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GOING, GOING, gone online

Estate auctions once brought communities together over folding chairs, concessions and competitive bidding. Today, the internet is creating a new kind of auction community.

By Gracie Kayko

Before the digital age, people gathered in homes, farms and auction houses to bid on items from estates. Food was often provided, friendships were formed, and memories were made.

Travis Mansfield, owner of NativeBid Auction Services, grew up attending in-person estate auctions with his grandfather.

"I loved it," he said. "You could find these amazing treasures, and I loved that everybody was there, bidding, and nothing was going to be sold for more than somebody was willing to pay for it."

Those memories of hard work and the rewards that followed are one of the primary reasons why Mansfield started his own auction business.

Jason Dvorak, owner of Dvorak Auction Services, sells items at a live auction. Auctions were held outdoors or in their auction facility, depending on the type of auction being held. Photo courtesy Jason Dvorak

The fun and hustle

Although NativeBid is an online auction company and deals with returns from online retailers rather than estate auctions, Mansfield tries to capture the fun and hustle of old-fashioned, in-person auctions.

"There was real work involved, but the reward was really good deals, and we try to capture as much of that experience as we can using the digital format."

Stacy Lupher, owner of By The Perfect Pick, started her estate auction business 15 years ago when her mom became ill and had to retire early.

"I was trying to think of a job that we could do together, and I was going to do estate auctions," she said. "She passed away before she could help me, but she told me to continue to do what I was doing."

For the first three years, Lupher held estate auctions before transitioning to estate sales.

"We started out doing auctions on site where people would come to the building and we would hold the auction and do pretty well," Lupher said. "Then it switched to more estate sales where we would hold them in someone's home."

Estate auctions and estate sales

Estate auctions use competitive bidding, while estate sales have fixed prices. Both involve liquidizing an entire estate.

Estate sales allow buyers to know what to expect,



A live auction of outdoor equipment held by Dvorak Auction Services. Dvorak Auction Services held live, in-person auctions before the COVID-19 pandemic forced them to move online. Photo courtesy Jason Dvorak

but items are sold on a first-come, first-serve basis. Estate auctions can become quite competitive, driving prices higher.

Auctions can be a lot of fun, Lupher said. Live, in-person auctions create a sense of community, allowing people to meet face to face while searching for interesting items.

The digital age and the COVID-19 pandemic changed the environment in which estate auctions

had once operated.

"When COVID hit, a lot of people that do auctions on site switched to online, and they really haven't gone back because actually they make more money (online), to be honest with you," Lupher said. "Doing it online, they're going to reach a lot more people further away than locally."

Jason Dvorak, owner of Dvorak Auction Services, used to hold live, in-person estate auctions in Des



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FEATURE

Moines three to four times a week.

Dvorak and his employees would go to the home, collect the items to be auctioned and bring them to the auction facility. Once there, they would present the items to make them appealing to buyers and advertise them for the upcoming auction.

Chairs were arranged around the facility, and concessions were available, often including hot dogs and hamburgers.

"People would sit there, hang out and enjoy themselves, bid on items that they were interested in, and last for sometimes three to five hours," he said.

Dvorak had customers who held permanent bidding numbers.

"You get to know people so well that they didn't even have to really register for the auction, but I would know what their number is," he said.

The shift

Even though auctions have moved online, Dvorak still knows many of his returning customers. But he said the experience is not what it used to be.

"In today's world, for whatever reason, people don't want to spend three hours sitting in an auction anymore. They seem much busier, and they don't want to take the time," Dvorak said.

The shift to online auctions makes them more beneficial financially for sellers and buyers, but it has dissolved the sense of community Dvorak once knew. Even so, Dvorak does not believe returning to in-person auctions would benefit his business or his customers. He can now reach a wider audience, having shipped items as far as Canada, Australia and Germany.

Online auctions have also eliminated some costs for sellers. Food is no longer served, and sellers don't need as many employees to run an auction. Dvorak once had five full-time employees who helped transport items, set up auctions, and prepare for the next day.

