateur hockey players to enhance their ability to succeed at the next level.

Home games:

- Dec. 5 vs. Sioux City Musketeers at 7:05 p.m.
- 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.



Photo courtesy of Christkindlemarket

CHRISTKINDLEMARKET

Principal Park, 1 Line Drive, Des Moines
www.christkindlmarketdsm.com
Dec. 4-6, 11-14

Discover regional vendors showcasing handcrafted products from charming wooden stalls. Enjoy lively performances of polka music, traditional dances, and choirs in Yuletide Hall. Engage in children’s activities, and savor Glühwein (warm, mulled wine) and European beers.

STANDUP COMEDY

Casey’s Center, 730 Third St., Des Moines
www.iowaeventscenter.com

- Dec. 11: Bert Kreischer
- Dec. 29: Jeff Dunham

HOLLIDAY HULLABALLOO

Southridge Event Center, 1111 Army Post Road, Des Moines
www.holidayhullabaloo.com
Dec. 5 through Dec. 28

Experience a family-friendly holiday event with festivities and entertainment every weekend through the dates posted. Follow the link to the website for the full details on each weekend’s festivities.



Photo Jasey Michelle, Picture Iowa

IOWA WOLVES

Casey’s Center
233 Center St., Des Moines
www.iowa.gleague.nba.com

- Dec. 12 at 6:30 p.m. vs. Motor City Cruise (Detroit Pistons) | Howliday Jersey

DRAKE BASKETBALL

Knapp Center, 2601 Forest Ave., Des Moines
www.godrakebulldogs.com

Men’s home games:

- Dec. 5 vs. UAB
- Dec. 13 vs. North Dakota State
- Dec. 29 vs. Illinois State

Women’s home games:

- Dec. 7 vs. Western Illinois
- Dec. 21 vs. Minnesota ■

CITYVIEW'S

BUSINESS JOURNAL



The business of **POP-UPS**

The hustle and heart
fueling Des Moines'
pop-up scene

By Lindsey Giardino

Pop-ups may look effortless — a cute booth, a friendly maker, a handful of products inviting you in — but there is so much more behind every display. Across the Des Moines metro, small-business owners are using pop-ups not just to sell but to connect and bring their brands to life in ways the digital world can't always match. Three local entrepreneurs share how pop-ups are doing just that.

DSM Flea, co-owned by Phoenix Lee, right, and his business partner, Boey Lu, left, began with a simple vision to highlight the region's creative talent. Photo by KB Photography / Kate Bailly



Jessica Cue, owner of Macrame by Jess, learned that pop-ups involve far more behind-the-scenes effort than one would imagine.

Macrame by Jess

For Jessica Cue, the face behind Macrame by Jess, the world of pop-ups began with inspiration. She watched other makers show up at events, share their work and connect with people face to face.

"I thought it was amazing how they put themselves out there and shared what they love with others," Cue shares. "As my macrame business started to grow and people began asking if I had any upcoming events, I told myself, 'You know what, we're going for it.'"

Cue soon learned that pop-ups involve far more behind-the-scenes effort than they appear to — from figuring out booth setup to creating marketing materials to navigating event details. Still, she knew it was the right next step.

"People can't find you if they don't know about you or your brand," she says. "So, I put in the hard work, believed in myself and went for it."

For Cue, the in-person connection is everything.

"There's nothing quite like connecting in person," she says. "It's a chance for small business owners like me, who don't have a brick-and-mortar shop, to set up our own little space for the day and bring our brand to life."

Her favorite part is curating a 10-foot by 10-foot space that feels welcoming — a spot where shoppers can browse and connect.

When choosing events, Cue looks for markets and communities that align with her values and aesthetic.

"From a business standpoint, I'll also check out past events to see if the audience fits my style and brand," she shares. "One of the great things about

Des Moines is that people really show up for small businesses. It's such a supportive community, and I love being part of that."

She has also found that vendors form their own meaningful network.

"We help each other out, share tips and let one another know about future markets," she says. "It really feels like a supportive family of makers and small business owners."

Social media helps, too, giving people a way to discover pop-ups and follow small brands they might not encounter otherwise.

"Pop-ups are becoming more and more common, and I'm so grateful for the opportunity to share space with brick-and-mortar shops that open their doors to us," she adds. "If someone out there is on the fence about signing up for their first event wondering if they can really pull this off, my advice is to go for it. You won't regret it."

Every event, she says, teaches business owners something new — and those lessons add up.

DSM Flea

DSM Flea, co-owned by Phoenix Lee and his business partner, Boey Lu, began with a simple vision: Bring people together regularly and highlight the region's creative talent. Their markets feature everything from vintage clothing to original art to local food vendors.

"We've seen a lot of the bigger cities have these styles of markets, and we really just wanted to bring something cool like that to the Des Moines metro," Lee says.

They held their first event in June 2024. A year



DSM Flea features everything from vintage clothing to original art to local food vendors. Photo by KB Photography / Kate Bailly

later, they have partnered with locations such as Zavy Kitchen, Secret Admirer, Big Grove Brewery and Val Air Ballroom, along with hosting a recent night market in the East Village.

Their most ambitious project yet is a holiday pop-up store on the second floor of the 1201 Keo Building, open from Nov. 7 through the end of the year with weekly hours Wednesday through Sunday.

"This has always been the goal. It's been our dream to open our own space," Lee says. "We've been selling vintage clothing for a long time, since 2017, but, recently, with new opportunities, our dream is now becoming a reality. We wanted to provide a hub for DSM Flea. Our events are only one day out of the month, so we wanted to provide a more permanent spot."

The store features curated vintage clothing from Lee and Lu, along with vendors like nine.two, Pretty Lili's and Katelyn's Closet. Shoppers can also find jewelry makers and physical media like vinyl and VHS tapes.

"People love the holiday season," Lee says. "Everyone is trying to find that special one-of-a-kind gift for someone in their life. So, pop-ups really bring something unique and special for the shopping or dining experience — a brand-new experience that maybe someone hasn't been a part of before."

From the moment customers walk in to the moment they leave, Lee and Lu want the experience to feel memorable and welcoming.

Little Hands Dough Co.

For Blair Lakis of Little Hands Dough Co., pop-ups offered a simple benefit: meeting people.

“There’s something special about watching kids’ eyes light up when they spot the colors and textures, and I realized pop-ups were the perfect way to create those moments,” she shares. “It also felt like a fun way to step out from behind the screen and actually connect with the community.”

Lakis primarily sells online, so pop-ups have helped her reach families she may not have encountered otherwise.

“Being able to talk face to face, hear what they’re looking for and see their reactions to the products has been so valuable,” she says. “It builds trust and makes the business feel a lot more personal. People love supporting something they’ve experienced in real life.”

She loves watching kids dive into play and chatting with parents, and she enjoys cheering on fellow small-business owners, too.

Lakis selects events that feel family-friendly and align with Little Hands Dough Co.’s mission of creativity and hands-on fun. Well-organized markets with a strong local turnout are at the top of her list.

Next up, she plans to appear at several holiday



For Blair Lakis, of Little Hands Dough Co., pictured with husband, Matt, pop-ups offer a simple benefit: meeting people.



markets and continues to pop up regularly at the Downtown Des Moines Farmer’s Market.

“More people seem to be intentionally seeking out handmade or screen-free gifts, especially for kids,” Lakis says. “I’ve also noticed shoppers asking more questions and wanting to know the story behind the business. It feels like people really value supporting

local makers, which is so encouraging.”

Ultimately, she says, the growth of her business still surprises her.

“Never in a million years did I imagine Little Hands Dough Co. would grow the way it has — from my very first pop-up events to now shipping to all 50 states,” she says. “It still blows my mind.” ■

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Perfect Pets, LLC	HUDSON	BLACK HAWK	02	\$189,000	3	0	2	NEW	Pet Care (except Veterinary) Services
Sherdelivery LLC	WATERLOO	BLACK HAWK	02	\$337,400	0	8	8	NEW	Private Mail Centers
ELITE SLABS COMICS, LLC	DURANT	CEDAR	01	\$15,000	0	0	2	NEW	N/A
THN, LLC	WAUKEE	DALLAS	03	\$120,000	1	1	1	NEW	Nail Salons
1914 VENTURES LLC	Waukee	DALLAS	03	\$300,000	40	40	1	EXISTING	Car Washes
INNOVATIVE POWER TECHNOLOGIES, LLC	OKOBOJI	DICKINSON	04	\$2,460,000	8	4	4	EXISTING	All Other Miscellaneous Waste Management Services
Estherville Community Care Center	ESTHERVILLE	EMMET	04	\$1,907,500	2	56	54	NEW	Nursing Care Facilities
COULSON’S RESTORATION & REPAIR SERVICES	BAXTER	JASPER	01	\$25,000	0	3	3	EXISTING	General Automotive Repair
Hometown Hearing Centers of Iowa, LLC	Newton	JASPER	01	\$200,000	3	2	2	EXISTING	Offices of Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapists, and Audiologists
Living A Fit Life, LLC	NORTH LIBERTY	JOHNSON	01	\$603,200	2	0	2	NEW	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
S C C PROPERTY SERVICE LLC	CEDAR RAPIDS	LINN	02	\$25,000	2	3	1	EXISTING	Residential Remodelers
Game Station Inc	Cedar Rapids	LINN	02	\$250,000	0	2	2	EXISTING	Amusement Arcades
Northtowne Cycling, LLC	Cedar Rapids	LINN	02	\$276,100	1	17	17	EXISTING	N/A
FEARLESS ENDEAVORS, INC. DBA EVERYMAN	Cedar Rapids	LINN	02	\$350,000	2	2	2	EXISTING	Office Supplies (except Paper) Manufacturing
Northtowne Cycling, LLC	Cedar Rapids	LINN	02	\$423,300	1	17	17	EXISTING	N/A
Hands Up Holdings, LLC	Cedar Rapids	LINN	01	\$506,000	0	24	24	EXISTING	Translation and Interpretation Services
STODOLA MANAGEMENT LLC	CEDAR RAPIDS	LINN	02	\$867,300	1	1	1	EXISTING	Offices of Dentists
K3 Performance Inc.	Hiawatha	LINN	02	\$207,000	0	6	6	NEW	Sports and Recreation Instruction
GLE Glenwood, LLC	GLENWOOD	MILLS	04	\$86,000	2	0	6	EXISTING	Offices of Optometrists
Wire Nuts Electric Service LLC	STANTON	MONTGOMERY	03	\$30,000	1	1	1	NEW	Electrical Contractors
BGI Holdings LLC	ALTOONA	POLK	03	\$1,479,800	2	0	2	EXISTING	Commercial and Industrial Machinery and Equipment (except Automotive and EI
PIA DSM LLC	CLIVE	POLK	03	\$100,000	8	8	8	NEW	N/A
MOCE Marketing, LLC	DES MOINES	POLK	03	\$350,000	0	14	14	EXISTING	Marketing Consulting Services
UTILITY SPECIALISTS, LLC	DES MOINES	POLK	03	\$3,207,000	0	0	1	EXISTING	Veterinary Services
KING SHIPPING INC	JOHNSTON	POLK	03	\$1,847,700	35	0	1	NEW	Couriers
HEART AND SOLAR LLC	WDM	POLK	03	\$50,000	1	1	1	NEW	Electrical Contractors
JP’S BILLIARD SUPPLY LLC	BETTENDORF	SCOTT	01	\$70,000	0	2	2	EXISTING	Sporting and Recreational Goods and Supplies
MLC Enterprises, LLC	DAVENPORT	SCOTT	01	\$451,100	0	15	40	EXISTING	Merchant Wholesalers
Outlaw Health LLC	Eldridge	SCOTT	01	\$200,500	2	2	2	NEW	Limited-Service Restaurants
GB ROCK LLC	ROCK VALLEY	SIOUX	04	\$1,608,000	4	4	4	NEW	Offices of Chiropractors
DBA Ramsey’s Market DBA Ramsey’s Ace Hardware	Lenox	TAYLOR	03	\$210,000	2	7	7	NEW	N/A
TEQUILA GRILL LLC	KALONA	WASHINGTON	01	\$45,000	0	11	11	EXISTING	Supermarkets and Other Grocery (except Convenience) Stores
								EXISTING	Full-Service Restaurants

TRANSACTIONS FROM SEPTEMBER 2025

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COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS IN POLK COUNTY FROM JULY 7, 2025, TO JULY 24

1210 FIRST AVE. N., ALTOONA
SALE DATE: 2025-07-09
SALE PRICE: \$208,578
SELLER: F&S ROSENBERGER LLC
BUYER: DCW INVESTMENTS LLC
ACRES: 0.798
SQUARE FEET: 0



1301 FIRST AVE., N. ALTOONA
SALE DATE: 2025-07-09
SALE PRICE: \$790,000
SELLER: ABRAHAM PROPERTIES LLC
BUYER: UCS HOLDINGS LLC
ACRES: 0.638
SQUARE FEET: 4,500

5075 S.E. DELAWARE AVE., ANKENY
SALE DATE: 2025-07-09
SALE PRICE: \$9,758,000
SELLER: PARLAY ANKENY LLC
BUYER: EXCHANGERIGHT NET-LEASED
ALL-CASH 15 DST
ACRES: 6.418
SQUARE FEET: 53,960



2319 BELL AVE., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-07-09
SALE PRICE: \$1,050,000
SELLER: GREENSPIRE HOLDINGS LLC
BUYER: 801 ASHWORTH LLC
ACRES: 3.420
SQUARE FEET: 15,554

175 S. NINTH ST., SUITE 655, WEST DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-07-10
SALE PRICE: \$250,000
SELLER: T&S INVESTMENT PROPERTIES LLC
BUYER: SEYMOUR, ANDREW
ACRES: 0.044
SQUARE FEET: 1,920

4505 DOUGLAS AVE., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-07-10
SALE PRICE: \$900,000
SELLER: BERNARD J CONNOLLY FAMILY LLC
BUYER: IOWA ZOTUNG BAPTIST CHURCH
ACRES: 3.138
SQUARE FEET: 8,824

175 S. NINTH ST., SUITE 520, WEST DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-07-10
SALE PRICE: \$700,000
SELLER: ORTON HOMES LLC
BUYER: DEL BOCA VISTA LLC
ACRES: 0.132
SQUARE FEET: 5,760

119 19TH ST., SUITE 206, WEST DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-07-10
SALE PRICE: \$70,000
SELLER: JANSSEN PROPERTIES LLC
BUYER: OPPORTUNITY LEASE COMPANY LLC
ACRES: 0.050
SQUARE FEET: 800

515 COLLEGE AVE., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-07-10
SALE PRICE: \$550,871
SELLER: TOWNHALL GP LLC
BUYER: TOWNHALL ASSOCIATES LP
ACRES: 0.629
SQUARE FEET: 9,142

1348 E. EUCLID AVE., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-07-11
SALE PRICE: \$2,100,000
SELLER: 1348 E EUCLID AVE LLC
BUYER: THE BEACON VILLAGE LLC
ACRES: 2.608
SQUARE FEET: 23,672

1601 SIXTH AVE., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-07-13
SALE PRICE: \$35,000
SELLER: INDIGO DAWN LLC
BUYER: TOWNHALL ASSOCIATES LP
ACRES: 0.236
SQUARE FEET: 4,680

NO ADDRESS LISTED
SALE DATE: 2025-07-14
SALE PRICE: \$1,820
SELLER: 1ST STREET FLATS LLC
BUYER: CITY OF ANKENY
ACRES: 0.007
SQUARE FEET: 0

NO ADDRESS LISTED
SALE DATE: 2025-07-14
SALE PRICE: \$1,850
SELLER: EVELYN MATSON-DAVIS TRUST
BUYER: CITY OF ALTOONA
ACRES: 0.219
SQUARE FEET: 0

2805 30TH ST., DES MOINES
SALE DATE: 2025-07-15
SALE PRICE: \$1,100,000
SELLER: BRICKSTONE APTS LLC
BUYER: 2805 30TH STREET LLC
ACRES: 0.887
SQUARE FEET: 25,896

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1420 W. BROADWAY ST., POLK CITY

SALE DATE: 2025-07-15
SALE PRICE: \$515,000
SELLER: MCHES LLC
BUYER: KMH LAND LLC
ACRES: 0.517
SQUARE FEET: 3,636

NO ADDRESS LISTED

SALE DATE: 2025-07-16
SALE PRICE: \$3,250,000
SELLER: AVAILA BANK
BUYER: JJ LARSON PROPERTIES LLC
ACRES: 38.270
SQUARE FEET: 0

4320 WESTOWN PARKWAY,
WEST DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2025-07-17
SALE PRICE: \$1,125,000
SELLER: 4300 WESTOWN LLC
BUYER: OIS MANAGEMENT SERVICES LLC
ACRES: 1.206
SQUARE FEET: 5,328

109 63RD ST., DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2025-07-18
SALE PRICE: \$1,400,000
SELLER: 109 63RD STREET LC
BUYER: BADER, BOYD RANDALL
ACRES: 0.892
SQUARE FEET: 8,200

NO ADDRESS LISTED

SALE DATE: 2025-07-19
SALE PRICE: \$1,190,000
SELLER: FORRET ACRES LLC
BUYER: HOPE DEVELOPMENT & REALTY LLC
ACRES: 8.720
SQUARE FEET: 0

3301 111TH ST., URBANDALE

SALE DATE: 2025-07-21
SALE PRICE: \$255,000
SELLER: NEXT TEN LLC
BUYER: PORCH LIGHT WOODWORKING & RENOVATIONS INC
ACRES: 0.107
SQUARE FEET: 1,500

