

OCTOBER 2026

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ghosts?

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

I don't believe in ghosts — probably

I have known several people who claimed they did not believe in God — until they were lying on their deathbed, staring at the ceiling and realizing they were about to find out whether they were right. At that point, their position became surprisingly flexible.

I think ghosts work the same way. There are people who insist ghosts don't exist. They are make-believe. There is a logical explanation for everything. Strange noises are pipes. Shadows are trees. Footsteps upstairs are the house settling.

I agree. Mostly. During daylight hours. But something happens when it gets dark. A horror movie can turn a perfectly reasonable adult into a human pretzel hiding behind a blanket. A haunted house can make people scream before anything actually happens. And if you want to see how quickly a situation can collapse, just put a big, hairy spider near a person who claims to be fearless.

We are strange creatures. We like to be scared — as long as we are completely certain we are safe.

That's why we watch horror movies. We sit comfortably on the couch with a bowl of popcorn, knowing darn well that the monster is fictional. Then the music changes. The camera slowly moves toward a dark doorway. A door creaks. And, suddenly, we are yelling at the television: "DON'T GO IN THERE!" Of course, the person on the screen can't hear us, but that doesn't stop us from trying.

Our obsession with haunted houses is even more strange. We voluntarily pay to be put into a dark building with chainsaws, masked people and dim lighting. Then, when somebody jumps out from behind a wall, we scream. And, afterward, we laugh.

I'm not saying every unexplained noise is a ghost. Most likely, there is a perfectly logical explanation. But I do think our reaction to the possibility of ghosts tells us something. Maybe we do not like the unexplainable. Maybe there is a part of us that wonders about life after death is really all there is. Or maybe we are just terrified of the dark.

Personally, I am willing to consider all possibilities, but I have established that if I am home alone and I hear footsteps coming from the basement, I am not going downstairs to investigate. That is not bravery. That is how you become the opening scene of a horror movie. ■

Shane Goodman

Editor and Publisher
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OCTOBER 2026



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ASK CITYVIEW

By CITYVIEW staff

Ask CITYVIEW anything by emailing editor@dmcityview.com.

Q. Why is gas cheaper here than in neighboring states?

A. A reader posed us this question because of a visit to Alabama, where gas was 30 to 60 cents higher than in any of the other seven states he had driven through to get there.

Gas prices have been rising in general because of conflicts like the war between Russia and Ukraine, as well as the U.S. war in Iran, but that doesn't explain why the price varies from state to state. For example, the average price of a gallon of gas in Polk County, according to GasBuddy.com, is \$4.10. But in California, some counties are, on average, more than \$6 per gallon.

The main difference is the state gas tax. Iowa's gas tax, according to the Tax Foundation, is 30 cents per gallon, ranking 27th in the nation. California's gas tax is 73.64 cents per gallon, the highest. Alaska has the lowest at 8.95 cents per gallon.

Our neighbors to the east, Illinois, have the second-highest gas tax at 70.4 cents per gallon, but their average gas price is \$4.53. That's because the distance it takes for gas to get to Illinois is typically shorter, because most of the country's refinery capacity is along the Gulf Coast. There are other reasons why prices may vary, like environmental programs and retail competition; the latter is why gas is typically cheaper in Ankeny than in other parts of the metro, but gas taxes and the distance it takes for gas to get to one state or another are the two main factors.

Q. How many total viewers were there for the Iowa State vs. Iowa football game?

A. The 2025 Cy-Hawk football game dominated the airwaves. It was the most-watched game on any network for the noon kickoff slot it held with 4.2 million total viewers throughout the game and an average of around 1 million viewers concurrently.

The 2026 game didn't quite hit those incredible numbers, but the biggest rivalry in Iowa still had major drawing power. It was the eighth-most-watched game for week two of the college football season at 1.99 million viewers. ■



