

APRIL 2026

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ROUNDING the BASES

Learn what's new with
the Iowa Cubs in the
2026 season.

BELLY UP TO...

The Fitz, an eclectic bar next to
Lachele's Fine Foods in Highland Park

BUSINESS FEATURE

Car wash industry is booming in the
Des Moines area and the nation

FEATURE

Joe Weeg goes on a megachurch pilgrimage
in the metro. Can I get an amen?

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Baseball in Iowa: spring's first crack

In Iowa, the first crack of a baseball bat signals spring more surely than blooming trees or warming air. Baseball marks the moment winter finally loosens its grip. Fans flood the ballpark for Iowa Cubs games, turning evening outings into a cherished seasonal ritual. The smell of fresh-cut grass, the rhythm of innings and the hum of conversation in the stands bring a renewed energy. Baseball here is more than a game — it's a bridge from winter's harshness to summer's promise, a reminder that change is inevitable and welcome. Each pitch and swing are part of the comforting rhythm of life returning to Iowa. Our cover story this month heralds what we love about baseball and previews what to expect from the Cubs this season.

Megachurches: modern faith in motion

Megachurches aren't just big — they're influential. They feature modern facilities, professional-quality music and programming that stretches beyond Sunday services. Many offer counseling, youth programs, charity work and educational opportunities, serving as community hubs. Critics say their size can make personal connections more difficult and question the focus on growth or prosperity teachings. Still, these churches continue to evolve, reflecting broader trends in how Americans practice faith. CITYVIEW writer Joe Weeg takes readers inside three local megachurches and shares his firsthand experiences.

Car washes: sparkling success

Warm weather means long lines at car washes — but with so many options, there's no shortage. The industry's growth over the past decades mirrors changes in consumer habits, technology and urban life. What was once a home-based chore has transformed into automatic and self-service washes with membership programs, subscriptions and bundled offerings that attract loyal customers. Our business journal feature explores these trends and highlights insights from local professionals on what keeps the car wash industry shining.

Have a great month, and thanks for reading. ■

Shane Goodman
Editor and Publisher
CITYVIEW
shane@dmcityview.com
515-953-4822, ext. 305
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EDITOR / PUBLISHER

Shane Goodman

ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER

Aaron Burns

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Jolene Goodman

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Mary Fowler
Allyssa Ertz

STAFF WRITER

Cyote Williams

DESIGN MANAGER

Celeste Tilton

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Douglas Burns
John Busbee
Kristian Day
Jim Duncan
Randy Evans
Lindsey Giardino
Rachel Harrington
David Rowley
Ashley Rullestad
Joe Weeg
Jackie Wilson

ADVERTISING DESIGNERS

Jayde Vogeler
Nick Ruiz

DIGITAL MANAGER

Beckham Miller

BUSINESS OFFICE MANAGER

Brent Antisdell

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Jim Jacobsen



Big Green Umbrella Media
8101 Birchwood Court, Suite D, Johnston, Iowa 50131
PHONE: 515-953-4822 FAX: 515-953-1394
www.dmcityview.com • editor@dmcityview.com

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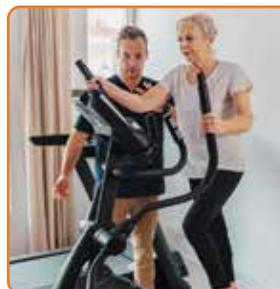
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Learn what's new with the Iowa Cubs in the 2026 season.

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Learn what's new with the Iowa Cubs in the 2026 season.

ON THE COVER: James Triantos will be an exciting player to watch for I-Cubs fans in 2026. Photo by Dylan Heuer

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ASK CITYVIEW

By CITYVIEW staff

Ask CITYVIEW anything by emailing editor@dmcityview.com.

Q. How far along is the construction of the 515 Walnut Tower?

A. Those who have driven through downtown Des Moines lately have seen the capital city's latest skyscraper taking shape. We reached out to Beal Derkenne Construction for an update and received this response, along with photos from the director of business development, Erin Knupp.

"Currently midway through the project schedule. Level 23 is pouring this week (March 11), and the exterior façade window system is trailing close behind at level 18. Interior framing and MEP rough-in are spread across levels 14-17, and drywall finishing and paint are on levels 9-13. Cabinets, countertops, shower doors and MEP trim are being installed between levels 5-8 and flooring is being installed at level 3. The topping out of the structure is targeted at early to mid-July, 2026! Expected completion date: 2nd quarter 2027,"

Upon its completion, the 33-story tower will be the fourth-tallest building in Iowa, trailing the Ruan Center, the Marriott Hotel, and 801 Grand.



Q. Is it true that Lou Sipolt Jr. once held the world record for consecutive miles driven on two wheels?

A. Yes, it's true. The host of "Iowa Live" on WOI channel 5 (and a longtime emcee of the CITYVIEW Best of Des Moines event) did hold the World Record for consecutive miles driven on two wheels. He set the record on June 26, 1977, driving an MG midget on two wheels for 7.5 miles at Pocono Raceway in Pennsylvania at 16 years old. A video of the event can be viewed on Lou's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@LouSipoltJr/ videos.



The most similar feat we could find in the Guinness Book of World Records is for the longest "car side wheelie" by Italian Michele Pilia at Sant'Elia Stadium, Cagliari, Italy, on Feb. 26, 2009. Pilia edged out Sipolt's record by driving for more than 230 miles. ■



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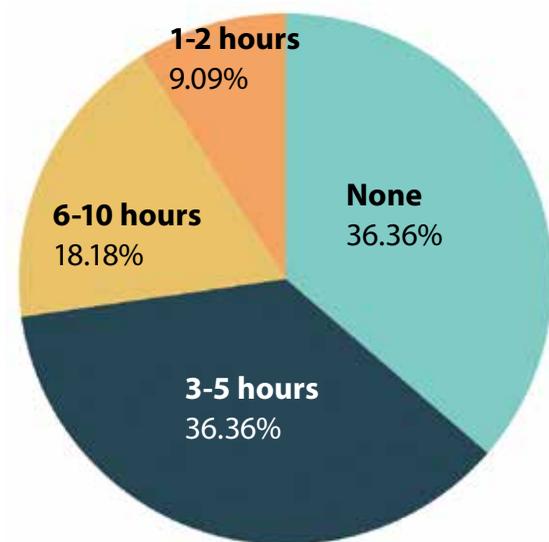
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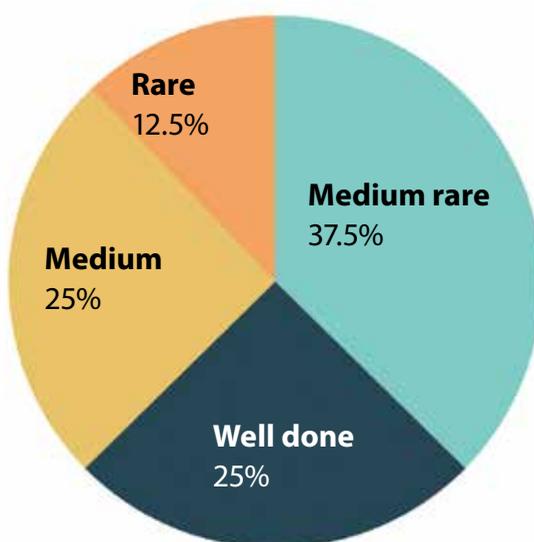
Results from last month's poll at www.dmcityview.com



How many hours per day do you watch traditional TV (not streaming like Netflix, Prime, etc.)?



How do you like your steak cooked?



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters are edited for space, spelling and clarity.

Thank you for your editorial, Troubled Water (Publisher's column, March 2026.) It is perfect except for the word "possibly" in the third paragraph. I am grateful and know it takes some courage to write about water here in Swine Republic.

- Ellen Hansen

Yesterday I had the opportunity to read CITYVIEW while waiting for my car at Ramsey. I had read a different, scaled-down version years ago. The March issue was more interesting and informative than some magazines I pay for! The article on water and several other features were filled with new-to-me facts. This was the first time I have not been delighted to have a service advisor come out.

- Shirley Andre

FACEBOOK COMMENTS



cityview magazine
(comments unedited)

CITYVIEW magazine: What's your favorite small town in Iowa, and why?

Kevin D. Hyberger: Decorah - a cool historical downtown district, beautiful views surrounding the area, the shops and restaurants and the outdoor activities surrounding the area. Also, the availability of really fun places to stay.

Sherri Traviss Pike: Pella

Deb Eastwood Williams: Pella! Love all the shops, restaurants, and the Peanut Pub!!

Beth Drees Brandt: Dyersville. My dad grew up on a farm, there. My cousins still live there.

Scott McClure: I used to travel in my career to various small towns throughout Iowa. There is one town I went to that really made an impression on me. Lake City, Iowa. It has an impressive town square with an incredible fountain. I never forgot that place.

Deb Cooper: Grew up in small town Waukee; not so small anymore. Clear Lake is now my favorite because of the year-round events!

Lauren Pesta: Elkader IA beautiful set along the Turkey River, rolling hills, antique mall amazing art and movie theatre. Best little bars and great Albanian food! Such a great town full of wonderful people too!

Cayla Ulfe: Indianola!

Paul Michael Davis: Malcom.

Deena Lea Edelstein: There are so many, Arnold's Park has to be one.

Michael Wellman: Slater; Grandma's house, Nitehawks semipro baseball...

Seth Peters: Lake View; my hometown

Kat Kinseth: Winterset. Cute things going on in the town and all around

CITYVIEW magazine: What do you think of West Des Moines making plans to demolish Valley West Mall to create mixed-use development?

Aaron Winters: As long as they have a Glamour Shots, KB toys, and an arcade I'm on board.

Jeff Bryan: It's dead. Take it out of its misery and start over

Bo Geigley: Hoping for Fun Factory 2.0

David Ewart: They can't remodel the existing building?

Paddie La Bruyere': Turn it into a Discovery Zone.

Jordan Campbell: I don't care

Lynn Roberts: If tenants are willing to occupy the space it really has no purpose, but I know that many people utilize the space for walking so it would be nice if that would work.

Melissa Higgins: I don't understand why they would demolish a useful building.

RETWEETS



(comments unedited)

@TheCatWhisperer: The rear view camera on my car went out so I had to rotate my neck and turn my head to back out just like they did on the Oregon Trail.

@neet_sol: I hope this email doesn't find you. I hope you've escaped. That you're free

@bestestname: Ariel's first mistake was wanting to be where the people are

@AbakpaJob: People singing happy birthday to you feels like a real life unskippable ad

@powcansurvivor: my favorite thing about ibuprofen is you can take like 3000mg and it still doesn't work

@d1nish: im at a job interview playing 1 truth 45 lies with the interviewer

@fwtimini: It's amazing how much you can accomplish around the house under the threat of someone coming over.

@aedison: almost reassuring now to receive a childlike, borderline-illiterate email. Ah, good — chatgpt didn't touch this

@OrevaZSN: I wish I had a friendship with benefits. (Those friends who get you an amazing job without going through HR)

@chasedbywasps: I'm always respectful of mannequins just in case

@MartinPilgrim1: The fact that most captchas are based on robots not being able to identify bikes or traffic lights doesn't fill me with confidence for self driving cars ■

STRAY THOUGHTS

BY RANDY EVANS

Des Moines' costly badge of secrecy

There must be more to the story.

City leaders in Des Moines are making it difficult to understand why they selected the new police chief, considering how they have imposed a code of silence about their recent \$975,000 payout to one of the candidates who did not get the job.

The payout and, even worse, the sealed lips are just another example of how common sense and good government suffer whenever public officials refuse to detail how and why they spend taxpayer money.

This textbook example of misplaced priorities began in 2024 when Des Moines Police Chief Dana Wingert announced his retirement after nearly a decade leading the department.

Maj. Lillie Parker, the highest ranking African-American woman at the department, sought the job. She was the only female among eight finalists, and the Des Moines Civil Service Commission ranked her first among the eight.

But City Manager Scott Sanders had the final say. With the City Council's blessing, he chose Maj. Michael McTaggart, instead. The commission had ranked him seventh among the eight finalists.

McTaggart took over in October 2024, at an annual salary of \$200,000.

His hiring received public praise for his more than 25 years of service on the police force. Mayor Connie Boesen said McTaggart would "lead our policing into the future ... and continue to build the department's relationship within our community, which is a key priority of not only the manager but also the council."

Well, perhaps not everyone in the community.

In January of this year, city officials announced they had reached a \$975,000 cash settlement with Parker to resolve demands her attorney made in a letter to City Hall. In return, she agreed to resign from the police force and keep quiet.

The city has refused to detail what Parker's demands were or disclose who she claimed had wronged her or when or how that happened.

Instead, the settlement agreement Parker and the city manager signed says generally she releases "all claims and causes of action arising out of Parker's employment with the City or any interaction with the City including but not limited to claims for age, race, color, sex, or gender discrimination, wages ... or any

mental health claim, or any other claim or payment."

City leaders likewise refuse to release the demand letter that preceded the settlement or provide the facts the letter alleges, such as just how Parker might have experienced unlawful discrimination or wrongful treatment.

Was it connected with McTaggart's selection?

Was it related to the Civil Service Commission rankings?

Did it occur before, during or after the interviews and selection process?

Who treated her so badly?

You can bet Parker knows those details. Sanders does, too. So does Boesen. Even McTaggart must have some clue.

But the city's code of silence is shielding the facts from the taxpayers — the people who are paying the \$975,000.

The city's lawyers even incorporated that code of silence into the settlement document, which included a lengthy paragraph saying "confidentiality is the essence of this agreement." The document bars the parties from commenting on the underlying claims.

What the settlement agreement does disclose is staggering.

First, Parker received a lump sum payment of \$126,803 that was subject to income tax withholding for wage-related recoveries.

She also received an additional lump sum of \$507,211 that was labeled as compensation for "alleged emotional distress." (As a lawyer told me, that provides her an argument to avoid paying income taxes on the amount attributable to a recovery for claimed personal injuries.)

Finally, her attorney received \$340,986 from the city for his legal services.

These payments did not follow an adverse ruling by a judge or jury. Indeed, Parker never sued the city. Instead, the city voluntarily settled, presumably to avoid a lawsuit and the public disclosures a lawsuit would bring. As a byproduct of the settlement, the city secured her resignation — and her silence.

Added together, the city agreed to pay Parker and her lawyer an amount it would have taken her almost five years to earn had she been named police chief.

So, as it stands, McTaggart toils at \$200,000 a year while a runner-up for chief scores a quick payout of nearly \$1 million.

There must be more to the story.

Last month, as the president of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, I wrote to City Attorney Jeff Lester to protest the city's refusal to turn over a copy of the demand letter from Parker's lawyer.

I told Lester, "The city's lack of any meaningful explanation of the basis and rationale for the payment of \$975,000 to Major Parker and her attorney [is] appalling and a misguided effort to hide facts and allegations of misconduct or favoritism that relate, in part, to the selection of the city's current chief of police."

I continued: "The chief's work will forever remain suspect if the air is not cleared about how he obtained his job. Moreover, the taxpayers of Des Moines are the ones who will satisfy payment of this sum, but those taxpayers are effectively in the dark about what led to this settlement."

I added: "This unwarranted secrecy prevents the citizens of Des Moines from evaluating how meritorious Major Parker's claims were or the wisdom of the city's decision to pay her to drop her claims. ... The public is being prevented from understanding whether these allegations dealt with Major Parker's peers at the Des Moines Police Department, her superior officers, or whether the allegations involved actions by officials at City Hall or by members of the City Council."

In these days when government budgets are tight and citizen concerns about wasteful government spending are widespread, it is hard to fathom why Des Moines city leaders think hiding Parker's allegations is a winning strategy.

It is even harder to understand why politicians and government officials who speak platitudes about transparency, public accountability and being wise stewards of taxpayer resources think openness is good for others but not for themselves. ■

*Randy Evans can be reached at
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CIVIC SKINNY

BY CITYVIEW STAFF

Leading in wind energy. Repurposing turbines. Resolving warrants. Avoiding measles.

Iowa leads the country in **wind energy**, according to iSelect, a business that compares energy costs. The company reported its findings after researching renewable energy trends across the U.S. Data show Iowa's total renewable energy share increased from 59.42% in 2020 to 65.55% in 2024, a 6.13% rise. More than 65% of Iowa's electricity now comes from renewable sources such as wind, solar and hydroelectric power. The increase, however, trails several states. South Dakota ranked second, with wind energy accounting for 57.8% of its electricity, a 19% increase from 2020. New Mexico, in fifth place, saw a 17% increase.

And then there's nuclear power. Iowa's only nuclear power plant, the **Duane Arnold Energy Center**, is scheduled to reopen in 2028-2029. The plant sits on a 500-acre site on the west bank of the Cedar River, two miles north-northeast of Palo and eight miles northwest of Cedar Rapids. It was closed after damage from the 2020 derecho. ...

Some rural Iowa communities have grown wary of wind turbines, partly because the blades are large and difficult to dispose of or recycle. Two downtown projects in

Des Moines have now repurposed **recycled wind turbine blades**.

Graham Construction, a 3G Company, secured its worksite at Mercy College of Health Sciences with Renewablade, commercial concrete barriers made from recycled composite material from retired wind turbine blades. A total of 28 barriers were installed. This is the second major Renewablade project in downtown Des Moines, following a retaining wall for Premier Credit Union that used material equal to three retired wind turbine blades. ...

The **Metro Waste Authority** released its fiscal year 2025 financial audit. Revenues totaled \$66.9 million, an 8% increase from 2024. Revenue comes from operating two landfills in the metro, a recycling facility, and other programs including hazardous waste and construction recycling.

Expenses were \$52.9 million, up 2% from the previous year. Surplus results for the year totaled \$14 million, up from \$10.1 million. Current assets included \$4.9 million in cash and cash equivalents, meaning that garbage has outraised Republican candidate for governor, **Randy Feenstra**. ...

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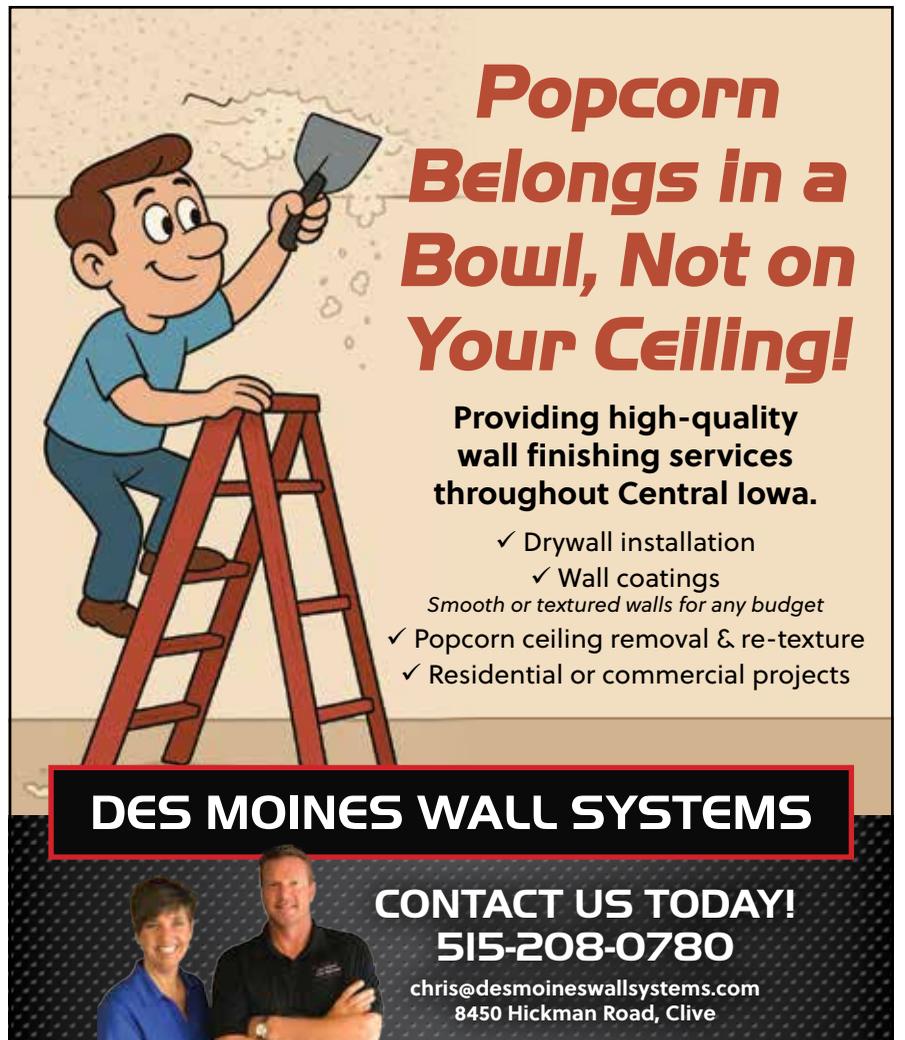
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CIVIC SKINNY CONT...

If you have a warrant, you need to read this. Polk County is holding its first **Warrant Resolution Clinic** on April 3. The free clinic allows residents to resolve low-level warrants. The county has more than 8,200 outstanding non-felony warrants, according to the Clerk of Court's office.

The clinic aims to reduce bookings for low-level, non-violent misdemeanor warrants, such as failure-to-appear and traffic offenses. It will also help residents set up affordable payment plans and pay off fines so they can regain driver's licenses. ...

The Greater Des Moines metropolitan area was named the **No. 2 Top Performing Metro for Economic Development** among its tier in Site Selection Magazine's 2025 Governor's Cup. The publication focuses on corporate real estate, facility planning, location analysis and foreign direct investment. Des Moines and West Des Moines previously ranked outside the top 10 but moved to second place after 37 verified corporate investment projects and expansions. The metro trailed only the Pennsylvania metro in investment projects among tier 2 metros, which have populations between 200,000 and 1 million. Des Moines ranked eighth in projects per capita. ...