575 S. PRAIRIE VIEW DRIVE,
WEST DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2025-07-22
SALE PRICE: \$14,525,000
SELLER: SILVERWEST-I WDM LLC
BUYER: STAYSHARPE WEST DES MOINES LLC
ACRES: 1.798
SQUARE FEET: 69,814

1566 S.E. MAFFITT LAKE COURT,
WEST DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2025-07-22
SALE PRICE: \$1,400,000
SELLER: TIMOTHY G HILDRETH REVOCABLE TRUST
BUYER: CHARLES I COLBY & RUTH COLBY INVESTMENT TRUST
ACRES: 10.918
SQUARE FEET: 1,928

NO ADDRESS LISTED

SALE DATE: 2025-07-22
SALE PRICE: \$1,340,000
SELLER: HOPE K FARMS LLC
BUYER: BROOKSIDE NORTH LLC
ACRES: 13.658
SQUARE FEET: 0

NO ADDRESS LISTED

SALE DATE: 2025-07-22
SALE PRICE: \$5,953,500
SELLER: WILLIAM B KIMBERLEY REVOCABLE TRUST
BUYER: IALCO POLK COUNTY LLC
ACRES: 119.084
SQUARE FEET: 0

NO ADDRESS LISTED

SALE DATE: 2025-07-22
SALE PRICE: \$5,100
SELLER: BLOYER RENTALS LLC
BUYER: CITY OF ANKENY
ACRES: 0.008
SQUARE FEET: 0

805 S.E. 14TH COURT, DES MOINES

SALE DATE: 2025-07-23
SALE PRICE: \$435,000
SELLER: SOUTHEAST 23RD STREET PROPERTY LLC
BUYER: HANSEN, RICHARD K
ACRES: 0.364
SQUARE FEET: 2,128

8980 HICKMAN ROAD, CLIVE

SALE DATE: 2025-07-23
SALE PRICE: \$600,000
SELLER: ECHQ LLC
BUYER: PARK PLACE INVESTMENTS LLC
ACRES: 1.256
SQUARE FEET: 14,022

NO ADDRESS LISTED

SALE DATE: 2025-07-23
SALE PRICE: \$10,013,410
SELLER: BRESSON REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS LLC
BUYER: IALCO POLK COUNTY LLC
ACRES: 274.335
SQUARE FEET: 0

619 17TH AVE. N.W., ALTOONA

SALE DATE: 2025-07-24
SALE PRICE: \$17,875,409
SELLER: A MEADOWS I LLC
BUYER: AVENUE LIVING US OPERATING LP NO 17
ACRES: 5.571
SQUARE FEET: 137,764

310 S.E. GATEWAY DRIVE, GRIMES

SALE DATE: 2025-07-24
SALE PRICE: \$5,451,830
SELLER: OAK CROSSING LLC
BUYER: AVENUE LIVING US OPERATING LP NO 18
ACRES: 3.530
SQUARE FEET: 57,012

1401 ADVENTURELAND DRIVE, N.W.,
ALTOONA

SALE DATE: 2025-07-24
SALE PRICE: \$52,816,500
SELLER: BLUE RIDGE COMMONS LLC
BUYER: AVENUE LIVING US OPERATING LP NO 13
ACRES: 18.253
SQUARE FEET: 397,563

8615 ILTIS DRIVE, URBANDALE

SALE DATE: 2025-07-24
SALE PRICE: \$13,145,772
SELLER: CROSS CREEK LLC
BUYER: AVENUE LIVING US OPERATING LP NO 21
ACRES: 5.432
SQUARE FEET: 109,078 ■



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Jorgensen joins DMU Clinic - Physical Therapy

Sarina (Lily) Jorgensen, P.T., D.P.T., has joined the providers at the Des Moines University Clinic - Physical Therapy, located at 3200 Grand Ave. at the DMU32 Health and Business Complex in Des Moines. Jorgensen earned a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from Des Moines University Medicine and Health Sciences in 2021, following a Bachelor of Arts degree in exercise science from Hope College in Holland, Michigan, in 2016. She is a certified brain injury specialist specializing in pelvic health and neurological disorders. In 2020, she received her Lee Silverman Voice Treatment BIG certification, an evidence-based, intensive training that better equips physical and occupational therapists to treat individuals with Parkinson's disease and other neurological conditions.



Sarina (Lily) Jorgensen

Mishra named chief research officer at Des Moines University Medicine and Health Sciences

Des Moines University Medicine and Health Sciences has promoted Pravin Mishra, Ph.D., M.B.A., to the role of chief research officer. In this role, he will continue to lead the university's strategic research priorities and further advance the foundation he has built since joining DMU in 2023.

Des Moines Art Center announces Kloewer as inaugural chief operating officer

The Des Moines Art Center announced the appointment of Susan Kloewer as chief operating officer (COO). Kloewer is the Art Center's inaugural COO, a position established to help position the institution for future growth and success. An accomplished administrator and respected executive with a background in museums, Kloewer brings a wealth of experience in a variety of operations-related fields, including collections care and display, capital improvements, historical preservation, master planning, and visitor and guest engagement. Her expertise includes donor cultivation, fundraising, strategic communications, government relations, and volunteer initiatives.

Reisinger named to First National Bank board of directors

Scott T. Bauer, president of First National Bank, announced that Rebecca A. Reisinger joined the Board of Directors. A native of Ames, Reisinger graduated from Ames High School before attending the University of Northern Iowa, where she earned a degree in political science in 1996. She then spent more than five years on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., serving in various roles, most recently as Health Policy Advisor for the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance. She went on to earn her law degree from George Mason University School of Law in 2005 and returned to Iowa to sit for the bar exam.



Rebecca A. Reisinger

Jimmy Wright takes helm and afternoons for 93.3 KIOA

After nearly 35 years at 102.5 on Des Moines' radio dial, Jimmy Wright is moving to 93.3 KIOA as the new content director and afternoon host. Wright has been with the Des Moines Media Group (DMMG) since 1991, moving through the ranks and

becoming a staple of central Iowa workdays and parties alike. KIOA listeners will catch Wright from 3-7 p.m. each workday. Then, on Fridays, he brings the week to a close with "Jimmy's Weekend Kick-Off" at 5 p.m. When not on the radio, Wright will oversee all content for KIOA from music and social media to digital assets and promotions.

Maschka appointed as chief development officer for Lutheran Services in Iowa

Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) announced the appointment of Andrea Maschka as chief development officer, effective Oct. 30. Maschka brings more than two decades of leadership in philanthropy, nonprofit management, sales and strategic communications to the role, advancing LSI's mission to respond to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service and community impact. Maschka will lead LSI's statewide fundraising and development strategy, guiding a team of philanthropy directors and strengthening donor, corporate and foundation partnerships to expand support for vital services across Iowa.

Semprini selected as national research champion

Jason Semprini, Ph.D., MPP, assistant professor of public health at Des Moines University Medicine and Health Sciences, was named to the inaugural cohort of AcademyHealth's Champions for Health Services and Prevention Research program. Supported by the Doris Duke Foundation, the program will foster connections between researchers and policymakers in communities across the nation.



Jason Semprini

Sweet named as chief advancement officer for United Way of Central Iowa

United Way of Central Iowa announced that Laura Sweet has been named the organization's chief advancement officer, bringing more than two decades of nonprofit executive leadership and community engagement experience to the role. Sweet joins United Way of Central Iowa after serving as vice president and chief operating officer at Des Moines Performing Arts, where she directed major capital projects, advanced revenue and audience development strategies, and championed inclusive cultural initiatives focused on accessibility, safety and community voice.



Laura Sweet

Des Moines Menace announce Davy as club's general manager

The Des Moines Menace announced today that Kyle Davy has been appointed the club's new General Manager as the organization prepares for the 2026 USL League Two season. Davy has been part of the Menace since 2023, supporting the club in areas including ticketing, operations, marketing, sponsorships and membership strategy. He now joins the club full-time to lead both soccer and business operations. In addition to his new role with the Menace, Davy serves as the director of soccer operations for Krause Group, helping guide the organization's broader soccer portfolio, including the Pro Iowa initiative. Prior to joining Krause Group in 2019, Davy served as chief revenue officer for the Iowa Wolves in the NBA G League. ■



Kyle Davy

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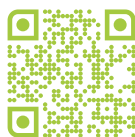


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'Twas the night before...

Our Christmas classic for the holidays



Story by Robert Hullihan
Illustrations by Brian Duffy

Publisher's note: Forty-six years ago, when Michael Gartner was editor of The Des Moines Register, he walked over to the desk of writer Bob Hullihan and said, "How about writing me a Christmas classic for the holidays?" Hullihan said, "Sure." And he did. It ran in the Register and years later in the Ames Tribune. Gartner sent the story to me in 2007 and asked that I consider running it in CITYVIEW. I did, and it has been running each year since as part of our holiday tradition. Merry Christmas. — Shane Goodman, publisher

The waterbug had grown old and weary. And he was alone. He was the only one of his kind left in the house. He knew he would never survive the next spring cleaning. He could not scurry away from the poison sprays anymore. Still, the waterbug had been so clever in his youth, and he had lived so long, that now he was the senior creature in the house. He knew that he had a last duty to perform.

So, as Christmas Eve approached, he called a meeting of all the creatures in the house. They met at a dark joint in the woodwork. It was a place that had happy memories of youth for the old waterbug. Once he had gathered with old friends here. Now all the old friends were gone. The waterbug did not recognize any of the young creatures who began to assemble around him.

There was a pair of silverfish, shameless and brazen because they had grown up in one of the popular novels on the bookshelf. An insolent young spider came. Her web was deep in a stereo set. She greeted the old waterbug with: "Hey, old daddy... what's happenin'?" Three ladybugs arrived, carefully made up and proud of their beauty. A cricket who lived in the television set came in and began acting like a game show host.

The old waterbug looked at the creatures sadly. He knew he was dealing with a new generation. But he cleared his throat and began:



“ Now I know you are all new creatures in the house.
This will be your first Christmas Eve here.
It is my duty to tell you that there must be no stirring on that night.
We are under a severe and clear directive. ”

— The waterbug

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“Now I know you are all new creatures in the house. This will be your first Christmas Eve here. It is my duty to tell you that there must be no stirring on that night. We are under a severe and clear directive. Not a creature in this house may stir on Christmas Eve, especially not the mice. It is a Tradition.”

When he said that, the old waterbug stared directly at a wild young mouse who had come late to the meeting. The mouse had been born in the fields of summer and had only come into the house when the nights grew cold. The old waterbug drew himself up in all of his brittle majesty. He sensed that he would have trouble with the mouse. The mouse was wild and resentful and, yes, he was a troublemaker.

“Wait a minute,” said the mouse. “Whose tradition? That’s a human tradition you’re talking about. It has nothing to do with us creatures! We can stir around all we want to, Christmas Eve or not!”

“Right on, man,” said the spider.

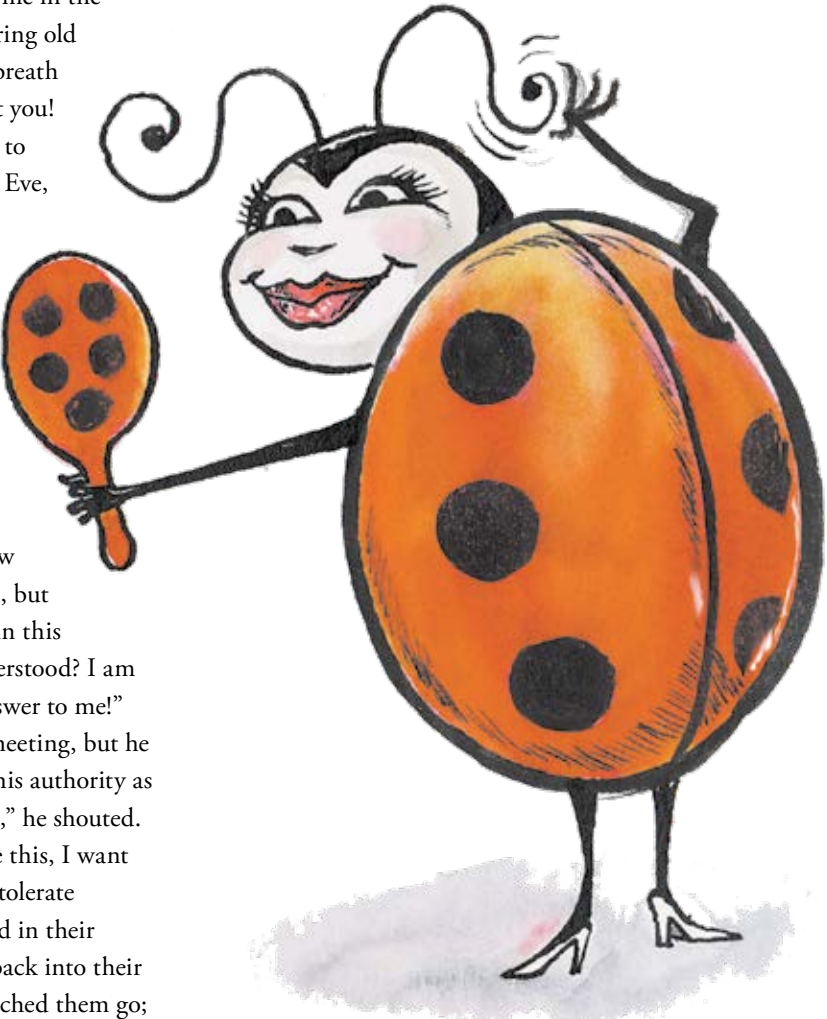
“Stay tuned, stay tuned,” shouted the cricket. The silverfish giggled indecently and the ladybugs batted their long eyelashes.

“And why should we cooperate with the humans, anyway?” the mouse shouted, wild now with rebellion. “They’re trying to kill all of us.

Why, right now, there’s a trap set for me in the basement. And you, you poor doddering old waterbug, you can scarcely get your breath from all the poison they’ve sprayed at you! Stir? I’ll show you stirring! I’m going to race around this house all Christmas Eve, and I just hope the other creatures will join me.”

It was a full-scale revolt. The old waterbug could only draw a painful breath and thunder at the creatures: “Stop! This is quite enough. Creatures have always obeyed the Tradition on Christmas Eve. It’s been handed down from generation to generation. I don’t know why, and I don’t know what it means, but there will be no stirring of creatures in this house on Christmas Eve! Is that understood? I am senior creature here, and you will answer to me!”

The old waterbug dismissed the meeting, but he made one more attempt to establish his authority as the creatures left. “And you silverfish,” he shouted. “If we ever have another meeting like this, I want you to come fully dressed. I will not tolerate nudity!” But the silverfish just giggled in their naughty way and wiggled off to get back into their popular novel. The old waterbug watched them go;



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“Wait a minute. Whose tradition? That’s a human tradition you’re talking about. It has nothing to do with us creatures! We can stir around all we want to, Christmas Eve or not!”

— The mouse

he had never been more discouraged in his life.

He began to think about the wild, young mouse and the fiery way he had spoken out. The old waterbug did not understand the mouse at all, but he rather admired him. He did not want the mouse to come to harm. The old waterbug thought about the trap set in the basement. He thought about the day when the mouse, being young, would foolishly attempt to take the bait. Perhaps, in an act of bravado, he would try to do it that very Christmas Eve. The old waterbug sighed and thought about what he must do.

He crawled painfully through the rooms of the house until he came to the Christmas decorations. For hours he gnawed away at a sprig of holly until he had removed a small piece of it. He carried it into the basement and found the trap set for the mouse. Risking his life, the old waterbug carefully pushed the cheese bait off the trap and replaced it with the bit of holly. He didn’t get back to his dark place under the drain until dawn. He was exhausted.

The very next night was Christmas Eve. The little wild mouse came bounding out of his hole determined to stir around the house all night. He saw the trap with its bit of holly and stopped short. He knew at once that this was the work of the old waterbug. “Why, the old fool,” thought the



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mouse, “he knows I don’t eat that stuff.” And then the mouse realized that was the point. The old waterbug had brought a gift of warning and good will. They might never understand one another, but they could wish one another well.

The little mouse thought about that idea as he went on through the house to the Christmas tree, where he was to meet the other creatures. He had promised to lead them “in a night of stirring around in this house that they won’t soon forget.” The silverfish, the ladybugs, the spider and the cricket were waiting for him. But they were strangely silent. None of them had ever seen a Christmas tree lighted before. It awed them.

The mouse looked at the tree and knew he had never seen anything so beautiful, not even in the fields of summer. He didn’t understand what it was. He thought, “This must be the Tradition the old waterbug is so hyper about.” Dimly, the mouse knew that something was on display here that surpassed all the creatures and all humanity. The mouse made a decision and quickly told the other creatures what to do. He knew the old waterbug would be coming out soon to see what was going on.

And, sure enough, the old waterbug came crawling slowly out, but he stopped in confusion when he saw what the creatures were doing. The little mouse stood motionless among the tiny plastic animals around a manger. The spider had spun a brilliant web on the tree, and it shimmered in the lights. The silverfish and the ladybugs hung like glittering ornaments from one limb of the tree, and the cricket quietly sang a simple, peaceful song.

The old waterbug looked carefully at what the creatures were doing. He wanted to remember this sight for all the rest of his life. Then he turned and crawled back to his place under the drain. He slept deeply and, for the first time in many nights, he did not have a nightmare about the dreaded Orkin man who would surely come for him in the spring. He knew that the Tradition had been passed on.

The little mouse watched from the corner of his eye as the old waterbug left. Then he stepped out from among the tiny plastic animals and called to the rest of the creatures. “All right, fellas. Let’s knock it off for the rest of the night, OK?”

All the creatures went quietly back to their places. Something had happened to them when they made their display for the old waterbug. They did not understand it, but they felt good about it.