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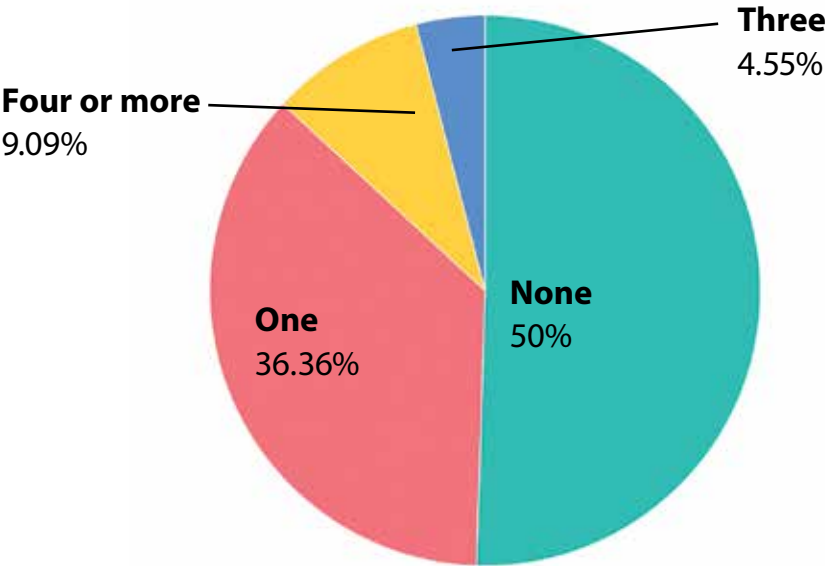
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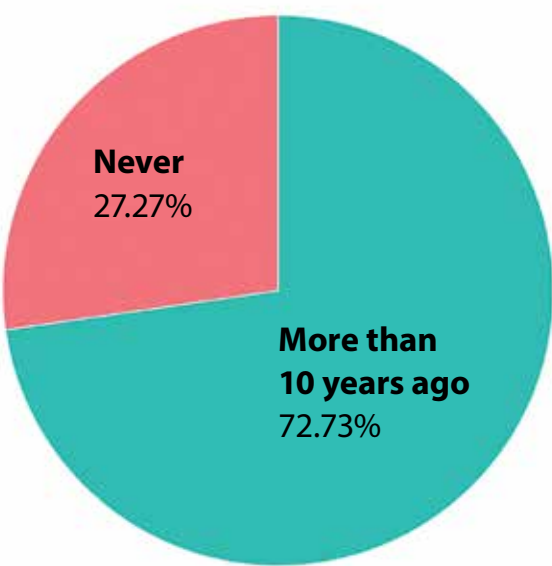


POLL POSITION Results from last month's poll at www.dmcityview.com

How many days did you attend the Iowa State Fair this year?



When was the last time you camped overnight in a tent?



FACEBOOK COMMENTS cityview magazine (comments unedited)

CITYVIEW magazine: What was the last movie you watched in theaters?

- Thomas Lindaman: Rifftrax "Sting of Death"
- Deb Eastwood Williams: The Odyssey
- Josh Yelland: Odyssey and Spiderman
- Darcy Godfrey: Practical Magic 2
- Julie Luepke: Supergirl
- Paula Northway Poland: Moonage Daydream. I don't get out much.
- Doug Bucklin: Harold & Kumar's 3D Christmas at the Southridge Theater. It's been a while, huh?
- Ann Martineau Breier: A star is born.
- Lance Brandt: Titanic at River Hills (seriously this is the last non animated kid movie).
- Danyell Klein: Michael Jackson
- Amy Ward Blair: The Jeff Buckley Experience at the Varsity
- Larry Early: The Dog Stars
- Chris Williams: The Weight, last Monday. Secret movie at Cinemark - Altoona
- Mary Kaisand: Spiderman
- Burton Lodwick: Practical Magic II
- LeAnn Winton: By any means
- Kelly Roberts Srader: Evil Dead Burn.
- Susan Miller: The breadwinner
- Josh Brown: Willie vs acme
- Caroline Ventura Hicks: The Parkers Documentary at The Fleur!
- Jill Klinkefus Clapper: Oppenheimer

- Hollie Harlea Dee: Melania...great documentary
- Cynthia Kimberly Johnson: The last Deadpool
- Lisa Sneddon-Kisting: Toy Story 5
- Lori Anderson: The Last Rodeo
- Judi Black: I went and saw that new movie Buddy - look it up it's HORRIBLE and shouldn't have even made it to the theater !!!! Before that it was "how to train your dragon" out at Jordan Creek

CITYVIEW magazine: For you, what is the sure sign that fall has arrived and summer is officially over?

- Brad Lovell: Football has started.
- David Ewart: Colorful leaves
- Aaron David: Cold weather
- Aaron Winters: Midwest Old Threshers
- DG Joe: Pumpkin spice as far as the eye can see.
- Mason Dolan: Changing of the trees
- Kendra Crandall: Sweatshirt weather
- David Tweedt: School starting.
- Hollie Harlea Dee: My apartment pool closes lol
- Tammy Clouser Bogenrief Leonard: The little black bugs come out biting
- Ann Martineau Breier: It's dark at 7:30pm.....
- Cassie Beaver: Iowa vs Iowa state game

RETWEETS

- (comments unedited)
- @MoMohler: In the 90's we wore windbreakers every single day. Kids nowadays out there getting absolutely dominated by the wind. Sad.
 - @caitiedelaney: "rate your recent purchase" "rate your experience with us" enough. Silence from you. Our exchange of goods and services is now and forever closed
 - @ewelannawhite: addicted to saying "not my circus, not my monkeys" to things that are absolutely both my circus and my monkeys
 - @JesterJum: If you ever feel useless, just remember, someone gets up every morning, drives to the BMW factory, and installs turns signals all day... knowing damn well that they will never be used
 - @jpottingaround: Every man should buy a big TV at Costco once in your life. Push that bad boy through the store as you do your other shopping. Every man gives a nod of approval or congratulates you like you just had a baby.
 - @MartinPilgrim1: The hardest part of being an art thief must be getting your entire crew to agree on what constitutes art.
 - @stargirlBaird: when you guys read the shampoo bottle instructions do you imagine yourselves as the shampoo or as the scalp
 - @TierZoo: Is there a reason so many establishments with double-wide front doors keep one of their two front doors locked?
 - @yeeerika: see how much happier everyone is when we have Monday off? much to consider
 - @BamaSaltyMarine: Shoutout to the people that do the awkward little jog when a car lets them cross the street. You are not moving any faster, but the effort is beautiful. I see you. I respect you. ■

STRAY THOUGHTS

BY RANDY EVANS

When retirements play hide-and-seek with tax money

What exactly are we paying for?