The Des Moines Area Association of Realtors reported that February saw 3,855 more homes on the market, a 12% increase from last year. Home sales totaled 763, up 5.8%. The median sale price rose 4.3% to \$292,000. Homes averaged 75 days on the market, a 2.7% increase from the previous year — the highest since March 2019. ...

Sometimes it pays to stay put. MoveBuddha, a website that helps people make informed moving decisions, reported that a standard local move in Des Moines costs about \$1,483, roughly \$346 more than the median monthly rent. Des Moines is one

of five cities in MoveBuddha's 153-city analysis where moving costs exceed median rent. ...

Celebrating creativity. The Iowa Tourism Office handed out 17 awards, celebrating "the creativity, collaboration and strategic thinking that continue to elevate Iowa as a tourism destination." The People's Choice Award went to **Reiman Gardens** in Ames. The **Avenues of Ingersoll and Grand** earned the Outstanding Marketing Campaign award for budgets less than \$50,000. **The Blank Park Zoo** won the award for budgets more than \$50,000. ...

The Illinois Department of Public Health notified Iowa Department of Health and Human Services that an Illinois resident with confirmed **measles** traveled to Iowa during the infectious period. Nine measles cases were identified in Iowa in 2025 with none yet identified in 2026. Nationally, 1,281 measles cases were confirmed in 2026, with 93% among unvaccinated people. Iowa's vaccination rate is 88.8%, higher than neighboring Minnesota (86.5%) and Wisconsin (84.8%) but lower than Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota, all above 90%. ...

Hold off on your trip to the **Saylorville Lake Visitor Center**. The opening of the Saylorville Lake Visitor Center has been postponed from April 1 to May 1 due to safety concerns. Staff will perform maintenance, including deck repairs. ...

Fong's Pizza was named the best place in Iowa to grab late-night eats and ranked 75th nationally by online casino ACE.com. Perhaps online gamblers are searching for a crab rangoon pizza slice after hitting the virtual slots, celebrating victory, or eating away the defeat. Shakespeare's Pub and Grill in Iowa City ranked second in the state and 81st nationally. To be or not to be; that is the question. ■

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POLITICAL MERCURY

BY DOUGLAS BURNS

'It took a disabled man to lead a disabled nation'

How Josh Turek's formula of empathy plus solutions (minus self-pity) is a winning one.

It's head-spinning to be at once depressed and optimistic.

But there I was. Somewhere between ideation and actualization. Something pulled me back. Mostly curiosity, I think. Wanting to know what happens next, a reporter's DNA, has gotten me through a lot. You gotta live to see tomorrow to know if you were right yesterday.

Like farmers crushed under the weight of skyrocketing interest rates, steelworkers displaced by corporate greed in the 1980s, we'd lost everything — the family business, our familial connections themselves, identity, income and purpose — as we had to give up the Carroll Daily Times Herald, the love of my life, the all-in for me, after 93 years and three generations of ownership.

We had to sell what we'd built to avoid foreclosure on mom's house, my house, forfeit our role as builder in the community in which we'd been in a century-long ensemble cast of builders.

On Dec. 1, 2022, three generations and 93 years of family ownership of the Carroll Times Herald ended. It was like being at your own funeral and parole simultaneously — the death of what bound our family and defined us, but also a release from a prison of unsolvable problems in a challenged industry during a cultural tornado watch for democracy.

We walked slowly that day, mom and I, across Court Street to sign the sale agreement at the Carroll Public Library, a new public facility our newspaper championed for the better part of a decade. We desperately did not want to sell but had exhausted all options. We signed the arrangement at the nearby library so the deal would be done before we walked back to the paper and informed staff.

A few days later, crushed, I honored a long-scheduled agreement to moderate a forum, to conduct a one-on-one public interview in the Harkin Institute's theater with Congressman Ro Khanna, a Democrat who represents California's Silicon Valley and is in the early discussion as a candidate for the White House in 2028.

We weaved through a wide range of topics but focused intently on the rural economy, ways to see that the wealth and optimism scooped and segregated to places like Silicon Valley spreads to neglected, left-behind regions of the nation, cities that have been seemingly read their last rites — places that look like I often feel, hollowed out, stretching to summon fight from a parade of defeats and indignities.

Among those in attendance that night at the Harkin Institute: State Rep. Josh Turek, D-Council Bluffs.

Turek is now seeking the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate.

I talked with Turek after the Harkin Institute session.



President Franklin D. Roosevelt on the porch at Top Cottage in Hyde Park, New York, with Ruthie Bie and Fala. February 1941. This photograph was taken by his friend, Margaret "Daisy" Suckley. Ruthie Bie (later Bautista), then 3 years old, was the daughter of the property caretakers. Source: Creative Commons/FDR Presidential Library and Museum. Photograph by Margaret Suckley.

And I listened as he chatted with Congressman Khanna and others in the room. Intrigued by Turek's story, the fact that he won in a challenging, red, western Iowa Statehouse district as a Democrat, and impressed by his defiance of his own disability, I wanted to learn more about Turek as he seemed to me to potentially hold the formula, or at least have it in reach, for what Democrats have sought for 12 years in Iowa — a statewide candidate with electability — a winner. A connective and compelling biographical narrative matters.

So I started covering Turek when I could, interviewing him at length, working to confirm if my instincts that were built over 30 years of political coverage in this state were reliable.

I covered Turek in Red Oak, his native Council Bluffs, Ankeny, Des Moines, Iowa City, Harlan, Ottumwa and other reaches of Iowa.

One Saturday afternoon, before a community event for Latinos in Council Bluffs, I was interviewing Turek on a range of topics. The economy and job loss emerged. So I let my own sorrows get the best of me and engaged in all-American self-pity. I relayed our story of business and personal loss, of economic struggle with the newspaper.

Turek, sitting in a wheelchair, having endured 21 surgeries related to spina bifida by age 12, let me exhaustively roll through the pain, the experience of our family, our loss. He looked me in the eyes, never interrupted me. I could tell he understood, that through



State Rep. Josh Turek talks with then 6-year-old Hayes Hofmeister in Des Moines during a summit on advocacy for people with disabilities. Photo by Douglas Burns

his own lived experiences, he could tap into my turmoil.

Then, in the interview, Turek, the first visibly and permanently disabled state legislator in Iowa, said this to me:

"I think probably 85% or 90% of the people who are in my sort of condition, or with similar disabilities, this situation breaks them and they don't go on to live meaningful, successful lives," Turek said. "But the ones who do come through are stronger, and those make the most interesting, hard-core people. Some of those that get broken become harder in the broken places. It's totally true. The struggle builds the character. If you can get through that and it doesn't completely break you, it makes you stronger, a much more interesting individual."

Turek shot me a knowing smile. He got that I got it. That's the moment I had my confirmation about Turek.

This guy finds a way. I should be able to as well. And, yeah, he's right, these struggles, if you can clear them, make you more interesting. He certainly is.

"There was this old saying about Franklin Roosevelt," former U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, said in a Council Bluffs speech for a Turek Statehouse race event. "I'm going to use the old vernacular. 'It took a crippled man to lead a crippled nation.' Well, we don't use those words anymore, so we say, 'It took a disabled man to lead a disabled nation.' Need I tell you that we are somewhat disabled in our country right now?" ■

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





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5-8:30pm**

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| 5/7 Cinco de Mayo | 7/23 The Barrelhouse Rockets |
| 5/14 Dirty Champaign | 7/30 The Get Down |
| 5/21 Bad Friends | 8/6 Gallivant |
| 5/28 Surf Zombies | 8/13 Faculty Lounge |
| 6/4 The People's Band | 8/20 English |
| 6/11 Decoy Trio | 8/27 Randy Burk & the Prisoners |
| 6/18 Kinda Petty Band | 9/3 Bittersweet Nation |
| 6/25 TBD | 9/10 Cedar Falls Rock & Roll Revue |
| 7/2 Recoil | 9/17 Gut Feeling |
| 7/9 Sons of Gladys Kravitz | 9/24 Jason Wells Band |
| 7/16 Dick Danger | |

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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.

IOWA CUBS

Principal Park, 1 Line Drive, Des Moines
www.iowacubs.com

Home games

- **April 7** at 6:38 p.m. vs. Omaha Storm Chasers (Kansas City Royals)
- **April 8** at 12:08 p.m. vs. Omaha Storm Chasers
- **April 9** at 12:08 p.m. vs. Omaha Storm Chasers
- **April 10** at 7:08 p.m. vs. Omaha Storm Chasers
- **April 11** at 3:08 p.m. vs. Omaha Storm Chasers
- **April 12** at 1:08 p.m. vs. Omaha Storm Chasers
- **April 21** at 6:38 p.m. vs. Louisville Bats (Cincinnati Reds)
- **April 22** at 12:08 p.m. vs. Louisville Bats
- **April 23** at 12:08 p.m. vs. Louisville Bats
- **April 24** at 7:08 p.m. vs. Louisville Bats
- **April 25** at 3:08 p.m. vs. Louisville Bats
- **April 26** at 1:08 p.m. vs. Louisville Bats

Photo by Dylan Heuer, courtesy of Iowa Cubs



55TH ANNUAL JURIED STUDENT EXHIBITION

Anderson Gallery, 2505 Carpenter Ave., Des Moines
www.andersongallery.wp.drake.edu
Through April 19

View the best of Drake University students' artwork at Anderson Gallery. This will be the 55th year that the Bulldogs' artwork will be on display, judged this year by artists Catherine Reinhart.

"MUSIC IN BLOOM" 2026 AFRICAN VIOLET SHOW

Plumbers and Steamfitters Local Union 33,
2501 Bell Ave., Des Moines
www.facebook.com/AfricanVioletClubOfDesMoines
April 24-25

African Violets and other Gesneriads grown by the club's members will be available for sale. There will be information available on the care as well as propagation of African Violets and Gesneriads. The winning show plants and plant designs will be on view. Educational exhibits and AVSA promotional information will also be displayed.



Photo courtesy of the Greater Des Moines Partnership



IOWA

BARNSTORMERS

Casey's Center, 730 Third St.,
Des Moines
www.theiowabarnstormers.com
Home games:

- **April 4** vs. Green Bay Blizzard at 7 p.m.
- **April 25** vs. Fishers Freight at 7 p.m.

EARTH DAY AT THE BOTANICAL GARDEN

Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden,
909 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines
www.dmbotanicalgarden.com
April 18

Celebrate Earth Day at the Des Moines Botanical Garden, central Iowa's hub of earthly goodness. There will be family-friendly activities, chances to explore, and community partners promoting awareness, sustainability and earth-friendly practices, all with free admission on April 18.

COMING UP

SUBMIT ENTRIES AND PHOTOS TO EDITOR@DMCITYVIEW.COM



Photo courtesy of Blue Ribbon Bacon Festival

18TH ANNUAL BLUE RIBBON BACON FESTIVAL

High Life Lounge and El Bait Shop, 200 S.W. Second St., Des Moines

www.blueribbonbaconfestival.com

April 18

The three-hour-long celebration of all things bacon will have funky food creations, live entertainment and all-you-can-eat bacon. Several local restaurants will serve up bacon-inspired foods like bacon pizza, maple bacon donuts and bacon cotton candy, just to name a few.



JAZZ AT CASPE TERRACE PRESENTS TESSA SOUTER/JOHN DIMARTINO

33158 Ute Ave., Waukee

www.jazzatcaspe.weebly.com

April 26

Mentored by jazz legends Mark Murphy, who called her “an extraordinary talent, remarkable and very moving,” and NEA Jazz Master Sheila Jordan, who puts her “at the top of my list of great talent,” vocalist Tessa Souter’s critically acclaimed voice, butterscotch timbres and penchant for exploring music mostly untouched by other vocalists has set her apart as one of the few exceptional standouts in a crowded field of female jazz singers.

FAMILY EASTER AT LIVING HISTORY FARMS

Living History Farms, 11121 Hickman Road, Urbandale
www.lhf.org

April 4

Egg hunts, Easter games, crafts and stories for the whole family. There will also be demonstrations at historic trade sites, horse-drawn wagon rides, picture opportunities with the Easter bunny and a “spring training” with the Walnut Hill Bluestockings.

EVENTS AT THE CASEY’S CENTER

Casey’s Center, 730 Third St., Des Moines

www.iowaeventscenter.com

Concerts, comedy, shopping, and monster trucks all make appearances at the Casey’s Center this April.

- **April 4:** Time Travelers Vintage Expo
- **April 8:** Journey: Final Frontier Tour
- **April 10-12:** Middle of the Map Tattoo Convention
- **April 11-12:** Monster Jam
- **April 24:** Nate Bargatze: Big Dumb Eyes World Tour



A previous performance at Wooly’s. Photo by Jaydn Swailes

WOOLY’S

504 E. Locust St., Des Moines

www.firstfleetconcerts.com

- **April 3:** Disco Always
- **April 4:** Heated Rivalry Night
- **April 8:** Magnolia Park
- **April 10:** Bloodywood
- **April 11:** El Desmadre
- **April 12:** Skizzy Mars
- **April 14:** Soulja Boy
- **April 17:** Atreyu
- **April 18:** Good to be King: A celebration of Tom Petty
- **April 22:** Zero 9:36
- **April 24:** Witchz Presents Afterlife World Tour 2026
- **April 25:** Taylor Fest
- **April 28:** Arcy Drive
- **April 29:** James McMurty
- **April 30:** Joyce Manor ■

BUSINESS JOURNAL



LOCALLY OWNED CAR WASHES

hold their own amid corporate boom

In Des Moines, family-run businesses like Perry's Service and Towing adapt to automation and membership competition while keeping a personal touch.

By Lindsey Giardino



FEATURE

At Perry's Service and Towing on University Avenue in Des Moines, a car glides through the wash while its owner relaxes in the driver's seat, coffee in hand. For decades, drivers would have stepped out to scrub by hand. Now, machines do the work, and the self-service car wash is just one part of a business that has served the community for more than 50 years.

Across the Des Moines metro, new car washes seem to be popping up on nearly every major corridor, reflecting a broader national trend. Private equity firms and national chains have poured investment into the industry, drawn by subscription-style memberships, low labor costs and steady consumer demand.

According to recent IBISWorld research, the U.S. car wash market generates more than \$14 billion annually, with new facilities opening rapidly in fast-growing metropolitan areas. The Des Moines area has followed suit, with numerous new washes opening in recent years.

Grimes is a hotbed for car washes

Brian Buethe, president and CEO of the Grimes Chamber and Economic Development, sees this firsthand. Grimes is a hotbed for car wash businesses, and Buethe views that as a good thing — even while acknowledging the many social media comments poking fun at just how many the town has. (He admits, some are pretty funny.)

"I recognize where people are coming from on this, but I'm really positive on [car washes]," he says.

Buethe has done his research and found there are more than 60,000 car washes in the United States, so the prevalence of new locations being built in Grimes and around the metro is not unique.

"If they're happening in your community, it's a really good sign that you have the right demographic that people are wanting to put them in there because car washes don't just go anywhere," he shares. "They do a lot of research like a lot of retail places do. They got to have high traffic counts, visibility, easy access, all these things that a lot of the communities around the metro area have at their disposal, including Grimes."

If a car wash chooses to establish itself in a community, it is also a bit of a statement on the quality of the local economic development environment.

Another benefit to the abundance of car washes in the area, Buethe says, is that they do produce jobs.

"Now, one of the attractive things about building a car wash is they're a little bit lower risk when it comes to that because it's not a lot of employees typically that work at them, but it does create jobs and it creates tax



base," he says. Across the Des Moines metro, new car washes seem to be popping up on nearly every major corridor, reflecting a broader national trend.

base," he says.

Not only is Grimes a prime market for new car washes, but it is also home to the largest manufacturer of automatic car washes in the Western Hemisphere. National Car Wash Solutions is headquartered in Grimes. While many people may know the company as Ryko, it has expanded and acquired additional brands over time. The company employs hundreds of people locally, manufacturing car wash systems that are delivered and installed all over the world.

Local services prosper, too

While many of car wash locations are owned by corporate chains with dozens — or even hundreds — of facilities nationwide, locally owned car washes are still finding ways to compete. Perry's Service is one example.

The family-owned business purchased a car wash down the road from its original shop in 2025, adding it to its existing towing, auto repair and gas station services.

"We wanted to be more all-inclusive for automotive services, and with the car wash's convenient location one block from our facility, it made perfect sense to expand," said Andy DeBoard, president of Perry's Service Inc.

The self-service car wash was originally built in the 1970s. DeBoard said he has already noticed how much the industry has evolved. Most older car washes required drivers to wash their own vehicles by hand. Today, many are fully automated.

"We have a lot of customers who prefer the self-serve style, but the automatics have definitely gained in popularity," DeBoard said. "Drivers are able to stay in their cars and let the machines do all the work."

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Keeping up with technology and customer expectations has been one of the biggest challenges, especially for an older facility. The business has upgraded the car wash to accept credit cards and tap-to-pay options while automating the chemical mixing process for soap, wax and foaming brushes.

Competition from large chains that offer unlimited wash memberships is another challenge.

“We have kept our prices low while trying to increase the quality of the services we offer, as well as our rewards program with our gas station, to stay competitive,” DeBoard said. “When you choose a locally owned car wash, you have the peace of mind that if there is an issue, someone cares about it and your concerns.”

For many customers, the self-service format remains part of the appeal, allowing them to take their time and clean their vehicles exactly how they want. Some even wash their cars nearly every day.

Running the car wash, however, is rarely hands-off. Even when everything appears to be running smoothly, someone must check in regularly to ensure equipment functions properly. Some days require only a five-minute visit. Others involve hours of troubleshooting unexpected issues.

For DeBoard, adding the car wash carries special meaning. He represents the third generation running Perry's Service, which was founded by his grandparents in 1968.

“Being a locally owned business, we strive to be part of our community by providing vital services,” DeBoard said. “With a locally owned company, you get personal service. You aren't tied to corporate policies that prioritize the company's bottom line over the customer experience. We have been on the same corner at Martin Luther King and University for 58 years. Customers whose parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles were ours now trust us enough to send their families here.” ■

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1575 S.E. CORTINA DRIVE, ANKENY
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-14
 SALE PRICE: \$825,000
 SELLER: MJG DEVELOPMENT LLC
 BUYER: CORTINA PROPERTIES LLC
 ACRES: 2.336
 SQUARE FEET: 0

5535 WEST PARKWAY, JOHNSTON
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-15
 SALE PRICE: \$540,000
 SELLER: RAL LC-JOHNSTON SERIES
 BUYER: ENCORE ESTATES LLC
 ACRES: 4.490
 SQUARE FEET: 0

1801 PLEASANT ST., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-15
 SALE PRICE: \$635,000
 SELLER: PLEASANT 18TH STREET LLC
 BUYER: OWEN LLC
 ACRES: 0.110
 SQUARE FEET: 7,404

4333 PARKRIDGE AVE., PLEASANT HILL
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-15
 SALE PRICE: \$11,516,000
 SELLER: PLEASANT VALLEY FMHC LLC
 BUYER: PLEASANT VALLEY LE LLC
 ACRES: 30.540
 SQUARE FEET: 1,584

2404 EASTON BLVD., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-16
 SALE PRICE: \$25,000
 SELLER: DENTAL TECHNICIANS INC
 BUYER: MARINARO, ANTHONY G

ACRES: 0.141
 SQUARE FEET: 1,574

5915 S.E. 46TH ST., CARLISLE
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-16
 SALE PRICE: \$225,000
 SELLER: GLORY BAPTIST CHURCH
 BUYER: LIGHT MISSION PENTECOSTAL CHURCH DES MOINES IOWA
 ACRES: 0.790
 SQUARE FEET: 2,780

7368 N.E. BERWICK DRIVE, ANKENY
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-17
 SALE PRICE: \$6,000,000
 SELLER: THIRD & COLLINS PROPERTIES LLC
 BUYER: SHEPHERD'S GROVE LLC
 ACRES: 63.680
 SQUARE FEET: 1,596

2918 E. NINTH ST., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-21
 SALE PRICE: \$150,000
 SELLER: PEREZ, MARTIN
 BUYER: HULL AVENUE REVITALIZATION LLC
 ACRES: 0.154
 SQUARE FEET: 2,143

6336 HICKMAN ROAD, WINDSOR HEIGHTS
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-21
 SALE PRICE: \$5,980,000
 SELLER: FFS APARTMENTS LLC
 BUYER: STANBROUGH RESIDENTIAL LLC
 ACRES: 5.873
 SQUARE FEET: 94,716

NO ADDRESS LISTED
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-21
 SALE PRICE: \$60,000
 SELLER: B&B MEYER LLC
 BUYER: 2408 PROPERTY LLC
 ACRES: 0.398
 SQUARE FEET: 0

NO ADDRESS LISTED
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-23
 SALE PRICE: \$375,000
 SELLER: JOHNSTON WILDLIFE ESTATES LLC
 BUYER: STATE OF IOWA
 ACRES: 26.914
 SQUARE FEET: 0

3023 E. 29TH ST., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-23
 SALE PRICE: \$350,000
 SELLER: DES MOINES MEETING ROOMS INC
 BUYER: SAMUEL M HOLT TRUST
 ACRES: 1.801
 SQUARE FEET: 5,738

4600 N.W. 51ST ST., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-24
 SALE PRICE: \$435,000
 SELLER: ERIC & JENNIFER QUINER 2022 JOINT REVOCABLE TRUST
 BUYER: LUTHERAN SERVICES IN IOWA INC
 ACRES: 1.305
 SQUARE FEET: 1,300

1315 E. 12TH ST., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-24
 SALE PRICE: \$206,000
 SELLER: J DIAZ PROPERTIES LLC
 BUYER: LOAIZA PROPERTIES LLC
 ACRES: 0.174
 SQUARE FEET: 1,621

4040 WESTOWN PARKWAY, WEST DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-27
 SALE PRICE: \$915,000
 SELLER: ZORN INVESTMENTS II-WDM REAL ESTATE LLC
 BUYER: MH ADVISORS LLC
 ACRES: 0.975
 SQUARE FEET: 5,000