Not one of the creatures stirred for the rest of the night. ■



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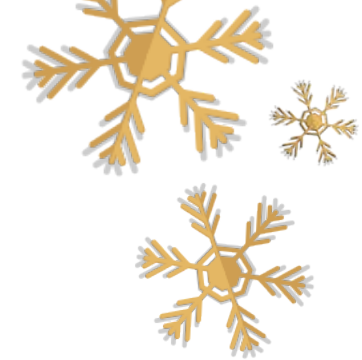


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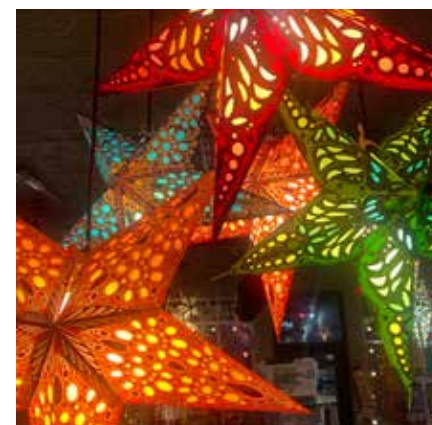
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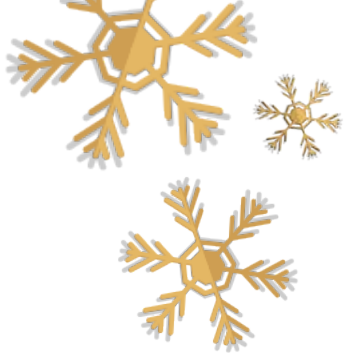


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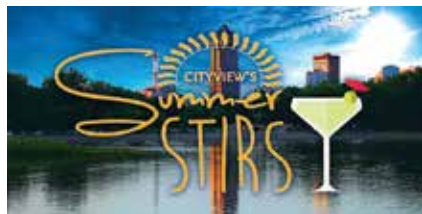
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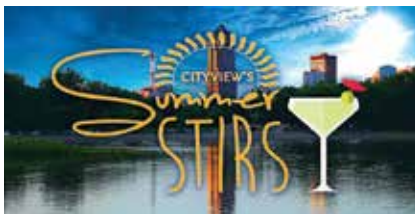
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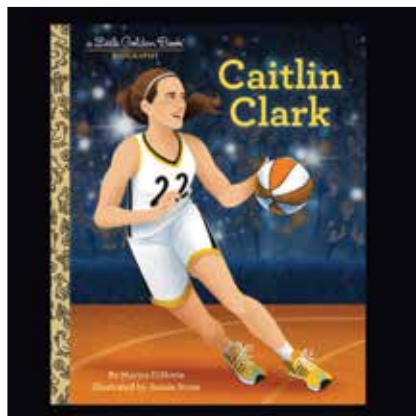
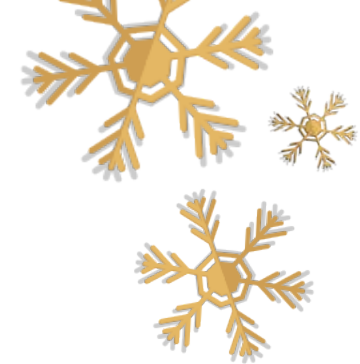


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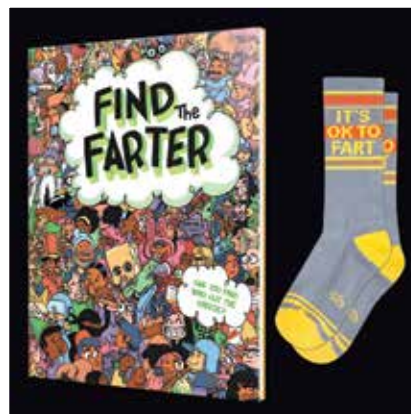
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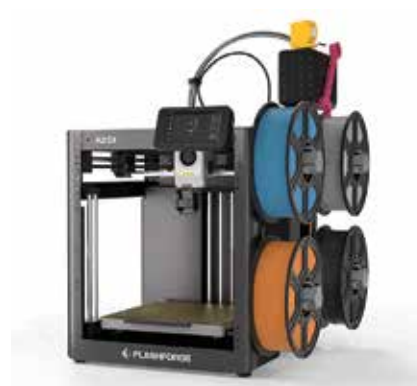


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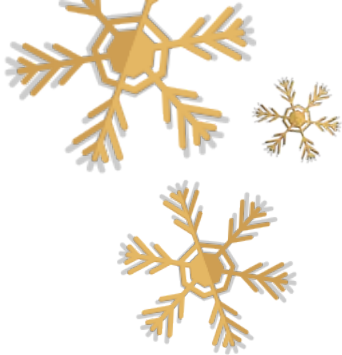
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EAT & DRINK

Highland Underground

Cocktails, fondue, a retro vibe and no TVs.

BY JACKIE WILSON

As one business shutters, another often snaps up the location and revamps it, reopening within a few years. Yet, for the Highland Underground, it took more than 40 years to be transformed from a department store into a cocktail bar.

The Highland Underground opened in early October and is in the basement of the former Klein's Department Store, located in Highland Park at 3614 Sixth Ave.

If you have never been there, don't look for large outdoor sign. It's not there. Instead, look closely for a discreet sign in the building's window. Then, follow the neon sign, walking downstairs.

Give your regards to the permanent hostess dressed in 1970s attire and head on inside. The dimly-lit spot resembles a 1970s basement with orange, gold and green décor. Dark paneled walls are reminiscent of your parents' or grandparents' basement. Completing the look includes gold velvet chairs draped with crocheted afghans (an ancient name for blankets).

All of the décor are original, period pieces. Old kitchen tables, barstools, lamps and bar glasses are all thrifted from secondhand stores. Mannequins are draped with department store finds. Choose from a stack of cork and wood coasters at the bar to place under your drink to avoid water rings.

Rotary telephones that actually work ring from one booth to the next. As the bartender answered the ringing phone, a table of ladies sitting across the room giggled, as if they made a prank phone call.

Now, on to the drinks. They have put some creative effort into naming the drinks and keeping the department store feel. The Signatures department offers a handful of cocktails for \$12. The Earlybird Shopper is a twist on the tequila sunrise, and the Paisely Print is Cedar Ridge bourbon, nonino, spiced pear with floral bitters.

Their Classics department includes a Chuck's Mule, with Cedar Ridge vodka, amaro Averna, demerara and ginger beer for \$10-\$11. The Fragrance department includes gin, honey, hibiscus, lemon and Freixenet Negro Cava. The Classics are \$3 off during happy hour from 3-5 p.m.

A full bar also includes wine by the glass, starting at \$7, with most bottles costing from \$28-\$32. A simple Tito's drink is \$7. Bottled and canned beer starts at \$4 and includes local and domestic beers.

The only food they serve is either a cheese or chocolate fondue. The cheese fondue arrived in a vintage pot, with a lit Sterno underneath to keep it hot and melty. It came with bread, sausages, pear, potatoes, celery and red peppers. Surprisingly, the cheese to dip



ratio came out perfectly, without leftover cheese or food. A cheese or chocolate fondue for two costs \$28; for four people, it's \$52. Stay tuned for a few more snacky food items serving one person.

There are no televisions — well, ones that work, that is. There is a brown TV console used as an end table, but, otherwise, there were no sports to glance at, which is a unique concept in today's entertainment-driven bars. The bartender says the ambiance provides for more "forced" conversations.

And, it did. As another boomer couple arrived, we chatted about the similar retro furnishings that we grew up with. We laughed as we pointed out the cork coasters, that we both still have in our home and promised to return soon to the Highland Underground. ■

Trostel's Greenbriar, after the gunslinger rode off

Johnston restaurant now has three distinctive parts — a white tablecloth dining room, a magnificent mahogany bar room and a shaded patio.

EAT & DRINK



When Colorado cowboy Paul Trostel rode into Des Moines in the early 1970s, the city thought: appetizers meant a choice of shrimp cocktail, tomato juice or fruit cocktail; that wine choices were simply “red or white;” and that French dressings were all orange and very sweet. He changed Des Moines restaurant culture by sheer force of personality at Colorado Feed & Grain and Rosie's Cantina on Ingersoll. Then, in 1987, he shocked Des Moines by pulling up stakes and moving, cowboy style, to the frontier's edge in Johnston.

At that time, Pioneer-owned Green Meadows had constructed a building to encourage restaurant options for Pioneer's Johnston employees. Three different restaurants had tried it out and all gave up in one year or less. Paul named his place Greenbriar to please the realtor and to suggest the 18th century resort in West Virginia — the Greenbrier.

Trostel's Greenbriar is a steakhouse that resists that restrictive label. It is a place where people come to celebrate the big occasions of their lives — marriages, graduations, birthdays, funerals and reunions. The restaurant now has three distinctive parts — a white tablecloth dining room, a magnificent mahogany bar room and a shaded patio.

Paul passed away in 2011 after a full life of hosting, rodeo, car racing, demolition derby, family, friends, drinking, gambling, rugby, etc. His portrait, titled “Culinary Gunslinger,” faces the south side of the bar room as if the master host is still looking after his guests. (That nickname came from a CITYVIEW cover story.) Paul's son, Troy, ran the kitchen before his surprise passing in 2024.



Greenbriar Gunpowder Ribeye
Photo courtesy of Trostel's Greenbriar

The restaurant continues providing special occasion-style ambiance and service under Robyn Trostel, Paul's daughter and Troy's sister. Continuity is helped along by an amazing retention of employees, including two from day one in 1987. That only happens in special places where employees and customers are treated like family.

New chef Jacob Kono comes from Honolulu, via a brief time in Omaha, and loves it here.

“All my previous experience was with big corporate restaurants. When I saw the ad for this job, I jumped. I had driven from Omaha to Saylorville several times for fishing, and I love the family atmosphere here. My wife and kids like it, and I can now save money for a mortgage downpayment. That's no longer possible for young native Hawaiians in Honolulu.”

The menu remains traditional. When Paul was mentoring the city about appetizers, he introduced things that became standards — Boursin mushrooms au jus, artichoke-spinach dip and shrimp baked in Havarti. They remain stars on the appetizer menu that also heralds fried Brussels sprouts, Thai beef rolls and prime rib as an appetizer.

Troy was trained in classic French cuisine and brought the feature of ordering any of Escoffier's mother sauces and many of their derivatives to any dish, even burgers. Only Bearnaise among those survives, but Kono says it is by far the most popular steak sauce, ahead of garlic beurre blanc. Soups include Troy's recipe French onion, which is classical, and beef



TROSTEL'S GREENBRIAR

5810 Merle Hay Road, Johnston, 515-253-0124
Monday - Thursday, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. and 4:30-9 p.m.; Friday 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. and 4:30-9:30 p.m.; Saturday, 4:30-9:30 p.m.

Greenbriar Prime Rib
Photo courtesy of Trostel's Greenbriar

barley, which is not.

The menus remind that this is a de facto steakhouse. Prime rib is featured daily, not just on weekends, and is also available as a salad, appetizer, French dip, or open-faced sandwich. It is worth the applications, slow roasted and generously cut. The regular cut is larger than most “large cuts” elsewhere, and the large cut is still priced less than \$40.

Similarly, the signature rotisserie chickens that Paul and Troy developed at Chips in Ankeny also are used for salads and sandwiches. Kono says his biggest culinary surprises in Iowa were walleye, unknown to Hawaii, and the breaded pork tenderloins. The latter are crumb crusted as sandwiches here, available only for lunch.

Greenbriar dinners, and even sandwiches, come with fries or salads. The restaurant offers a short seasonal menu that currently includes beef short ribs, mahi mahi and roast shanks of lamb. Otherwise, as Kono says, “Don't change what works.” ■

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

Paul Rottenberg at A Dong

Over marinated roast pork bún and green bean stir fry, we talked about the hospitality business in central Iowa.

Paul Rottenberg is the president and founder of Orchestrate Hospitality. He has been named both “restaurateur” and “hotelier” of the year in Iowa. His 25-year-old Des Moines company is managing partner of Centro, Django, Gateway Market & Café, Bubba, Zombie Burger, Liberty Street Kitchen/Pella, Main Street Markt/Pella, Hilton Garden Inn Des Moines/Urbandale and Holiday Inn Express and Suites in Altoona. We asked him to lunch, and he suggested A Dong, the oldest surviving Vietnamese café in Des Moines, since 1989.

Entering from the parking lot, one is greeted by one wall of CITYVIEW Best of Des Moines award plaques and an opposite wall of drawings by young children. That family-friendly vibe suits A Dong, where our server warned us to stay out of the restaurant business. Over marinated roast pork bún and green bean stir fry, we talked about the hospitality business in central Iowa.

Rottenberg noted that I seemed surprised at his choice of restaurants. I told him that most restaurant people want to meet at a place of their own.

“I’ve outgrown that. I like Asian food because it seems healthy to me. I have lost 30 pounds since I started eating more of it, and I feel great. I also love C Fresh Market. It makes me feel like I am in New York.”

Rottenberg was a Jersey boy. What brought him to Des Moines?

“I went to the University of Colorado and then followed a girlfriend to Tucson. She had taken a job with a Good Earth there. I came along and lost the girlfriend to the chef. At any rate, Good Earth was a big chain founded by Bill Galt who envisioned something like Panera before Panera. He wanted a place where executives and blue collar workers came together over soup. Those were 6,000-square-foot restaurants, and the competition was IHOP and Denny’s. It was a time when big restaurants were infatuated by all things canned and frozen. Good Earth made meals fresh from scratch. Its labor costs were too high to support the model.

“Galt sold the chain to General Mills. Then General Mills lost interest and opened Olive Garden. (There’s one Good Earth left, in Edina, Minnesota.) I needed a job, and someone showed me an ad placed by Mike LaValle. I pitched my restaurant experience, and he asked me if I could be in Des Moines in a week. I came and helped him open City Grille in 1986.”

What were his first thoughts about Des Moines then?

“I thought Des Moines was on fire. It took another 15 years, though, before that really happened.

Downtown was attracting start-ups because rents were cheap. There was lots of money and lots of incentives in the 1990s, but then the rents rose and the start-ups went elsewhere.”

What changed with the new millennium?

“After the Temple for the Performing Arts was saved, good things happened. Centro brought people downtown after 5 p.m. for the first time in decades. Tenth Street was the new town center. Then the Pappajohn Sculpture Park made it a destination for out of towners. I think that 2000 to 2019 was the golden age for downtown Des Moines and dining.”

That’s in the past tense. Did COVID end that?

“It changed it. Hotels were able to function better than restaurants on limited payrolls. For restaurants, it was hard to survive serving just take-out and delivery. Government support was based on the number of people you had on payroll, so that helped the big chains a lot more than independents. When we adjusted to that, I made the mistake of thinking takeout and delivery were the future and spent too much money to accommodate that.”

Are things stabilizing now?

“That remains to be seen. It’s not the same Gateway district without as many office workers and with Scott Carlson closing Americana and Gas Lamp and Proof gone.”

Doesn’t that mean less competition?

“That’s not as vital as the energy that comes with lots of people coming for lots of different entertainments. Tenth Street is strong, but the Gateway west of Tenth misses the pedestrian traffic. Americana’s space will not remain a restaurant, nor Proof’s. We need to translate the East Village vibe to all downtown.”

Several years ago, Rottenberg told us, only somewhat tongue in cheek, that the suburbs could not support independents, only chains. Is that still the case?

“I don’t think so. Dom (Iannarelli) seems to be doing great with Prime & Providence despite being so close to Ruth’s and Flemings; Irina’s too. I didn’t think the suburbs could ever work for that many prime steakhouses. Twenty years ago, the feeling was that the new homeowners in the Jordan Creek neighborhood were strapped for discretionary income because they had huge mortgages.”

The Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse in Jordan Creek sold more wine than any store in the chain last year. There is plenty of discretionary income now in that neighborhood.

“And now the suburbs are building all the new



entertainment attractions, too. If I was 30 today, I would think about taking that plunge. At 69, I am no longer looking for risk, even risks with promise.”

I have taken scores of media trips over the years. A couple years ago, I heard from travel writer friends from Kansas City and Minneapolis who were on such a trip to Altoona and Newton, hosted by Prairie Meadows, the Iowa Speedway, Adventureland and the Bass Pro store. I had never thought about Altoona being a tourism magnet before then. Orchestrate has a hotel in Altoona. **Does it benefit from that?**

“For our hotel, the interstate highway is the driver. Altoona business is very seasonal with Adventureland being a summer event. The Bass Pro store is a lure, too, and the outlet mall, particularly before Christmas. I think Prairie Meadows’ customers are only there for Prairie Meadows.”

Looking back, what was the best surprise for Orchestrate?

“Gateway Market Café. I got into the grocery store business thinking it had to be similar to the restaurant business. That was crazy. Restaurants make it on around 10% net margins. Grocery stores have to do it on maybe 4%. It took several years before we made any money, but there is nothing I would have done differently. The café and the store complement each other perfectly.

“It’s a joy to watch people there. They are actually having fun grocery shopping.” ■

A CITYVIEW SPECIAL SECTION THAT HONORS
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MILESTONES

Where did they start?
How did they grow?
What are they proud of?

44 YEARS

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Established in 1984, Waterfront Seafood Market has blossomed from a humble fresh market selling out of the back of a pickup truck into an award-winning establishment in West Des Moines.

As a family-owned gem, the journey began with a vision to bring quality seafood to Des Moines, evolving into a comprehensive experience that includes a fresh seafood market, sushi bar, oyster bar and fine dining restaurant.

As the Midwest's premier seafood establishment, we distinguish ourselves through a commitment to excellence. Our fish and seafood arrive via air freight and are loaded directly into our specially-built cooler at the airport to keep everything as cold as when it left the docks. Sourcing fresh fish from the same trusted providers for years, we ensure the highest quality from boat to plate.