Succession planning and public celebration typically accompany executive retirements. They provide for an orderly leadership transition and public acknowledgment of a job well done.

So, two simple questions arise whenever top government employees leave their jobs in hastily announced retirements — and receive more than the customary coffee-and-cookies going-away reception in return for signing customized contracts containing waivers, releases and promises not to criticize.

What exactly are we paying for?

And why?

The recent “retirements” of David Dostal, the Cedar Rapids police chief, and Scott Ourth, Polk County’s director of general services, illustrate why these questions and answers are important.

Dostal, 57, who was paid about \$190,000 annually, announced earlier this month he is retiring, effective Jan. 1, after serving as chief for the past two and a half years. He has been a police officer in Cedar Rapids for nearly 35 years.

When Dostal became chief in 2024, Mayor Tiffany O’Donnell praised his advancement through the ranks of the police department, his selection over top national police leaders and his commitment to leading with integrity.

Nothing said then suggested any doubts about his qualifications or ability to oversee the department. But these facts do:

Although his retirement does not take effect until Jan. 1, Dostal’s last day of work will be Oct. 1. From Oct. 2 through Dec. 31, he will be on paid administrative leave and will continue receiving city health insurance.

Within 10 days after his retirement date, Dostal will receive a lump-sum severance payment of \$191,096 — equal to six months’ salary plus his accrued, unused time off.

While Dostal’s departure is portrayed as a voluntary retirement, he was handed a copy of the retirement agreement on Sept. 1 and was given 21 days to accept or reject it.

In addition, the agreement binds both Dostal

and city officials from making any “derogatory, disparaging, or negative remarks ... likely to cause harm to the reputation, business, or interests of the other.”

Does that sound like a typical retirement arrangement?

Meanwhile, in Des Moines, Scott Ourth, 67, a former Warren County state legislator, has been employed by Polk County for four years. His annual salary was \$158,700. His retirement took effect Sept. 22, although his last day at the office was weeks earlier, on July 31.

Ourth’s retirement was sweetened by payment of six months’ salary for what the county called a “department head benefit,” plus a \$2,000 payout for sick leave. He also will have county-paid health insurance for 12 months after retirement.

As with Dostal, Ourth and Polk County agreed in writing “not to make any public statements which materially disparage the other party” unless required by court order.

Those arrangements deserve scrutiny in light of two additional facts not mentioned in the retirement agreement:

Ourth is the subject of two sexual-harassment lawsuits filed against Polk County by two female county employees. And his deputy, Thomas Alessio, was fired by Polk County earlier this summer over unspecified “inappropriate behaviors and conduct.” Alessio, unlike Ourth, received no compensation on his way out the door beyond his earned wages.

Make no mistake, like private employees, public servants should get paid what they earned, including retirement payments calculated under established rules and policies.

But when a government employee leaves with tens of thousands of dollars in additional taxpayer-funded compensation for unexplained reasons — particularly after only a few years in their current position — it is appropriate to ask why. That question becomes even more important when the agreement restricts what the former employee and employer can say about each other.

At that point, a retirement package stops being merely a personnel matter and becomes a public accountability issue.

If the departing executive receives compensation beyond what was earned on the job, the public deserves to know the circumstances and rationale for the agreement, including the reasons for any mutual promises to say only good things about one another.

Not every detail of a government employee’s life should become public. But the justification for spending public money should not be hidden behind the words “personnel matter” or a ginned-up excuse of retirement.

Normal retirement benefits are earned as part of long-term compensation and retention plans. A lucrative settlement negotiated outside programs available to all employees is different.

The public deserves enough information to determine whether the additional payments represent a legitimate obligation or an extraordinary exercise of administrative discretion.

City and county governments are not private corporations. Their money belongs to the public, and their leaders and employees are entrusted with the public’s confidence.

Taxpayers are rightly uncomfortable with the idea their tax money might be used to purchase silence about the circumstances surrounding any public employee’s departure, especially when the employee is a highly compensated leader who leaves precipitously.

The public should not have to wonder whether a large payment was made because an employee was exceptionally valuable, because the government exposed itself to legal liability, because elected officials made a mistake, or because those in charge simply wanted a controversy to go away quietly.

“Personnel matter” should not become a magic phrase that turns government expenditures into private secrets and public doubt. ■

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





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CIVIC SKINNY

BY CITYVIEW STAFF

Highest-priced home sales. School administrator costs. Iowa's anxiety and depression ranking. And our universities' NIL spending.