5209 S.W. NINTH ST., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-28
 SALE PRICE: \$5,675,000
 SELLER: QUARTERS ON 9TH LLC
 BUYER: TILTON QUARTERS LLC
 ACRES: 3.032
 SQUARE FEET: 59,400

501 FIFTH AVE., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-29
 SALE PRICE: \$4,300,000
 SELLER: THE GRAHAM GROUP INC
 BUYER: INSURANCE EXCHANGE BUILDING LLC
 ACRES: 0.494
 SQUARE FEET: 154,950



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1642 E. GRAND AVE., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-29
 SALE PRICE: \$175,529
 SELLER: MIDDLETON, ALEXANDER J
 BUYER: RPN PROPERTY MANAGEMENT LLC
 ACRES: 0.121
 SQUARE FEET: 1,768

4801 FRANKLIN AVE., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-29
 SALE PRICE: \$3,300,000
 SELLER: IOWA TRUST & SAVINGS BANK
 BUYER: 4801 DES MOINES LLC
 ACRES: 12.100
 SQUARE FEET: 213,269

300 WALNUT ST., SUITE 200, DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-29
 SALE PRICE: \$500,000
 SELLER: SJJR PROPERTIES LLC
 BUYER: MLK RIVER PARK LLC
 ACRES: 0.095
 SQUARE FEET: 20,188

8355 UNIVERSITY BLVD., CLIVE
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-30
 SALE PRICE: \$245,000
 SELLER: JEM II TRUST
 BUYER: HIA PROPERTIES LLC
 ACRES: 0.349
 SQUARE FEET: 3,780

2175 N. ANKENY BLVD., ANKENY
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-30
 SALE PRICE: \$8,795,000
 SELLER: AAA STORAGE INC
 BUYER: CCCO23 LLC
 ACRES: 4.060
 SQUARE FEET: 128,744

8345 UNIVERSITY BLVD., CLIVE
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-30
 SALE PRICE: \$480,000
 SELLER: JEM II TRUST
 BUYER: HBS IOWA PROPERTIES LLC
 ACRES: 0.506
 SQUARE FEET: 7,840

606 WALNUT ST., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-30
 SALE PRICE: \$100
 SELLER: LAWMARK LP
 BUYER: FINANCIAL CENTER MASTER LANDLORD LLC
 ACRES: 1.455
 SQUARE FEET: 401,909

1427 E. PLEASANT VIEW DRIVE, DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-10-31
 SALE PRICE: \$825,000
 SELLER: JAMES AND CAROLYN SHAFFER REVOCABLE TRUST
 BUYER: ALVIV PROPERTIES LLC
 ACRES: 1.520
 SQUARE FEET: 12,400

5613 N.E. 22ND ST., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-11-04
 SALE PRICE: \$3,139,896
 SELLER: WILLIAMS TURF FARMS INC
 BUYER: EXCEL MECHANICAL COMPANY LLC
 ACRES: 3.859
 SQUARE FEET: 22,770

8355 BIRCHWOOD COURT, JOHNSTON
 SALE DATE: 2025-11-05
 SALE PRICE: \$334,119
 SELLER: JORDAN CREEK EXECUTIVE CAR

WASH LLC
 BUYER: ONE MANN'S TREASURE LLC
 ACRES: 0.822
 SQUARE FEET: 4,054

9379 PLUM DRIVE, URBANDALE
 SALE DATE: 2025-11-06
 SALE PRICE: \$1,167,111
 SELLER: LANDMARK OFFICE PARK LLC
 BUYER: ISLAMIC AND EDUCATIONAL CENTER EZAN
 ACRES: 5.103

555 WALNUT ST., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-11-07
 SALE PRICE: \$9,600,000
 SELLER: 515 WALNUT LLC
 BUYER: 515 TOWER LLC
 ACRES: 0.866

5685 N.E. 16TH ST., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-11-08
 SALE PRICE: \$100
 SELLER: STARKE, PETER T
 BUYER: STARKE FAMILY PROPERTIES LLC
 ACRES: 2.070
 SQUARE FEET: 20,250

708 SECOND AVE., S.W. ALTOONA
 SALE DATE: 2025-11-10
 SALE PRICE: \$445,000
 SELLER: MCGREAN, AUTUMN
 BUYER: POLANCO, MARIA P
 ACRES: 0.256
 SQUARE FEET: 3,176

4350 WESTOWN PARKWAY, WEST DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-11-11
 SALE PRICE: \$15,500,000

SELLER: REGENCY WEST OFFICE PARTNERS LLC
 BUYER: BRADFORD ALLEN REGENCY WEST LLC
 ACRES: 43.948
 SQUARE FEET: 634,038

NO ADDRESS LISTED
 SALE DATE: 2025-11-11
 SALE PRICE: \$335,000
 SELLER: MID-IOWA COUNCIL OF BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA INC
 BUYER: BELL AVENUE PROPERTIES INC
 ACRES: 0.304
 SQUARE FEET: 0

2812 BRATTLEBORO AVE., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-11-12
 SALE PRICE: \$290,000
 SELLER: GALLUZZO, STEVEN
 BUYER: EL VALLE CONVENIENCE STORE LLC
 ACRES: 0.182
 SQUARE FEET: 3,544

NO ADDRESS LISTED
 SALE DATE: 2025-11-12
 SALE PRICE: \$87,971
 SELLER: S&C REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS LC
 BUYER: CITY OF URBANDALE
 ACRES: 0.311
 SQUARE FEET: 0

800 NEW YORK AVE., DES MOINES
 SALE DATE: 2025-11-13
 SALE PRICE: \$3,700,000
 SELLER: SKJ LLC
 BUYER: MERCURY GROUP LLC
 ACRES: 3.985
 SQUARE FEET: 91,137 ■

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Send information on new hires, promotions, expansions, openings and other business news to editor@dmcityview.com.

Grossman elected to serve as president-elect on the National Association of Medicaid Directors' Board of Directors

Following the National Association of Medicaid Directors' (NAMMD) announcement of its newly elected leadership, the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that State Medicaid Director Lee Grossman has been elected to serve as president-elect on the NAMMD board of directors, effective April 1.

DART CEO accepts position with Metro Transit in Twin Cities

The Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) today announced that Chief Executive Officer Amanda Wanke has accepted a leadership position with Metro Transit in the Twin Cities. Her final day with DART will be May 9. Wanke, who has worked at DART for 10 years, including the past 2.5 years as CEO, will join Metro Transit as Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Operations Administration. Metro Transit is one of the nation's largest transit systems, employing more than 3,000 people and operating an integrated network of buses, light rail and commuter rail serving the Twin Cities region.

Appleseth promoted to VP at Wixted & Company

Wixted & Company announced the promotion of Ann Appleseth to vice president, client engagement. Ann is noted as a respected leader on The Wixted team, known for her deep industry experience and commitment to the company's clients. In this role, Ann will champion strategy, service and results for clients.



Ann Appleseth

Andeweg honored with Drake University Law School's Distinguished Public Service Award

Nyemaster attorney and City of Urbandale Mayor Bob Andeweg was honored with Drake University Law School's Distinguished Public Service Award on March 28. The Distinguished Public Service Award recognizes Drake Law School alumni who have engaged in exemplary service to the community and demonstrated commitment to public service over the course of their careers.



Bob Andeweg

Schabel joins board of directors of Community Support Advocates

Brad Schabel of Schabel Solutions, Inc. has joined the board of directors of Community Support Advocates. He brings decades of experience in leadership development training, DEI initiatives, and HR functions. ■



Brad Schabel

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Paul Bouwers, Jason Uhlenhake, Ben Buenzow, Tyler Fromm, Chad Lyons, Taylor Carey. Not pictured: Faith Dorn-Spiece, Steve Plym

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8 a.m. — 5 p.m.**



SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION LOANS

Borrower Name	City	County	Cong. District	\$ Amount	Jobs Created	Jobs Retained	New Vs. Existing	Business Type
American Color Imaging Inc.	CEDAR FALLS	BLACK HAWK	02	\$4,478,500	0	78	NEW	Photofinishing Laboratories (except One-Hour)
Eleven & Co. LLC	Cedar Falls	BLACK HAWK	02	\$549,000	14	2	NEW	Offices of All Other Miscellaneous Health Practitioners
AMERICAN COLOR IMAGING, INC.	CEDAR FALLS	BLACK HAWK	02	\$500,000	0	78	EXISTING	Photofinishing Laboratories (except One-Hour)
Living A Well Life LLC	CEDAR FALLS	BLACK HAWK	02	\$434,500	0	1	EXISTING	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
O.M.J.C. SIGNAL, INC.	CEDAR FALLS	BLACK HAWK	02	\$299,000	3	0	EXISTING	Other Communications Equipment Manufacturing
O.M.J.C. SIGNAL, INC.	CEDAR FALLS	BLACK HAWK	02	\$179,000	3	0	EXISTING	Other Communications Equipment Manufacturing
T.E.A.M. Builders Ltd.	CEDAR FALLS	BLACK HAWK	02	\$150,000	0	35	EXISTING	Residential Remodelers
Allison's Dance Center LLC	CEDAR FALLS	BLACK HAWK	02	\$150,000	0	3	EXISTING	Dance Companies
Cedar Valley Senior Consulting Services LL	WATERLOO	BLACK HAWK	02	\$150,000	12	12	EXISTING	Other Individual and Family Services
QUALITY BUILT STRUCTURES LLC	BOONE	BOONE	04	\$100,000	0	5	NEW	Commercial and Institutional Building Construction
SNL Services, LLC	Manson	CALHOUN	04	\$322,000	0	0	NEW	Car Washes
Plaza Jalisco LLC	ADEL	DALLAS	03	\$260,900	8	0	NEW	Full-Service Restaurants
Vance Refrigeration, LLC	Burlington	DES MOINES	01	\$414,000	5	0	EXISTING	Electronics and Appliance Retailers
Lloyd's Pizzeria, LLC	Asbury	DUBUQUE	02	\$523,000	16	0	NEW	Full-Service Restaurants
Hodgson Delivery, Ltd.	Dubuque	DUBUQUE	02	\$182,700	1	3	EXISTING	Specialized Freight (except Used Goods) Trucking, Local
Achen Becker Media, LLC	Charles City	FLOYD	02	\$950,000	0	12	NEW	Internet Publishing and Broadcasting
Devi LLC	CORALVILLE	JOHNSON	01	\$395,000	0	7	NEW	Limited-Service Restaurants
JDM CONCRETE, LLC	NORTH LIBERTY	JOHNSON	01	\$350,000	3	0	EXISTING	Site Preparation Contractors
Kraftwerks Automotive LLC	Cedar Rapids	LINN	02	\$350,000	1	1	EXISTING	New Car Dealers
Golf Club of Iowa LLC	MARION	LINN	02	\$354,500	1	0	NEW	All Other Amusement and Recreation Industries
Developmental Wellness, LLC	PELLA	MARION	01	\$350,000	9	21	EXISTING	Offices of Mental Health Practitioners (except Physicians)
PELLA PRECAST LLC	PELLA	MARION	01	\$25,000	0	0	NEW	Septic Tank and Related Services
PELLA PRECAST LLC	PELLA	MARION	01	\$25,000	0	0	NEW	Septic Tank and Related Services
LANDIBLE LLC	MUSCATINE	MUSCATINE	01	\$92,400	1	0	NEW	Cable Networks
TRIAD GYMNASTICS and TRIAD'S KIDS CAMPUS	Ankeny	POLK	03	\$3,788,000	16	0	EXISTING	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
FEED JAKE LLC	ANKENY	POLK	03	\$50,000	1	4	EXISTING	Pet Care (except Veterinary) Services
Ancell Enterprises LLC dba House Doctors	Bondurant	POLK	03	\$150,000	5	1	NEW	Residential Remodelers
D.E. Smith Inc	DES MOINES	POLK	03	\$500,000	1	0	NEW	All Other Industrial Machinery Manufacturing
Trainwell Creditor Services Inc.	DES MOINES	POLK	03	\$87,700	0	10	NEW	Repossession Services
EXECUTIVE RESOURCES, LIMITED	URBANDALE	POLK	03	\$50,000	0	1	EXISTING	Employment Placement Agencies
Integrated Nursing Solutions LLC	West Des Moines	POLK	03	\$50,000	0	3	EXISTING	Nursing Care Facilities
GARCIA HOME SERVICES LLC	WEST DES MOINES	POLK	03	\$20,000	1	1	EXISTING	Prefabricated Metal Building and Component Manufacturing
Holiday Inn Express	Council Bluffs	POTTAWATTAMIE	04	\$4,405,000	0	0	NEW	Hotels (except Casino Hotels) and Motels
ANSM Properties LLC	Bettendorf	SCOTT	01	\$131,000	1	0	EXISTING	Glass and Glazing Contractors
ACT Solutions LLC	BETTENDORF	SCOTT	01	\$130,000	5	0	NEW	Janitorial Services
Charles F. Day & Associates, LLC	DAVENPORT	SCOTT	01	\$400,000	0	75	EXISTING	All Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
NAIL TEK LLC	DAVENPORT	SCOTT	01	\$50,000	0	0	EXISTING	Nail Salons
EVOLVE FORENSIC SERVICES, PLLC	Long Grove	SCOTT	01	\$50,000	3	1	EXISTING	Offices of Physicians, Mental Health Specialists
Midwest Iron Addicts LLC	Walcott	SCOTT	01	\$100,000	3	3	EXISTING	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
Midwest Iron Addicts LLC	Walcott	SCOTT	01	\$50,000	3	3	EXISTING	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
Chad Riesenbergl	Earling	SHELBY	04	\$67,700	0	2	EXISTING	Farm Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing
JoeSha, LLC	Sioux City	WOODBURY	04	\$360,000	0	0	EXISTING	Finish Carpentry Contractors

TRANSACTIONS FROM JANUARY 2026

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A MEGACHURCH PILGRIMAGE

Can I get an amen?



Lutheran Church Of Hope West Des Moines

By Joe Weeg

IN THE BEGINNING ...

I wear a dark suit.

It's my first visit to a megachurch, and it is for a funeral. It is confusing in this day and age to know what to wear to church. Your best clothes? Business casual? Shorts and a T-shirt? Got me. Back in the day, I would tell young lawyers who might ask what to wear for a court appearance ... well, wear what you would to a wedding or funeral or Sunday church.

Not true anymore. It is a free-for-all when it

comes to church dress. But today I wear my dark suit anyway. Listen, I'm an old dog in a sea of jeans and shorts and sweat pants.

Speaking of being out of touch, when I enter the pew, it isn't a pew. It is some type of Barcalounger with a coffee cup holder. Plus the arena seating and big screens at the front of the church? WOW. Is there a vendor selling hot dogs and beer? The dead guy — my friend — would certainly appreciate that amenity

and might even want me to ask for extra mustard. I relax comfortably into my plush chair and smile.

Yup, this is a far cry from my 1960s traditional Catholic upbringing of hard wooden pews with wooden kneelers topped by a thin pad and absolutely no multi-media presentations except song numbers written on a blackboard by Sister Timothy Mary — with whom I'm still in love. Nor is the lively funeral service like my college studies of the Old Testament



Church of Hope had less than 20 worshippers at an office suite in West Des Moines.

What is going on?

“What is being shown statistically is similar to what we’re seeing at Hope, that the biggest demographic of people that are coming to church with the most regularity are Gen Z. These are high school and college students that are coming independent of their parents.”

Why?

“For starters, I think people are exhausted from being judged by performance and comparison. And I think people are looking and they’re searching and

they’re finding that Jesus doesn’t compare you based on everybody else.”

OK.

“People think life is bigger. And Jesus invites them to a better and a more abundant life. And, in that, there’s comfort. And, in that, there’s a little bit of challenge. Jesus says, hey, I have a better way for you to live your life and I have grace for you and that doesn’t go away.”

Is this message unique to Hope?

“We’re doing the same things that every other church is doing. Every church is saying, hey, there’s a guy who loves you. He created you. He’s given you

these gifts to love and serve your neighbor. Love God with everything that you have, and then love your neighbor as yourself.”

That “love your neighbor” business has taken quite a hit in the United States, I muse out loud.

“Especially because of that very divisiveness, church is important. Wow, to be a part of a mission that brings people together rather than drives them apart, doesn’t that sound so satisfying? That’s what attracts people when they walk in the door.”

And Pastor Jeremy smiles. I smile. He believes. I don’t. But his obvious warmth and his love your neighbor as yourself? Amen to that.

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AND THEN THERE IS...

Reach Church, 2725 Merle Hay Road, Des Moines

Folks are flowing into the 11 a.m. service at Reach Church. One of the ushers is an old friend from my assistant county attorney days. I ask her about all the people coming into church.

“Well, Joe, you can see all these young people coming in the door, and also many people from diverse backgrounds, and then there are older folks like me and my husband. The vibrancy of this church is what speaks to us all.”

And the church is vibrant. The altar is a rock-and-roll stage with the drummer behind glass, guitarists spread across the raised platform and the singers up front. A young preacher on stage begins to speak of Jesus and the resurrection — and then seamlessly weaves it all into a song. The lights start flashing, the smoke machines start smoking, and the music takes off.

My traitorous body starts swaying.

“For the tears, for the blood, that was willingly poured” is sung out by the



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performers on the stage as we all dance and raise our hands. And young people form a mosh pit at the top of the altar, and we sing louder and sway even more. A sweet ecstasy for believer and unbeliever alike.

And then Pastor Cullen Allen gives a sermon with a preacher cadence that ebbs and flows from fireside chat to religious fervor. He blends complicated theological ideas with very clear concrete action plans. His hands fly out emphasizing every word, and then he abruptly stops — dead quiet — only to run to the other side of the stage and begin again.

“Because of that truth of Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the dead,” Pastor Cullen pauses and begins to turn his body from one side of the congregation to the other with more and more exuberance as he riffs, “... we have healing ... we have freedom ... we have blessing ... we have abundance ... we have wholeness ... we have favor ... we have prosperity ... we have strength ... we have protection ... we have his presence ... we have direction ... we have peace ... and we could go on and on and on and on.”

Everyone whoops and hollers and shouts amen.

“We have people in our church who have been here decades. And many of your new people are coming from the city of Des Moines. Part of our story, Joe, is that we really feel like God’s called us to the city — in the city, for the city.”

Pastor Cullen quietly talks to me as I sip a coffee and he catches his breath after another high-energy sermon. He explains how the church sold their land out west to focus on a new mission, “to reach the one who’s disconnected from God, new values, a new focus, new everything — to

reach and make a difference in the city.

“I really felt like God was asking us to start a dream center, to provide hope for the city.”

So the church launched a nonprofit with that very name — Dream Center Des Moines.

“It already has nine different areas of programming — for example a food pantry, a medical clinic, a pregnancy center, a free store for clothing and diapers, sports camps. We have a component called Together for Good that helps families before DHS gets involved and provides counseling.”

This change of focus for the church has resulted in now having 28 nationalities represented in the congregation, according to Pastor Cullen.

But why do those people come in your door in the first place?

“They feel compelled to come in. And then when they come in, they hear about the love of Jesus, and God loves them, and their lives are often changed. Listen, we want every single person who walks in the doors to feel like they are honored, that they’re valued, that they have dignity, they have respect.”

And those who have fallen away from Jesus?

“We’re not trying to reach people who have it all together in life. If you feel like you’re hurting or you’re struggling, hey, this is the place for you. We all struggle. So we’re not looking for perfect people. We’re looking for people who want hope.”

Pastor Cullen smiles. I smile. One a believer. One not. But it’s difficult not to like this man with his intense gentleness and his embrace of hope. Can I get a witness? Absolutely.

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Terry Pauley

FINALLY, THERE IS...

New City Church, 3114 S.W. 61st St., Des Moines

I arrive before the crowds and barely get seated before the man near me introduces himself.

“Terry Pauley.”

Terry has been going to New City Church for “six to eight years.” Prior to that, he was in ministry in his own right. I ask what brought him in the door.

“We were curious and heard good things about the church. We got here, and it was such a diverse church. Everybody is welcomed, they’re accepted, and the worship makes you feel comfortable.”

What do you think is drawing others to this church?

“I think with everything going on in the world, people are longing to find some kind of hope. People are turning to faith and coming together. All the preachers are good here. And it is those churches that are open and friendly to all types of people that are going to succeed. That is what this church is.”

The church begins to fill. The music starts. Again, a full band, great singers and music that gets you standing and clapping and shouting amen. And, on this day, the crowd is actively involved in every part of the worship, from the opening songs to the sermon itself. It is a call and response worship service — full of joy.

“Jesus, we love you,” comes from the stage.

“Yes, we do,” everyone sings back.

Lead Pastor Rod Dooley calls out, “Look up at the words on the screen: ‘Jesus we love, oh how we love you, you are the one our hearts adore.’ Would you lift up your heart with affection toward Jesus? How many of you adore him? How many of you love him?”

The congregation cheers and claps and shouts.

And over the top of the crescendoing noise, Pastor Rod says, “We love him because he first loved us, because he sacrificed his life for us, because he fills us with joy. We love you Jesus. That’s why we come to church — to worship Jesus.”

The congregation gets louder and louder.

And Pastor Rod runs with it: “Jesus we love you. We bless you. We thank you. We worship you. You’re awesome. You’re amazing. Your greatness is so amazing. We thank you Jesus. Hallelujah. We adore you God for being our deliverer. Hallelujah Jesus.”

It is utterly infectious. “Hallelujah,” I shout from my unbeliever mouth.

Whaaaaat?

The power of a joy-filled community and a charismatic leader is not lost on me. Hallelujah indeed.

On the day of my visit, Women’s History Month was being celebrated by women ministers giving sermons over the month and by other special events. Minister Claudette “Deenie” Little preaches about “uncommon unity” and that we must ask Jesus for what we need and want and Jesus will provide in His time. “Amen?” she asks. “Amen,” responds the congregation.