In 2008, Waterfront opened its second location in Ankeny, expanding its reach while continuing to provide top-notch food and service its known for.

Our highly-trained staff is not just here to serve; they are your culinary companions, ready to answer questions on cooking techniques, seasonings and storage. We also want you to relish the experience of cooking our fresh fish at home.

After more than 40 years of service, Waterfront's commitment is unwavering — if it doesn't meet our standards at the back door, it won't find its way out the front.



1983

Began selling seafood out of a pickup truck

1984

Opened West Des Moines location in Clocktower Square

1996

Introduced sushi bar in West Des Moines

2008

Opened second location in Ankeny

2025

Celebrating 44 years as the Midwest's premier seafood establishment!

55 YEARS

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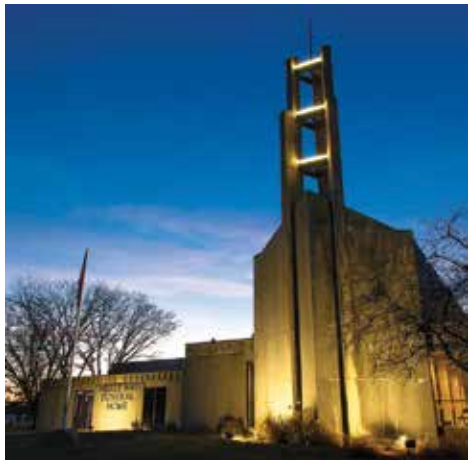
Iowa Funeral Planning proudly serves the Greater Des Moines community through a network of three funeral homes—Merle Hay Chapel, Sunset Memorial Chapel, and Brooks Funeral Care—each dedicated to providing compassionate, high-quality care for families during their most difficult moments.

Merle Hay Chapel has long stood as a landmark on Merle Hay Road, adjacent to Chapel Hill Gardens Cemetery. Following an extensive renovation in 2022, the chapel now offers a warm, modern, and flexible environment designed to accommodate a wide range of Celebration of Life services. The updated facility seats up to 150 guests and provides convenient reception options, offering families both comfort and versatility.

Sunset Memorial Chapel, located along Fleur Drive and built in 2021, is situated within Sunset Memorial Gardens. Its serene setting, overlooking the picturesque landscape just south of the Des Moines International Airport, creates a peaceful atmosphere for gatherings. With seating for up to 125 people and the ability to host luncheons, this chapel offers a thoughtfully designed space for all end-of-life needs in a highly accessible location.

Brooks Funeral Care, located at 2135 SW 9th Street, provides the same trusted level of care at a more economical price point. This intimate venue accommodates up to 75 guests and is known for its signature “one-day service,” which allows families to hold all arrangements at their church or chosen venue—often at a significantly lower cost than the regional average.

In addition to its funeral homes, Iowa Funeral Planning owns and operates two beautiful cemeteries—Chapel Hill Gardens and Sunset Memorial Gardens. Both offer a full range of burial and memorialization options, including traditional casket burials, cremation interment,



urn niches, and customized memorials. Families can find meaningful and affordable choices to honor their loved ones.

Iowa Funeral Planning also offers comprehensive pre-planning programs that allow individuals to document and fund their arrangements in advance. This thoughtful step provides clarity, comfort, and peace of mind for both individuals and their families, ensuring wishes are honored and burdens are eased.

1970

Merle Hay Funeral Home is built

2008

Blair Overton and partners purchase Merle Hay Funeral Home

2009

Brooks Funeral Home is acquired

2020

Blair Overton & Sara Middleton Bering form a partnership to create Iowa Funeral Planning

2021

Sunset Memorial Chapel was built

2023

Major renovation on the Merle Hay Funeral Chapel

38 YEARS

ABENDROTH RUSSELL BARNETT LAW FIRM

2560 73rd St., Des Moines
515-278-0623
abendrothandrussell.com

Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm was established in 1987 in Urbandale. Since then, we have been providing valued legal services to meet the needs of our clients. Our practice areas include wills and trusts, probate, estate administration, guardianships and conservatorships, Medicaid and asset protection, real estate transactions, business formation and compliance, and Social Security Disability. We strive to exceed our clients' expectations, and with our staff of skilled professionals, we work to deliver an exceptional customer experience throughout the most difficult legal matters.

Community is important to us — that's why we partner with local police on safe housing issues and work closely with community service providers such as On With Life and Brain Injury Alliance.

We love our clients and look forward to serving them for many years to come.



1987

The law firm was established by Mark Abendroth and David Russell.

1999

Abendroth and Russell moved to their current location in Urbandale.

2000

Ross Barnett joined the firm, specializing in probate, estate planning, and real estate

2012

The firm celebrated 25 years in business.

2014

Charlotte Sucik joined the firm, specializing in landlord/tenant law, real estate, and business formation.

2016

The firm eliminated the Collection Department and developed a more service-oriented approach to our clients.

2017

Gail Barnett joined the firm, specializing in Social Security Disability, probate, and Medicaid planning.

2018

Charlotte Sucik and Gail Barnett were made partners at the firm.

2020

In October, Ross Barnett celebrated 20 years with the firm.

2021

Mark Abendroth retired.

2025

Celebrating 38 years in business. Ross Barnett is managing partner.

SHADE TREE AUTO

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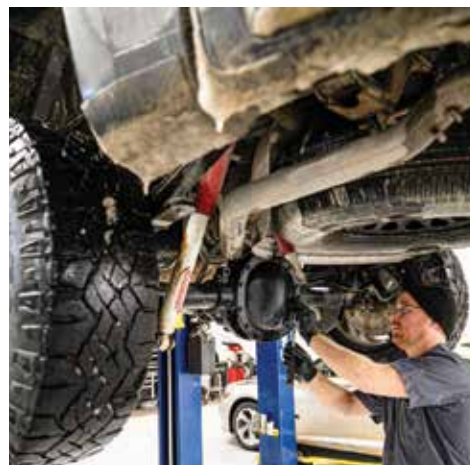
Twenty-four years ago, Shade Tree Auto began as one technician with a simple idea: if you respect people, do the job right, and explain repairs in plain language, a shop can become more than a shop—it can become a community fixture. In 2001, owner and DMACC graduate Clint Dudley opened the business in a small Johnston garage. Four years later, in 2005, the young shop planted permanent roots in Grimes, setting the stage for what would eventually become one of Central Iowa’s most trusted automotive teams.

Grimes embraced Shade Tree early. The shop expanded its footprint, then expanded again, and by 2017 moved into the 13,000-square-foot facility along Highway 141 that locals know today. That growth wasn’t just about square footage; it was built on relationships—neighbors recommending neighbors, customers sending in family members, and local organizations welcoming the team into chamber events, charity drives, and partnership projects.

As demand grew, so did the need for accessible, community-focused auto care. Shade Tree Auto opened its second location in Urbandale in 2022, bringing its digital inspections, 4-year/40,000-mile warranty, shuttle service, and famously friendly staff to another corner of the metro. In 2024, the company expanded again—this time to Ankeny—creating a three-shop, locally owned network while keeping the tight-knit, small-town feel that started it all.

One of the clearest examples of Shade Tree’s heart for the community is the Jump Start Program, a nonprofit initiative that provides safe, reliable vehicles to local veterans facing transportation challenges. Born out of conversations with customers, chambers, and community partners, Jump Start has become a signature effort that proves auto repair can be a force for good.

Through every expansion, Shade Tree Auto has kept their mission the same: educate customers, stand behind every repair, support their employees, and invest in the communities that built them. Three locations later, they’re still proud to be locally owned, locally operated, and locally rooted. And if the past two decades are any indication, Shade Tree Auto’s story in Central Iowa is still just heating up.



- | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| <p>2001</p> <p>Shade Tree Auto was founded in a 900 sqft. garage in Johnston.</p> | <p>2005</p> <p>STA moved to a rental space in Grimes.</p> | <p>2007</p> <p>STA expands to 4,800 square feet.</p> | <p>2009</p> <p>Recognized as a blue seal shop.</p> | <p>2014</p> <p>Named Small Business Community Champion.</p> | <p>2015 & 2016</p> <p>U.S. Chamber of Commerce Dream Big award recipient.</p> | <p>2017</p> <p>Bronze winner of the International Business Awards (Small Retail Company of the Year) in Barcelona, Spain.</p> |
| <p>2017</p> <p>Moved to 13,000 sqft. facility in Grimes along Highway 141.</p> | <p>2018</p> <p>Gold Winner of the International Business Awards (Small Retail Company of the Year) in London.</p> | <p>2018</p> <p>Gold winner of the American Business Awards.</p> | <p>2022</p> <p>Opened our second location in Urbandale.</p> | <p>2024</p> <p>Ankeny shop.</p> | <p>2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JumpSTART launch. • Celebrating 20 years in Grimes • Small Business of the Year - Urbandale Chamber. | |

AROUND TOWN

PHOTOS BY MARY FOWLER



Lauren Benson and Brenda Ballard



Nancy Zwickle and Evie Down



Sarah Ingles and Jay Heaton



Janet Chavez and Terri Lopez



Shannon Menard and Deb Anderson

CENTRAL IOWA HEALTHCARE NETWORK HOLIDAY PARTY

The Breakfast Club, West Glen
Nov. 18



Sheri Carr and Tyffany Jackson



Karla Rohe, Brandi Eischeid, Lacey Galetich and Kyle Valios



Dawson Peters, Robert Richards and Wendy Wilson-Rice

Your end-of-year wellness checklist

Overcome the seasonal rush and start the new year right with your health and finances.

YOUR HEALTH CHECKLIST

☐ Schedule annual appointments.

- ☐ Physical: _____
- ☐ Dental cleaning 1: _____
- ☐ Dental cleaning 2: _____
- ☐ Eye exam: _____
- ☐ Skin cancer screening: _____
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

☐ Plan for recommended vaccines.

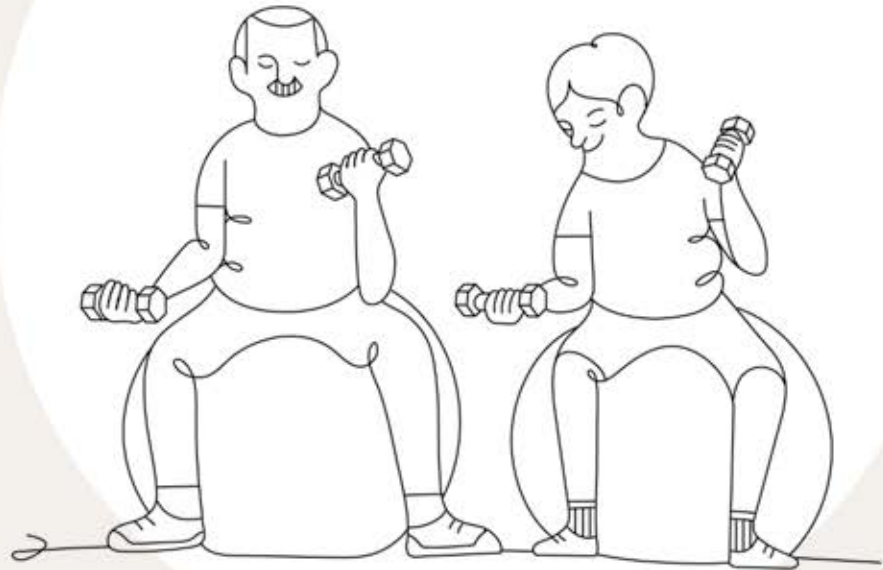
- ☐ Flu: _____
- ☐ Shingles: _____
- ☐ Pneumonia: _____
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

☐ Begin an exercise program: Strength training, aerobic exercise, flexibility, and balance.

☐ Rethink your nutrition.

☐ Prioritize sleep: 7-9 hours every night

☐ Kick a bad habit.



YOUR FINANCIAL CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Review your health insurance needs:** Medicare's open enrollment period runs Oct. 15 to Dec. 7. Consider supplemental health plans to fill Medicare's coverage gaps.
- ☐ **Set a holiday spending budget.**
- ☐ **Check your FSA or HSA account.**
 - Flexible spending account (FSA): likely expires at the end of the year.
 - Health savings account (HSA): consider making maximum investment for the tax benefits.
- ☐ **Contribute to your retirement account(s).**
- ☐ **Withdraw your required minimum distribution (RMD).**
- ☐ **Take advantage of charitable tax deductions.**
- ☐ **Contribute to a 529 college savings plan.**
- ☐ **Update your estate plan:** Tell loved ones where to find it.
- ☐ **Prepare for tax season.**



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INSTALLATION IN PROGRESS

The Des Moines Art Center's installation department takes us behind the scenes to see what it is like working in the museum's shadow.

By Cyote Williams

Established in 1948, the Des Moines Art Center has brought world-famous works of art right into central Iowa's backyard. Whether it be at an exhibit inside one of the three unique buildings, which are considerable artworks themselves, or the renowned John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park in downtown, the Art Center has made the Hawkeye State's capital a destination for exceptional artwork.

Its permanent collection contains works from names such as Andy Warhol, Claude Monet, Georgia O'Keeffe and Grant Wood to name a few, and that does not count the various exhibits that make a temporary stay inside its walls.

Tom Rosborough and Zachary Quick install Jordan Nassar's "Bethlehem-In-The-Galilee," 2025 in the Art Center's I. M. Pei building.

These names are etched in the memories of art connoisseurs, and their works are taught by art teachers from elementary schools to universities, documented, viewed, preserved and appreciated. What goes under the radar, however, are the people behind the scenes, building the crates used for transporting the works and the mechanisms required to display the art, and helping provide a worthwhile viewing experience so those walking through the Art Center have the most enjoyable experience possible.

Those people are the Art Center's Installation Department. By their own design, they are unsung and unseen, helping make the Art Center's exhibits and artwork look pristine and presentable.

The group has more than 100 collective years of experience in the department. Most are practicing artists themselves, helping build the mechanisms for hanging, displaying and lighting the artwork, building the frames to custom dimensions and temperature and moisture restrictions.

The team recently acquired a new leader, Director of Installations Jonathan deLima, who brings 20 years of experience of his own. He takes over for Jay Ewart, who had held the position for 21 years.

MEET THE TEAM

We sat down with several members of the team to find out what they do to bring various works to the eyes of Des Moines. At the time of the interviews, the group was taking down the "Iowa Artists 2025" exhibit by quiltmaker Ben Millett.

"You had the artist here, and so he was overseeing how everything would go up, and we would check in with him as to how he wanted it to look. You have some three-dimensional things that you're hanging, you're suspending in this one room here, and then you get two-dimensional things on the wall," Tom Rosborough, assistant preparator and former illustrator, said.

Rosborough has been working in the installation department since 1999. He says the group often works with the artist or other exhibits to ensure they know ahead of time the best way to install the art.

Mindy Meinders, conservation technician and works on paper coordinator, has roughly 40 years of preparatory work. Some would consider that more than enough to be an expert on the subject.

"Oh, well, I don't know about that. There's too much to know for that," Meinders said.

Meinders, a painter with a studio at the Fitch Building, primarily works with the permanent collection of works on paper.

"Anything that needs to be framed or matted (the

border of an artwork), I do that but also repair and wash some prints and take care of any problems that might arise with them," Meinders said.

While that is what she is normally focused on, she does also help with hanging paintings or building as needed. Helping across all areas is a common theme for this group.

Jeff Ashe, lead preparator, has been working with the department on and off for 25 years. Ashe does more of the physical aspects of the job — large-scale rigging, and heavy equipment operation — and takes a liking to the technological and material side.

"I have experience with large machines and things like that, and so I also have a fascination with the exponential magnification of a person's movements. This often requires a high level of finesse, which makes for operating heavy equipment to move these fragile things. I think to some people, that's like an undigestible prospect, but for me, I enjoy that aspect quite a bit, because it is the opportunity of a true melding of man and machine to create this thing that ultimately is not an air conditioner on a roof or a new wing on a school. I really enjoy opportunities to make incredibly large objects succumb to our will, through subtle manipulation," Ashe said.

Michelle Hill, a graphic designer and also a former helicopter mechanic in the military, is an assistant

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Teresita Fernandez, “Viñales(Chasm),” 2022; Phyllida Barlow, “Untitled: balcony,” 2012; Deborah Butterfield, “Untitled (Hoover),” 1986; Sol Lewitt, “Wall Drawing #601, Forms Derived from a Cube (25 Variations),” 1989

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preparer and works on paper coordinator. Hill was in charge of the Ben Millet exhibition that the group was taking down. She has been with the department for two and a half years. She originally joined the team as a security guard.

“I’ve always been kind of naturally mechanically inclined. You need to have some design skills. As a graphic designer, that helped me manage to multitask and certain shows and everything. Being a mom actually helps,” Hill said.

Temporary employee Aida Peña spends time between installations and registration (the process of documenting the artwork’s condition) but first started in the education department in 2019.

Associate Preparator Zachary Quick recently celebrated his eighth anniversary with the installations department.

“I started as a part-time person on a show called ‘Drawing in Space.’ And, then I worked part-time with installations but also with the security for four years until about 2020 when they hired me on full-time,” Quick said.

INSTALLATIONS

The “Drawing in Space” exhibit came up more than once when asking the installation team about which exhibits were most challenging. Tape was suspended throughout the Art Center, allowing visitors to crawl through it. The exhibit took a team of 14 people two weeks to set up. Meinders, Rosborough, Quick and Ashe all named that as one of the most taxing exhibits they have worked on.

“We suspended tape through the whole gallery that you could actually walk in. We had to kind of test the strength of the walls,” Rosborough said.

“They had to do load capacities on the wall,” Quick added. “They have to make sure that no one’s going to fall through the tape. That was a pretty difficult, but also very fun, one.”