Each October, we take a look at property sale records and various home sale sites like Zillow and Redfin to see what the highest-priced residential homes were in the metro since January of this year.

The focus seems fitting right now, as the most expensive home in Iowa just listed for \$10.2 million. If it sells at that price, it will make the record sale in the state, eclipsing a 9-million-dollar sale in Spirit Lake in 2024. While none of the homes in our reporting holds a candle to the roughly 13,400-square-foot Toddville home, which resembles a castle more than a home, these digs are still quite swanky.

The highest recorded sale price of a home in Polk County since Jan. 1, 2026, on the Polk County Assessors page is at **12870 Ridgeview Drive** in Urbandale, sold to Roxann and Darin Roggenburg

in May for \$4,550,000. Darin is the executive vice president and chief financial officer of Farmers Mutual Hail Insurance of Iowa. The home was built in 2022, sits on a 2.59-acre lot, has three bedrooms and five bathrooms and is more than 3,000 square feet.

A sizeable gap exists between the price of the first home and the second. The house at **3618 Oakmont Court** in West Des Moines went for \$2,550,000 in July and sold to Tamara Gaye DeYarman. DeYarman was in our reporting last year after selling a different West Des Moines home for \$3 million. DeYarman Auto Group owns a series of car dealerships throughout central Iowa. The home has six bedrooms, five bathrooms and 3,485 square feet, plus a sizable pool in the backyard.

Another West Des Moines home makes this list, this one at **1723 Glenleven Terrace**. The home was sold in

March from Christina Vahanian to 410 MANDALAY FWB TRUST for \$2,200,000. Vahanian bought the home in 2017 for \$1.6 million. Inside are six beds, five baths and a whopping 5,048 square feet.

The next listing takes us to **2505 N.E. Bellagio Court** in Ankeny. No casino, but this is absolutely a big home. It was purchased in April for \$2,100,000 by Sharon Willey. The stone-clad home has four bedrooms and seven bathrooms and clocks in at 5,309 square feet. It has a pool, hot tub and workshop in the home. The back faces the Talons of Tuscany Golf Course.

We head back to Urbandale for the last home on our list. This one at **12820 Cardinal Lane** is located just a few doors down from the highest-selling home. It was bought by Paul and Gwen Conte in June for \$2,000,000. Paul specializes in independent medical

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as follows: \$0.00-\$24,999.99 at 0.00% dividend rate and 0.00% APY; \$25,000.00-\$9,999.99 at 3.20% dividend rate and 3.25% APY; \$100,000.00-\$249,999.99 at 3.20% dividend rate and 3.25% APY; \$250,000-\$1,000,000.00 at 3.20% dividend rate and 3.25% APY.

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CIVIC SKINNY CONT...

exams. The home has five bedrooms, five bathrooms and the largest square footage of all of the homes we featured at 7,670 square feet.

And for those of you who don't like to go past 63rd Street, the sale of the highest-priced home located in Des Moines proper was at **3534 Arapahoe Drive**, sold by Kent Lehs in June to 3534 Arapahoe Holdings for \$1,825,000. It has three bedrooms and four bathrooms and is 4,845 square feet. Redfin and Zillow estimate its value between \$2.3 and \$2.5 million. ...

The **Common Sense Institute of Iowa** released a report showing that administrative growth was outpacing student enrollment in Iowa schools. The report claims that since the 2014-2015 school year, enrollment has fallen 2% while the administrator headcount has increased 11.8%. The reports says national numbers are almost identical with an 11.9% increase in administrators and the same 2% drop in student enrollment.

Other key findings claim that the administrative staffing gap represents an estimated \$27 million in recurring annual salary spending. CSI says if Iowa maintained its 2020-2021 ratio of roughly one administrator per 205 students, the district would employ 202 fewer administrators today. However, they note that this calculation does not suggest any individual position is unnecessary.

Coincidentally, the nonpartisan CSII — a partner of the State Policy Network, a network of what it calls “conservative and libertarian think tanks” that

coordinates efforts to support policy goals, raise funds and amplify the influence of its members — falls in line with Governor **Kim Reynolds**, who has often chided growing school administrations. Reynolds posted similar numbers from the National Center for Education Statistics, a federal government agency, in February. KCRG dug into the numbers, which showed the increase was in paraeducators and instructional coordinators more so than a general “administrator.”

These roles increased in large part due to the introduction of the Iowa Teacher Leadership and Compensation Program, which was part of a 2013 education reform bill, supported by then-Governor **Terry Branstad**.

According to numbers from the National Center for Education Statistics, KCRG found the largest increases were by paraeducators (3,576) and instructional coordinators (1,885), with school administrators accounting for 265 of the additions.

The CSII report states its administrative growth outpaces its neighbors, which is partially true, but it still ranked Iowa sixth out of 12 on its efficiency index of Midwest states. Nationally, it ranks Iowa fifth for spending on education salaries and benefits as a % of total expenditures. If you are curious, of the four states ahead of Iowa on those rankings, Utah (sixth), Washington (eighth) and Virginia (18th) all rank ahead of Iowa in the U.S. News and World Report rankings for education. ...