And so it goes. Call and response, response and call.

The welcome mat at New City Church goes far past the parking lots. Even as far as me. Again, this is a house of believers. I’m not. But the warmth of this loving community? That is difficult to ignore.

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Hah, don't you hate people who do that? But his point to me was, do you believe in the Hebrew God because you saw a miracle? Do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe in Buddha? And what does that belief really mean in terms of morality and how you live your life? And was it even a miracle to begin with?

Yikes!

But the messages discovered on my pilgrimage — love your neighbor, reach for hope, embrace community, help the disadvantaged, welcome the stranger, have compassion for the immigrant and refugee, build food pantries, hold clothing drives, give honor and respect and value and dignity to all?

Hmmmm ... can I get an amen? ■

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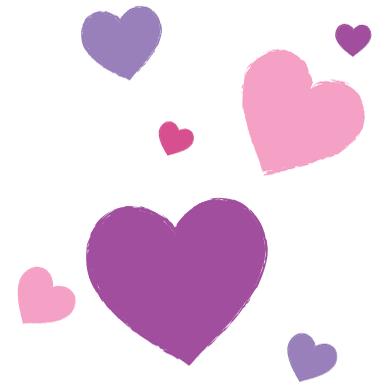


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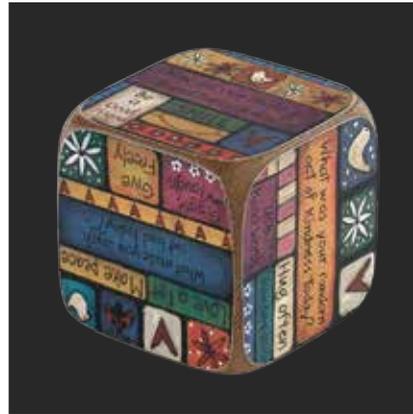


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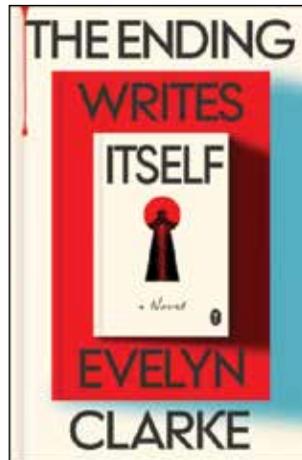
'The Ending Writes Itself'

As a lifelong reader and word collector, I love a bit of metafiction. A story about stories will always perk my ears. The skilled pair of authors writing under the name of Evelyn Clarke has given me that in spades. This one has a ton of buzz for a reason. Clever, emotional, perceptive, addictive — this is a storyteller's story if I ever read one.

The synopsis reads like a "Knives Out" movie. Six struggling authors are brought together to a private island to finish the final book of a famous, now dead, bestselling author. They have 72 hours to write their way into fame and fortune. Naturally, schemes arise and danger creeps. This is a locked room mystery with a devastatingly flawed set of characters and biting satire of the publishing industry — all at the same time.

Observations about writing, character arcs, endings and the ever-present human desire for closure make this a perfect mix of thoughtful and playful. Charming and satirical in equal measure, this is the kind of book you finish at 2 a.m. and immediately want to press into a friend's hands. Or write a gushing review of. ■

— *Review by Julie Goodrich*



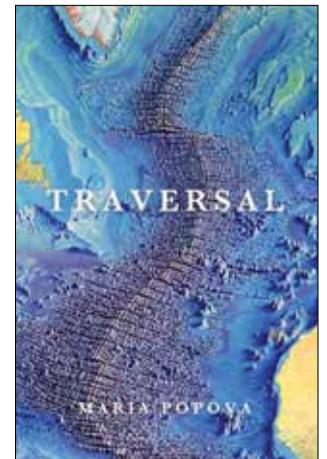
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'Traversal'

Reading this book feels a bit like wandering into the world's most enchanting dinner party. Pull up a chair and suddenly you're listening to Mary Shelley discuss creation while Walt Whitman waxes poetic about the soul of the universe, and then Frederick Douglass is reminding us all that moral courage is a form of genius. One minute you're contemplating continental drift with Alfred Wegener; the next you're pondering the nature of consciousness, love and the color blue.

Popova writes with the curiosity of someone so in love with the world that she sees connections that feel so hidden, yet so obvious. She understands that science and poetry are all just different dialects of the same cosmic language.

Sometimes the writing feels so dense, but then a sentence lands like a small miracle, and you can't remember why you were struggling at all. This is one of the most powerful books I've ever read. It feels less like reading and more like uncovering a secret you forgot you knew. It's part intellectual history, part philosophical mixtape, and wholly satisfying for anyone who likes their nonfiction a little star-dusted and gloriously alive. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



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The Fitz

Eclectic bar is located next to Lachele's Fine Foods in Highland Park.

BY JACKIE WILSON

Walking into Lachele's Fine Foods in Highland Park, I found a brightly lit diner. Craving a bar atmosphere, I asked myself: Where's the bar? I didn't have to look far. The Fitz was right next door. The two are connected, and I could have easily gone through a side door to reach it.

Lachele's Fine Foods and The Fitz share the same owners. Corey Wendel and his wife, Lachele, opened the Ingersoll location and added the Highland Park venue last year. Named for Lachele's maiden name, Fitzgerald, The Fitz has a laid-back, eclectic "crazy uncle" vibe, while Lachele's retains a classic diner feel. Both locations serve food and drinks.

The Fitz features a mix of wall treatments, flooring and décor. One wall is wood-paneled, another brick, and a third green plaid. Retro-colored booths include hunter green and brownish mahogany. Taxidermy, thrift-store finds, old beer signs and a miniature Oscar

Mayer Weinermobile are displayed in unexpected spots.

An upstairs loft with a low ceiling feels like an afterthought. With only a few tables, it offers a view of the room below for people-watching. Streetside seating provides a big-city feel with an old-fashioned charm.

Drinks include a variety of canned beers starting at \$4 and craft cocktails starting at \$8. One signature drink, the Hiland Park Punch, combines Pimm's No. 1, fresh fruit, Sprite and lemonade for \$8. For multiple servings, a jug is available for \$21. Bartenders pour generously on cocktails.

Another unique offering features a ChaCha's Hiland Bakery donut. The drink, called "Cities in Dust," mixes vodka, coffee liqueur, orgeat and cream, served on a sugared rim and topped with half a fresh donut. The drink costs \$11. Our bartender split it so each of us could try it.

The Fitz menu includes many of Lachele's favorites,



such as juicy smash burgers on sesame or potato rolls, priced from \$15 to \$17. Each burger comes with a side, including tots, fries, coleslaw or salad. For \$1 more, diners can upgrade to onion rings, corn nuggets, cheese curds, steamed vegetables and other options.

The menu also features soups, salads and specialty items such as "Fry Me to the Moon," a breaded pork schnitzel with fingerling potatoes, carrot puree, Brussels sprouts and apple-bourbon pan sauce, priced at \$18. Friday specials include various fish dishes. No menu item exceeds \$26.

The Fitz hosts community events. In April, it will host a market featuring local vendors. On Metal Mondays, heavy metal music fills the space.

Whether you choose Lachele's or The Fitz, both offer appealing atmospheres. Highland Park's resurgence is a boost for the Des Moines restaurant and bar scene. ■

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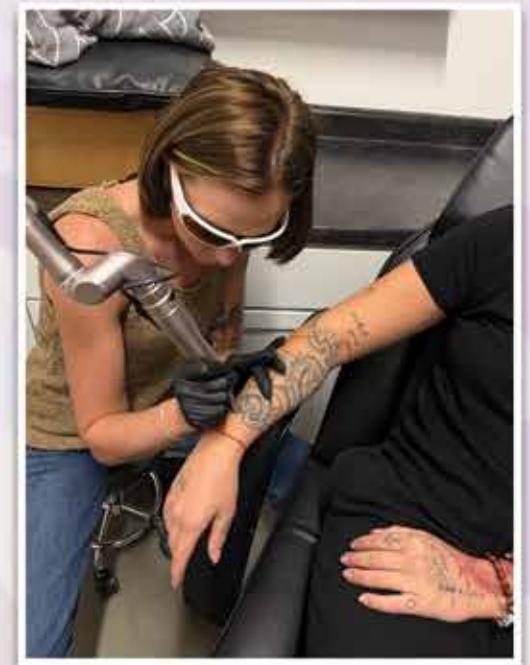


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Unplugged weddings

The sight of guests holding phones aloft has become almost as common as bouquets and boutonnieres at modern weddings.

But a growing number of couples are choosing “unplugged weddings,” asking guests to put away their devices and experience the day without screens. The trend is as much about atmosphere as it is about etiquette.

WHY COUPLES GO UNPLUGGED

For many, the decision comes down to presence. Couples want their guests focused on the ceremony, not distracted by capturing the perfect photo. Phones and tablets can also interfere with professional photography, blocking sightlines or casting unwanted light.

Wedding couples who have invested in a photographer to capture memories often don't want a sea of cell phones in the background of their first kiss.

Others simply want to preserve intimacy. By limiting photos and social media posts, couples can control how and when their wedding images are shared. This helps create a more private, meaningful experience.



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UNPLUGGED WEDDINGS

SETTING THE TONE GRACEFULLY

Asking guests to go phone-free can be delicate, but there are many ways to communicate the request with warmth. Ceremony programs often include a note such as, "We invite you to be fully present with us. Please turn off your phones and put away cameras." Couples can have officiants or ushers make a brief announcement before the ceremony begins.

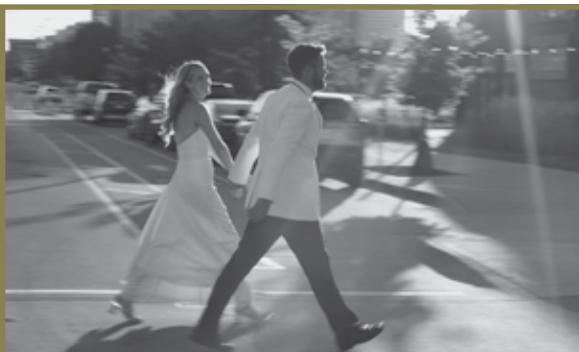
Signage is another popular option. Chalkboards or decorative signs at the entrance can politely reinforce the message. Some couples even phrase it playfully: "We promise to share the photos. Please put away your phones and enjoy the show."

For receptions, rules are often relaxed, with phones welcome once the formalities are complete. This balance allows couples to maintain focus during their vows while still giving guests a chance to snap fun, candid shots later.

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Not every guest may understand the request, so offering reassurance is important. Couples can let guests know they'll have access to professional photos after the event. Providing a shared online gallery is a thoughtful way to include everyone while keeping the ceremony distraction-free.

Ultimately, unplugged weddings are about prioritizing connection over documentation. By asking guests to set aside devices, couples ensure that the most important moments are witnessed with eyes, not screens — creating memories that feel more vivid and heartfelt. ■



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Fresh flavors in every sip

Signature cocktails have become a staple at modern weddings, giving couples the chance to add personality to their reception menu. For spring 2026, fresh fruits, fragrant herbs and colorful presentations are defining the season's drink trends. A creative cocktail doesn't just taste good; it becomes part of the celebration's story.

SEASONAL FRUITS SHINE

Spring is the perfect time to take advantage of fresh, ripe produce. Strawberries, blood oranges and cherries add vibrant color and natural sweetness to cocktails. A strawberry-basil mojito, for example, blends muddled berries with rum, mint, basil and a splash of soda for a refreshing twist on a classic.

Citrus fruits are also in demand, with Meyer lemons and blood oranges bringing tangy brightness. Couples might choose a blood orange margarita for its striking hue and zesty flavor, or a sparkling lemonade spritz for a lighter, lower-alcohol option that pairs well with spring menus.

HERBS AND FLORALS FOR A FRESH TOUCH

Fresh herbs and edible flowers are elevating wedding cocktails this year, adding flavor and visual flair. Lavender-infused gin spritzers have a fragrant aroma that feels perfect for garden receptions. Rosemary sprigs bring a savory balance to gin and tonics or grapefruit-based drinks, while thyme pairs beautifully with honey and lemon.

Edible blossoms, such as pansies, violets or nasturtiums, make cocktails feel special and seasonally appropriate. Floating a single flower in a coupe glass or freezing petals into ice cubes adds a touch of elegance guests won't forget.

STRAWBERRY-BASIL MOJITO Serves 1

INGREDIENTS

- 3 fresh strawberries, hulled and sliced
- 4-5 fresh basil leaves
- 2 fresh mint leaves
- 1 teaspoon sugar (or simple syrup)
- 2 ounces white rum
- 1 ounce fresh lime juice
- Club soda to top
- Ice

DIRECTIONS

1. In a tall glass, muddle the strawberries, basil, mint and sugar until the berries release their juices and the herbs are fragrant.
2. Add the rum and lime juice. Stir to combine.
3. Fill the glass with ice and top with club soda.
4. Garnish with a whole strawberry and a sprig of basil for a bright spring look.



COLORFUL PRESENTATIONS AND MOCKTAIL OPTIONS

Spring cocktails are as much about looks as they are about taste. Bright garnishes, pastel hues and creative glassware set the tone. A cherry blossom martini, tinted soft pink, can become a signature photo-worthy drink, while cucumber-mint coolers served in tall glasses make a crisp choice for outdoor weddings.

Mocktails are also an essential part of today's cocktail program. Couples are offering non-alcoholic versions of their signature drinks so every guest feels included. A peach-basil spritzer or lavender lemonade can be just as festive without the alcohol.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Many couples name their cocktails after shared memories, favorite travel destinations or even beloved pets. A couple who got engaged in Italy might serve a limoncello spritz, while dog owners could playfully dub their drink "The Bella" or "The Max" after their pup. ■



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When to book appointments

When it comes to weddings, timing is everything and that applies to beauty prep as much as planning the ceremony. From hair trials to nail polish, a carefully thought-out beauty timeline helps ensure brides feel confident and radiant on the big day.



SIX MONTHS TO GO Build your foundation

The first step is establishing a healthy routine. Brides-to-be should schedule an initial consultation with a hairstylist and makeup artist to discuss ideas and expectations. This is the time to commit to a consistent skincare regimen, ideally guided by a dermatologist or esthetician. If professional facials are part of the plan, schedule them every four to six weeks to keep skin clear and glowing.

Hair health matters, too. If a bride plans to grow out her hair, now's the time to talk trims, treatments or color goals. For those considering a spray tan, a trial run a few months out ensures the right shade and application method.

THREE MONTHS TO TWO WEEKS Perfecting the look

Around the three-month mark, book a hair and makeup trial. Bring inspiration photos, accessories and even your veil if you have one. This is the chance to test curls vs. updos, natural vs. glam makeup, and make adjustments before the wedding week.

Continue with regular facials but stop anything too aggressive like peels or extractions at least a month before the wedding.

If you're planning cosmetic treatments such as teeth whitening or injectables, this window gives enough time for results to settle.

Two weeks out is the best time for a final hair trim and color touch-up, so roots and split ends don't distract from the overall look.

Brides opting for a spray tan should do a trial one week before the big day to confirm the shade.

ONE WEEK TO THE BIG DAY

The finishing touches

During the final week, less is more. Keep skincare simple and hydrate to avoid irritation. Book manicure and pedicure appointments two to three days before the wedding so polish stays fresh. Classic shades, French tips or subtle sparkle remain popular choices.

If a spray tan is part of your look, schedule it two to three days before the wedding to allow color to settle naturally. Waxing should also happen at least three days prior to reduce the risk of redness.

Finally, pack a small day-of beauty kit: lipstick, blotting papers, setting spray, and bobby pins. The best bridal beauty timeline balances preparation with peace of mind, letting every bride shine with confidence from the aisle to the last dance. ■

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Bubba turns 10

Owner Chris Diebel, a Texas born and raised bubba himself, willed his love of southern comforts on his restaurant.

Bubba Southern Comforts turns 10 this summer. In its first decade of growing up, the restaurant has redefined southern comforts with a Midwest appeal while becoming a bucket list destination for whiskey aficionados and an anchor of the western Gateway District of downtown. Bubba did that with exquisite attention to details — from the way waiters' bow ties are tied to the manner in which Bourbon is served, grits are selected, and art is procured.

As western downtown west all but disappeared as a dining scene, Tenth Street became its new focus with Centro, Akebono, Proudfoot & Bird and Bubba surviving the devastation wreaked upon the Gateway by COVID, work-at-home ethos and street festivals destroying the business of restaurants.

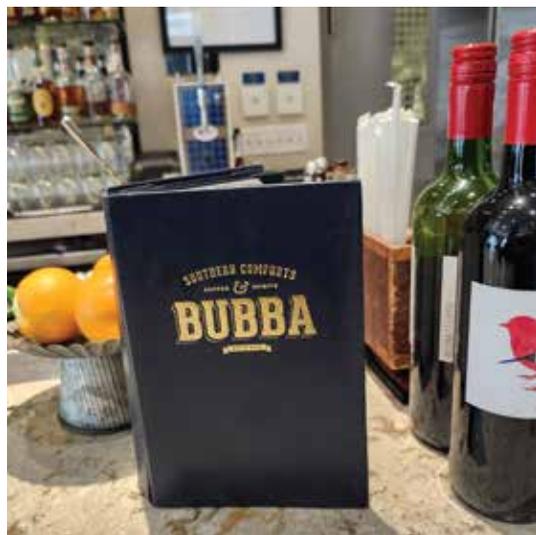
Open for lunch and dinner seven days a week, Bubba survived while becoming exemplary of a food genre rarely found as far west in the Midwest as Iowa. Owner Chris Diebel, a Texas born and raised bubba himself, did that by willing his love of southern comforts on his restaurant. For instance, he insisted on Anson Mills grits from South Carolina until he proved to himself that Early Morning Harvest in Panora's grits tasted just as good. Red beans and rice is made with Andouille sausage; collard greens with smoked ham hocks, or in a vegan version; the house salad dressing is a buttermilk vinaigrette.

Fried chicken, the best seller here, is always organic, brined in buttermilk and served with mashed potatoes made with buttermilk. Southerners tend to prefer dark meat more than just breasts, so Bubba makes both an option. Chicken fried steak is the sine qua non of Texas cuisine. In the Lone Star State, it is sold in fine dining cafés, gas stations and Chinese restaurants. As Texas writer Larry McMurtry wrote "only a rank degenerate would drive 1500 miles across Texas and not eat chicken fried steak." Bubba elevates its art form by using prime sirloin and tenderizing it with a high-tech machine.

Bubba is "the" place for fried green tomatoes and artichoke-okra dip. Macaroni and cheese and the house burger are made with pimento cheese. Deviled eggs are



Shrimp and grits



Chicken and waffles

BUBBA

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and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

made with bacon. Frog legs are fried crispy.

Concessions were also made to Iowa's taste buds. The gumbo isn't spicy enough to Cajun purists, and its roux isn't dark enough. But it appeals to the less extreme Midwest customer.

Bubba is a converted brewery. It serves two floors, and rental apartments now occupy territory behind the bar and kitchen. Floors are inlaid tile — common in the early- to middle-20th century. Diebel's father was called upon to teach waiters how to tie their bowties. Those are a thing in the South where people are more apt to dress up for supper.

The dining rooms are far more elegantly appointed than others in Bubba's genre, like Machine Shed, Tupelo Honey or Cracker Barrel. Great care was taken in purchasing the chandelier, the furniture and the art work.

"We were one of Liz Lidgett's first clients. Now she has a gallery and a staff," Diebel explained about the art.

That includes framed silver serving ware, framed bow ties, and a Texas flag that flew over the state capitol on the day Diebel's fathered was honored by Gov. Ann Richards, Diebel's favorite politician. A portrait of Diebel's grandmother hangs on one wall. Over the host's station hangs the definition of a bubba, as a younger brother. It is the most frequently photographed artwork as people pose under it with their own bubbas.

Bubba inspires loyalty. There are day-one employees here, including chef Kate Willer who returned to town after working for legendary restaurateur Danny Meyer in New York's Gramercy Tavern. Bubba's 100 top-shelf Bourbons have made it a whiskey destination. Those are served, appropriately, with a single giant ice cube.

How cool is that? ■

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



Allie Delaney and Jake Kashuk at Pho 888

Over fried tofu, spring rolls, banh mi and hot chili oil, we talked about renovation, life styles and Des Moines' attraction.

Allie Delaney is the owner of Renovation Jungle, a plant store that inspires unusual loyalty, love and appreciation among customers. Jake Kashuk is her husband, a skateboard lifer and contractor. We think they epitomize the ideal young professionals that Des Moines is desperately hoping to attract to town.

We asked them to lunch, and they chose Pho 888, a Vietnamese restaurant on Second Avenue's strip mall of Vietnamese businesses. Over fried tofu, spring rolls, banh mi and lots of hot chili oil, we talked about renovation, life styles and Des Moines' attraction.

What do they like about Pho 888?

"It's affordable. Sometimes we need to feed whole crews of people. That comes with renovation projects. This place is awesome with that. Banh mi sandwiches ("French subs" on the menu) cost about \$4, and they're fabulous. Plus, we're rather romantically attracted to Vietnam. We took a long honeymoon there and traveled all over."

What other local places do they enjoy?

"La Familia is great. I painted the outdoor mural on their building. They have great tacos at affordable prices," Jake said.

"We like the restaurant in C Fresh Market – Pho 515. We like Bellhop and Secret Admirer," Allie added.

How did Renovation Jungle come to be?

"During COVID, I started taking cuttings from my house plants, potting them and selling them on my doorstep with a tip jar. Then my brother offered us a deal; Jake painted his house in exchange for six months free rent to start our shop in a former dance studio. Jake's business dried up during COVID, so he also had time to build my walls of shelves and the business," Allie explained.

"That's why we called it Renovation Jungle. Allie had a design in mind, and I built her dream space," added Jake.

Is Jake's business renovation?

"Ninety five percent of it is interior painting, but it's basically all connected to renovation. I build cabinetry, create geometric murals, stain furniture, et cetera."