"It's a little bit less expensive, but I miss it. I just miss going to auctions where it was like a community," Lupher said. "But online is good, too, for others. So everybody's got their own opinion on that."

Online auctions can last for weeks, while an in-person auction typically lasts a day or two.

As the internet leaves those who remember in-person auctions longing for the past, it has drawn younger generations — those who have never known a world without the internet — into a new community.

"They're looking for vintage clothing, and it's kind of interesting to see because before it seemed like it was older people looking for their collectibles, or resellers, and to see the younger crowd looking for items, too, it's quite the adventure, and it looks like they just have a blast," Lupher said.

Mansfield has noticed the same shift in audience.



Dvorak Auction Services holds a live, in-person auction. People attend auctions for different reasons, some go to find collectable items while others work as resellers. Photo courtesy Jason Dvorak.

There can be something for everyone at estate auctions and sales. Although the community has changed, a new one is forming.

"There's youngsters, who never have experienced an in-person auction, experience the online auction, and I can see that when they come in the door. There's the same element that I had as a kid," he said. "It's fun, it's exciting, sometimes they see their friends there and are like, 'Oh, you know about this place, too?'"

Mansfield said his audience consists of hustlers, and he knows the auction community isn't for everyone.

"In a day where you can have same-day delivery brought to your door, the thought of getting in your car, driving somewhere, going inside, loading it up yourself, loading it in your car to get home, all those things, whether you're going to resell that or use it in your home, that's just a lot of pieces that not everybody is interested in doing," he said. "But if the deals are good enough, the people will do it. If the customer service is there, then the overall experience is there."

Although Mansfield misses the hustle of in-person bidding, he still sees the work people put into online bidding and considers it the future. The internet has also made the auction industry more accessible to people interested in bidding.

"The internet has allowed more people to be able to bid on items when they're available, when it's handy to them," he said. "If they're at work and they can take a break, or if they're at home after 5 p.m., they don't have to drive down somewhere to participate in it."

Despite being an online auction service, Mansfield has great respect for those still participating in live estate auctions. One reason people prefer in-person auctions is that they can see

items before deciding how much to bid.

"I really believe that they're people that just love to go through the estate," Mansfield said. "I think there is still a very good buying community that would love to go in-person and see these items, and sometimes it's hard to put a price on something unless you see it in-person, like jewelry and other items of value."

There are additional aspects of in-person auctions that draw people in. They are an experience, a treasure hunt and a place where stories can be shared and memories made. But the online auction industry brings its own benefits, allowing people to participate from anywhere, reaching a larger audience and drawing in a new generation of bidders.

The goal

Whether done in-person or online, Dvorak's reason for holding estate auctions remains the same: to help people liquidate their assets, a process that can often follow a difficult time, such as the loss of a loved one or financial hardship.

"The goal is to help people move on from whatever situation that they're in," Dvorak said.

Helping others is one reason Lupher has stayed in the industry.

"A lot of people that may not be in a good situation and need help, as far as if they're moving or downsizing, sometimes someone has passed away and they just need help," she said.

As the world of in-person auctions fades away and becomes a memory, many businesses are ready to welcome bidders to the community of online auctions.

"You have to adapt and change with the times and the people," Dvorak said. ■

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COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS IN POLK COUNTY FROM MAY 13, 2026, TO JUNE 2, 2026.