According to a report by **Sage Space Technologies**, a sensory wellness technology company, Iowa adults are reporting the seventh-lowest average rate of anxiety or depression symptoms. The study calculated the average percentage of adults reporting symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorders across surveys and showed that 29.83% of Iowa adults reported the symptoms.

Nationally, the lowest number was reported by South Dakota at 27.51%. The highest came from Louisiana at 37.49%. ...

Despite the fact that college universities are public entities, and their financial records should be clear as day, it is nearly impossible to uncover exactly how much is being spent on their athletic programs in the “Name, Image and Likeness” era. The Athletic’s college football staff decided to dive into this topic.

They reached out to coaches, general managers, personnel directors and more to get an idea of what the Power Four teams were spending on players. At the high end, they report that **Ohio State University** is spending between \$49-52 million on its roster. At the low end, they found **Boston College** was spending between \$8-13 million on theirs. A difference of nearly 40 million dollars between schools.

Joining Boston College toward the bottom are our two Power Four football teams: **Iowa State University** and the **University of Iowa**. ISU was the fourth lowest on their chart, spending between \$13-17 million. Iowa was ahead, but not by much, at \$17-21 million. ■



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GUEST COLUMN

BY JAMES STROHMAN

Cleared for takeoff

Iowa politics takes to the air again.

On a late fall afternoon in 1954, Iowa Governor William Beardsley got behind the wheel of his own car and headed south from Ames on old Highway 60. He and the First Lady had been visiting Iowa State.

Just after sunset, only a few miles north of Des Moines, as his car overtook a hill, he slammed into the back of a pickup that had slowed to assist another motorist. The governor was killed instantly. Charlotte survived but with serious injuries, including partial paralysis. The family's little white dog was found alongside the wreckage, unharmed but shivering uncontrollably.

The tragedy did more than end Beardsley's life. It changed the state's highest office itself. Iowa governors have traveled with a state patrol trooper behind the wheel since, practical advice that the chief executive shouldn't be the one steering.

From stagecoach to railroads, from automobiles to airplanes, modes of transport have always shaped how politicians campaign, connect and govern. Today, that journey arrives in the cabin.

The Republican Party gubernatorial nominee, Zach Lahn, has become the latest chapter in a long Iowa tradition. He is a licensed pilot who frequently flies his own airplane, and his choice to fly has revived questions that seem to surface every time politicians travel. He has lots of company.

From stagecoach box to flight deck

Transportation has always been intertwined with Iowa politics. Ansel Briggs, Iowa's first governor, ran a stagecoach line before office in 1846. Soon railroads replaced wagons and became one of the most powerful political forces in the state. Governor Albert Cummins, part of the national progressive movement of the early 1900s, built his reputation wrestling with railroad monopolies over freight rates and political influence. By the middle of the 20th century, another transformation arrived with paved highways and automobiles.

In 1962, Harold Hughes carried the identity of a long-haul truck driver to the governor's office, representing an Iowa transformed by highways rather than rail lines — and making transportation part of his unique political biography. But even Hughes had his eye on something faster than a roadway for travel.

Iowa had been an early pioneer in the creation of a State Patrol Air Wing, buying two Piper Super Cub aircraft to monitor traffic and provide emergency services. Soon, governors and other officials were flying across the state, more planes were purchased and political turbulence followed.

In 1967, Hughes had his eye on a twin-engine Beechcraft Queen Air 88 from Elliott Flying Service in Des Moines, but the price tag was over budget. To cover the balance, the Iowa Executive Council voted 5-0 to draw on supplemental funds. But newly elected State Attorney General Richard Turner — already building the combative reputation that would define his career — issued an opinion declaring the purchase illegal, as an end-run around the appropriations process. A confrontation between the two broke out in a Capitol corridor — Turner holding firm in opposition, Hughes reportedly calling him a malcontent.

It was an early episode in Turner's rather flamboyant career that would keep reporters and cartoonists busy. During his tenure, he sent state agents to raid a

local church bingo fundraiser, charging the parish priest with running a gambling house, mused publicly that a chimpanzee in a suit would go unnoticed in the state legislature, and waded in on the question of whether a chicken is technically an animal.

Turner ensnared himself in several aircraft controversies. The following year, the Air Patrol clocked his vehicle traveling 84 mph near Greenfield on Interstate 80. He paid the \$10 fine. Later, he battled Governor Robert Ray, who had declined to fund Turner's own departmental plane. In 1978 he lost his re-election bid to a 34-year-old McGregor lawyer named Tom Miller, who would go on to become the nation's longest-serving state attorney general.

Bird's eye view — a heyday for political cartoonists

Frank Miller, the Pulitzer Prize winning editorial cartoonist for The Des Moines Register, instinctively understood that airplanes made excellent political theater.

He marked the defeat with a cartoon that shows a small plane down in flames, its fuselage lettered "RICHARD TURNER'S FLYING CIRCUS," wreckage and playing cards scattered across the ground, and a goggled Turner climbing dazed out of the debris. The caption, borrowed straight from one of Turner's favorite lines, reads simply: "This is illegal."