Allie grew up in Des Moines. Jake grew up in Providence, Rhode Island. How did they meet and decide to live in Des Moines?

"I am a skateboard lifer. I was a street boarder. I think it's a lifestyle. Skateboarders have a family where ever they go. I skateboarded all over the world, meeting

people that way.

"My mother's family came from Portugal, like lots of people in Rhode Island. So, I wanted to skateboard Portugal. When that got complicated, I decided to go to the next closest place and ended up in Bilbao, Spain. That's an interesting city. The Guggenheim Museum there completely changed the city and how outsiders perceived it."

That's an understatement. The museum is frequently cited as the greatest architectural achievement of modern history. It was built on the site of the old port which had been the source of Bilbao's wealth and industry but had become decrepit.

"The museum brought that commerce back — in tourism. After Bilbao, I began paying attention to art museums. Looking for others that redefine their cities. I skateboarded in Canada, France, Greece, Guatemala, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico and Portugal. We saved money in Milwaukee so we could live in south Mexico for three months.

"When I first came to Des Moines and saw the Des Moines Art Center and its three different architectural styles, I decided I wanted to live here. I also remember when I was new here, I was walking by the downtown library and people made eye contact with me, in a nice way. That never happens in Providence. I was thinking, 'What's your angle?'"

"Central Academy was another selling point. The whole idea of valuing smart people was new to me. Where I grew up, you had to hide it if you were smart. It was not cool. I hated high school. The University of Rhode Island wasn't much better," Jake said.

"We think the permanent collection at the Art Center is as good as anywhere," added Allie.

The couple moved to Milwaukee where Allie studied at Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design. That's near the Milwaukee Museum of Art. It was designed by a Spaniard and resembles the American-Canadian designed Guggenheim in Spain.

"Yes, but it's annoying. The entire entryway is wall-less. You have to move off into enclosures to see any art," added Allie.

Chris Vance's most recent art exhibition, at Moberg Gallery, included his first ever pots. They were potted by Allie. What are the most popular plants at Renovation Jungle?



"Philodendrons because they are so successful indoors. Snake plant, which is also called Mother-in-law tongue. It does well indoors, but it can be toxic to pets. Alocasia (Elephant Ear) is popular because it's pet safe and has huge leaves."

What about edible plants?

"The trouble with edible plants is they taste good, and that attracts pests. Oxalis is popular, and it has an interesting taste like green apple peels or tart rhubarb."

In the 1970s and 1980s, fern bars were the rage. They made restaurants and bars look great but were so difficult to maintain that restaurants had to hire full-time employees just to water them. Are there any left that the couple knows of?

"The Peppermill in Las Vegas is one. I would love to design a fern bar from scratch. I love the vibe of a rain forest café. There's something about being under a living canopy that makes me feel safe," Allie answered.

What is the couple's own home like?

"After renovating the house we were living in for six years, we sold it and bought a former school building in Dallas County. We built an indoor skate park in the basement. It has lockers, and every room is different. We invite friends to stay there, and they spread the word. We had a classic cellist from Berklee College of Music move in for a while. We host movie nights and concerts. It's a perpetual work in progress. Someday we might make it a B&B." ■

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



James Triantos will be an exciting player to watch for I-Cubs fans in 2026. Photo by Dylan Heuer

FEATURE STORY



ROUNDING the BASES

Learn what's new with the Iowa Cubs in the 2026 season.

By Cyote Williams

“For its root, root, root for the Cubbies,” has long been the motto of Des Moines baseball fans. Without a Major League Baseball team in the state, area fans of America’s pastime tie their allegiances to clubs across the Midwest and throughout the country. But when the sun comes out and the grass gets greener, those fans converge on Principal Park to cheer for the beloved Cubbies.

Even though the Iowa Cubs play a level below MLB, there is no lack of talent on the field or in the front office. The Chicago Cubs’ farm system has routinely produced stars who spend time in Iowa. Team officials say they aim to ensure a strong fan experience every season, and in 2026 they are again offering a look at what’s new, what to expect and what to be excited about.

LAST SEASON

The Iowa Cubs finished last season 35-40, identical to the previous year. It was not the record the team hoped for or expected.

At the start of last season, the Chicago Cubs were ranked as having the eighth-best farm system in the MLB, with seven players among the top 100 prospects. Many of those prospects spent time in Iowa, but several were promoted as the season progressed.

“We started the season with the top seven prospects in the organization,” Iowa Cubs General Manager Randy Wehofer said. “Baseball America said we were the most talented roster in minor league baseball to begin the year. But that often doesn’t lend itself to wins and losses because of specific player plans and getting them ready for the next step.”

Those prospects included Matt Shaw, Cade Horton, Owen Caissie, Moises Ballesteros, James Triantos, Kevin Alcántara and Jefferson Rojas. Shaw, Horton, Ballesteros and Alcántara are now on the Cubs’ major league roster, while Caissie was traded to the Miami Marlins.

“I think our coaching staff was a little disappointed that we finished just below .500,” broadcaster Jason Kempf said. “We got off to a really good start. Expectations were that it was going to be a really good team throughout the year.”

THIS SEASON

Wehofer enters the season in a new role after being promoted from assistant general manager to general manager. Sam Bernabe, who had served as GM since 1987, remains with the organization as team president.

Wehofer has spent 18 seasons with the Iowa Cubs and 27 total in minor league baseball.

“I’m proud of the opportunity,” Wehofer said. “It’s now on me, rather than to advise, to make the final decisions.”

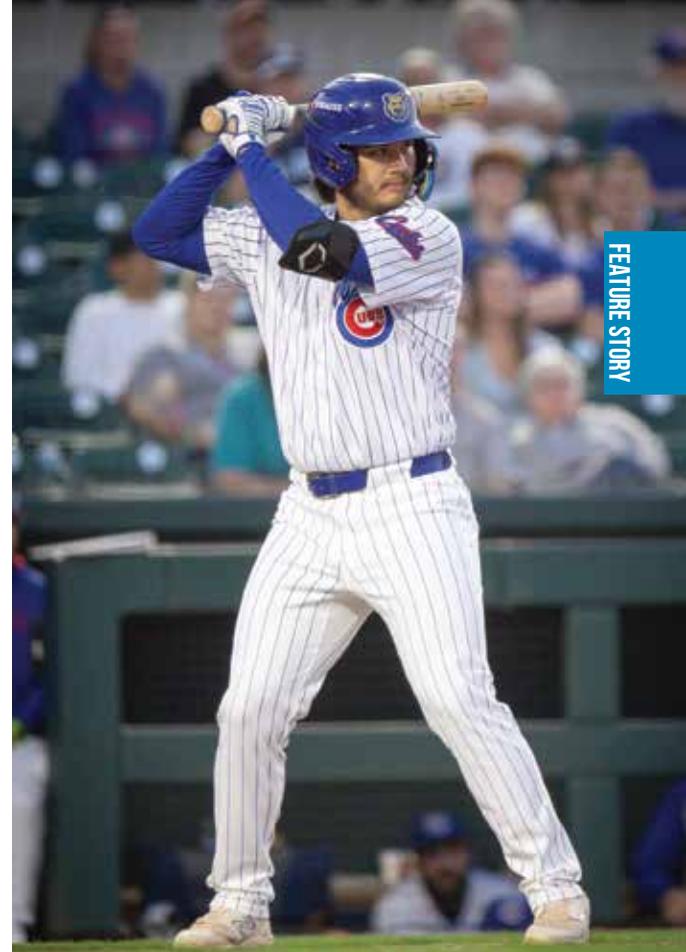
He said continuity remains strong, with staff retention and two new hires, and emphasized long-term planning for the organization and fan experience.

Kempf, entering his second season with the team, said the fan base exceeded expectations.

“When you’re actually part of it, it’s even beyond what you expect,” Kempf said. “Cubs fans are more invested in their minor league teams than any other fan base.”

The Cubs now rank 23rd in farm system rankings with two top-100 prospects: Ballesteros and Jaxon Wiggins. The drop reflects several players now contributing at the major league level.

Wehofer expects Ballesteros to spend most of the season in Chicago after hitting .316 with 13 home runs and 76 RBIs last year, though he could still appear in Iowa.



FEATURE STORY

Jonathon Long was the Cubs Minor League Player of the Year for his outstanding 2025 season. Expect him back in white and blue this season. Photo by Dylan Heuer

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- **APRIL 10** vs. Omaha at 7:08 pm | **Friday Night Fireworks**
- **APRIL 11** vs. Omaha at 3:08 p.m. | **Catch On The Field**
- **APRIL 12** vs. Omaha at 1:08 p.m. | **Kids Run The Bases**
- **APRIL 21** vs. Louisville at 6:38 p.m.
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- **APRIL 23** vs. Louisville at 12:08 p.m.
- **APRIL 24** vs. Louisville at 7:08 p.m. | **Friday Night Fireworks**
- **APRIL 25** vs. Louisville at 3:08 p.m. | **Catch On The Field**
- **APRIL 26** vs. Louisville at 1:08 p.m. | **Kids Run The Bases**
- **MAY 5** vs. Columbus at 6:38 p.m. | **Demonios de Des Moines**
- **MAY 6** vs. Columbus at 12:08 p.m.
- **MAY 7** vs. Columbus at 12:08 p.m.
- **MAY 8** vs. Columbus at 7:08 p.m. | **Outdoors Night**
- **MAY 9** vs. Columbus at 3:08 p.m. | **Mental Health Awareness Day | Catch On The Field**
- **MAY 10** vs. Columbus at 1:08 p.m. | **Mother's Day**
- **MAY 19** vs. Memphis at 6:38 p.m.
- **MAY 20** vs. Memphis at 12:08 p.m.
- **MAY 21** vs. Memphis at 12:08 p.m. | **Iowa Oaks**
- **MAY 22** vs. Memphis at 7:08 p.m. | **Friday Night Fireworks**
- **MAY 23** vs. Memphis at 6:08 p.m. | **Catch On The Field**
- **MAY 24** vs. Memphis at 1:08 p.m. | **Kids Run The Bases**
- **JUNE 2** vs. Toledo at 6:38 p.m. | **Lou Gehrig + ALS Awareness Night**
- **JUNE 3** vs. Toledo at 12:08 p.m.
- **JUNE 4** vs. Toledo at 6:38 p.m.
- **JUNE 5** vs. Toledo at 7:08 p.m. | **Star Wars Night | Friday Night Fireworks**
- **JUNE 6** vs. Toledo at 6:08 p.m. | **BBQ Bootcamp**
- **JUNE 7** vs. Toledo at 1:08 p.m. | **Sensory Friendly Day**
- **JUNE 16** vs. Indianapolis at 6:38 p.m.
- **JUNE 17** vs. Indianapolis at 12:08 p.m.
- **JUNE 18** vs. Indianapolis at 6:38 p.m. | **American Sign Language Night | First Responders Night**
- **JUNE 19** vs. Indianapolis at 7:08 p.m. | **Pride Night | Friday Night Fireworks**
- **JUNE 20** vs. Indianapolis at 6:08 p.m. | **Catch On The Field**
- **JUNE 21** vs. Indianapolis at 1:08 p.m. | **Father's Day**
- **JUNE 23** vs. Buffalo at 6:38 p.m. | **Dog Day**
- **JUNE 24** vs. Buffalo at 12:08 p.m.
- **JUNE 25** vs. Buffalo at 6:38 p.m. | **Citizenship Ceremony**
- **JUNE 26** vs. Buffalo at 7:08 pm | **Hawaiian Night | Friday Night Fireworks**
- **JUNE 27** vs. Buffalo at 6:08 p.m. | **10 Year Chicago Cubs World Series Anniversary Celebration**
- **JUNE 28** vs. Buffalo at 1:08 p.m. | **Kids Run The Bases**
- **JULY 7** vs. St. Paul at 6:38 p.m.
- **JULY 8** vs. St. Paul at 12:08 p.m.
- **JULY 9** vs. St. Paul at 6:38 p.m.
- **JULY 10** vs. St. Paul at 7:08 p.m. | **Friday Night Fireworks**
- **JULY 11** vs. St. Paul at 6:08 p.m. | **Catch On The Field**
- **JULY 12** vs. St. Paul at 1:08 p.m. | **Demonios de Des Moines | Kids Run The Bases**
- **JULY 28** vs. Scranton/WB at 6:38 p.m. | **Dog Day**
- **JULY 29** vs. Scranton/WB at 12:08 p.m.
- **JULY 30** vs. Scranton/WB at 6:38 p.m. | **Iowa Oaks**
- **JULY 31** vs. Scranton/WB at 7:08 p.m. | **Friday Night Fireworks**
- **AUG. 1** vs. Scranton/WB at 6:08 p.m. | **Catch On The Field**
- **AUG. 2** vs. Scranton/WB at 1:08 p.m. | **Kids Run The Bases**
- **AUG. 11** **MILB Field of Dreams game** vs. St. Paul at 6:30 p.m. (**In Dyersville**)
- **AUG. 12** vs. St. Paul at 6:38 p.m.
- **AUG. 13** vs. St. Paul at 6:38 p.m.
- **AUG. 14** vs. St. Paul at 7:08 p.m. | **Friday Night Fireworks**
- **AUG. 15** vs. St. Paul at 6:08 p.m. | **Catch On The Field**
- **AUG. 16** vs. St. Paul at 1:08 p.m. | **Kids Run The Bases**
- **AUG. 25** vs. Omaha at 6:38 p.m. | **Dog Day**
- **AUG. 26** vs. Omaha at 12:08 p.m.
- **AUG. 27** vs. Omaha at 6:38 p.m. | **Iowa Oaks**
- **AUG. 28** vs. Omaha at 7:08 p.m. | **Friday Night Fireworks**
- **AUG. 29** vs. Omaha at 6:08 p.m. | **Catch On The Field**
- **AUG. 30** vs. Omaha at 1:08 p.m. | **Demonios de Des Moines | Kids Run The Bases**
- **SEPT. 8** vs. Toledo at 6:38 p.m.
- **SEPT. 9** vs. Toledo at 12:08 p.m.
- **SEPT. 10** vs. Toledo at 6:38 p.m. | **Iowa Oaks**
- **SEPT. 11** vs. Toledo at 7:08 p.m. | **Friday Night Fireworks**
- **SEPT. 12** vs. Toledo at 6:08 p.m. | **Catch On The Field**
- **SEPT. 13** vs. Toledo at 1:08 p.m. | **Kids Run The Bases**

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Stadium improvements such as new bullpens, sound system, video board and concessions changes in the concourse will be noticeable improvements for 2026. Photo by Dylan Heuer

Both Wehofer and Kempf pointed to Triantos as a player to watch. In 102 games last season, he hit .258 with seven home runs, 43 RBIs and a team-high 28 stolen bases. “He’s a really dynamic player,” Wehofer said.

Wiggins, the Cubs’ top pitching prospect, made three starts late last season, striking out 14 batters in nine innings.

“He throws 100 mph with his fastball,” Kempf said.

Fans may also see Jonathan Long, the Cubs’ minor league player of the year, who hit .305 with 20 home runs and 91 RBIs. Kempf said there is an outside chance Long could begin the season in Chicago.

Connor Noland and Will Sanders also return after leading the team in wins last season.

STADIUM CHANGES

Several upgrades are coming to Principal Park.

One of the most noticeable changes: The bullpens have been moved off the field and into the stands, reducing seating capacity by 734.

“We think there will be huge advantages for both the team and promotions,” Wehofer said.

The ballpark will also feature a new sound system designed to improve audio quality and control throughout the stadium.

Additionally, the video board has been rebuilt after a power issue damaged the previous system. The new board will feature improved resolution and updated technology.

Concessions and fan amenities have also been updated. Changes include a new Neighborhood Bar behind home plate, revamped food stands and a dedicated sensory-friendly room for fans who need a quieter space during games.

“I think fans will walk in and say, ‘I like it,’” Wehofer said.

PROMOTIONS

The Iowa Cubs’ promotions schedule blends tradition with new ideas.

“It’s a balance,” marketing director Elly Simpson said. “We want to remain authentic to our brand while continuing to innovate.”

Returning favorites include Star Wars Night and Friday night fireworks. New this season is Backyard Baseball Night, inspired by the popular 1990s video game series, featuring themed jerseys and interactive gaming opportunities.

The team will also celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Chicago Cubs’ 2016 World Series title with a replica trophy giveaway and special appearances.

Other promotions include Margaritaville Night, a bobblehead honoring Bernabe, Princess Day and the return of the Demonios de Des Moines identity as part of Minor League Baseball’s Copa de la Diversión initiative. ■



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BARNSTORMERS 2026

New coach is excited to challenge young players.



Tyler Tate.
Photo by Jerrad Downer



Coach Coles. Photo by Jerrad Downer

By Jackie Wilson

The Iowa Barnstormers will begin the 2026 season with a new coach at the helm — Andre Coles.

Coles brings a diverse background, having played indoor football for nine seasons. He previously coached for the Frisco Fighters and the Tulsa Oilers.

Coles recognizes he has inherited a monumental task, as the Barnstormers won only one game during the 2025 season.

“Last year was a rough start. They struggled through a tough season,” he said.

Only four players returned to the roster, including Tyler Tate.

“Tyler was on the team last year. He didn’t have to come back, but he’s excited about the new coaching staff,” Coles said.

Coles wants to “start fresh” with the new players.

“We want to get back to our identity and what we do. We have a young group that is hungry to show what they are made of,” he said.

Coles grew up watching the Barnstormers and said he is thrilled to be named head coach.

“It’s legendary to have this opportunity and to get back to how the team used to be run. The Barnstormers have been around since 1995. I’m excited about the prospect and challenge of turning this team into a winner,” he said. “I want to thank Jeff Lamberti and Juli Pettit, owner and general manager, for the opportunity to lead this team.”

Coles said his passion for coaching is mentoring young men.

“Whatever they do — whether it’s going into the next phase of football or their careers — it’s my job

to train, develop and mentor men who may have been overlooked,” he said. “That development piece is important.”

Coles said Barnstormers fans appreciate the fast-paced action and the ability to connect with players.

“With big-league teams, you can’t get to know the players. This team is centered around community,” he said. “It’s family-friendly fun. There’s no other place to be when we’re playing.”

He encourages new and longtime fans to return to Casey’s Center for a fresh start.

“We expect to win and will turn around the record,” he said. “I’m ready for the challenge.”

THEME NIGHTS

The Iowa Barnstormers will host eight home games at Casey’s Center in Des Moines during the 2026 regular season. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m., except for 5 p.m. start times on May 2 and July 11. Doors open one hour prior to game time.

Attending a Barnstormers game offers more than football, with entertainment for all ages. Theme nights include concession specials, giveaways and other promotions.

• **April 4 — Home Opener/Racing Night.** The Barnstormers will host the Green Bay Blizzard in their home opener.

• **April 25 — Family Night.**

The evening will include family-friendly activities and specials for all ages.

• **May 2 — Kids Night.** The game will feature activities for children, including appearances by Billy the Barnstormer and other entertainment. Giveaways will be announced.

• **May 22 — Military Night.** The Barnstormers will host their annual Military Night, honoring veterans and active-duty military personnel. Additional details will be announced.

• **June 13 — First Responders Night.** The Barnstormers will host their annual First Responders Night against the Quad City Steamwheelers, recognizing local first responders.

• **July 11 — Halftime Corgi Chase.** The Barnstormers will face the Green Bay Blizzard. The game will feature the annual Halftime Corgi Chase, presented by the Animal Rescue League of Iowa.

• **July 24 — Fan Appreciation Night.** The Barnstormers will host the San Antonio Gunslingers in their final regular-season home game. The team will highlight fans throughout the evening. Giveaways and promotions will be announced.

TICKET INFORMATION

Season tickets for the 2026 Iowa Barnstormers season are available, with packages starting at \$128 per seat. Packages include admission to all eight regular-season home games.

Individual game tickets start at \$23. Tickets may be purchased online at Hy-VeeTix.com or theiowabarnstormers.com. For season tickets, call 515-633-2255.

Tickets will also be available at the door. ■

2026 SCHEDULE

Home games

DATE	OPPONENT
• March 21	Quad City Steamwheelers
• April 4	Green Bay Blizzard
• April 11	Fishers Freight
• April 18	Green Bay Blizzard
• April 25	Fishers Freight
• May 2	Quad City Steamwheelers
• May 17	NAZ Wranglers
• May 22	Jacksonville Sharks
• May 30	Tulsa Oilers
• June 6	Orlando Pirates
• June 13	Quad City Steamwheelers
• June 20	Fishers Freight
• June 27	Tulsa Oilers
• July 11	Green Bay Blizzard
• July 18	Jacksonville Sharks
• July 24	San Antonio Gunslingers



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'Hoppers' is a return to Pixar's more playful side

It's very much like "Avatar" — just with more fur and pond rules.

With the likes of "GOAT," "Zootopia 2" and the ongoing "Into the Spider-Verse" franchise, kids are eating good when it comes to feature-length animation. And "Hoppers" is no different, giving the kind of movie you enjoy from the first frame to the final credit. It reaches deep into Pixar's established toolkit to make you chuckle, care, connect and (of course) cry. It is a return to form for the studio's more playful side, blending a hysterically insane premise with a grounded heart that feels both earnest and wonderfully weird.

Directed by Daniel Chong — best known for the delightfully charming "We Bare Bears" — the movie centers on Mabel Tanaka (Piper Curda), a young environmentalist caught in that specific, uncomfortable post-college-grad limbo. Remember the feeling? After spending years being told you're special and likely to change the world, you realize the world isn't actually waiting for your arrival. Mabel is currently fighting a losing battle against Mayor Jerry Generazzo (Jon Hamm), who plans to pave over her late grandmother's beloved glade for a freeway expansion. The goal? Cutting a local commute by nearly 5 whole minutes.

Idealism is quickly shattered by indifference as Mabel discovers that making an impact requires access, structure and influence that many young adults don't possess.

This is where the film's "Avatar" of it all comes into play.