Hanging artwork is not inherently seen as a dangerous job, but when a project



The installations department needed 14 people and two weeks to set up “Drawing in Space” in 2017. Photo by Rich Sanders, courtesy of the Des Moines Art Center

tests the strength of the walls it is inside of, or a large sculpture needs to be hung or set up, the danger is real.

“Anytime we have an object where, if there is a critical failure, somebody’s not going home (is challenging). Sounds dramatic to bring it to that state, but that’s absolutely true. A thousand pounds is a thousand pounds. If something goes wrong, and I’m putting a two-pound painting on the wall, that’s a shame. If something goes wrong and it’s 2,000 pounds, I just lost a friend,” Ashe said.

Another challenging exhibit, according to Rosborough, was by visual artist



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Mindy Meiners guides trusted assistant “Peggy” through the Richard Meier building to help with the installation of artwork

Phyllida Barlow.

“She basically filled that entire Pei wing (I. M. Pei Building) with pieces that were very heavy. She had a large piece that was called ‘Scree’ that went from the floor all the way up to the ceiling. She brought in a crew, and we worked with that crew in creating her vision. She was there and oversaw the whole thing along with us,” Rosborough said.

Even the amount of light that gets projected onto various artworks is taken into account by the installations department. Certain works require different light levels.

“Light is a big enemy. There have to be considerations into how much UV unfiltered light is hitting these objects. Now, paintings, are generally pretty robust. Works on paper are generally pretty vulnerable. Fabrics are sometimes exceptionally vulnerable, considering the kinds of dyes and processes used in their creation,” Ashe said. “In many cases, when we’re doing an entire show, we put everything up, take all the lights down, and start from scratch and build to meet a level that is the ceiling that we can’t light beyond, and then refine that to give each piece its own prominence and its own presentation.”

Knowing where things should go, how high they should be, and what color should be on the wall behind them are all part of the process.

“The current show we are doing right now, you have a lot of photos. We would have had to paint the gallery after the last show to make sure there were no blemishes on the walls,” Quick said. “To get exactly where it goes, we measure the height of the piece. And then, the baseline is 58 inches, that’s the average human eye level, so that’s where we want the center of the piece to be.”

For the Manuel Álvarez Bravo exhibit, which will be on display until Jan. 18, the installations department did plenty of preparatory work.

“We had 220 pieces. We started in February. Someone went down to Mexico City and measured everything, and we pre-cut all the mats ahead of time, and then we framed them all. That was very time-consuming, but we were ready when the time came to hang them on the walls,” Meinders said.

In Meinders’ work on the permanent collection of works on paper, she walked us through some of her processes.

“A lot of times, you unframe something, and, because of the housing that was previously used, it could be acidic. Regular cardboard is really full of acids and will deteriorate the paper. So, if it is a print with non-soluble inks, you can wash it. It’s a little tricky, but you soak it in distilled water and remove it and then blot it dry with

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Various quilted artworks by “Iowa Artists: 2025” artist Ben Millett during the process of deinstallation.

blotter paper,” Meinders said. “The standard museum practice of attaching paper to the backboard is a Japanese handmade paper and wheat paste. And a lot of framers will use linen tape, which is hard to get off, and if the piece were to fall, the artwork would tear. So, we tend to replace that material and try to get off all the adhesives left behind.”

At times, Meinders has been pleasantly surprised, saying a lot of times an artist will paint one side, not like it, and begin on the other side, leaving behind an unfinished work.

The process of bringing pieces in is not always easy. Hill reflects on a time when, in the Pei wing, the team ran into challenges created by a large work by Shechet.

“It looks like a yellow elephant. It came in a giant crate, and so we had to hire equipment to get it in. Then we brought it through the auditorium, and then we couldn’t fit it through the door. We had to take down the fire exit signs in order to get it through. It was just a debacle. We ended up getting it in, and it was more complicated because of how heavy the pieces were and how big the crate that it came in was,” Hill said.

The installation department also prepares the artwork to be transferred to its next destination. This can require them to custom-build crates.

“A lot of times, when the pieces come in, they could be crated in a certain way, or we feel like they’re not protecting the piece in a specific way, we will usually upgrade whatever they have before it goes back out. We usually give them back to them better than what they sent,” Rosborough said.

All in all, the goal for the installation department is for no one to know they exist. To them, if they have done their job correctly, those who attend the Art Center are able to interact with the art as intended — and that reputation follows them.

“Historically, this place has an astonishing record of manifesting quite ambitious and amazing projects. They care a lot about people’s experience and doing good work that helps raise people’s potential experience with the artworks,” deLima said.

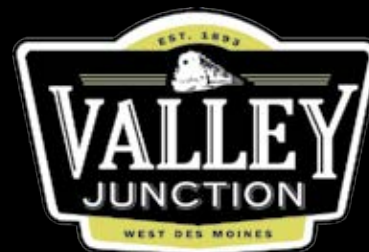
The process is harmonious. Between installations, curatorial and registration, all of it comes together to bring these works of art to Des Moines. deLima found an apt comparison.

“If you go into a concert, and it’s too loud, you can’t hear the whole sound because it’s overwhelming. It’s hard to engage with. If it’s too soft, you can’t pick it up. That is the same as light. If it’s too bright, if it’s too dark, that’s kind of self-evident,” deLima said. “You are in an environment that promotes engagement with the work,

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with the space, potentially even with the other people in the space.

“Like a great restaurant meal or a spectacular, really moving theater experience, you’re aware of being transported, or you feel energized by the experience, and not feeling like you’re paying attention to all of the decision-making, because, hopefully, it all feels part of the whole so you’re not necessarily being pulled out to think about all the separate pieces,” deLima added.

APPRECIATING THE ARTWORK

With most of the team having been working with the Art Center for multiple years, several of the members have interacted with some of the most famous artworks ever seen. As most of them are artists, or at a minimum art appreciators, they appreciate the weight of the art more so than just how much they have to carry.

“It’s always like Christmas morning when you open the crates and you really have no idea what it’s going to be or what condition it’s going to be in. That’s always nice because we all have a love of art,” Meinders said.

A favorite for Meinders, last year, was one of the print exhibits the Art Center hosted for Rembrandt, a famous Dutch painter from the 1600s.

“Eighteen Rembrandts in our paper collection. Handling them is kind of awesome,” Meinders said.

For Hill, it was a Picasso painting, which, as well as working with the current show, gave her an extra appreciation for it.

“I’ve been able to frame Picasso. This current show, his photographs are just gorgeous, and I was able to help coordinate that show. We got to talk to his daughter. Once you know the story, and there’s a connection there, whether it’s with the artist or family, it becomes important, not that it wasn’t already,” Hill said.

Ashe has been able to handle one of the most famous pieces of Iowa art.

“I had the opportunity to work on the installation of the ‘American Gothic,’ which is arguably the second most recognizable painting in the world and hugely important to Midwest Art, to regionalism and to Iowa itself,” Ashe said.

Quick says that not only temporary exhibits but some of the permanent pieces held by the Art Center have given him a sense of awe.

“The John Singer Sargent, or like handling the Picasso. When I was a guard at one point, someone was like, ‘Is that a real Picasso, or is that a print?’ And I had to be like, ‘Well, it’s real,’” Quick said.

For Peña, it was a Japanese contemporary artist.

“I was really excited for the Takashi Murakami to come out. I’ve personally never seen that on display. I walked by it in storage a few times, but I was really excited for that to come out,” Peña said.

WORKING WITHOUT BEING SEEN

“I think that, if we do things right, no one can tell we’ve done anything at all, and the shadow work that we perform is meant to make it all look effortless. So, if it’s belabored, if it’s overdone, if our fingerprint is clearly legible, that’s a shortcoming,” Ashe said.

The work the group does goes unsung and unseen, and that is purposeful, but it does not detract from the time, quality and care that each member of its staff puts into it. Each of them specializes in different works, coming together to bring Des Moines a cultural gem.

deLima, who has only been with the Des Moines Art Center for a short amount of time, said their reputation precedes them.

“That team accomplished some extraordinary things that were noted locally but were also consistently appreciated by the visiting artists and by the people who they worked with,” deLima said. “This team is super resourceful, responsive, nice to work with. I can say all of that because I heard it from other people, and that’s some of the legacy of what that team had brought to the art world that came through here on the installation side.” ■

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VEHICLES TO WATCH

LEAF



Once a hatchback, the Leaf EV has been re-launched for 2026 as a small SUV with a longer driving range.

ARMADA



The sporty new NISMO model sees its twin-turbocharged V-6 upped by 35 hp, with cool exterior upgrades.

SENTRA



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AT A GLANCE

TECHNOLOGY

Nissan's VQ engines, which are configured much like V-6 engines, have routinely been placed near the top of the list in terms of performance and craftsmanship.

HISTORY

Officially founded under the Nissan name in 1933, the company marketed its vehicles under the Datsun brand for several decades.

FAMOUS MODELS

Altima, Sentra and Maxima.

KNOWN FOR

Edgy, high-performance vehicles that span a broad array of categories.

Nissan didn't start using their name in the U.S. until 1981, but this automobile manufacturer has enjoyed a long history that spans back to 1933.

The company initially restricted its focus to Japan. After World War II, though, it expanded its efforts worldwide using the Datsun name. A 1960s merger with Prince Motor Company spurred the company to shift its focus to luxury vehicles. The first car that it designed exclusively for the U.S. market, the Datsun 510 sedan, increased its overall popularity considerably.

During the 1970s, the Datsun 240Z sports car became a favorite of car enthusiasts around the world. In 1981, though, the Datsun name was phased out and the Nissan name was put into exclusive use. Fun cars like the 300ZX, the Sentra and the Maxima helped give Nissan an edge over the competition, especially among sporty luxury vehicles.

A slight slump during the late 1990s was more than made up for after 2000, when Nissan unveiled the redesigned Altima and Sentra models — along with the Titan and the Armada — winning over new fans once more and proving yet again that it is a true force to be reckoned with in the world of slick, sleek cars that everyday people can enjoy.

No matter what name it has, it's good to see Nissan continue its focus on affordable luxury and performance.

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TERRAIN



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SIERRA EV



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AT A GLANCE

TECHNOLOGY

Developer of luxury hybrid technology for large vehicles; Denali line pushes boundaries of truck luxury.

HISTORY

Founded in 1908, it is now one of the biggest automakers in the world.

FAMOUS MODELS

Yukon, Sierra.

KNOWN FOR

The premier manufacturer of light-duty trucks and sport utility vehicles.

For decades, the extensive line of GMC trucks dominated the marketplace. It was more than a simple vehicle; it was a lifestyle and a sturdy representation of the American ideology of individualism.

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The company is bolstered by two things: its refusal to give up, even in a relatively difficult economic climate, and its clear determination to adapt to the changing demands of the market, without alienating its core audience.

GMC's trucks are still geared toward working folks, but the working folks of the 21st century. GMC has modified its template of the 20th-century truck so that it encompasses the needs of the 21st-century family, too.

The manufacturer is known for its luxury, particularly on the high-end Denali line, which offers the features of a luxury car with the toughness of a GMC truck. In fact, the Denali line is taking on a life of its own, representing a huge portion of sales for many of GMC's models. It shows that this brand makes a statement in both style and power.



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VEHICLES TO WATCH

ENCLAVE



This luxury three-row SUV gains several new equipment and feature options, including a wallet-friendly key card.

ENVISTA



In a model year with little changes from Buick, Buick's entry-level crossover has only undergone some minor tweaks.

ENVISION



Only small changes are also planned for 2026 after a recent redo, most notable of which are a few new paint options.

AT A GLANCE

TECHNOLOGY

The 2025 Enclave became the first Buick with Super Cruise, GM's new hands-free highway driver-assist technology with automated lane changes.

HISTORY

The first Buick automobile was built in 1899. The company was established in Flint, Michigan, in 1903. By 1908, it was considered a leading car manufacturer.

FAMOUS MODELS

Enclave, Lucerne, Roadmaster, Regal.

KNOWN FOR

Affordability, luxury, performance and comfort.

The Buick brand name has been active in the auto industry since the very beginning. It serves as the entry-level luxury division for General Motors, providing affordable alternatives to other luxury vehicles. Buick jumped out of the gate in 2025 with a continued focus on comfort, performance and safety.

It's rolling out a long list of modern safety features across many vehicles in its lineup, including a Rear Cross Traffic Alert and Side Blind Zone Alert. Many of the upscale, high-tech safety features seem more reminiscent of cutting-edge Volvo features than what domestic family cars have traditionally offered.

Buick is moving its cars upscale and closer to what many drivers expect from a more expensive luxury brand. The quality construction and smooth, quiet driving feel rival even its cousins from the Cadillac brand.

Overall, the Buick brand is in the middle of a renaissance that puts a new focus on the vehicle experience, from the silence of its engines to the precision build quality inside the cabin. Its styling improved in recent years, most notably with the handsome now-discontinued LaCrosse sedan.

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AT A GLANCE

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AT A GLANCE

TECHNOLOGY

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HISTORY

Formed in 1903 by Henry Ford. This groundbreaking Detroit company introduced mass-production techniques that enhanced the capacity of all car companies.

FAMOUS MODELS

Mustang, Expedition, Ranger, Explorer, F-150.

KNOWN FOR

Affordability, power, performance and durability.

The Ford Motor Company has always provided high-performance vehicles that fit the budget of average consumers. In the early 20th century, this enhanced the productive capacity of humanity as Ford cars reached critical mass. This commitment to providing affordable and technologically advanced machines persists.

Ford is leading the charge in the pursuit of energy efficiency. As the market calls for efficient, affordable and innovative new vehicles, Ford was prepared to meet this challenge — including with electric vehicles such as the Mustang Mach-E. Its SUVs and crossover vehicles remain popular for doing just that: mixing efficiency with desirable tech features.

Ford continues to dominate the truck market with its F-150 pickup. This truck offers the kind of raw power and durability to do the toughest jobs and has the refinement of a luxury car in many ways. Whether doing hard work at a job site or traveling across America in comfort, the aluminum-intensive F-150 was designed to do it all.

Ford revived a classic nameplate that is beloved among enthusiasts: the Bronco. This hard-nosed, rugged SUV returned in a modern form that stayed true to its trail-climbing roots without sacrificing comfort or modern conveniences and connectivity. It's another reason the Ford name will stand for value in the years to come.

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CORSAIR



Largely untouched since 2024, this compact SUV packs plenty of luxury and sophistication.

AT A GLANCE

TECHNOLOGY

Intelligent Access with push-button start; collision warning with brake support.

HISTORY

Founded in 1917 by Henry Leland, a former GM executive. Bought by Henry Ford in 1922 to become the luxury car division of the Ford Motor Company.

FAMOUS MODELS

Zephyr (1936), Continental (1939), Town Car (1922, 1959, 1981-2010), Navigator SUV, MK Series.

KNOWN FOR

Large luxury cars, luxury SUVs.

Lincoln was founded in 1917 by former General Motors executive Henry Leland to build aircraft engines for World War I military airplanes. After the war, it was converted to luxury automobile manufacturing.

Henry Ford acquired the floundering company in 1922 to be the luxury car division of Ford Motor Company. Lincoln competed successfully with the likes of Pierce Arrow, Packard, Cadillac and other luxury brands with well-made touring cars like their 1929 model.

In 1936, a 4.4-liter V-12 engine was developed and installed in an attractive, flowing design coupe and sedan called "Zephyr." This model was so successful that it became a separate brand name under the Lincoln banner.

The Town Car name first appeared in 1922 on huge, limousine-style vehicles. It appeared again in 1959 as a trim package on Lincoln sedans. In 1981, Town Car became a separate model, about the time the Continental became a smaller Lincoln model.

Lincoln expanded its success in the modern age with crossovers, including the Aviator with its focus on an extremely quiet, comfortable ride and an upscale, sophisticated cabin. The smaller Corsair combined power and technology beautifully. In addition, the family-friendly Navigator offers spacious, first-class accommodations that will continue to raise the bar for luxury for years to come.



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BOOK REVIEWS

COURTESY OF BEAVERDALE BOOKS

'The Book of Kin: On Absence, Love, and Being There'

This is such a book of the moment, for me. It is healing and kind and full of the parts of humanity we rarely see these days, the power of what can be accomplished together. It is a radiant blend of memoir, essay and cultural insight that explores how love and presence shape our humanity and, ultimately, heals us in myriad ways.

The Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop was founded by the author and remains the country's largest and most enduring prison-based literary organization. Working with the incarcerated people has had a profound effect on her view of the world, and that shows in her earnest, beautiful writing about grief, family, loneliness and what it means to care. These might be some of the most human essays I've ever read — unflinching but overflowing with generosity.

Lyrical and life-affirming, this is a gorgeous book for anyone feeling the strain of these divided days. It would make a brilliant gift for those who might feel lost or alone. When everything feels so heavy, it is books like this that remind us how to lighten the load — together. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



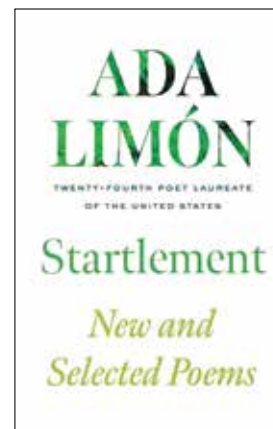
By Jennifer Eli Bowen
10/21/25
264 pages
\$20
Milkweed Editions

'Startlement: New and Selected Poems'

There is a lot of talk about how poetry enhances storytelling. Lyrical, rhythmic words in a novel add punch and feeling to a narrative. I'm guilty of it myself. I reach for books with pretty words and sharp wit.