© Frank Miller / Des Moines Register via Imagn Images. Nov. 9, 1978

Turbulence ahead

As the Flying Circus subsided, Iowa political skies appeared to calm for some time.

Then Steven Leath landed in Ames in 2012 as the new president of Iowa State University. Leath, already a pilot, used the university's aircraft — including a half-million-dollar Cirrus SR-22 purchased with donor funds — extensively for what the Board of Regents described as official travel.

But in 2015, while returning from a vacation at his mountain home in North Carolina, Leath piloted the university-owned plane into Bloomington, Illinois. During landing, he damaged both wings of the aircraft in what investigators described as a hard landing. The damage proved substantial enough to require

GUEST COLUMN CONT...

extensive repairs and badly enough that he needed an FAA check ride just to keep flying.

Such a mishap might have ended there, if it was made public. But when information only surfaced a year later through insurance paperwork, the story took flight.

News organizations began raising questions about the flow of information to the Board of Regents and the adequacy of existing oversight. State audits followed — one that found Leath had used the plane 181 times — as the matter expanded into a comprehensive review of aviation practices, travel policies and institutional governance.

The airplane, as it turned out, was never really the story. The pilot's actions made it about accountability. The airplane became secondary.

CITYVIEW's Brian Duffy summed up the whole affair in a single image: The president rendered as a goggled aviator crammed into a coin-operated kiddie plane ride, sitting on a base marked "PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF IOWA." The headline needed nothing else: "Ride's Over."



By Brian Duffy, CITYVIEW, January 2015

Leath resigned in 2017 and, after a closed search, was hired by Auburn University. The ISU plane fiasco soon followed him there, where he was known to students as “Crash.” He abruptly resigned a few years later. ISU sold the aircraft.

The view from the left seat

That tradition runs straight through this year's race. Zach Lahn is a licensed pilot who has been at the controls since he was young. He regularly flies his own plane between homes in Kansas and Iowa. When asked by a reporter whether he'd give up personal flying if elected governor, he said he hadn't really thought about it.

It also runs straight back to Governor Leo Hoegh, and a cartoon Frank Miller drew in the summer of 1956, during the thick of Hoegh's tough re-election campaign, the one he'd go on to lose that November.

Miller's cartoon, headlined "Plane Carrying Governor Hoegh Runs Out of Gas," shows a small plane down in a farm field, propeller bent against a fence, with Hoegh safely out, approaching a farmer in overalls. The farmer's line could run in tomorrow's paper without changing a word:

"We're on the verge of disaster down here, Governor."

And the reply from the cockpit experience, equally reusable 70 years later:

"You should have been up there with us a few minutes ago."

Swap the attire and the decades, and it's not difficult to see Zach Lahn standing in that field instead of Leo Hoegh — a pilot-candidate climbing down out of his plane, mildly rattled by his own adventure, while the farmer on the ground is worried about the real disaster.

Final approach

Governor Beardsley engineered Iowa's "farm to market" system — that still uses trucks and trains over highways and railways — to haul Iowa's bounty to market. His administration created the Road Use Tax Fund and expanded the state patrol with a special focus on safety. He lost his life on one of the highways he worked so hard to improve. It was a cruel irony.

Nearly 75 years later, Iowa is watching another candidate who prefers the left seat. Whether Mr. Lahn's flights become a campaign footnote or another chapter in that history remains to be seen.



© Frank Miller / Des Moines Register via Imagn Images. July 28, 1956

Iowans don't seem to mind their officials getting off the ground. What draws attention is what happens to their judgment once they're airborne — whether they disclose the purpose, answer for the fuel bill, account for the hard landing, or forget there's a countryside of Iowans beneath them, many

Most Iowans can handle a politician who's aloft — as long as they're not aloof about it. ■

James Strohman is a Des Moines writer at CrossingBridgesAhead.com.



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Booker, Buttigieg, Khanna are connecting here

Are Iowa Democrats intent on going first?

U.S. Sen. Cory Booker — a potential candidate for the presidency in 2028 — is keeping in touch with at least one influential Iowa supporter.

Does Booker's check-in one recent weekday with Nancy Bobo of Des Moines mean Booker sees Iowa as filling its historic role in the presidential nominating process? Is that why he is calling Bobo, 73, the founder of Des Moines-based Women For A Stronger America, and an active Iowa Democrat, a Polk County Democratic Party Central Committee member?

Here's a read: If he is calling Bobo, Booker thinks Iowa could or should be a key state — perhaps the first state — as former U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin and other top Democrats insist.

"I think that's a little bit of a stretch, but I think what it says is that he's got Iowa on his radar," Bobo said.

Bobo, who posted about her call with Booker on Facebook and then talked with Political Mercury about it, said she and the Democratic senator from New Jersey talk periodically, and that she knows his family and he knows hers. Booker stayed with Bobo and her husband, Melvin, during the 2020 presidential election cycle. This could be just a congenial call between friends, but it's fair to ask if Booker make a go of it for president, and campaign in Iowa.