Mabel stumbles upon a secret project at her university where scientists have figured out how to transfer a human consciousness into hyper-realistic robotic animals. While the scientists insist it's "nothing like Avatar," it's very much like Avatar — just with more fur, less blue kitty cats, and a significantly higher ratio of beaver-based slapstick.

Mabel is thrust into the wild, where she discovers that the animal kingdom isn't just a collection of critters but a complex monarchical hierarchy. There are kings or queens for the mammals, the fish, the insects, the birds, the amphibians and the reptiles, each sporting their own tiny gold crowns. Mabel quickly befriends King George (Bobby Moynihan), the mammal king who operates under a surprisingly bleak set of "Pond Rules" — a philosophy built on the casual acceptance of being eaten or squished. You know, "the circle of life."

By depicting nature with a darkly comedic tone, the world of "Hoppers" feels hilariously bleak for all the right reasons. But don't let the tiny crowns and fluffy tails fool you; this movie isn't afraid to get dark. There is a shocking moment about halfway through when a major character is brutally dispatched. There is no slow, swelling orchestra;



"Hoppers"

PG | 104 minutes

Director: Daniel Chong

Writers: Daniel Chong, Jesse Andrews, Jordan Harrison

Stars: Piper Curda, Bobby Moynihan, Jon Hamm

just a sudden, quiet departure that leaves the characters (and the audience) in a state of genuine shock. From there, it gets weirder, even a bit scarier. A moment of body-horror during a villainous turn by Titus (Dave Franco), an insect-to-human hopped antagonist who "rips" through a synthetic human skin is particularly terrifying. It is risky, bold and exactly the kind of creative swing we've been missing from Pixar's original works.

Between the shocks, "Hoppers" remains Pixar's funniest film in a decade. It is peppered with quick, "meme-esque" humor and throwaway gags that feel tailor-made for Gen Alpha. A standout sequence involves the animals communicating with humans using a text-to-speech app and emojis on a smartphone; it's a gag that works in isolation but also smartly reinforces the film's themes of the communication gap between humanity and the natural world.

Technically, the animation is as stunning as we've come to expect. Not only does it surprise and delight, but it actually advances the plot. The film delineates between when an animal is understood by Mabel and when it is not. When they aren't "in the loop," they look a bit more basic — more like the background animals of "Open Season." But when we get close, the furs and surfaces are so rich you can practically feel them through the screen.

As we look toward the future, "Hoppers" stands as a vital reminder that Pixar can still be "spiky" enough to carve out its own niche. It's a cautionary, compassionate tale that whether we are arrogant politicians or beaver-bodied students, we all exist on this planet together. Kids will have a blast with the slapstick, while adults will find themselves back and forth between laughing and questioning how a kids' movie got this weird. ■

"They Will Kill You"

R | 106 minutes

Director: Kirill Sokolov

Writers: Alex Litvak, Kirill

Sokolov

Stars: Zazie Beetz, Tom Felton, Patricia Arquette
Asia Reaves (Zazie Beetz) is an ex-convict who is desperate to find her estranged younger sister, Maria (Myha'la). Her search leads her to The Virgil, a mysterious and opulent New York City high-rise, where she answers a help-wanted ad for a housekeeper. Asia soon discovers that the building is not just a residence for the elite but a death trap run by a Satanic cult led by the building's superintendent, Lilith (Patricia Arquette). The residents are immortal "rich freaks" who maintain their power through ritual sacrifices — and Asia is their next intended offering. However, the cultists quickly realize they've picked the wrong victim.



"The Drama"

NR | 106 minutes

Director/Writer: Kristoffer

Borgli

Stars: Zendaya, Robert

Pattinson, Alana Haim

"The Drama" from A24 is a psychological romantic-comedy-drama. The story follows Emma (Zendaya), a bookstore clerk, and Charlie (Robert Pattinson), a museum director, whose seemingly idyllic relationship is detonated just days before their wedding when a shocking secret from Emma's past comes to light. While the aesthetic of a classic romance — including a viral faux engagement announcement in the Boston Globe — is at the forefront, a sharp, sinister pivot into moral shock and paranoia may be hiding just beneath the surface.



"Hamlet"

NR | 116 minutes

Director: Aneil Karia

Writers: Michael Lesslie,

William Shakespeare

Stars: Riz Ahmed, Morfydd

Clark, Joe Alwyn

The film follows Hamlet (Riz Ahmed), the son of a powerful London business magnate. After the sudden and suspicious death of his father, Hamlet returns home for the funeral only to find his family in a state of moral and corporate decay. He is horrified to discover that his uncle Claudius (Art Malik) has not only seized control of the family empire but also plans to marry Hamlet's widowed mother, Gertrude (Sheeba Chaddha). After a chilling encounter with his father's ghost on a London rooftop, Hamlet is told that his father was murdered by Claudius. ■



When dreams become realities

One of the best traditions in regional theatre welcomes its 11th iteration.

April is filled with a bounty of performing arts, from musical artists to family fare to several musicals. Enjoy the allure of cultural adventurism that these Greater Des Moines shows have to offer.

One of the best traditions in regional theatre welcomes its 11th iteration when Tallgrass Theatre Company presents its Sarah Frank and Jack Balcombe Dream Project. In 2013, Tallgrass was approached by two actors with a dream—to perform Sam Shephard’s “True West” as it had been done on Broadway (with the two lead actors switching roles each night). This inaugural dream featured veteran stage performers Micheal Davenport and Shawn Wilso. In a unique, Broadway-style approach, they switched the lead roles of Lee and Austin on alternating nights. It was a risky proposal that took a lot of work, but Tallgrass’ creative gamble paid off. “True West” was a resounding success, and the Dream Project took firm root.

Anyone with a vision can apply to have their “dream” show produced by Tallgrass. After reviewing applications and discussing details with applicants, the Tallgrass staff selects one project each year to be produced as part of the following season — in tandem with the “dreamers,” of course.

Honoring legacy support

Sarah Frank and Jack Balcombe were legendary arts supporters in central Iowa, a constant presence at gallery events, symphony performances, student recitals, indie film projects and, of course, a primary love: theatre. Their passion for the arts was matched by their deep knowledge and insatiable thirst to learn and experience.

In 2019, the union of The Dream Project with the legacy of Sarah Frank and Jack Balcombe, assuring a strong future for this creative initiative. That year’s Seventh Annual Dream Project was “Other Desert Cities,” and was the last Dream Project performed in Tallgrass Theatre’s original performing hall, the Rex Mathes auditorium.

“Tallgrass Theatre Company is committed to continuing our Dream Projects as they have proven to push local artists and our audiences to new heights in live theatre,” Artistic Director Thomas Perrine said. “Our Dream Projects bring new artists to Tallgrass Theatre Company, expanding our ‘family’ of artists. Over half of all the artists who have been involved with our Dream Projects were new to Tallgrass when they worked on the production, this includes actors, directors and designers. Historically our Dream



Arlene McAtee in Tallgrass Theatre Company’s Dream Project production, “For Peter Pan on Her 70th Birthday.” Photo by Dylan Heuer Photography

Projects have not been big financial successes for Tallgrass. Our Dream Projects have tended to be more edgy theatre, with perhaps a more limited audience appeal. It is the goal of Tallgrass Theatre Company to grow our Dream Projects and attract a wider audience as well as more interest from the theatre community. We believe that with this season’s playwright driven Dream Project our ‘Dream’ is taking a huge step towards our goal.”

The 2026 Dreamer is Arlene McAtee, who will perform the title role in “Peter Pan on Her 70th Birthday,” written by the uber-talented Sarah Ruhl. McAtee shared some insight into this show’s appeal.

“What was it that drew me to this lovely story? I love the ensemble nature of the piece portraying the dynamics of family — particularly a family of older individuals with such a long history together. If you grew up in a larger family as I did, you know that there are events that do indeed define individuals in the family but also create the entire family’s identity. It shows how alike family members can be and how we can be so different at the same time.

“And then there was the way Sarah Ruhl captured the many aspects of aging, growing older and facing (or not) your own mortality and those of the people you love. It is rare to see the lives of the more mature

BARE BOARDS CHATTER

About Time Theatre Company. “White Rabbit, Red Rabbit.” April 1-4.

Des Moines Performing Arts - Temple Theatre. Susan Werner. April 4.

Ankeny Community Theatre. “An Enemy of the People.” April 17-26.

CAP Theatre. J. M Barrie’s “Peter Pan.” April 17-19.

Des Moines Playhouse. “Crazy for You.” April 17 to May 3.

Des Moines Performing Arts - Temple Theatre. Wellmark Family Series. “Doodle Pop.” April 18.

Des Moines Symphony. “Hope – Copland & Gershwin.” April 18-19.

Des Moines Performing Arts - Temple Theatre. Billy Nation: Tribute to Billy Joel. April 19.

Des Moines Performing Arts. National Geographic Live. “Diving the Great Barrier Reef.” April 22.

Capital City Pride - Temple Theater. “Pride Storytellers: Black & Proud.” April 23.

Tallgrass Theatre Company. “Peter Pan on her 70th Birthday.” April 24 to May 10.

Des Moines Playhouse – Adventure Clubhouse with “Cinderella” April 24-25.

Des Moines Performing Arts - Temple Theatre. Duke Tomatoe. April 24.

Des Moines Performing Arts. “The Rock Orchestra by Candlelight.” April 24.

Des Moines Young Artists’ Theatre. “Clue: High School Edition.” April 24 to May 3.

Des Moines Performing Arts, Temple Theatre Made in the Midwest. The Lubben Brothers. April 25.

Des Moines Performing Arts. “America: The Happy Trails Tour.” April 25.

Des Moines Performing Arts – Willis Broadway Series. “Suffs.” April 28 to May 3.

set portrayed with such insight and warmth. Actually, it is rare to see a family of older people in depth at all. Sarah captures all this through the interactions of these brothers and sisters and an ending that explores these themes in a fantastical fashion. When I describe it to others, I find myself using the words beautiful, lovely and touching but not without humor and joy.” ■

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.



Blood, bombs and Americana

The local scene played out less bloody and sarcastic.



Simone Harris as Lady Blake, image by Kevin Tschierse

Twenty years have passed since Des Moines Art Center hosted its tribute to Ana Mendieta. She was a Cuban refugee who escaped Castro's reign of terror, was raised in Sioux City and first rose to fame in Iowa City where her 1973 performance piece "Rape Scene" was first performed.

Photos of "Rape Scene," in all their bloody, nude brutality, documented a subsequent show in which Ana reenacted the rape and murder of a fellow student at the University of Iowa, where she was studying. That work became a real moment in the feminist agenda — a statement on the issues of violence and defenselessness.

Mendieta envisioned her work as a situation that confronted viewers with traumatic events, obliging them to address their emotions and to take a stand. Mendieta was herself "murdered" by her husband in 1985. He was acquitted despite overwhelming evidence against him. She became a martyr for victimhood.

Mendieta is back in the news this month as the main inspiration to Puppies, Puppies, who was born Jade Guanaro Kuriki-Olivo. That trans artist made the cover of Art News this March in a sensational nude cover photo. The story mentions Mendieta as a pioneer. Puppies is now reenacting Mendieta's "Rape Scene" in performances that come with a warning that they are not accessible to those under 18. The reenactments last three bloody hours ending with the draping of Puppies' naked body in a transgender flag.

Also last month, anonymous guerilla artists placed a 12-foot-tall statue reenacting Leonardo di Caprio and Kate Winslet's legendary "King of the World" pose from "Titanic." It superimposed Donald Trump and Jeffrey Epstein in its Washington, D.C., debut.



Chris Vance's pottery on display at Moberg Gallery.

The local scene played out less bloody and sarcastic. Chris Vance's annual show was his best ever, in our opinion, and his gallery's (Moberg), too. Vance included pottery for the first time. Those are made with the same zany characters as his paintings, making them the perfect complement "for collectors who have already filled their walls with Vance paintings," in TJ Moberg's words.

Touts

- Des Moines Art Center continues its deep dive into Caribbean art with "Christine Rebet: Sound of Time," April 11 to Aug. 23. That film-performance reflects on an 18th century slave rebellion in Jamaica's Blue Mountains which culminated in the founding of the colonies of Maroons. It was led by legendary Queen Nanny. On April 11, Rebet talks with Simone Harris, one of Queen Nanny's descendants, who reenacts the history of the legend in performance.

- Des Moines Symphony follows up a sensational March concert that featured the Des Moines debut of violin virtuoso Stella Chen with an all American tribute to famous works by Copland and Gershwin plus little known works of Steve Heitzig and Margaret Bonds. Heitzig writes music for sculptors, all featured

in Des Moines' sculpture park. Bonds wrote her piece as a tribute to the four Sunday School students killed in the 1963 16th Street Baptist Church firebombing in Montgomery, Alabama, by the Ku Klux Klan.

- Olson-Larsen Gallery debuts "Inked" on spring Gallery Night in Valley Junction, April 17.

- Fred Hersch has shaped jazz with more than 60 albums. His trio will play the venerable Sheslow Auditorium on April 17.

Road trip

The exhibition "Containing Multitudes" at the Minneapolis Institute of Art is garnering rave reviews internationally. The exhibition, inspired by Walt Whitman's "I am large, I contain multitudes," highlights 95 photographic works "exploring the diversity, beauty, and contradictions of the American experience." Robert Frank, Walker Evans, and Ansel Adams star alongside contemporary artists Dawoud Bey, Catherine Opie, and Carrie Mae Weems. The show plays through Aug. 17. ■

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



IOWA ARTIST

BY JACKIE WILSON

Des Moines photographer captures city's walls in new book

Jim Zeller turns decades of photos into "Des Moines Wallscapes Unseen," highlighting buildings and neighborhoods that are disappearing.

When Jim Zeller began sorting through old negatives from the mid-1980s, he held them up to the light. He thought about the negatives, which had been replaced by digital pictures.

"These negatives will end up in the dumpster," he recalls. "People might be interested in old photos. These photos would make a good book."

That was about 10 years ago, when Zeller began photographing downtown Des Moines buildings, some of which are now demolished. Over the past few years, he snapped, sorted and arranged the images, creating a collection of Des Moines "walls." His book idea finally took shape and was aptly named "Des Moines Wallscapes Unseen."

The book focuses on walls at various buildings in Des Moines, as well as the Iowa State Fairgrounds.

"The subject of walls appeals to me," he says. "I didn't set out taking pictures of walls."

He enlisted the help of graphic designer Connie Wilson, formerly with the Des Moines Art Center. Wilson advised on photo placement and layout.

Zeller grew up in Des Moines, helping his father in the family darkroom. He and his twin brother assisted with the developing process by dipping paper into chemical tanks and baths.

He took photos for his high school yearbook at Roosevelt High School. After college, he began shooting pictures in Des Moines. His work in a photo printing lab sharpened his eye for editing. He also photographed briefly for the Des Moines Business Record, carrying a camera wherever he went.

One of his exhibitions featured 100 churches in the Des Moines metro area. He has photographed many events for his own Greek Orthodox Church of St. George but was intrigued by other religious sites.

"I walked my way through 100 churches. I was unsupervised," he admits. "I had on my signature bow tie, so I appeared harmless."

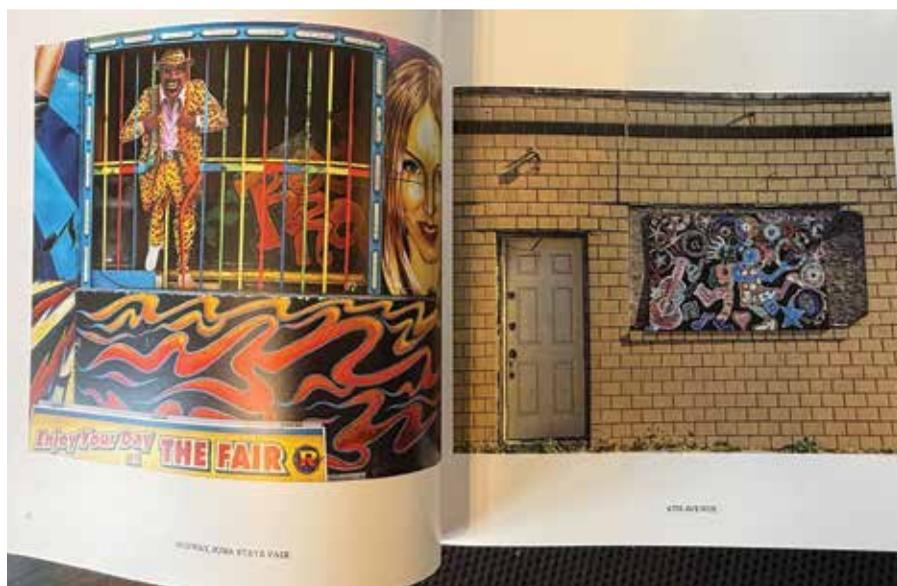
The resulting 202 photos were displayed at the Catholic Pastoral Center.

"I wish I would have gotten that in book form," he reflects.

Another series featured homes of different colors throughout Des Moines. For example, he photographed all the yellow houses and grouped them together on a poster.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



One of his favorite photos captures him tutoring a Vietnamese girl learning English.

Zeller's love of photography books is evident in his home, where bookcases overflow with favorites, including Fred Herzog, Christopher Payne and Berenice Abbott.

He has no formal photography training and considers it an advantage.

"You don't know what you don't know. I don't like to follow directions," he says.

He uses an Olympus 4/3 camera.

"It's got a smaller body with a retro feel. It feels like a film camera. I'm getting too old to carry around a heavy camera," he explains.

By "taking pictures on the fly," he encourages other photographers to do the same.

"Take what you see now and where you live — because you don't know when it might be gone," he reflects.

His books are available at Beaverdale Books, The Blok in West Des Moines, and the Des Moines Art Center gift shop.

Those interested in his photography can email him at zellerjim50@gmail.com. ■

APRIL 2026 | CITYVIEW | 63

America celebrates 5 decades of hits on 'Happy Trails' tour

Folk-rock band to perform classics like "A Horse With No Name" in Des Moines, led by remaining original member Dewey Bunnell.

A classic American band, aptly named America, is in its fifth decade of touring. The group recently embarked on its "Happy Trails" tour for 2026 and will perform at the Des Moines Civic Center on April 25.

America, a folk-rock band, is known for its vocal harmonies and numerous hit songs. "A Horse With No Name" topped the Billboard charts, along with "Sister Golden Hair," "Tin Man" and "Ventura Highway."

The band won a Grammy Award for best new artist in 1972, and two members have been inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Dewey Bunnell co-founded the trio with Gerry Beckley and Dan Peek. The three young men's fathers were stationed in England while serving in the military. Bunnell recently spoke to CITYVIEW magazine about the band's tour.

Bunnell is the only remaining original member. Peek left the group early, and Beckley retired from touring three years ago. Bunnell said he and Beckley agreed on a hiatus from touring when the COVID-19 pandemic derailed concerts.

When promoters later suggested a tour, Beckley declined.

"It was tough moving on from my longtime bandmate," Bunnell said. "Gerry was music director and good at arranging vocal harmonies. I wanted to keep performing. Gerry was always the front man on stage, so I took that role. I'm still a little anxious, but once I get on stage, I'm backed by a great band."

The band formed when its members were in their late teens. Their first album was a hit, and they began performing concerts. On their first tour, they lacked a backing band.

"We were just three guys, sitting on stools with our acoustic guitars," Bunnell recalled. "We weren't seasoned with live shows, and it exposed our flaws and

lack of training."

They quickly added a bass player and a drummer and began conducting serious rehearsals. Because their first single and album went to No. 1, they were approached by producer George Martin, who produced albums for the Beatles.

"It was terrific to have that connection with George to produce our records. It was a very special time," Bunnell said.

Their musical style, notably their harmonizing melodies, was inspired by the Beatles and the Beach Boys. The Eagles were recording in the same office.

"We were in awe of their vocal harmonies," he said.

America toured extensively, playing nearly every state, festival and venue in the U.S. and around the world. Their music is treasured by fans in many countries.

"Our music has no limitations, as opposed to heavy metal genres. Singer-songwriter songs are easily digestible," Bunnell said.

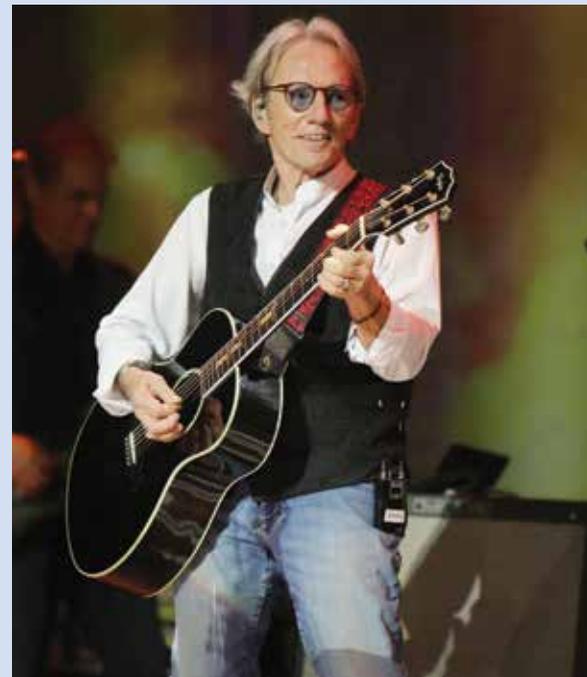
America headlined concerts and also opened for Pink Floyd, the Who and the Beach Boys. They performed at venues such as Central Park and the Washington Monument on July 4, where 600,000 fans attended.

Bunnell admitted to answering a common question: Why didn't the horse have a name? He explained that he and his brother were outdoorsy and liked to explore different habitats, including the desert.

"The horse was just a vehicle to get through the desert. Songwriting is funny that way — I can't tell you why the horse has no name," he laughed.

When naming themselves America, the band expected possible negative feedback.