2205 BELL AVE., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-13 SALE PRICE: \$3,000,000 SELLER: SUSa CAPITAL LLC BUYER: LEGACY IMPACT MANAGER LLC ACRES: 4.327 SQUARE FEET: 57,394	BUYER: MARLENA HOLDINGS LLC ACRES: 0.310 SQUARE FEET: 2,400	1450 22ND ST., WEST DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-22 SALE PRICE: \$2,741,180 SELLER: WESTOWNE CENTER ASSOCIATES LLC BUYER: FORREST DES MOINES COFFEE LLC ACRES: 0.861 SQUARE FEET: N/A	3702 SECOND AVE., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-29 SALE PRICE: \$195,000 SELLER: KNAPP ENTERPRISES BUYER: HPM INVESTMENT INC ACRES: 0.437 SQUARE FEET: 1,980
1915 S.E. 41ST ST., GRIMES DATE: 2026-05-13 SALE PRICE: \$1,350,000 SELLER: LCG PROPERTIES LLC BUYER: GRIMES THREE LLC ACRES: 1.003 SQUARE FEET: 10,500	5571 N.W. SECOND ST., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-15 SALE PRICE: \$750,000 SELLER: MCROBERTS PROPERTIES LLC BUYER: MAK CCK LLC ACRES: 0.898 SQUARE FEET: 4,131	2455 S.W. STATE ST., ANKENY DATE: 2026-05-26 SALE PRICE: \$2,900,000 SELLER: DRA PROPERTIES LC BUYER: NEWBLOOD DEVELOPMENT LLC ACRES: 2.298 SQUARE FEET: 14,978	175 S. NINTH ST. STE. 445, WEST DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-29 SALE PRICE: \$259,000 SELLER: CUSTIS REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS LLC BUYER: GIGI445 LLC ACRES: 0.044 SQUARE FEET: 1,920
910 NINTH ST., WEST DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-13 SALE PRICE: \$735,000 SELLER: BSQUARE PROPERTIES LLC BUYER: A&N 603 E COURT LLC ACRES: 0.444 SQUARE FEET: 5,460	300 WALNUT ST. UNIT U4, DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-15 SALE PRICE: \$70,040 SELLER: MLK RIVER PARK LLC BUYER: REC PROPERTIES LLC ACRES: 0.004 SQUARE FEET: 821	324 FIRST ST., WEST DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-27 SALE PRICE: \$540,000 SELLER: JOHANNINGMEIR, RENAE BUYER: CROUCH, TRAVIS ACRES: 0.442 SQUARE FEET: 4,209	4455 HUBBELL AVE., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-29 SALE PRICE: \$350,000 SELLER: ASIAN TOWN LLC BUYER: BRAUNCON LLC ACRES: 0.664 SQUARE FEET: 2,880
3708 75TH ST., URBANDALE DATE: 2026-05-13 SALE PRICE: \$390,000 SELLER: 75TH STREET PROPERTIES LLC BUYER: WALFORD PROPERTIES LLC ACRES: 0.220 SQUARE FEET: 2,780	1501 OHIO ST., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-19 SALE PRICE: \$363,000 SELLER: RUBBER ROOFING SYSTEMS INC BUYER: LFE PROPERTIES LLC ACRES: 0.298 SQUARE FEET: 3,528	3333 GRAND AVE., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-27 SALE PRICE: \$8,100,000 SELLER: WINDSOR TERRACE DES MOINES LLC BUYER: HGIG WINDSOR PTY OWNER LLC ACRES: 5.058 SQUARE FEET: 119,039	2920 DOUGLAS AVE., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-29 SALE PRICE: \$495,000 SELLER: ROBBINS PROPERTIES LLC BUYER: OAK CREST APARTMENTS LLC ACRES: 0.440 SQUARE FEET: 8,008
113 SECOND ST. N.E., MITCHELLVILLE DATE: 2026-05-13 SALE PRICE: \$472,000 SELLER: PECK PROPERTIES LLC BUYER: PAZ INVESTMENTS LLC ACRES: 0.202 SQUARE FEET: 5,984	301 S.W. ORALABOR ROAD, ANKENY DATE: 2026-05-20 SALE PRICE: \$2,710,000 SELLER: 301 ORALABOR PARTNERS LLC BUYER: DANDER & TORBITT ADVENTURES LLC ACRES: 3.407 SQUARE FEET: 27,000	5635 N.E. 14TH ST., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-28 SALE PRICE: \$42,000,000 SELLER: GRAHAM WAREHOUSE 2 LP BUYER: MD10 DES MOINES INDUSTRIAL LLC ACRES: 40.147 SQUARE FEET: 600,000	2019 GRAND AVE., WEST DES MOINES DATE: 2026-06-01 SALE PRICE: \$2,000,000 SELLER: JOCAR PROPERTIES LLC BUYER: 6450 LLC ACRES: 2.000 SQUARE FEET: 18,368