"I don't know that; we did not talk about the caucuses," Bobo said. "I said, 'Well, Cory, you are everywhere.' That night he was going to be on MSNOW and CNN again. He just said he had a lot of faith in Iowa turning things around."

Bobo said she hopes Booker runs for the presidency, and she joins Harkin in thinking Iowa should hold first-in-the-nation caucuses.

"I wish we would," she said. "They all say we don't have the diversity and we don't have this and we don't have that. Right now, there is no rural state that is in that early mix. I just think there are so many reasons Iowa is helpful in that process."

Just weeks earlier. ...

Likely 2028 presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg, through the implicitness of his presence in Altoona and earned connectedness to Iowa, made it clear he thinks the Democratic Party should launch the next presidential nominating contest in its historic setting — Iowa. Eschewing hints and subtlety in favor of unbridled advocacy, Buttigieg described the Iowa Caucuses' role in shaping presidential fields in both soaring and practical terms in a major speech in the state.

Buttigieg, the former U.S. Transportation secretary

and 2020 presidential candidate who burst onto the national scene in Iowa, and continues to maintain a network here, keynoted the Iowa Democratic Party's Liberty and Justice Celebration at Prairie Meadows in Altoona.

"I am very proud of the fact that I was forged in the political furnace of the Iowa Democratic caucuses," Buttigieg, now living in Michigan, said in his speech. "Only in Iowa could a young Indiana mayor enter a field of literally 20 men and women competing for the American presidency, governors and senators and experienced presidential contenders, and earn one vote at a time and wind up winning."

I interviewed Buttigieg for the first time in early 2019 after randomly spotting him walking into the Marriott Hotel in downtown Des Moines. Few people recognized Buttigieg, then 37, as he entered the busy hotel lobby. I approached him, and in a few minutes, we sat for an unscheduled interview as he ate a cheeseburger and drank a beer in the lobby restaurant.

With a field of Democratic White House aspirants likely to stretch to at least 20 viable candidates in 2028 — or even larger as social media influencers, sports and entertainment celebrities, and other notable figures with no political experience enter in the era of Trump — expected candidates like Buttigieg who have bases of support in Iowa, and start-up campaigns today like the one the then South Bend, Indiana mayor ran in 2020, could decide to compete in Iowa in a "first" caucus even if the national party sanctions these candidates.

They would have to weigh the options, the costs and benefits of competing in Iowa. Buttigieg knows a lot of Iowa media members by name and was approached often in Altoona by steadfast supporters who want to see him run again for the Oval Office. Media attention, the content diets of voters more precisely, are fragmented, so the legacy lane for political profile building in caucuses and primaries in 2028 will be attractive to a range of candidates, meaning there is no reason Iowa should not go first, no matter what the national party says. Let the haters hate Iowa all they want. The nominee will emerge from Iowa. Who cares what national Democratic leaders who despair that rural American even exists think? Go first. Power is taken, not given.

To be fair, Buttigieg never flatly said that Sunday that Iowa Democrats should go first, but he made a better case for it than even the most stalwart advocates.

Asked directly if Iowa Democrats should hold the caucuses first no matter what national leaders dictate,

Buttigieg offered a clear endorsement of the state.

"What I would say is that being here made me a better candidate, a better public servant, and that process where people, whether they're a former vice president or a sitting vice president, all the way to a total unknown, have to be there in the diners and the backyards and convince people to stand up in front of their neighbors and say why you ought to be the pick," Buttigieg said in response to a question from Political Mercury in a news conference following the Liberty and Justice event. "I just think there is incredible value in that process."

And in early October. ...

Potential White House candidate Ro Khanna, a high-profile congressman from California, will headline Des Moines legislator Sean Bagniewski's annual Fish Fry fundraiser in Des Moines on Sunday, Oct. 11.

"I'm thrilled to welcome Congressman Ro Khanna back to Iowa," Bagniewski said. "He's shown immense courage in leading the bipartisan fight to force the release of the Epstein files. He's been a forward-thinking voice on technology and the American economy. And he's shown a commitment to Iowa and the Midwest for years."

The event now in its fifth year serves as Bagniewski's annual fundraiser and has previously featured guests like Ambassador Rahm Emanuel and former lieutenant governors Sally Pederson and Patty Judge.

Held at Rep. Bagniewski's home, the Fish Fry draws on his Midwestern roots and serves freshly caught and fried fish picnic-style to hundreds of guests.

Khanna represents Silicon Valley and what is arguably the most financially muscular and cultural defining district in the history of the nation, a region that is home to household-name companies.

Khanna has been a frequent visitor to Iowa, and the congressman worked directly with economic development leaders in Jefferson, Iowa State University and at Des Moines Area Community College. He shepherded a Google-backed initiative at DMACC from concept to classroom reality.