"It was a bold move to call ourselves that. We thought we'd have more repercussions and braced



Dewey Bunnell of America. Photo by David Plastik

ourselves for that," he said. "Fortunately, we've never had a bad protest. Our name is superfluous to the music we make."

Bunnell said America is a baby boomer band, yet he enjoys welcoming young concertgoers.

"We have great loyal fans who see us over and over. I laugh and think, haven't you seen the show enough already?"

Diehard fans crave new music, which the band occasionally performs. However, during the Des Moines concert, Bunnell promises to play favorites and a few cover songs.

"People don't want to hear obscure album cuts or those that didn't get airplay," he said. "The songs we play aren't oldies — this is classic rock." ■

SOUND ADVICE

BY JACKIE WILSON

In celebration of Jazz Appreciation Month, the **Community Jazz Center of Greater Des Moines** presents four hours of local jazz on April 19 at the Turner Jazz Center at Drake University's campus. The event, which runs from noon to 4 p.m., features various jazz performances. There is a \$10 suggested donation, with funds supporting CJC's youth programming. For more information, visit www.cjc-dsm.org.

An all-time classic rock band with top hits such as the iconic "Don't Stop Believin'" is bringing its Final Frontier Tour to Casey's Center on April 8. Attending **Journey's** concert might cause you to lose your voice after singing along with hit

after hit. If you've never experienced a classic rock band concert, here's your chance to see them, as it is dubbed their farewell tour. Tickets available at <https://hyveetix.eventue.net>.

Iowa Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee **Matt Terronez** is a long-time Iowa singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist. In February, he released his debut album, "Tell Me A Story." The highly eclectic 10-song collection blends energetic pop, pop-jazz, Latin influences and blues textures into a cohesive, story-driven body of work. Catch Terronez at a concert at xBK on May 6. <https://mattterronez.com>. ■

Dog donates life-saving blood at Iowa State Veterinary Bank

Sig, a yellow Labrador, gave a gallon of blood over three years before aging out, helping animals in need across the community.

Animals, like humans, can suffer blood loss from injuries, illnesses or surgeries. Humans can rely on a blood bank for a life-saving transfusion. But what about animals?

They, too, have a blood bank. One furry client, Sig,

has been a regular blood donor for the past three years.

Sig's owner, Theresa Beachler, is a theriogenologist at the Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

Beachler learned about the blood donor program at ISU, which looks for "friendly and willing" dogs to donate blood.

The ISU Veterinary Blood Bank first screened Sig, a yellow Labrador, to ensure he was healthy, free of infectious diseases and up to date on his vaccinations. His blood type was tested, as DEA-negative is considered a universal blood donor. Dogs must meet other criteria, such as weighing at least 50 pounds, being 1-5 years old, spayed or neutered and never having had a previous blood transfusion. They also need a calm, social disposition.

When Sig arrives at the veterinary medicine office, he refrains from eating breakfast. Specialists insert a catheter in his vein and draw blood, a process that usually takes about 20-30 minutes. Some animals require mild sedation, but Sig comes in ready to donate.

"If I hold him and he gets a few good belly rubs, he's good to go," Beachler said.

Once the sample is collected, Sig gets a meal or treat.

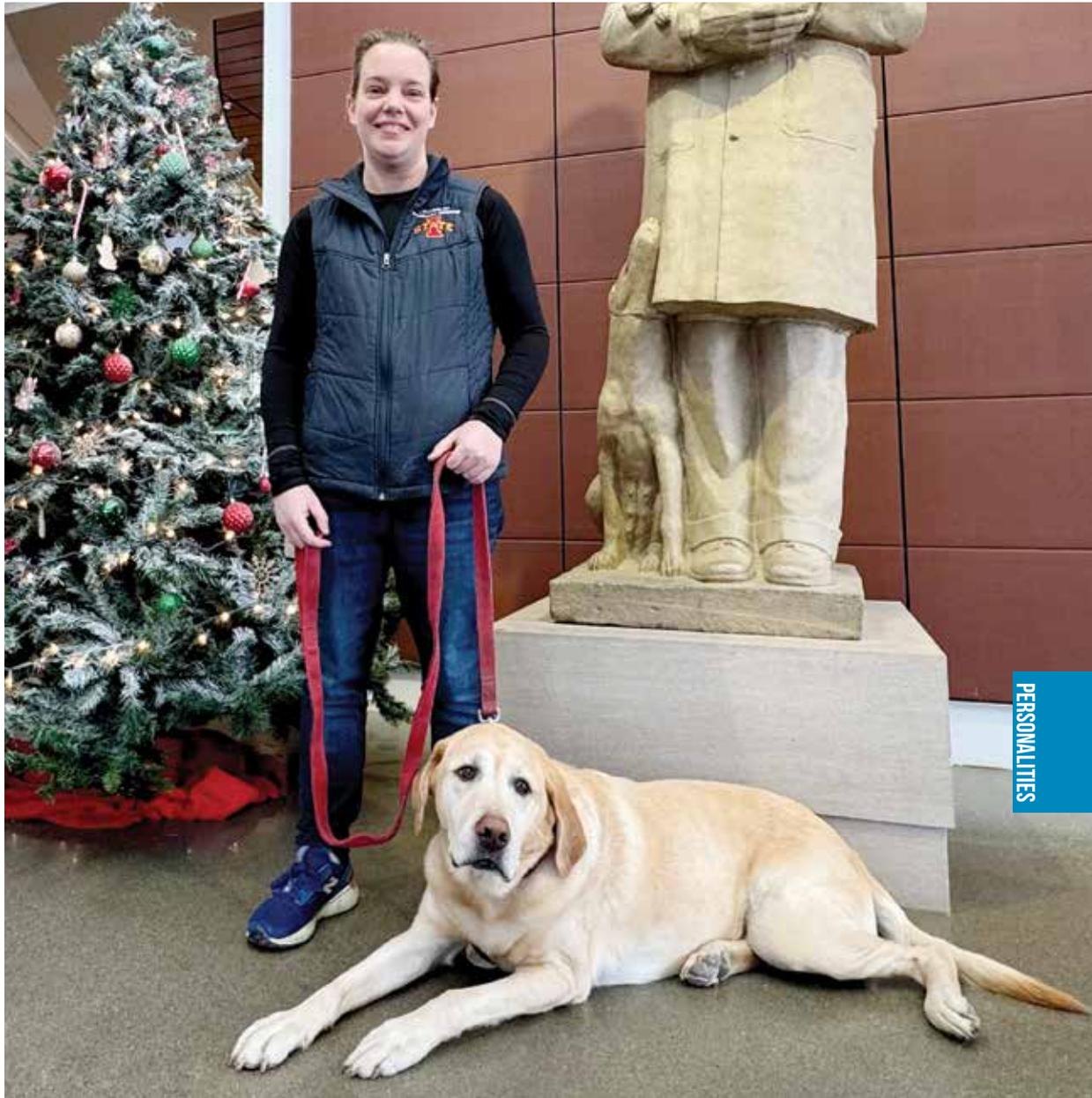
"It's just like us. We get a cookie after donating blood," Beachler said. He stays for a while afterward to make sure he is feeling well-rested and that his vitals are normal.

Sig donates 450 grams, about a pint, of blood each time. After three years of donating, he recently reached the one-gallon mark, a notable accomplishment.

However, as Sig has aged, he can no longer donate. At 9 years old, he recently "aged out" and attended a ceremony honoring his contributions.

"We're proud of him for what he could do in the program," Beachler said.

Beachler, a lifelong animal lover, grew up with dogs and horses. Her mother, a children's physical therapist, often used



horseback riding as therapy.

"Having animals around was enriching and stimulated my desire to be a veterinarian," she said.

As a theriogenologist, Beachler helps animals, mostly horses, with reproductive needs.

"I love helping clients achieve their goals and dreams with their racehorses," she said.

Sig has a 1-year-old Labrador sibling at home, Striker. The two animals are close companions.

Taking the time to have her dog donate blood is important to Beachler.

"It's one of those things that if your own animal needs it, it's there for them. They help the community help each other and those animals in need," she said. ■

DONATING BLOOD

ISU Blood Bank coordinator Amy Hodnefield says about 30 dogs currently donate blood. Each month, the ISU Small Animal Hospital uses approximately 36 transfusions. Hodnefield says, "One unit of blood can save three lives. It's a generous decision for your pet to be a blood donor."

For more information on your dog or cat donating blood, visit <https://vetmed.iastate.edu/vmc/services/blood-donor-program/> or scan the QR code.



Romantasy run amuck

A million women — and me — are reading about werewolves and fairies and magical powers and fated mates and bonded couples.

“Trouble (oh, we got trouble) Right here in River City (right here in River City)” — Meredith Wilson, “The Music Man.”

Like most of you, I generally think I’m a decent person. I let people who are in a rush cut in front of me at the grocery store. I smilingly say “no problem” when my request for two eggs over easy results in two pale yellow hockey pucks that are rocks. When an injustice occurs, I’m probably not the first one yelling at the unfairness, but I married a woman who is one of the first.

All this is to say that I am just like you — a decent person on most occasions. But am I, really?

Sure, during the day, I’m a mild-mannered, friendly, wave-at-the-neighbors kind of guy, but at night — and here’s my shameful secret — I’m a marauding werewolf prince with magical powers. Surprise!

What happened here? Well, I was gifted a Kindle so I can read all the great books ever written. Innocent enough. At last, books written by Hemingway and Tolstoy and Aristotle are right at my fingertips. Wherever I travel, anywhere in the world, I have something to read. Isn’t that wonderful? And it’s light as a feather and takes up no more room than my phone. Wow.

And I took full advantage of my device over the years — hundreds of digital books purchased. Such fun. But then, folks, my reading list began to change. I started reading old westerns and science fiction and “Conan the Barbarian.” Still pretty innocent. Nothing that would make me blush if you peeked over my shoulder at the coffee shop. Although my Kindle was starting to identify me as a candidate for young adult literature. Really? I’m 71. I’m clearly going the wrong direction here.

Ah, but then my reading list started to take a dark turn. I began reading books with titles like “The Knight and the Moth,” “Shield of Sparrows,” “A Court of Thorns and Roses,” and “From Blood and Ash.” Yikes, I’m reading romantic fantasy books — ROMANTASY for those of you in the know. Stories that Catherine Pearson in the New York Times describes as a “crossover genre that blends elements of fantasy (think fairies and dragons) with what is often very explicit sex.”

See, trouble, with a capital “T.”

Pearson goes on to say: “Romantasy books — which tend to be written by female authors, for a largely female audience — sell millions upon millions of copies.” My goodness.

So, a million women — and me — are reading about werewolves and fairies and magical powers and fated mates and bonded couples. We’re reading about powers, both good and bad, hidden inside of every character. And the need for the characters to believe in themselves and discover their own strength. And to follow truth. And goodness. And righteousness.

And ... sex?

“He lifts his hand and dusts his knuckles across my cheek. His thumb tugs my bottom lip, and it’s like he casts a spell on me. I push onto my toes and kiss him. Hard.” Sable Sorensen, “Dire Bound.”

Hard kisses are the slippery slope to staying up all night riveted to your Kindle



while eating bowls of buttered popcorn. Trust me. And before you know it, certain words start to creep into your conversations. Words like “abs” and “washboard.”

But I’m not going to panic.

The Iowa legislature already justifies book bans based on a child’s “developing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacity.” Now the legislature needs to ban these romantasy books based on my DECLINING cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacity. Please write your legislator before it is too late — no more romantasy books in Iowa.

“Trouble (oh, we got trouble) Right here in River City (right here in River City).” ■

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.



DES MOINES FORGOTTEN

BY KRISTIAN DAY

The haunted birdhouse and Iowa's bird lady

For decades, Gladys Black's keen eye and colorful columns connected Iowans to the birds in their backyards — and inspired a lifelong love of wildlife stewardship.



The "Haunted Birdhouse" in Greenwood Park. Photo by Kristian Day

At least twice a week, my morning walks take me through Greenwood Park along the dirt trails that begin on the west side of the Des Moines Art Center parking lot. For the past 15 years, I've passed what I call "the haunted birdhouse." Perched atop a 10-foot pole, it looks like a battered multifamily dwelling, scarred by tornadoes, thunderstorms and blizzards. It still stands. Not far away, just 4 feet off the ground, are several bluebird houses. Signs on each read: "Please do not disturb this bluebird nesting box. This box is providing nesting habitat for bluebirds in Des Moines parks. This box is monitored weekly during nesting season by volunteers to keep house sparrows from nesting."

Gladys Black wrote about Iowa's birds for *The Des Moines Register* from the 1960s until 1987. An eccentric conservationist, she bridged scientific concerns and public opinion, helping shape support for wildlife protection and responsible land use.

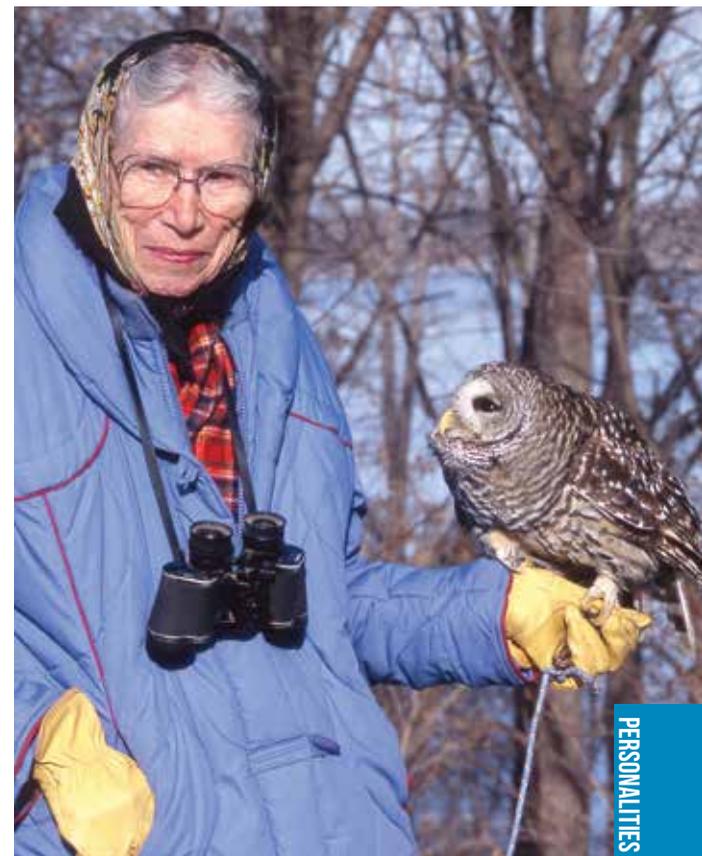
Born in Pleasantville in 1909, Gladys could identify 25 bird species by age 7. She studied nursing

at a time when few women pursued higher education. She moved to Georgia with her husband, Wayne, who was stationed at Robins Air Force Base. After his death in the late 1950s, she returned to care for her ailing mother and stayed in Pleasantville after her mother passed.

Gladys lived alone — sort of. She kept a few hawks and a snowy owl and was a certified bird bander, tracking bird migration by placing numbered bands on their legs.

Her column, which began in 1969, gave ordinary birds personalities and brought conservation issues to the public. She feuded with Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist and conservationist Ding Darling over whether conservation should come from the community or political institutions. In the 1970s, she raised alarms about pesticides poisoning waterways, prompting passionate letters from readers, some of whom received published replies starting with "Dear Smart Alec" or "Sir Bonehead."

For decades, Black lobbied the state capitol in Des



Gladys Black photo by Larry Stone

Moines to stop lawmakers from creating a hunting season for mourning doves and crows, arguing there was no good reason to hunt them for sport. The legislature did not approve it until years after her death.

Over the winter, I read about Gladys, picking up her second book, "Iowa Birdlife," and the biography "Gladys Black: The Legacy of Iowa's Bird Lady" by Larry Stone and Jon Stravers. Her writing, much of it collected from her *Register* columns, warned readers about Iowa's land and waterways long before environmental concerns became mainstream.

Spring is here. Whether conserving water, planting a pollinator garden or building a haunted birdhouse, we can all follow her lead. ■

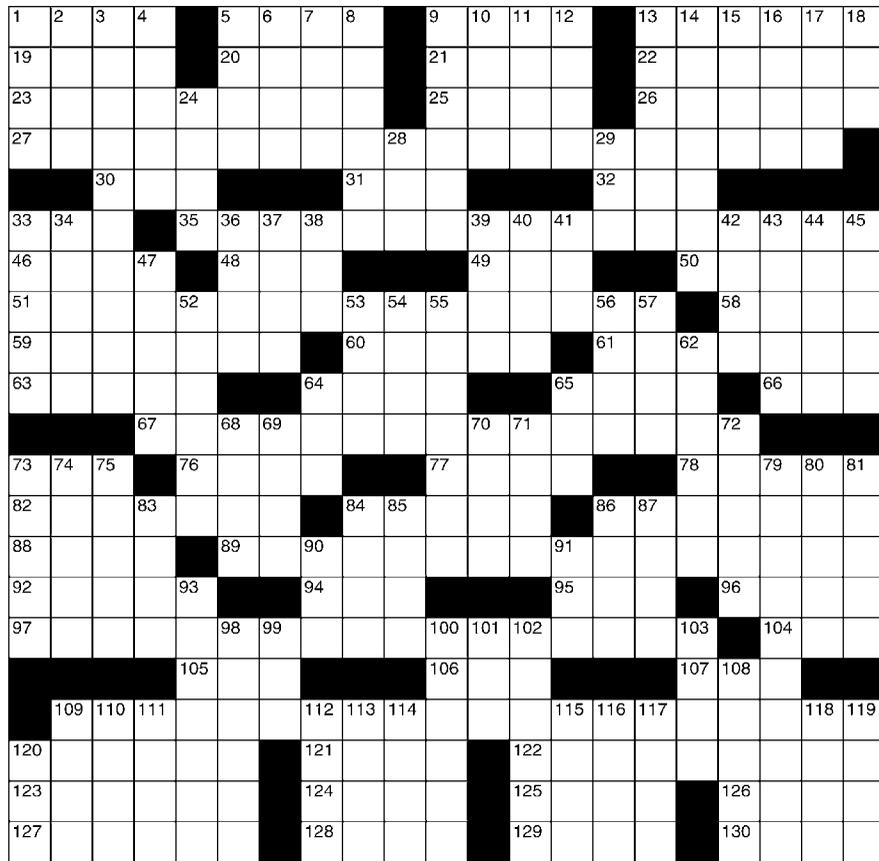
Kristian Day is a filmmaker and writer based in Des Moines. He also hosts the syndicated Iowa Basement Tapes radio program on 98.9 FM KFMG. Instagram: @kristianday | Twitter: @kristianmday



PUZZLES

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

MEAGER MEAL



- ACROSS**
- 1 Colon's meaning in analogies
 - 5 Casino IOU
 - 9 Honcho
 - 13 Fruits to bob for
 - 19 Flow slowly
 - 20 Jay of jest
 - 21 Sinful
 - 22 Artist Monet
 - 23 Free
 - 25 -- avis (unusual thing)
 - 26 Ottawa's land
 - 27 Start of a riddle
 - 30 By means of
 - 31 Response to a punch
 - 32 Clunker
 - 33 State whose cap. is Boise
 - 35 Riddle, part 2
 - 46 Touch-me--- (explosive plants)
 - 48 Cellphone game, often
 - 49 -- Trapp family
 - 50 Stable animal
 - 51 Riddle, part 3
 - 58 Locality
 - 59 Squirms, as in pain
 - 60 Film critic Roger
 - 61 Propelled a bicycle
 - 63 Acting prize
 - 64 Made a run for it
 - 65 -- extra cost
 - 66 The, in Paris
 - 67 Riddle, part 4
 - 73 Pool length
 - 76 "Jeepers!"
 - 77 Margarine, quaintly
 - 78 -- salts
 - 82 Vocalist with the 2018 hits "Boo'd Up" and "Trip"
 - 84 Lyric poets
 - 86 Sweet wine of Portugal
 - 88 Map out
 - 89 Riddle, part 5
 - 92 Gobble down
 - 94 Big Brit. lexicon
 - 95 Tooth doctor's org.
 - 96 Auth. unknown
 - 97 End of the riddle
 - 104 British verb suffix
 - 105 Toward a boat's back
 - 106 Wriggly fish
 - 107 Klutzy type
 - 109 Riddle's answer
 - 120 Regain a conscious state
 - 121 Challenge
 - 122 Fitness club machine
 - 123 Consolidator
 - 124 Iran's home
 - 125 "Jeepers!"
 - 126 Around H'wood, e.g.
 - 127 Go to bed
 - 128 Comply with
 - 129 Lone
 - 130 Novelist Jennifer
 - DOWN**
 - 1 Caesar's "vidi," translated
 - 2 "Late Night" host Meyers
 - 3 Able to read minds
 - 4 Express a view
 - 5 Musical staff symbol
 - 6 One who saves the day
 - 7 Wild about
 - 8 Pomeranian, e.g.
 - 9 Deprived (of)
 - 10 Egg-shaped
 - 11 Assistant on iPhones
 - 12 Pomeranian, e.g.
 - 13 Accumulate, as interest
 - 14 Modeling compound for kids
 - 15 Twinge of guilt, e.g.
 - 16 Oahu feast
 - 17 Water whirl
 - 18 Briny body
 - 24 Sharp remark
 - 28 Cry of Homer Simpson
 - 29 Actor Byrnes or fielder
 - 33 Roush
 - 34 Halved
 - 35 Entryways
 - 36 Go very fast
 - 37 Numbered musical work
 - 38 FedEx rival
 - 39 State firmly
 - 40 Variety
 - 41 Like most musical works with five sharps
 - 42 Civil rights figure Parks
 - 43 Dentist's tool
 - 44 Lauder of cosmetics
 - 45 Oboe inserts
 - 47 Occupy, as a table
 - 52 Morel or enoki, informally
 - 53 Narrate
 - 54 Comply with
 - 55 City that's home to Tufts University
 - 56 As far as
 - 57 Carnival shelter
 - 62 End of a college's URL
 - 64 Go very fast
 - 65 Earlier
 - 68 Language of Bangkok
 - 69 Infamous Idi
 - 70 Ye -- Shoppe
 - 71 Relaxation
 - 72 Met offering
 - 73 Cartoon skunk Pepe
 - 74 Islamic God
 - 75 "Oro y --" (Montana's motto)
 - 79 Representing
 - 80 Often-twisted cookies
 - 81 French river or department
 - 83 "... some kind of --?"
 - 84 Ran in the wash
 - 85 Q7 or A8 carmaker
 - 86 Lead-in to care or gap, in health care
 - 87 Impose -- on (illegalize)
 - 90 Gear tooth
 - 91 Owns
 - 93 Book of hymns
 - 98 From the distant past
 - 99 High degree
 - 100 Conquer
 - 101 That gal
 - 102 A-list groups
 - 103 Yummy
 - 108 Apt first name for a general?
 - 109 Actress Skye
 - 110 Leave off
 - 111 -- pot (congestion clearer)
 - 112 Cain's father
 - 113 Flower jar
 - 114 Lake abutting Ohio
 - 115 Thus
 - 116 Close tightly
 - 117 Lose vibrancy
 - 118 Spanish pot
 - 119 -- Bator, Mongolia
 - 120 Mean mutt

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!