535 E. ARMY POST ROAD, DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-13 SALE PRICE: \$796,500 SELLER: JUDITH ANN WATSON REVOCABLE TRUST BUYER: 535 EAP LLC ACRES: 0.723 SQUARE FEET: 8,304	3516 S.W. NINTH ST., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-20 SALE PRICE: \$225,000 SELLER: TIMOTHY CARSON IRA BUYER: BABBA PROPERTIES LLC ACRES: 0.149 SQUARE FEET: 3,550	175 S. NINTH ST. STE. 630, WEST DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-28 SALE PRICE: \$535,000 SELLER: TELLO PROPERTIES LLC BUYER: CUSTIS REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS LLC ACRES: 0.088 SQUARE FEET: 3,840	2525 N. ANKENY BLVD. UNIT 105, BUILDING 1, ANKENY DATE: 2026-06-01 SALE PRICE: \$600,000 SELLER: JESSJOHN LLC BUYER: ELSAYED RE HOLDINGS LLC ACRES: 0.269 SQUARE FEET: 2,600
3001 E. 14TH ST., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-14 SALE PRICE: \$255,000 SELLER: DANA J ALBRIGHT REVOCABLE TRUST BUYER: MAGALLANES, MANUEL ACRES: 0.383 SQUARE FEET: 3,683	1241 KEOSAUQUA WAY UNIT 3, DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-20 SALE PRICE: \$1,575,000 SELLER: THE GARAGE DSM LLC BUYER: 6450 LLC ACRES: 1.188 SQUARE FEET: 17,520	3821 121ST ST., URBANDALE DATE: 2026-05-28 SALE PRICE: \$1,800,000 SELLER: LINCOLN SAVINGS BANK BUYER: MANT LLC ACRES: 2.900 SQUARE FEET: 22,463	3714 INGERSOLL AVE., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-06-01 SALE PRICE: \$1,800,000 SELLER: WILLIAM C KNAPP LC BUYER: BROADLAWNS MEDICAL CENTER ACRES: 0.670 SQUARE FEET: 5,086
800 13TH ST., WEST DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-14 SALE PRICE: \$1,220,000 SELLER: KLBB REAL ESTATE 4 LLC BUYER: WHITE OAK MANOR LLC ACRES: 0.551 SQUARE FEET: 10,143	407 ADVENTURELAND DRIVE N.E., ALTOONA DATE: 2026-05-21 SALE PRICE: \$5,390,000 SELLER: LEE FAMILY TRUST BUYER: RADAR ADVERTNTURELAND LLC ACRES: 6.361 SQUARE FEET: 36,500	2212 INGERSOLL AVE., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-28 SALE PRICE: \$675,000 SELLER: POE DES MOINES LLC BUYER: SMITTEN KITTEN LLC ACRES: 0.417 SQUARE FEET: 4,162	200 EUCLID AVE., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-06-02 SALE PRICE: \$437,064 SELLER: CAWLEY, TY BUYER: CITY OF DES MOINES ACRES: 0.332 SQUARE FEET: 11,935
3916 NINTH ST., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-14 SALE PRICE: \$242,500 SELLER: JEWETT HOLDINGS LLC BUYER: GUPTA, ARMAAN ACRES: 0.152 SQUARE FEET: 2,237	302 N. THIRD ST., POLK CITY DATE: 2026-05-22 SALE PRICE: \$365,000 SELLER: POLK CITY POST OFFICE PROPERTY LC BUYER: SKUSTER, NATHANIEL T ACRES: 0.581 SQUARE FEET: 3,236	6123 SCOUT TRL., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-28 SALE PRICE: \$7,000,000 SELLER: MID-IOWA COUNCIL OF BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA INC BUYER: BELL AVENUE PROPERTIES INC ACRES: 15.586 SQUARE FEET: 23,662	4931 DOUGLAS AVE., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-06-02 SALE PRICE: \$695,000 SELLER: ROBERTA M TRAVISS REVOCABLE TRUST BUYER: THE FIRST CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE ACRES: 0.484 SQUARE FEET: 5,514 ■
3326 UNIVERSITY AVE., DES MOINES DATE: 2026-05-15 SALE PRICE: \$320,000 SELLER: BSQUARE PROPERTIES LLC	1311 N.W. LAUREL ST. UNIT 121, ELKHART DATE: 2026-05-22 SALE PRICE: \$525,000 SELLER: 1311 INDUSTRIAL LLC BUYER: TELLO PROPERTIES LLC ACRES: 0.253 SQUARE FEET: 3,600		