My newest revelation is that the converse can be true, too. In this glorious, tremendous collection celebrating one of the best poets in existence, we see the power story and narrative can have in the tiny space of a poem. This collection feels almost voyeuristic, like the best memoir filled with pinpoint experiences and voluminous emotion and the universal lessons that can only come from a single person's memories.

Poetry isn't for everyone, but for those who can see the magic in it, Ada Limon needs no introduction. Her unique take on the mysteries of life is legendary, and this bountiful book contains both new and beloved poems organized into a path that reads almost like a fairy tale. It would make the loveliest gift for any poetry-fiend or even the poetry-curious. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



By Ada Limon
9/30/25
232 pages
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Milkweed Editions

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FILM REVIEW

BY DAVID ROWLEY

'The Running Man' is a stylistically generic trot through dystopia

If his name wasn't on the poster, you would never guess this is an Edgar Wright film.

A director's unique voice is the most powerful asset. It is the authorial stamp, the stylistic flair that transforms a mere story into a distinct experience. That is what makes Edgar Wright's 2025 remake of "The Running Man" such a profound disappointment.

On paper, the pairing of Wright's hyper-kinetic style with Stephen King's prescient dystopian novel seemed inspiring. On the screen, the film is a bafflingly pedestrian affair, a project where the directorial spark has been entirely sanded off, leaving behind a competently made but utterly generic shell that fails to justify its own existence.

In a future where the economy has collapsed and a mega media conglomerate known as the Network holds sway, Ben Richards (Glen Powell), desperate for money by any means, volunteers for a deadly game show. To save his sick daughter and financially ruined family, he must survive 30 days as a "Runner," hunted by both professional assassins known as "Hunters" and a bloodthirsty public incentivized to turn him in.

The story shuffles in side character after side character to provide advice and life-saving acts that keep Ben in the competition. Unfortunately, it is done with no clear connections, and motivations aren't satisfyingly unexplained. It is as if a whole reel of exposition was removed, resulting in a confusing mess, especially in the third act where new characters are introduced far too late.

The most glaring failure is the film's hollow political core. It is a story primed for sharp social satire and visceral tension, and Wright's capable hand was a great choice, but this film only flirts with these ideas rather than any kind of focused critique. It whimpers about an unfair world, offering fleeting glimpses of underground resistance and media manipulation, but it never builds a coherent worldview. The politics feels tacked on, more like a random call for social relevance rather than baked into the narrative.

The burden of carrying this shaky foundation falls heavily on Glen Powell. While he is clearly giving it his all, the performance often misses the mark. He is dialed to a hundred from the start, shouting, sweating and swearing his way through scenes that require nuance. Unlike Arnold Schwarzenegger's iconic, larger-than-life portrayal in the 1987 version, Powell's Ben Richards strives for an everyman quality, but the script and his own choices prevent him from achieving the necessary depth. He feels like a theater kid lost in this shuffle in a big boy role, lacking the ego that defines a true 1980s action star.

Most of the film's other cast members do not fare much better with the likes of Josh Brolin, William H. Macy and Lee Pace getting little to work with while Colman



"Running Man"

R | 133 minutes

Director: Edgar Wright

Writers: Stephen King, Michael Bacall, Edgar Wright

Stars: Glen Powell, Josh Brolin, Colman Domingo

Domingo as the over-the-top game show host Bobby T and Michael Cera as conspiracy nut Elton Perrakis are the only performers who were really allowed to, or really wanted to, bring the fun to an otherwise mostly po-faced affair.

This is where a comparison to the 1987 "Running Man," or, perhaps more specifically, Paul Verhoeven's satires like "RoboCop" or "Total Recall" becomes inevitable — and damning. Verhoeven understood that the fascistic, corporate worlds needed to be built with clockwork precision, their absurdity and violence rendered in a style that was both exuberant and biting. Wright's world, by contrast, lacks this juice entirely. The dystopia is bland, and the promised satire never moves beyond very on-the-nose surface-level observations.

To be fair, the film is not a total disaster. When it focuses on straightforward action, it works. The chases and fights are clearly shot with a solid sense of impact. A high-rise escape sequence and a bizarre, memorable detour involving a conspiracy theorist played by Michael Cera provide fleeting moments of entertainment.

But, competence is a low bar for a filmmaker of Wright's caliber. "The Running Man" felt like the cinematic equivalent of a contract obligation. It is a film that understands the power of its concept but possesses none of the courage or creativity to fully realize it. Wright's signature touches — the whip-smart editing, the visual puns, the dynamic camera work and iconic soundscapes — are conspicuously absent. If his name wasn't on the poster, you would never guess this is an Edgar Wright film. By the time the climax devolves into a generic fight on an airplane and rushes to an unsatisfying conclusion, any initial promise has long evaporated.

As a random action flick, it is watchable. As an Edgar Wright movie, it is a major creative misstep. ■

PREVIEWS

BY DAVID ROWLEY

"The Secret Agent"

R | 158 minutes

Director: Kleber Mendonça Filho

Writer: Kleber Mendonça Filho

Stars: Wagner Moura, Robson Andrade, Rubens Santos



The film begins with Marcelo (Wagner Moura) headed to the northern city of Recife, seeking asylum and to be closer to his young son. Arriving during the raucous celebrations of Carnival, Marcelo is welcomed by a colorful community of political refugees, yet an insidious atmosphere of surveillance, paranoia and danger encircles him. Director Mendonça Filho spotlights corruption everywhere, from the sleazy local police chief and his ruthless deputies to the director of the state identification archives where Marcelo is simultaneously working, hiding and searching for his mother's official ID card.

"Dust Bunny"

R | 106 minutes

Director/Writer: Bryan Fuller

Stars: Mads Mikkelsen, Sigourney Weaver, Sophie Sloan



Like many children, Aurora (Sophie Sloan) fearfully believes a monster lurks beneath her bed. And, she has good reason to: Her foster parents have been eaten by one. Fortunately, she has arrived at a practical solution. She will hire the enigmatic hit man who lives next door (Mads Mikkelsen) to slay the beast. But procuring her neighbor's services will not be easy, for he believes her family was mistakenly dispatched by an assassin's bullets that were meant for him.

"5 Nights at Freddy's 2"

PG-13 | 104 minutes

Director: Emma Tammi

Writer: Scott Cawthon

Stars: Josh Hutcherson, Elizabeth Lail, Piper Rubio



One year has passed since the supernatural nightmare at Freddy Fazbear's Pizza. The stories about what transpired there have been twisted into a campy local legend, inspiring the town's first ever Fazfest. Former security guard Mike (Josh Hutcherson) and police officer Vanessa (Elizabeth Lail) have kept the truth from Mike's 11-year-old sister, Abby (Piper Rubio), concerning the fate of her animatronic friends. But, when Abby sneaks out to reconnect with Freddy, Bonnie, Chica and Foxy, it will set into motion a terrifying series of events, revealing dark secrets about the true origin of Freddy's and unleashing a long-forgotten horror hidden away for decades. ■

2025 – ‘It was a very good year’



DMMO's "The Cunning Little Vixen" with Oyoram's scenery



DMSO with 100 voice chorus

The year 2025 was a very good one for Des Moines' art scene. The news poured sweet and clear. Oyoram, the French-Israeli genius who now headquarters in Sherman Hill, installed "TimePiece" on the north face of the Fitch Building. Transforming itself 24 times a day, his 3D led clock dazzles the western Gateway like a star cluster guiding wise men to Des Moines while inspiring the question: If an international artist associated with luxury brands like Tiffany and the Louis Vuitton-Moët-Hennessy empire found his way here, are the city's possibilities not legion?

Our opera company might well have enjoyed its best year yet. Des Moines Metro Opera had its earliest ever sellouts in 2025 and expects to top their subscription sales record again next year. In the last two seasons, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Opera America and New Yorker sent their top opera critics to Indianola for the complete repertoire. All wrote complimentary reviews of the company. DMMO's "American Apollo" won an Emmy for Judy Blank and team at Iowa PBS, the fifth for the DMMO-Iowa PBS partnership.

Opera America detailed the ingenuity of DMMO costume designers Vita Tzykun and Robert Perdziola. Tzykun coped with inflated material costs by having most costumes made in her native Ukraine. Her work on "The Cunning Little Vixen" co-starred with Oyoram's scenery in a production shown on Iowa PBS. We expect another Emmy next year. Finally, the International Opera Awards named DMMO among the world's five

best opera festivals, and the only U.S. one. Two DMMO artists were finalists for IOA's Rising Star of the Year award: baritone Justin Austin and tenor Duke Kim.

All that attention was too much for The Des Moines Register. That paper, which has pretty much ignored DMMO since Eliot Nusbaum and Michael Morain left it, did a series of smear pieces about the opera company abusing its employees. The paper went back decades to find former employees with bones to pick. They did not quote current employees, nor any who returned to the company after their first season — although 80% do, amazingly in the vagabond world of opera.

Des Moines Symphony grew its audiences, too, with Maestro Joe Giunta's signature pairing of avant garde discoveries and beloved classics. Season highlights included a pops concert with Beck, a collaboration with Eighth Blackbird on Viet Cuong's "Vital Signs," and a blowout performance of "Carmina Burana" with a 100-voice chorus.

Des Moines Community Playhouse also grew its audience in a season highlighted by "Waitress" including an award-winning debut in the title role by Hannah Zepeda. Josue Barahona, a 2025 Des Moines North and Oak Studio graduate, followed his own guiding star to Nashville's esteemed Blackbird Academy. Oh, and he opened for Gwen Stephani at the Target Center in Minneapolis. He remembered Iowa fondly in his YouTube and Apple Music lyric video hit "Corn Sweat."

December touts

Manuel Álvarez Bravo lived and chronicled a full century of Mexican history, from the Diaz dictatorship through the Revolution and the golden ages of Mexican art and cinema. The photographer's exhibition "Collaborations" recalls his famous friendships and chameleon adaptability, at Des Moines Art Center (DMAC) through Jan. 18.

Ana Mendieta was a Cuban refugee who grew up in Sioux City and flourished in Iowa City before her tragic "murder" by sculptor Carl Andre. He was somehow acquitted despite the motive of her divorcing him, her flying off a 34th story NYC balcony while in his company and his repeated lies to the police. Famous for blood, body and earth art, Mendieta's made-in-Iowa film "Grass Breathing" plays at DMAC through Dec. 7.

Scott Charles Ross returns to Moberg Gallery Dec. 5 with "The Earth Talks," a meditation on climate change and the beauty of the natural world.

Bill Luchsinger and Karen Strohsen, Iowa's most popular artists, moved from Moberg to Liz Lidgett Gallery and Design. Lidgett also moved her gallery from East Village to the space on Ingersoll where Moberg used to be. Look for her gallery to produce monthly shows featuring Iowa artists. ■

Megan Hammer gains inspiration from nature

Fiber artist transforms wool into felt.



When initially viewing Megan Hammer's framed art, it appears like a delicately painted fabric canvas.

Yet, upon further inspection, the artwork is actually made of layers of felted wool fiber. There's no paint. Rather, it is the wool's pop of color weaved in it.

Hammer is a fiber artist located at Mainframe Studios, who gains inspiration from nature and Iowa's natural prairieland, wildflowers and seasonal colors. The process of creating her art is complex, and she explains how the multifaceted artwork is put together.

First, she takes a ball of wispy and fluffy wool fiber. She separates layers of color, and, using soapy water and friction, she blends the wool or the material to create shades and colors. For example, a cloud scene uses white and blue wool, and she blends the two together.

When she wants to add details, such as a tree, she will use a barbed needle with the wool to create shapes and intricate details with the fiber.

The wool is then transformed from a delicate material into something strong.

"The process is important. I love the combination and embrace the natural textures from the wet process," she explains.

When she begins stretching and wetting the wool, also called wet felting, the

method is often unpredictable.

"I embrace how the colors transform and change," she says. "It's different every time, and my work isn't duplicated."

Different breeds of sheep often create different types of wool. She purchases from various places to get a variety of textures. Merino wool creates the smoothest texture.

When the artwork is complete, she frames pieces in shadowboxes, rather than behind glass, where the artwork appears to "float."

"It really shows the texture and the edges," she explains.

Another popular artform is crafting wet felted bowls. Small bowls can hold artificial or air plants and other items. She teaches felting classes at Mainframe and is excited to share her technique.

"People are so intrigued to learn how to do it," she says.

Hammer attended college and studied studio art, painting and drawing. After working in restaurants, and after she had two kids, she chose to stay home. When her youngest started kindergarten, she felt that "creative urge" to come back to art.

"That's when I discovered felted wool. It clicked, and I've been making it ever since then," she says.

She hopes to be an inspiration for her kids' creativity. Her kids accompany her to art festivals and markets.

"I bring them, so they can see me as an entrepreneur. If they can see that I can make a business at it, they can, too — in whatever they decide to do," she reflects.

With her studio at Mainframe, being surrounded by fellow artists offers inspiration.

"I like that I can bounce ideas off other creatives," she says. "There's a lot of support from the art community."

Finding harmony in textures and adding details is her favorite part in watching the transformation from wool to felt.

"It's similar to how nature and landscapes change. The materials go from soft and fluffy to strong felt," she reflects. "It's amazing to create something beautiful in the process."

Hammer's work will be displayed at the Grimes Public Library Dec. 8 through February 2026. From February through April 2026, she will display her work at the Clive Public Library. For more information about felting classes, visit www.meganhammer.com. ■



Classic rite of passage

Immerse yourself into several rewarding performing arts experiences.

The holiday performing arts options are a bounty on which to feast. Like a cultural Whitman's Sampler, there is variety and appeal to attract anyone. The diversity this year is enticing from classical like "The Nutcracker," the Des Moines Symphony and Central Iowa Wind Ensemble, to classics like "A Christmas Carol," "Miracle on 34th Street" and the return of the A Sisters, to a family hit, Disney's "Frozen." Each offers a special respite, giving patrons a chance to immerse themselves into several rewarding performing arts experiences.

Classical rite of passage – "The Nutcracker"

Deserving special attention is any adult's opportunity to introduce or rekindle the magic of "The Nutcracker." Tchaikovsky's iconic music underscores the magical immersion into the dream world filled with soldiers, mice, sugar plum fairies and more. In a young person's first connection to this beloved tale, each adult in that rite of passage party will vicariously thrill at their reactions while undoubtedly recalling their first "Nutcracker" experience. Those with a passing or passionate attraction to the arts likely remembers their first introduction to Clara's fantasy. This should be on every child's cultural bucket list, and adults really should be honor-bound to make such an event happen.

Greater Des Moines provides two productions to consider. Or, consider both and have a lively discussion comparing interpretations. With a stage often filled with soldiers, mice, sugar plum fairies and more, this timeless production is a sensory wonder for young people — and the young at heart.

Ballet Des Moines is Iowa's premier professional ballet company, presenting its version in the gilded glory of Hoyt Sherman Place Theatre. With a national talent network and company members boasting exceptional credentials, the full power and grace of this work's dancing beauty is on display.

Iowa Dance Theatre's "Nutcracker" commands the stage at Des Moines Performing Arts' Civic Center. An ongoing tradition in this space since 1997, IDT began presenting its annual ballet in 1985. They present a shortened version to more than 3,000 metro school children each year. This production truly captures the participatory imagination of young people as they see their peers performing in this exhilarating musical tale.



The dynamic Grand Marquee band has a national decades-long tradition of delivering an unforgettable evening of music and memories. Photo credit: The Grand Marquee

New Year's Eve temptations

This month, a new venue offers not one but two ways to spring into 2026. The long-awaited and eagerly anticipated opening of The Ingersoll begins Dec. 31 with two shows — one in the middle of the day, and the other in the more traditional evening time.

Giving diehard New Year's Eve celebrants the opportunity to dip twice into welcoming the turning of the calendar, The Ingersoll brings a gourmet luncheon feast to patrons prior to a dynamic show, "New Year's Lover," featuring Napoleon and his 14-piece jazz orchestra. With an irresistible groove, this orchestra delivers an unforgettable performance filled with timeless hits and smooth grooves spanning the decades. The Ingersoll then taps the nationally renowned Kansas City jazz orchestra, The Grand Marquee. This band has spent more than two decades dazzling audiences nationwide with thousands of performances and eight full-length releases, including recordings from the legendary Sun Studios in Memphis.

One of the region's premier ways to usher in the New Year has been delivered by the Des Moines Symphony. Under the masterful baton of Maestro Joseph Giunta, these themed orchestral celebrations have become a special way to usher in the New Year. DMS again partners with Cirque talent to bring an extravagant symphonic and performance awe heralding an unforgettable beginning to 2026.

Other show gems to enjoy

Embracing nostalgia and stimulating memories seem to be a theme this year, as a series of shows with serve as warm wrappings for the heart and soul. "Miracle on 34th Street," "A Christmas Carol" and "The A Sisters & Friends at the Velvet Lounge" are sure to draw enthusiasts. Add a series of instrumental excursions

BARE BOARDS CHATTER

Des Moines Performing Arts – Temple Comedy Series Through Dec 7. "Triple Espresso"

Des Moines Performing Arts Dec. 2-7. "The Notebook"

Ankeny Community Theatre Dec. 5-14. "Miracle on 34th Street" the play

Iowa Stage Theatre Company Dec. 5-21. "A Christmas Carol"

Des Moines Playhouse Dec. 5-27. Disney's "Frozen"

Ballet Des Moines at Hoyt Sherman Place Theatre Dec. 11-14. "The Nutcracker" (also touring to other Iowa cities)

Iowa Dance Theatre at Des Moines Performing Arts Dec. 12-13. "The Nutcracker"

CAP Theatre (Class Act Productions) Dec. 12-14. "The CAP Radio Hour – Live!"