"First of all, we want
_____ bills..."

Display _____

Process _____

Crazy _____

Divine _____

SCARED _____

TODAY'S WORD

SUDOKU

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

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: ◆

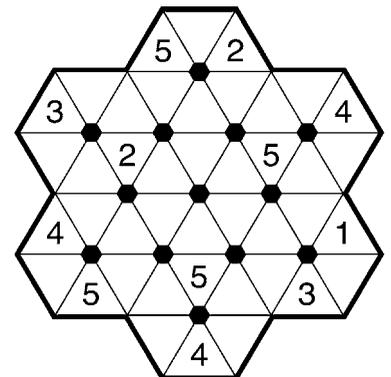
◆ Moderate ◆◆ Challenging
◆◆◆ HOO BOY!

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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.

	+		-		=	4		
+		+		+				
	+		÷		=	9		
÷		×		×				
	+		-		=	5		
=		=		=				
2		112		48				
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:



IMAGE BY GRATISOGRAPHY

This month's winner

"Chippie always insisted on the finest china for her afternoon tea break."

- Dar LePon



IMAGE BY TETYANA KOVYRINA

Runners-up

"Chippy takes a sippy."

- Kenneth Erwin

"Former Disney star Dale, of Chip and Dale fame, enjoying a spot of fruit and tea from his Chippendale tea service set."

- Mark Alvord

"Chip froze in embarrassment as he realized he'd just taken a big swing from the cream pitcher."

- RJ Lowney

"Come on down to Chip's Cafe, where the blueberries are the size of saucers."

- Rebecca Lowney

Send your "What The...?" caption and image entries to celeste@dmcityview.com.

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Fauna 10K aims to save lives, not break records

Reagan Maher launches initiative to register 10,000 new organ donors after his own transplant journey inspires a growing support community.

When seeing “10K” associated with something, the likely first reaction is that there is a race attached — but not for Reagan Maher and his Fauna Transplant Support group.

Maher, the group’s founder, is hosting the first annual Fauna 10K. His “10K” relates to organ donors, not runners.

Maher faced plenty of challenges on his road to recovery, both before and after his kidney transplant.

“I got the transplant on Nov. 11, 2021. I was on the transplant list for three weeks, which is crazy. I wasn’t ready for it at all. I was supposed to go see my nephrologist to get on dialysis. The same day I got the call — it was an amazing thing that worked out that way — but I had the transplant, and then I had complications for two and a half years. I had CMV, cytomegalovirus, three times, which requires a month’s worth of chemo, antiviral IV each time. And then I had COVID-19 four times in four years,” Maher said.

It was one problem after another for Maher, but that never slowed his desire to progress in his recovery. He named both the group and the 10K after the person he received his kidney from, Fauna.

“I’ve written three letters to my donor’s mom ever since I had the transplant. I just sent one in January. I wanted her to be my guest at ‘Wanna Have a Catch Day,’ just to make it very special. She contacted me this week — it just blew my mind. I cried. She had been following my public Facebook page, saw this, and told me how beautiful this is, and that Fauna would be so, so happy that I’m doing something like this, honoring her,” Maher said. “I just want to show my appreciation for her and Fauna at the ‘Wanna Have a Catch Day,’ so hopefully she comes.”

Eventually, Maher began attending Lutheran Church of Hope in West Des Moines, where he started the Fauna Transplant Support group.

“I started that transplant support group on Jan. 6 of this year, and we’ve been growing like crazy. This is a community that Des Moines needed. There’s just nothing like being around somebody who’s had a transplant and meeting somebody else who has gone through the same thing,” Maher said.

It was important for him to start the group because, after the suffering he endured in the years following his transplant, he wanted to ensure others would not have to go through those same battles alone.

“I could not find anything to help. I was home,



isolated by myself. I lived alone for two and a half years, and I just had a hard time and couldn’t find any support,” Maher said. “We meet here every two weeks. It’s a community that’s more like a family now.”

The group meets on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. Maher invites speakers, plans themes and encourages discussion among the growing group.

“We’ve got a very chatty group, which is awesome. It’s not hard hosting, because I just ask a question and let them go. Everybody connects so much over what others say. It’s just amazing to watch,” Maher said.

Seeing how successful the group has been, Maher set a new goal — the Fauna 10K. This is not a traditional race heading toward a finish line but an effort to get 10,000 more Iowans signed up as organ donors.

“It would be amazing to hit that 10,000 goal. This is the first annual. When I went over to the Iowa Donor Network, I said, ‘Maybe this could be a thing for next year,’ because April was two months away from when I started, and they were like, ‘Let’s go for it. We’ve got to start somewhere,’” Maher said.

Maher said Iowa is already ranked seventh in the nation for registered organ donors, but that is no reason to slow down his efforts.

“I want to do it every year. I don’t know why we don’t do something like this every year, so I took it upon myself,” Maher said. “I’ve struggled with this 10,000 number, but you’ve got to start somewhere, and I think it’s absolutely doable. If we get 500, that’s a huge win. Even if it’s five people, that could save 40



“It’s something good for Iowa. There are so many bad things going on. This is a great promotion for the month of April, and it’s about giving life,” Maher said.

lives. It’s more about impact, education and asking people to step up and help other Iowans.”

Maher said he is grateful for the second chance at life he was given through organ donation. Through countless medical procedures and complications, he has not wavered. He has lost more than 100 pounds, started a transplant support group and is now working to help others in need of an organ donation — just as he once was.

“For two and a half years, I wasn’t living — I was just suffering. It’s amazing just to be back. God changed my heart. I didn’t feel like I was really empathetic my whole life, but that’s changed, and I just want to help people now and support others,” Maher said.

Those interested in learning more about Maher and the group’s mission can visit its Facebook page, Fauna – Transplant Support. ■



CARS IN THE CITY



Porsche Cayenne Coupe is a high-performance dream

This luxury crossover SUV has a 3-liter turbo V6 with 348 horsepower.

BY JACKIE WILSON

For my first time driving a Porsche, a wave of excitement hit me. A Porsche is “driven by dreams” and is an iconic, ultimate sports car. Yet I hesitated. The vehicle I was about to drive cost twice as much as my first house in the 1990s. Could I maintain my accident-free driving record and still enjoy a Cars in the City review?

I did. And the Porsche lived up to the hype.

First, let’s clear up how to pronounce it. Porsche is pronounced with two syllables: por-sha. It’s not pronounced like some Midwesterners who say “warsh” their hands.

I drove the 2025 Cayenne Coupe, Porsche’s luxury crossover SUV, which originally debuted in 2002. This lower-priced model has a 3-liter turbo V6 with 348 horsepower and starts at \$113,315. Higher-end models include the Turbo GT, which costs \$205,795 and offers 650 horsepower. By comparison, a Toyota RAV4 has 183 horsepower.

The exterior color was dolomite silver metallic. The Spyder-design wheels in high-gloss black cost an extra \$4,000. My car-enthusiast brother dislikes black wheels, citing a lack of contrast and the inability to see the wheels spinning from a distance. To each his (or her) own.

Inside is where the magic happens. A thick leather seat sinks in, like your favorite recliner at home. The

touchscreen is nearly seamless, built into the dash instead of as a clunky afterthought.

The Cayenne seats up to five adults. The back seats have air vents at passenger head level. Why keep vents at one level? This design keeps passengers comfortable. It’s a pet peeve of mine as a rear-seat passenger when front passengers close their vents because they are too cold, leaving the back passengers suffering.

The toggle shifter for the touchscreen is located on the dashboard, freeing up space on the center console for a venti or Big Gulp and other beverage containers. Automatic seat configurations and steering wheel adjustments hug your body for optimal driving conditions. The leather-wrapped steering wheel offers a sporty grip for better handling.

Porsche is known for manufacturing high-performance race cars. The company was established in 1948 in Austria and quickly won numerous national races. The Porsche 911 reaches up to 200 mph. Porsche vehicles have consistently made top-10 best race car lists throughout the decades.

That race-car performance translates into their street vehicles. I discovered firsthand how fast you could go without realizing it because of the smooth ride and expert handling. Wanting to stay far from other cars, I accelerated. I thought I was going about 60 mph; turns out I was inching past 80. The reactive

handling and corner hugging were surprising for an SUV, as most others feel like they might topple on a sharp turn.

Owning a Porsche is definitely a splurge and an investment. Most used Porsches are reliable and retain their value. If you want the escape or reward of a thrilling, race-car-like vehicle, consider the classic and refined Porsche. ■

Kayaking takes Holmes all over the country

Indianola storeowner teaches and travels the U.S. with kayaking and paddle sports.

Iowa isn't quite the land of 1,000 lakes like our neighbors to the north, but it's still home to plenty of navigable waterways. Lakes, rivers, creeks and ponds alike are found all over the state. If those are a little too slow for you, the U.S. has it in high speeds and more danger if you're willing to travel.

One Indianola store owner, Jeff Holmes, knows all about kayaking and paddle sports. The Guthrie Center native and Simpson College graduate started his own magazine, "Canoeing Iowa" in 1988 and eventually opened his store, CanoeSport Outfitters, in 1992.

"I started paddling with my dad was about 10 years old. We would go out and fish on a local lake. I was living down at Farmington at the time, in southwest Iowa, and that got me out on the water on lakes. And we did a little bit of river paddling down there," Holmes said.

With a young start, the seed was planted within Holmes. The year before he started his magazine, he busted out his canoe but was disappointed in the lack of information on how to paddle Iowa's water.

"There wasn't a lot of information about it. There was just a very basic brochure out by the DNR. And I decided that it might be fun to start publishing a little magazine and write about places to paddle," Holmes said.

Holmes says he gained about 1,200 subscribers. His passion only grew from there, opening his store and beginning to teach and instruct new paddlers.

"That took me to Lake Superior and white water paddling. And I do a lot of coastal stuff now on the Georgia coast. It's gotten me all over the place. We guide for the University of Iowa for spring break trips. I've done Big Bend National Park in Rio Grande, Lake Powell up in Utah," Holmes said.

The Everglades in Florida is his favorite spot to kayak.

"We've done that many times. Georgia is a favorite as I've gotten older. It's especially a favorite because we stay in a house and I get to sleep in a bed instead of camping in a tent. But, you know, every place is a little unique," Holmes said. "You go to the Everglades, you're in a swampy, hot, humid environment. You go to Lake Powell, you're in a dusty, desert environment with big, sheer cliffs."

Central Iowa is no slouch for good locations, either, according to Holmes. He named the Boone River



near Webster City for a leisurely float or for camping on the side. The Turkey River in upper Iowa earned a mention, too, as well as areas around Somerset and Red Rock.

"It's pretty easy to find water to float on, so there are lots of fun places to go. You know, we spend a lot of time at Ahquabi. That's where we've done most of our instruction," Holmes said.

Holmes enjoys the calming, relaxing trips as well as the more exciting white water experiences.

"I've gone out by myself, you're camping on a sandbar alone, and you wake up in the morning and see the sunrise and things like that. Some of the early things that I did would have been white water stuff, and those certainly got me an adrenaline rush, and it got me excited doing things," Holmes said.

Holmes is an expert at this point, whether it be kayaking by himself or helping instruct, which helps him when situations get a little concerning.

"White water certainly creates things. I've done some big swims where I've come out of my boat, and I've had to be in the river for a while and float until I come out the bottom. In sea kayaking, I've had a couple of big rescues," Holmes said. "Most of the things that I've had happen that were hairy moments were more instruction-based, where they were planned. Trainers will put you in scenarios that they expect to get a little dicey and see how you handle it."

One time in Georgia, during what was supposed to be a designed situation by an instructor got out of



hand.

"We ended up with somebody who tipped over out in some pretty big water. They couldn't get back into their boat. I happened to get the job of towing the other guy's boat who was swimming, who couldn't get back in his boat. I got totally separated from everybody, and it took me about 45 minutes to bring that boat in," Holmes said.

But Holmes says, far more often than not, that the activity is calm, harmless and easy going. He recommends it for anyone interested in learning.

"It's a fun, healthy activity. It gets you out outdoors. It can be a fitness thing, but even if you're not doing it for fitness, you're going to get exercise. It's a great way to get your kids involved and get them away from the TV. You can take it to whatever level you want to. You can be as relaxed as you want with it, or you can get pretty serious about it and go places and see some amazing stuff," Holmes said. ■

WALKS OF LIFE

COMPILED FROM THE IOWA LIVING MAGAZINES

A 'fur-ever' home

Abandoned. Abused. Neglected. The world is full of animals — big and small — that don't know the comfort of a full belly, a warm place to sleep, and the love of a caring owner. Some people seek out these needy animals when looking to add a pet to their family. Others come across them unexpectedly and are moved to rescue them. Whatever the case, rescued pets often give their humans as much love as they receive.



Robert and Eliza Boarman Kitty time

Robert and Eliza Boarman weren't quite ready for another dog, but adopting a kitten felt like a natural way to bring another new pet into their lives.

They were not committed to getting a pet that evening, but they ultimately fell in love with a 10-week-old muted tortoiseshell kitten. They adopted her on the spot and have loved having Elphie in their home for the past four months.

This was the Boarmans' first adoption, and what surprised them was how easy and stress-free the experience was. The ARL set everyone up to easily transition Elphie into their home. To say they are obsessed with little Elphie is an understatement.

"She truly is the sweetest, friendliest cat," Eliza says. "She is wonderful with our kids, allowing them to snuggle with her and enjoying lots of play time. Our neighbors, who have taken care of her while we have been on vacation, say she is the best kitty they have ever encountered. We are so happy that we adopted from a local shelter and are grateful for this sweet addition to our family. We will adopt a dog someday in the future, but, for now, we're enjoying life with Elphie."

Source: Johnston Living, March 2026;
by Ashley Rullestad

Read the full story here:



Ron Shaffer A rescue instead of an auction

Ron Shaffer is a lover of horses, and he was in the market for a young foal about three years ago. In a conversation with the Iowa Animal Rescue League at the Iowa Horse Fair, Shaffer learned that the ARL had recently received 40 horses from an owner who had let her herd fall into neglect.

"They were vaccinated and halter broken with all of their health needs taken care of," Shaffer says. "It was nice to work with the ARL because the animals have been neglected and abused, and you can give them a better life."

He says that, contrary to what some may think, the ARL handles more than just dogs and cats. Farm animals of all kinds can be adopted, including chickens, goats and horses.

Shaffer kept the mare, named Lady Hawkeye, until the colt was weaned. He then rehomed Lady Hawkeye to someone who was looking for a mare. He named his new colt Arizona.

"In a few months, Arizona will be turning 2 years old, and I will break him to ride," Shaffer says. "I plan on him becoming my main riding horse as my girlfriend has taken over my other horse, America. Arizona has turned out to be a really nice horse. I got very lucky."

Source: Winterset Living, March 2026;
by Rachel Harrington

Read the full story here:



Heather Gornick From one pony to a farm

About 20 years ago, Heather Gornick had a friend who was with an organization that busted puppy mills reasonably close to where she lived. Through her friend, Gornick got a taste for rescuing animals.

"I made a decision then that I would always choose to rescue animals instead of buy them," she says.

During a neighborhood event in 2017, one of her neighbors brought a mini pony for the children to pet and ride.

"My autistic grandson, Liam, or, as I like to call him, 'Jiggy,' showed positive (behavior) stemming from his interaction with the pony," Gornick says. "Because of that, I thought that perhaps I should get a mini pony."

A friend of Gornick who has a 20-acre farm just south of Highway 92 heard of her endeavors to rescue animals, and he told her that he was close to retirement and would be willing to work with her and provide a physical home for all the animals she rescues.

"We call it Double G Farm because both of our last names start with 'G,'" Gornick shares. "We started rescuing animals that people were not lining up to take. The greatest number I've had at a time included 20 goats, four mini ponies, a cow and four chickens."

Source: Norwalk Living, March 2026;
by Rachel Harrington

Read the full story here:



Susie Sheldahl Family of pups stays together

It is a story of three special rescue pups who, despite being adopted by three different families, still share a connection.

Georgia and her two sisters were rescued at just 2 weeks old from a hoarder/breeder situation. Today, all three still live in the Polk City area — one with Susie Sheldahl and her family, another with Shawn Comer's family. Being nearby allows the sisters to enjoy occasional playdates.

Despite her difficult start, Georgia is confident, affectionate and full of personality.

Sheldahl's pup, Daisy, had a diseased eye that required removal before she could come home.

"I always joke that Daisy has generational trauma because she's kind of crazy and likes to bark and scare people, but she's only like 8 pounds," Sheldahl says. "She's also the sweetest dog in the world. You would never know that she only has one eye because she's so black. And she runs in place just like she has both eyes."

The Sheldahls already had other dogs and believe they helped Daisy adjust.

"Daisy was so little when we got her," Sheldahl says. "But she is a sweetheart, and she follows us everywhere we go. She is the moodiest of our three dogs though." ■

Source: North Polk Living, March 2026;
by Lindsey Giardino

Read the full story here:



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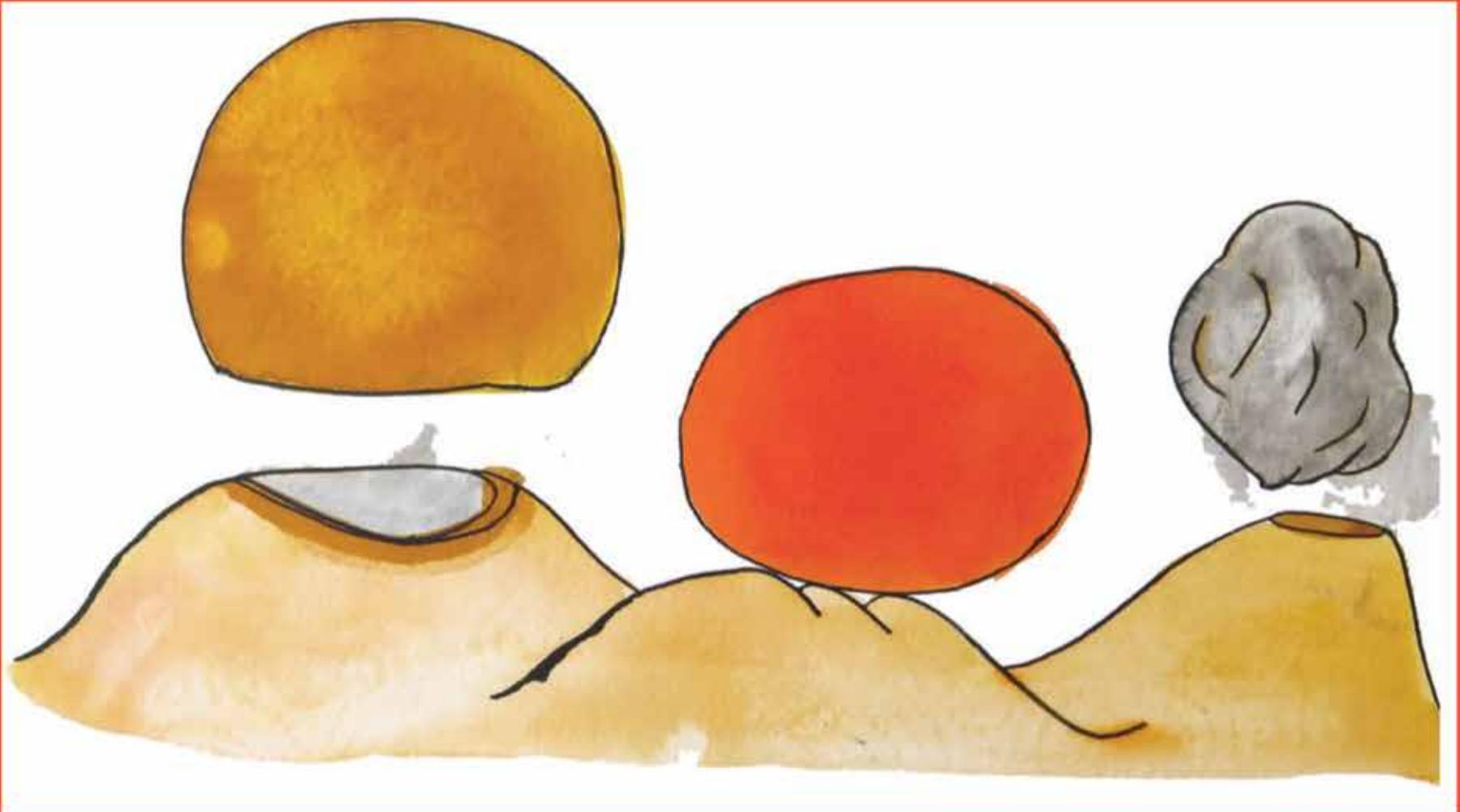
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