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Gahring Machine, Inc.	Van Horne	BENTON	02	\$341,000	2	0	EXISTING	Machine Shops
Test It, LLC	WATERLOO	BLACK HAWK	02	\$382,500	1	1	NEW	Remediation Services
Revive Bodyworks, LLC	JESUP	BUCHANAN	02	\$30,000	2	6	EXISTING	Offices of Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapists, and Audiologists
Atlantic Animal Health Center, LLC	ATLANTIC	CASS	03	\$2,925,000	4	4	EXISTING	Veterinary Services
Therapy and Healing Solutions, LLC	DENISON	CRAWFORD	04	\$30,700	1	1	NEW	Offices of Mental Health Practitioners (except Physicians)
PIONEER CLEANING, LLC	VAIL	CRAWFORD	04	\$188,000	2	2	EXISTING	Janitorial Services
K & B Strategies LLC	Adel	DALLAS	03	\$179,300	2	12	EXISTING	Bowling Centers
Vanderbeek Design Build LLC	Waukee	DALLAS	03	\$202,700	4	1	EXISTING	All Other Specialty Trade Contractors
Neel Lumber, LLC	Panora	GUTHRIE	03	\$1,192,800	3	18	EXISTING	Other Building Material Dealers
The Complexion Company, LLC	BATAVIA	JEFFERSON	01	\$228,400	0	2	NEW	Other Personal Care Services
MILADY NAILS AND SPA	CORALVILLE	JOHNSON	01	\$50,000	0	4	EXISTING	Nail Salons
THE MAPLE TABLE SHOP LLC	IOWA CITY	JOHNSON	01	\$5,000	1	1	NEW	All Other Specialty Trade Contractors
Edwards Entertainment Cedar Rapids, LLC	CEDAR RAPIDS	LINN	01	\$5,000,000	1	6	EXISTING	Amusement and Theme Parks
Flatt Tire Co.	CEDAR RAPIDS	LINN	02	\$702,000	3	19	EXISTING	Tire Dealers
JCP Property Holdings, LLC	Cedar Rapids	LINN	02	\$553,000	3	19	EXISTING	Tire Dealers
Rejuvenation Group, LLC	CEDAR RAPIDS	LINN	02	\$174,000	2	1	NEW	Other Personal Care Services
MWR Properties, LLC	Hiawatha	LINN	02	\$948,000	9	0	EXISTING	Offices of Mental Health Practitioners (except Physicians)
Quiet Giant LLC	Muscatine	MUSCATINE	01	\$30,100	1	1	NEW	Marketing Consulting Services
Chown Appliance, Inc.	NICHOLS	MUSCATINE	01	\$50,000	0	0	NEW	Plumbing, Heating, and Air-Conditioning Contractors
IA30A, LLC	Ankeny	POLK	03	\$856,000	5	0	EXISTING	All Other Home Furnishings Retailers
Holt Construction Co. LLC	ANKENY	POLK	03	\$25,000	1	1	NEW	Other Building Finishing Contractors
ProWise 163 LLC	GRIMES	POLK	03	\$500,000	5	18	NEW	Custom Architectural Woodwork and Millwork Manufacturing
ProWise 163 LLC	GRIMES	POLK	03	\$350,000	5	18	NEW	Custom Architectural Woodwork and Millwork Manufacturing
RBG Investments LLC	Davenport	SCOTT	01	\$965,900	3	2	NEW	Coin-Operated Laundries and Drycleaners
HVAC LLC	OTTUMWA	WAPELLO	03	\$25,000	0	1	NEW	Plumbing, Heating, and Air-Conditioning Contractors
Trendy Transfers	Indianola	WARREN	01	\$50,000	1	13	EXISTING	Commercial Screen Printing
TMRP, LLC	Fort Dodge	WEBSTER	04	\$450,000	1	6	NEW	Electronics and Appliance Retailers
TMRP, LLC	FORT DODGE	WEBSTER	04	\$50,000	1	6	NEW	Electronics and Appliance Retailers
JB10, LLC	SIOUX CITY	WOODBURY	04	\$108,000	1	1	NEW	All Other Specialty Trade Contractors
NV Holdings LLC	SIOUX CITY	WOODBURY	04	\$3,460,000	2	2	NEW	Lessors of Miniwarehouses and Self-Storage Units