Central Iowa Wind Ensemble Dec. 13 (in Ames), 14 (in Des Moines). "Holiday Spectacular"

Tallgrass Theatre Company Dec. 19-21. "The A Sisters & Friends at the Velvet Lounge"

Des Moines Symphony Dec. 20-21. "Holiday Brass"

Community Jazz Center Big Band Dec. 21. "Jazzin' Up The Holidays"

Des Moines Symphony Dec. 31. "New Year's Eve Pops: Cirque"

The Ingersoll Dec. 31, early show. "Napoleon Douglas & His Jazz Orchestra"

The Ingersoll Dec. 31, evening show. "New Year's Eve Pops: Cirque"

into holiday joy with Central Iowa Wind Ensemble, Des Moines Symphony's "Holiday Brass," and CJC-Big Band to shake the rafters, plus exceptional production value with the Playhouse's holiday show, the family favorite, Disney's "Frozen," and this December offers a blissfully indulgent array of seasonal sensations.

Sally forth, cultural adventurers, and fill your calendars. ■

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. He has performed in more than 100 musicals, including many leading roles.



A trio of furry favorites

Thick-fur dogs love the cold weather.

Jennifer Schmit has been a dog-lover her whole life. Fortunately, it didn't take much to convince her cat-loving boyfriend, Sam, to share in her love of dogs.

Today, the now married couple has three dogs.

"I had cats, but I liked the idea of a dog. Cody (Jennifer's dog) was my heart dog," Sam recalls.

The pair also began fostering dogs. Scott, a husky malamute mix, was a rescue foster dog they ended up adopting.

As a rescue, Scott didn't know how to be a dog.

"He didn't want to be petted. But now, he's a big marshmallow and came out of his shell," Jennifer explains. "He loves to get hugs and kisses."

Shortly after that, they rescued a puppy mill dog from a shelter. They traveled to Cedar Falls to obtain Keeva, a Samoyed with white, thick fur.

Keeva was hesitant and resisted affection due to how she was raised as a puppy.

"She was so nervous. It took a few weeks before we could touch her. It took years before a guest in our home could touch her," Jennifer recalls. "We gave her years to learn how to love. It was rewarding to see her blossom, as it took almost five years for her to approach people."

After Scott and Keeva, the pair got a third dog — Zuri, a Bernese mountain dog. When the couple were in Breckenridge, Colorado, last Christmas, they brought Zuri to a Bernese mountain dog parade.

"It was so fun. She was still a puppy. My aunt and uncle's dog wore matching outfits," she says.

All three dogs get along and often nap next to each other. Scott is the "protector" and looks out for the younger dogs.

"Zuri can be rowdy. They have separation anxiety when they are apart and have to be with their pack," Jennifer says.

As the dogs all have thick fur, they are cold-loving creatures.

"They love winter," Sam says. "We can't get them to come inside. The colder, the better."

Sam takes Scott on runs with him near their home in Ankeny. They avoid dog parks and instead take walks on nearby Saylorville Lake paths.

Jennifer says Scott is an empath.

"He feels people's energy. If people are excited or nervous, he is, too," she says.

The couple says their three dogs have all bonded and are like one big family.

"We don't have kids, so they are like our kids," she says. "Dogs are instantly happy and always want to be with you."

Despite constantly cleaning up dog hair, the love and companionship is always present.

"They give us so much. I feel like I don't give enough," Sam says. "They are always happy to see you." ■



Zuri, a Bernese mountain dog; Keeva, a Samoyed; and Scott, a husky/malamute mix.



JOE'S NEIGHBORHOOD

BY JOE WEEG

Hanging it all out at the holidays

The perfect gift

My mom was a hoarder. And I don't say that harshly. Listen, I've got my own problems. And my mom was not the worst hoarder I've ever seen. But her home does make for quite the excavation as we prep her house to sell after her death. For example, over there on that far wall in the basement are hundreds of cottage cheese containers in case you need somewhere to put that leftover turkey. And here are old newspapers dating back 40 years that, as my mom used to say may (or may not!) contain important information. And what if you suddenly want to can 200 jars of tomatoes? I've got the canner and the jars and the lids just for you.

Ah, but look there. In the back room of the basement. Yup, on the floor sits an old white enamel bucket. I recognize it immediately. It's full of clothespins.

Hmmm...

My dad bolted the crossbeam down with heavy nuts and washers. Then he painted it with sealant hoping it would withstand the Iowa elements. My 11-year-old self

trailed him like a disciple as he carried the cross on his shoulders out to the backyard where he dug two deep holes with a post hole digger. He slid two posts into the holes and packed them with concrete. A day later, he strung six lines between the two, and then he placed under the lines a white enamel bucket full of clothespins. Voila, a clothesline for a family of 10.

I have loved clotheslines ever since. From a weathered clothesline next to an old Iowa farm house to a clothesline strung between windows in an alley in Lille, France. From sheets flapping like landed fish to stiff jeans acrobatically hanging upside down. Circular clotheslines, retractable clotheslines, clotheslines on pulleys. They all work for me.

Look, there's my mom stringing clothes in 1953 while living in married college housing in Ames.

And here's another. Forget the gondoliers in Venice, my tourist attractions were the clotheslines above the canals.



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And closer to home, my neighbor is clearly channeling clotheslines at Halloween — nothing spookier than wind blowing ghostly sheets in the distance.



Which gets us to the point — you still haven't bought a gift for that person who seems to have everything. Oh my. And it's even harder to decide the appropriate gift because they always give you something meaningful. Ouch. Well, I have the answer. Today only. Rock bottom prices. And they are going fast...

A clothesline.

Why a clothesline? Hah, I'm so glad you asked.

First, clotheslines are romantic. The sensuous waiving of the clothes in the wind has been a favorite of

artists for forever, from Andrew Wyeth's "Light Wash" painting to John Sloan's "A Woman's Work." And, yes, if there is a figure in the painting, it is almost always a woman. I'm so sorry. But YOU can flip that outdated dynamic on its head and give a clothesline to that discerning man in your life. It's time, folks. So, give a gift that is sensuous while at the same time fighting the patriarchy.

Second, using a clothesline is just healthier. Let's just look at plastics. If clothes that stretch have plastic in them, then putting any of those items in the dryer to heat up and agitate isn't a good idea. And on top of the plastic issue, the clothes just smell better when they dry outside. And, no matter how you slice it, adding "freshening" fabric softeners or scent beads or scent boosters to your dryer load is like adding flavorings to your coffee. Don't.

Finally, the clothesline pushes you into nature. You start thinking about things like humidity and light and temperature. Where is the sun today? Is there a breeze? Is it so humid my clothes might actually get even more damp? See, isn't that fun? Or, try this, flash freeze that shirt into a scarecrow when you hang it out in late January. Why not? And, while frozen, the shirt makes for an agreeable dinner companion. Trust me.

Enough? I'm so glad I was able to help with your

holiday shopping. But, I've still got my own problems — this chipped enamel bucket of wooden clothespins that dates back 60 years or more. Every clothespin in the bucket was surely touched by my mom and dad and probably all of my siblings, some alive and some dead. Voices from the past.

But, maybe that points to the real gift you should give at the holidays. The real “hanging it all out.” The clothespins are a reminder to raise a glass not only to those at the table, but those not at the table. To honor those present and to honor those absent. Grandmas and grandpas. Mothers and fathers. Brothers and sisters. Lovers and dear friends.

So, take off your ball cap, set down your phone, put away the laundry and clothespins, and raise your glass: May they all be eating pumpkin pie in heaven.

And now wipe that tear and pass the pumpkin pie so that we can experience heaven — as the old Irish saying goes — before the devil realizes his mistake. ■

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.



A CITYVIEW PUBLICATIONFREE!

HOMEVIEW

DES MOINES' HOME IMPROVEMENT AND REAL ESTATE GUIDE

KITCHEN
Makeover

A BRIGHTER, MORE FUNCTIONAL KITCHEN
PAGE 8

A DES MOINES HOUSE BECOMES A HOME
PAGE 10

WALL AND DARK COLORS HAD TO GO
PAGE 17

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All about the entertainment factor

Gina Gedler's wide vocal range shines across genres, garnering many awards and accolades.

From lounge acts to jazz standards to pop music and Broadway tunes, it's safe to declare that Gina Gedler is at home singing any genre.

Gedler's wide vocal range shines across genres, garnering many awards and accolades. This year, the Greater Des Moines Community Jazz Center Hall of Fame honored her with a special recognition award. She has received several Dionysos awards for Best Actress in various lead singing roles. In 2018, she won a Cloris Leachman Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role in "Florence Foster Jenkins." The Des Moines Playhouse inducted her in the 2017 as a Playhouse Performer Legend.

She has sung and acted for various commercials, films and other local marketing in Des Moines. Chances are you might have heard her sing but not known it is her because of her unique vocal range.

Gedler grew up in the desert of Arizona, which she says lacked music opportunities. Instead, she listened to albums on her record player. In high school, she performed in musicals and sang in the choir.

As she married right out of high school, her husband was deployed in the service. She auditioned for the musical "Grease," thinking she would get the part of Rizzo. Instead, she was cast as the lead of Sandy.

"I thought it was cool," she says, noting how this boosted her confidence.

When she moved to Des Moines, she began acting in plays at the Des Moines Playhouse. She performed in three musicals a year and worked full time.

"You do it for the love of it. It's not for the money," she reflects.

Other opportunities arose as a guest singer in bands, in private performances and in other musical endeavors. She has sung the national anthem dozens of times at various events. A 1970s lounge act, called Joey and Sugar, features songs from the era.

Whatever genre she sings, she says it is all about the entertainment factor.



"Sometimes, I'm there for the background music. It doesn't have to sound the same each time. I really enjoy entertaining people," she says.

Gedler admits she is nervous every time before she goes on stage or performs.

"I'm extremely nervous. I don't want to let people down," she explains. "Once I hear people and their energy or applause, then my energy kicks in."

Often, her songs evoke feelings in the audience and related memories.

"I've witnessed people crying in the audience with a Bette Midler song. It's fulfilling, because I know I'm doing something right," she reflects.

Since Noce's jazz club opened 10 years ago, Gedler is a mainstay, performing on a regular basis. She shares ideas and appreciates the opportunities Noce provides for entertaining options.

"Noce has been a blessing for me. They know what they are doing. It gives me a chance to do something I love," she says.

Her wide vocal range includes timeless classics, jazz

standards, Broadway tunes, chill songs and pop music. The best part is surprising the audience.

"I've known to throw them for a loop and break out by belting out a gritty, sassy song with an attitude," she laughs.

As she sings Linda Rondstadt and Barbra Streisand songs, some folks have referred to her as a diva. She rejects the connotation.

"I'm a polar opposite of a diva. I just do my thing. I'm not a hoity-toity person. I'm chill, and I step back when I need to," Gedler explains.

She knows that people have options when it comes to listening to music. She appreciates her fan support, along with her family and husband, who she says is a "truth teller" about her singing.

"I love doing what I do. I'm grateful. I don't take that for granted. I don't say it to be cheesy," she reflects. "I want things to be perfect, and I always strive to be the best I can."

Catch Gedler at Noce's "All I Want for Christmas" shows on Dec. 5, 7 and 23. ■

SOUND ADVICE

BY JACKIE WILSON

December is a month of merry-making. From holidays to ringing in the New Year, Des Moines offers numerous music options.

Celebrate 1980s rock on Dec. 13 for **A Very Motley KISSmas** show. It features tribute bands, **Red Hott** (Motley Crue) and **KISSinTime** (KISS). Concert is at Sherwood Forest Events Center at 7400 Hickman Road. General admission tickets start at \$20; table and chair seating extra. www.eventbrite.com

Head to the Val Air Ballroom on Dec. 27 for a **Not Quite New Year's Eve** concert featuring **Not Quite Brothers** and guests **Tyler Richton & The High Bank**

Boys and Fountains of Dane. General admission tickets \$23. www.axs.com.

Wooly's is the New Year's Eve spot to hear **Tony Bohnekamp and Pianopalooza**, along with opener **The Finesse**. GA tickets are \$28. www.axs.com.

Noce is all about holiday music in December. More than two dozen concerts offer up a variety of holiday classics. Performances include **A Charlie Brown Christmas** with the **Tanner Taylor Trio**, **Under the Mistletoe** with **Lauren Vilmain**, **Home for the Holidays** with **Max Wellman** and many others. Dates, performances and tickets vary. For more info, visit www.nocedsn.com. ■

More than 350 hours of volunteer work

Lydia Youngquist spends much of her free time helping local charities.

The United Way of Central Iowa has been in operation since 1917. Though it has operated under a number of different names since its inception, its goal of uniting the community and its various charitable efforts to make central Iowa a better place remains the same. One of its employees, Lydia Youngquist, is a donor services payment specialist but spends her free time volunteering.

Youngquist, a Storm Lake native, found her passion for nonprofits while at Iowa State University.

"I worked with the United Way of Story County up there, and that's what made me learn about United Way. When I was looking for a job, a job opened up here, I moved down from Ames, and that's how I've got involved in the community and volunteering here," Youngquist said.

Growing up in the church fostered her sense of community early on. Plus, what she calls the less exciting world of accounting in corporate America gave her more reason to find a job in the world of volunteering.

"I did corporate accounting, which is not very fun, but I just am really passionate about community work," Youngquist said. "It was a way for me to do it in my free time and get involved in the community, especially moving to a new city, not knowing anyone. It's a good excuse to drive to a new neighborhood and find something new and talk to new people."

Volunteer work is not everyone's idea of fun, but it is for Youngquist. She spends the majority of her free time helping out around the city, free of charge. She discovered where she could get started through a program through the United Way.

"They have a volunteer hub online, and that's where I pretty much started. They have a lot of one-time opportunities, so I use that as a way to get out and see what's out there. The first year I moved here, I did like 350 volunteer hours that year. I do weekly volunteering with the Ronald McDonald House, the Food Bank of Iowa and the Bidwell Food Pantry," Youngquist said.

That's right. More than 350 hours. That's two entire weeks and a few hours left over just in volunteer work. What is she normally doing during that time?

"At the Ronald McDonald House, I do a lot of cleaning, so a lot of behind-the-scenes work, cleaning rooms in between families, or writing thank-you notes. Baking treats at the food bank, we do a lot of repackaging food. It's really fun. There are a lot of



the same people that go there every week, so it's very community-based. And just get to spend time with each other, kind of like an exercise for the day. At the food pantry, it's restocking shelves, so it's like a grocery aisle, basically. And it's opening up the boxes, moving things around, and setting it up for the next day for families to come in," Youngquist said.

She says that she leans into this realm of volunteering because families dealing with food insecurity is a cause that is important to her, as it is something that affects all of us.

"It's something everyone deals with every day, finding food. Just to imagine, a lot of our neighbors are hungry. And if I can do two hours every week, it's the little bit that I can do to help people who are struggling to get basic necessities," Youngquist said.

Since she normally works in a cubicle, she says being able to get outside and interact with the community is a great way to meet new people while making an impact. It has also helped her step out of her shell.

"I'm a little bit shy, a little anxious, so it's been a good way to force myself out there and force myself to get involved and talk to people. I've definitely grown and am less scared showing up at places than I used to be," Youngquist said.

When asked, a fellow United Way of Central Iowa employee described Youngquist as a "dedicated community volunteer" and recommended her for this



Lydia Youngquist

feature.

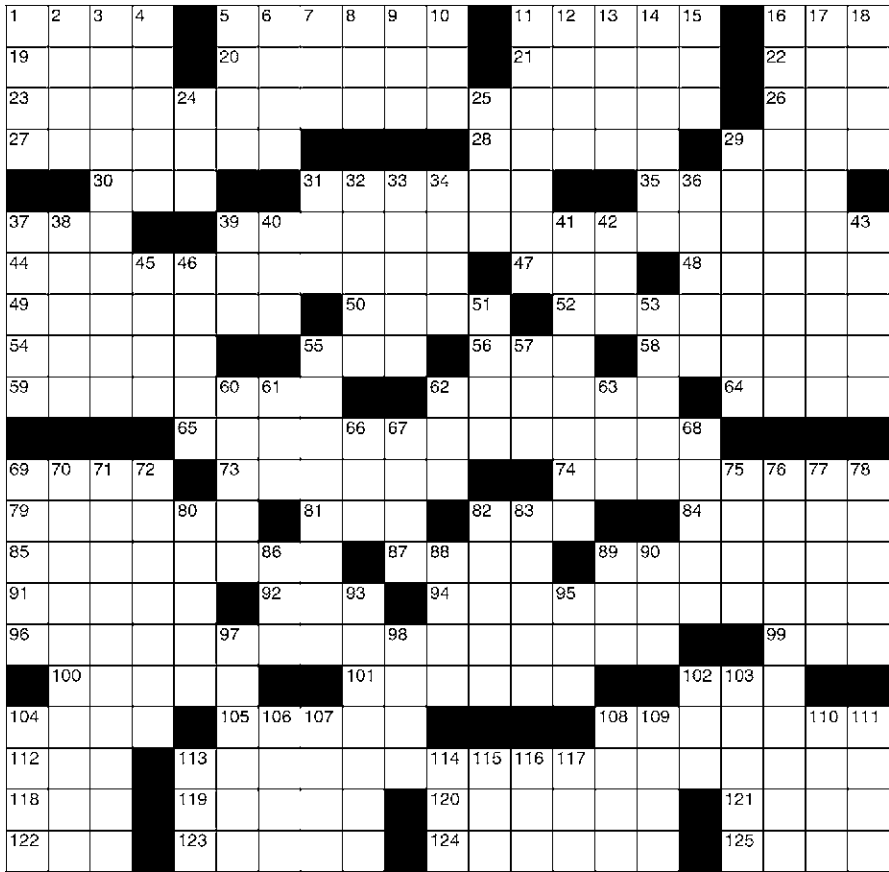
"I think to me, it's a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging. To feel like I have a reason and have an impact. It's important to not just do things for myself but to look at the bigger picture. And, it's very important to my values. It's that internal gratification of living your values and having a reason to do things," Youngquist said.

She also takes delight in knowing how to direct friends and family where they can go to volunteer.

"Volunteering is very fun. It's not lame, and it's a good excuse to get out of your house. You know, get off the couch, get off of TikTok," Youngquist said.

Those interested can get visit the United Way of Central Iowa's volunteer hub at www.volunteer.unitedwaydm.org/need. ■

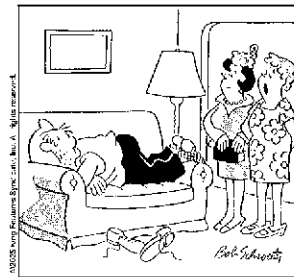
GROUP OF HERBS



- ACROSS**
- 1 Tasks
5 Witty remark
11 Pinnacles
16 Inaccurate
19 Sailing
20 Ablaze
21 Pinnacles
22 Money for the senior yrs.
23 Start of a riddle
26 Guided
27 Redeemers
28 Tally
29 Forest growth
30 Comics cry
31 Omitted, as a syllable
35 Used a scull
37 USN VIP
39 Riddle, part 2
44 Riddle, part 3
47 "Mayday!"
48 Take to the road
49 Neighbor of Georgia
50 Aroma detector
52 Stain-fighting toothpaste, e.g.
54 "Year One" director
55 Gun, in slang
56 Asian "way"
58 "Three's Company" co-star Suzanne
59 Aversion
62 User's guide
64 Celtic language
65 Riddle, part 4
69 Je ne -- quoi
73 Incendiary felonies
74 Most frequently
79 Golf legend Palmer
- 81 Picnic pest
82 Lifelong pal, informally
84 Tiny hairlike structures
85 Not crying
87 Currency of Latvia
89 Gives the means
91 "-- dabba dool!"
92 Lick like a cat
94 Riddle, part 5
96 End of the riddle
99 Part of ROY G. BIV
100 A stage past embryonic
101 Protested unpeacefully
102 Gp. checking baggage
104 Actresses Jillian and Blyth
105 Joan -- (French saint)
108 Elliott of the New England Patriots
112 Permit to
113 Riddle's answer
118 Maui garland
119 Bother a lot
120 Sprinted faster than
121 Prefix with byte or ton
122 Org. on a toothpaste box
123 Pre-Soviet rulers
124 Sneeze catcher
125 "You, over there ..."
- DOWN**
- 1 Skull parts
2 Worker welfare org.
3 Rodent-built channel blockers
4 "Vexations" composer
5 Erik
6 Churlish sort
7 Difficult task
8 Gridiron gp.
9 Prefix with term or week
- 10 Eye, to poets
11 Casual shirt
12 Tiered temples
13 Pale tan
14 "Preach it!"
15 "Sleeper" co-star Diane
16 Old fast jet, for short
17 Worker purifying petroleum
18 Breath-holding reef explorers, e.g.
19 Lose color
20 Bowl-shaped frying pan
21 Brand of PCs and tablets
22 Warship with three banks of rowers
23 Letters after els
24 Hotelier Helmsley
25 Otherwise
26 Huskies, e.g.
27 Expand on
28 Swiss -- (beet variety)
29 -- Lama
30 Math game with matchsticks
31 "I'm -- loss"
32 Resign from
33 Hearth waste
34 Succinct
35 Just slightly
36 Rips into
37 Coup d'-- (rebellion)
38 Dot of land in the ocean
39 Is given the chance to chime in
40 Darth Vader, as a boy
41 Hue
42 Roadwork goo
43 Eds. mark them up
44 '80s sitcom
- 66 Took the gold
67 Poker stake
68 Deteriorate
69 Man-goat of myth
70 Where aid is urgently required
71 While not physically attending
72 Ice cream alternatives
75 Pen tips
76 "Phantom Lady" co-star
77 Prolonged attack
78 Zapped with a stunning weapon
80 Camel cousin
82 "DMZ" actor Benjamin
83 "-- is an Englishman" ("H.M.S. Pinafore" lyric)
86 Kind of 35mm camera
88 High coif
89 Furniture wood option
90 Bridal bio word
93 Avian mimics
95 Rock guitarist Barrett
97 Luau hellos
98 Ward for preemies
102 Decimal base
103 Be too thrifty
104 Spaghetti -- bolognese
106 Goat cheese
107 Miles away
108 Jacob's twin, in the Bible
109 Region
110 Nest fillers
111 Exam for an atty.-to-be
113 Vietnamese New Year
114 Deteriorate
115 Anna of fashion
116 Non-earthlings, for short
117 "-- longa, vita brevis"

SCRAMBLERS

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



- Convey
RAMPIT
Scrub
LANCE
Foe
MEENY
Flaxen
BOLDEN

TODAY'S WORD

SUDOKU

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

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

DIFFICULTY : ♦♦

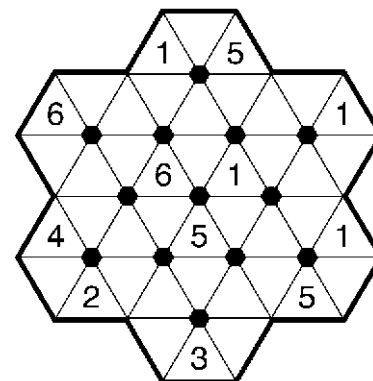
♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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SNOWFLAKES

by Japheth Light

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



DIFFICULTY : ♦♦♦

♦ Easy ♦♦ Medium ♦♦♦ Difficult

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GO FIGURE!

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

	-		÷		= 5			
+		+		+				
	+		+		= 17			
+		+		×				
	+	4	+		= 18			
=		=		=				
22		14		20				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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WHAT THE...

Think you're funny?

Send us your best caption...

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

Next month's photo:



PHOTO BY OLEKSANDR PIDVALNYI FROM PIXABAY

This month's winner

"Determined to be the prettiest one in her patch, Patty Pumpkin hits the spa."

- Bradly Hummel



PHOTO BY YELENA FROM PEXELS

Runners-up

"I don't feel well; my brother got canned!" - Ina Marie Gilman

"So, sue me. It's my last day before I have to get a giant knife stabbed into me. I deserve this." - Lilah Ross

"An avocado face mask, cucumber eye hydration — most people thought Pumpkin was out of her gourd!" - Greg Chamberlin

"For those of you wanting to have a softer, kinder, gentler Halloween, we are proud to introduce the Jill-O'Lantern, a much more popular symbol than scary, ugly old Jack'O." - Mark Alvord

"Seriously, can you give spiced apple or even toasted marshmallow a try so that I can enjoy a little 'me time' and possibly feel whole again?" - Beth Damm

Send your "What The...?" caption and image entries to celeste@dmcityview.com.
BE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR NAME.

We can stop HIV, Iowa—
by protecting our sexual health
when we **talk, test, treat.**

talk

Talk with your partner **before** having sex.

Talk about **when** you were last tested and suggest getting tested together.

Talk to your healthcare provider about your sex life. Ask them about HIV and STI testing—including **what tests you need** and **how often**.

test

Get tested! It's the **only way** to know for sure if you have HIV or another STI.

Many STIs, including HIV, **don't cause any symptoms**, so you could have one and **not know**.

If you don't feel comfortable asking your regular provider for an HIV or STI test, find a clinic that provides free or low-cost confidential testing.

treat

HIV and all other STIs are **treatable**.

If you test positive for an STI, work with your healthcare provider to get the right treatment.

If you test positive for HIV, your provider or testing location will help connect you to treatment and resources! Successful HIV treatment prevents HIV from passing to your partners and protects your own health.

And for both HIV and other STIs, ask for partner services to get your partner tested and treated.



Scan the QR code or visit **stophiviowa.org** to find testing, prevention resources & more



CARS IN THE CITY

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Chevy Trailblazer

Subcompact SUV is a solid ride for its price, fuel efficiency and trendy color combination.

BY JACKIE WILSON

As an auto manufacturer with more than 110 years in existence, Chevrolet knows its vehicles. They have tousel with model names back and forth, tweaking and releasing different versions each year.

For example, take the Chevy Trailblazer. The Trailblazer was released in 1999 as an upscale Blazer. It quickly morphed into an SUV in 2002, then was discontinued in 2009.

Fast forward to 2021 and the Trailblazer returns, this time as a new subcompact SUV.

Today, Chevy currently has six SUVs in its lineup. The Trailblazer is second smallest SUV behind the Trax and the test drive for this month's Cars in the City.

The 2026 Trailblazer ACTIV with front wheel drive has a 1.3 liter turbo engine. The base model starts at \$27,600; the model test driven was \$33,270. Comparatively, the Trax base price is approximately \$23,000.

The Trailblazer is a straightforward model. It is small to get in yet has enough leg and head room for even taller folks. As an average-height woman, I try to imagine how my larger friends would fit in this vehicle and, yes, they would fit.

The exterior color is unique. The "white sand" is a two-tone color with white on the top roof area and a khaki-like color on the rest of the vehicle. Maybe they

are getting their color cues from people's home décor? Take the gray paint with white trim phase. After the trending new home color of gray, suddenly 10 shades of gray vehicles became popular. Matching homes and cars might be the latest trend.

The interior color is jet black, and the seats are made with Evotex, a synthetic leather-like material that is durable and easy to clean. The seats are trimmed with a bright yellow stitching. The contrasting yellow resembled a safety seating, which seemed out of place in the vehicle. Or, perhaps, it looked too much like a Hawkeye color combination.

There are a lot of extras for the price. The 10-way power driver's seat offers a lumbar control setting. An 11-inch touchscreen infotainment offers up connection, hands free driving and heated seats. Chevy's Safety Assist package is a must-have for keeping drivers safe.

Driving around town and on the interstate, acceleration was easy. Some SUVs seem clunky, yet the Trailblazer's ride felt zippy, taking corners with ease and changing lanes. Pulling into a parking spot, I didn't worry about car door dings since the Trailblazer doesn't take up a lot of room.

This model has front-wheel drive as opposed to all-wheel drive. What's the difference? All-wheel drive handles a little better in uneven terrain or slippery conditions. Yet, front-wheel-drive vehicles often get



better gas mileage. It is a fuel efficient SUV, as the Trailblazer gets 31 mpg average on city and highway.

Cargo space is average and can be expanded by folding the seats down; however, you lose out on passenger space.

The Trailblazer is a solid ride for its price, fuel efficiency and that trendy color combination. ■



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DES MOINES FORGOTTEN

BY KRISTIAN DAY

Ingersoll Wine & Spirits

Good liquor stores don't need to sell strawberry flavored vape pens.

I was in Ingersoll Wine & Spirits back in October to pick up a couple bottles of wine as a treat to myself for getting through a challenging commercial project. Full disclosure: I am not much of a drinker these days. My brother-in-law loves to talk about whiskeys with me, but it is difficult for me to pretend to be interested. I think IPA's taste gross, and my only preferences with wine are that it is not from Iowa and has a cork. The only time drinking becomes a priority is if I am attending a wedding, and I am trying to forget that I am there. But, that night I walked into Ingersoll, I was feeling proud. They had a wine tasting happening, and the ambassador from the Okoboji distributor got me for \$60 on two bottles of wine. It reminded me of the few wine-tasting events that Ingersoll used to throw around the holiday season.

When I moved to Des Moines in 2007 from Golden, Colorado, I was 22 years old. The craft beer boom had just happened in the Denver Metropolitan area. Every corner you turned, there was another craft brewery that was owned and operated by a couple of bros with beards and work shirts with their names stitched in cursive on them. In the moment, I was totally amazed by it all of the wild beers with high alcohol content and "flavors" outside of your standard lager. I would go to this small liquor store off what was called Old Golden Road. Golden City Liquors was my go-to, as I felt like I was able to sample beers from all around this floating rock.

When I arrived in Des Moines, the craft beer boom had not happened yet. There



were whispers about Fat Tire coming to Iowa, and everyone was losing their minds. But, what I was missing in my life was that small independently owned liquor store that wasn't also a smoke shop (because good liquor stores don't need to sell strawberry flavored vape pens). I found Ingersoll Wine & Spirits, and I remember the first day I walked in there. It reminded me so much of the little place back in Golden, Colorado.

Ingersoll quickly became my place and for the last 18 years. I have paid them a visit for every holiday that I had some type of family gathering. When I read about owner Inbo Jung's passing in the paper this past September, I admit that my heart hurt a little. I never knew the man personally, but I would see him in there looking over the inventory and walking the aisles.

InBo Jung was born in Pyongyang in 1937, served in the Korean military, spent time in Germany, and immigrated to the United States in 1967, when he settled permanently in Des Moines. He first worked as a Pepsi deliveryman before founding Jung's Oriental Food Store (located at East Ninth and University), Iowa's first Asian grocery store, which became an important gathering place for Korean and Asian immigrants. In 1987, when Iowa first allowed private liquor stores, he launched Ingersoll Wine & Spirits. His life was also deeply rooted in faith, as he was one of the founding members and longtime elder of the Korean United Methodist Church where he and his wife found community for more than 50 years.

With all the changes happening on Ingersoll Avenue, the news of his passing sent a chill through me with the thought that someday the store might not exist in the neighborhood. I was told by the staff that there was no plan to close, but you never know. It would be a shame to see it disappear. Businesses are getting bought left and right. Renovations are in full swing, and some places are getting demolished to make room for new developments. I consider launched Ingersoll Wine & Spirits place an institution just like Jesse's Embers, The Greenwood Lounge and the Alpine. ■

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



A movie poster for the documentary "IOWA'S DIRTY SECRET". The title is in large, bold, black letters. Below the title is a black and white photograph of an industrial facility with smokestacks and buildings. In the top left corner, there are two laurel wreath awards: "SIOUX CITY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL AUDIENCE CHOICE 2025" and "OFFICIAL SELECTION Iowa Independent Film Festival". At the bottom, there is a red banner with the text "THE TRUE COST OF BURNING COAL" in white. To the right of the banner, there is a QR code and the text "Watch the award-winning documentary, now available at IOWASDIRTYSECRET.COM".

Mercury inspires extensive Hot Wheels collection

John Marchant has been collecting the miniature cars since 1995.



Whether from inside a box in your basement, in your child's collection of toys, or perhaps sitting on your shelf, you likely have held a Hot Wheel in your hands before. After all, the first Hot Wheels were introduced in 1968 by Mattel, and the total number produced is in the billions. John Marchant is no stranger to the miniature cars.

Marchant, a now retired truck driver, says he officially started his Hot Wheels collection in 1995. Hot Wheels made a Mercury, a car Marchant once had, and figured that would be a good place to start. However, he never anticipated the collection would become what it did.

"I thought it'd be small, but it just turned out to be what it is," Marchant said.

And, "what it is" is a collection of several thousand Hot Wheels spanning generations, from new to old, common to rare. Roughly a decade ago, he put the dedicated space together for his collection.

"Everybody says, 'How do you remember what you have?' Well, I go down there twice a week, you look around, and there are these storage containers. You look through it, and you remember some. Well, some turns into two, three or four, sometimes 10 that you already have," Marchant said.

Having duplicates is not something he minds. As mentioned, he has plenty Mercury cars, the Hot Wheel that got him to start the collection. Another of his favorites is the Beatnik Bandit. It is based on the Ed Roth car and is one of the original "sweet 16" Hot Wheels produced in 1968.

As for newer Hot Wheels, there are a few that catch Marchant's eye.

"I stay mostly in the newer stuff. I like the Porsches and the Lamborghinis. They are sharp-looking cars, and they're getting them to the point where they're detailed, where the fenders or the doors and the hood and all that opens," Marchant said.

He has a few in his collection that were particularly hard to find.

"The Employee Cars are hard, and the Treasure Hunts are hard. Today, if you are lucky enough, you had a chance to get a Treasure Hunt," Marchant said.

Treasure Hunt cars are randomly packed into cases and distributed to toy stores. Employee Cars, on the other hand, are much more difficult to get a hold of. They are cars given specifically to Mattel employees to signify special occasions, company achievements, etc. Marchant has several of them in his collection, framed and documented.

Marchant bought the majority of his collection online, or from friends, or at Hot Wheels collection shows.

"We've gone to California, and we've gone to St Louis for the conventions. For a regular show, we've been to Kansas City, Illinois, Nebraska and here (Iowa). Since I'm retired, we've gone to Arizona," Marchant said.

He does not have a collector's or wish list that he abides by. If something catches his eye and he feels like adding it to his extensive collection, he does so.

"I just look, and if something is rare, then I'll pick it

up. If I know I don't have it, then I'll pick it up. But I don't have a list," Marchant said.

At one garage sale in particular, his wife made an incredible discovery.

"She picked up some Hot Wheels, and they sold them to her for 10 cents apiece. She spent like \$10. She showed them to me, and she said, 'What do you think these are worth?' It was worth over \$1,000," Marchant said.

How does his wife feel about the collection?

"At first she didn't like it, and now she likes it. But, she will not dust it," Marchant said with a laugh.

Marchant is also the vice president of the All Iowa Hot Wheels Collectors Club, which has been in operation since 1981. The group currently has more than 100 active members and hosted its club show with more than 1,000 Hot Wheels and 97 tables set up for display.

"That's one of the largest (in the Midwest). People like to come from South Dakota and Nebraska, Kansas City, St Louis, and Illinois, just for our show," Marchant said.

He added that he has made plenty of friends over the years being part of the club.

"I meet new people, like I'm meeting you right now. There are a bunch of people who talk about different Hot Wheels with. We actually tell them, 'Don't go crazy like me,' " Marchant said. ■



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