TRANSACTIONS FROM AUGUST 2026

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Des Moines Public Schools names Pattschull as new director of early childhood education

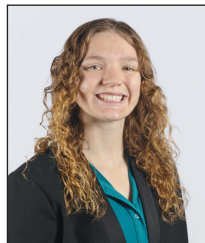
Des Moines Public Schools has named longtime educator and early childhood leader Beth Pattschull as its next director of early childhood education as the district continues its work to expand access to inclusive, high-quality preschool for Des Moines children. Pattschull assumed the role Sept. 2. The district continues to advocate for state funding for full-day preschool as part of its broader effort to increase access to early childhood education for families across Des Moines.



Beth Pattschull

Iowa Pork names Heath programs and events manager

The Iowa Pork Producers Association (IPPA) has welcomed Sadie Heath as its new programs and events manager, bringing a lifelong connection to agriculture and a strong background in agricultural communications, outreach and marketing to the organization. Heath grew up on her family's third-generation dairy farm near Tony, Wisconsin, where she and her four siblings represent the fourth generation of the family operation. Her great-grandfather moved from Sioux City to Wisconsin in 1940 and settled at the farm's current location in 1942.



Sadie Heath

Iowa Pork names Bryant communications manager

The Iowa Pork Producers Association (IPPA) announced the addition of Amber Bryant as communications manager. Bryant brings to IPPA deep roots in agriculture, a genuine love for rural communities, and a career built on telling the stories of farmers and the people who work alongside them.



Amber Bryant

Iowa Wild announces updates to hockey operations staff

Iowa Wild General Manager Matt Hendricks announced the following updates to its hockey operations staff. The club has hired Cory Chapp as head strength and conditioning coach and Nick Peyton as assistant athletic trainer.

Bartlam joins The Stelter Company as senior director of client strategy

The Stelter Company, a planned giving marketing agency headquartered in West Des Moines, has welcomed Matt Bartlam as senior director of client strategy. Bartlam fills a newly created leadership role designed to strengthen alignment across the company's client strategy and sales teams. Bartlam brings more than 20 years of experience to the new role, including executive leadership and expertise in growth strategy, client development, business operations and cross-functional team leadership. ■

LSI announces retirement of Dr. Eric Idehen from Evelyn K. Davis Center

LSI (Lutheran Services in Iowa) announced that Dr. Eric Idehen stepped down as director of the Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families in late September, concluding two years of leadership focused on expanding opportunity, strengthening workforce development systems, and advancing economic mobility for individuals and families across central Iowa. During his tenure, Dr. Idehen helped ensure the center remained a leading workforce, career development, and financial opportunity hub in central Iowa. Under his leadership, the center expanded partnerships with employers, educational institutions, community organizations, and public-sector leaders to connect job seekers with career pathways, training opportunities and supportive services.



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