Khanna has said that the wealth and optimism that collects in his district has to river out to the rest of the nation, especially reaches of rural America and de-industrialized communities, through what he calls a "New Economic Patriotism." ■

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



AMERICA'S HARVEST Festival

October 24, 2026

1pm-Dark | Iowa Capitol Grounds

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COMING UP

SUBMIT ENTRIES AND PHOTOS TO EDITOR@DMCITYVIEW.COM

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

THINGS TO DO

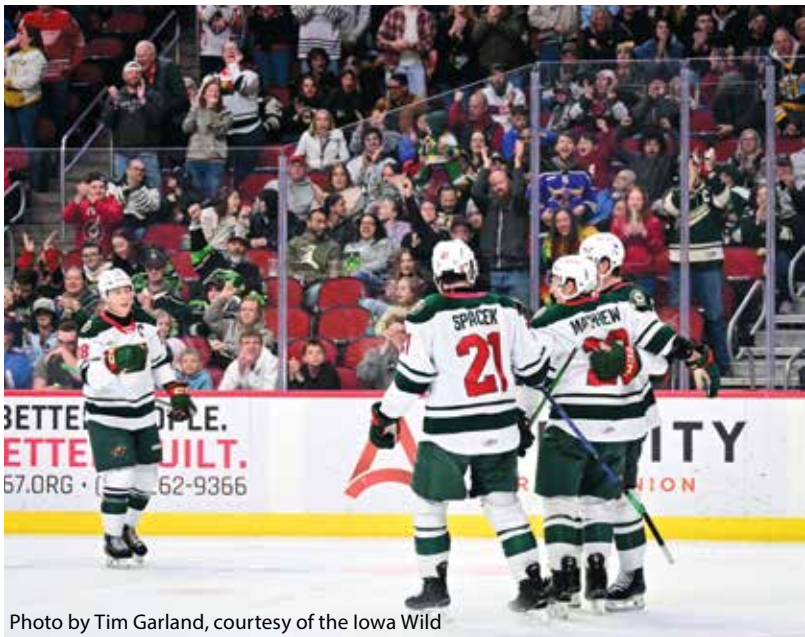


Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of the Iowa Wild

IOWA WILD

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

Home games:

- **Oct. 9:** vs Rockford IceHogs at 7 p.m.
- **Oct. 10:** vs Rockford IceHogs at 6 p.m.
- **Oct. 21:** vs Milwaukee Admirals at 7 p.m.
- **Oct. 23:** vs Manitoba Moose at 7 p.m.
- **Oct. 24:** vs Manitoba Moose at 6 p.m.
- **Oct. 30:** vs Charlotte Checkers at 7 p.m.

SPIRIT SEEKERS FAIR

Unity Center of Des Moines, 414 31st
St., Des Moines
www.unitydesmoines.com

Oct. 10

Free admission and with it features vendors from the healing arts, intuitive readers, gifts, stones, jewelry, personal growth opportunities, and more. This acts as a welcoming place for Iowa's spiritual community to connect with others. There is a full list of vendors on the website.



Photo courtesy of Capital City Gaming Con

CAPITAL CITY GAMING CON

Hilton Garden Inn,
205 S. 64th St., West Des Moines
www.capitalcitygamingcon.com
Oct. 16-18

A weekend full of fun and games held annually. Meet local vendors, attend events and make new friends, all while playing the hobby's best games.

DES MOINES YOUNG ARTISTS' THEATRE

4801 Franklin Ave., Suite 1166, Des Moines
www.dmyat.org

- **Oct. 23 through Nov. 1:** "The Addams Family: School Edition"

WOOLY'S

504 E. Locust St., Des Moines
firstfleetconcerts.com/first-fleet-venues/woolys

- **Oct. 1:** Jervis Campbell at 7 p.m.
- **Oct. 2:** Obsession Rave at 9 p.m.
- **Oct. 3:** Saturn Ascends at 8 p.m.
- **Oct. 5:** Kylie Morgan at 7 p.m.
- **Oct. 8:** The Ultimate Doors - A Tribute to the Doors at 8 p.m.
- **Oct. 9:** The Urge at 8 p.m.
- **Oct. 10:** The Haunt at 7:30 p.m.
- **Oct. 11:** Roger Clyne and The Peacemakers at 7 p.m.
- **Oct. 13:** PeelingFlesh at 6:30 p.m.
- **Oct. 15:** An Evening With Geordie Greep at 7 p.m.
- **Oct. 16:** Danielle Nicole at 7 p.m.
- **Oct. 17:** Daft Disko at 9 p.m.
- **Oct. 22:** "Business In The Front, Party In The Back" Tour with TVBOO at 8 p.m.
- **Oct. 24:** Twiztid at 7 p.m.
- **Oct. 25:** Drowning Pool x Saliva at 7 p.m.
- **Oct. 28:** All Them Witches at 7:30 p.m.
- **Oct. 29:** Spite at 7 p.m.
- **Oct. 31:** Winyah at 8 p.m.



The IMT Des Moines Marathon is one of the area's most heralded.
Photo submitted

IMT DES MOINES MARATHON

212 Raccoon St., Des Moines
<https://desmoinesmarathon.com>
Oct. 18

The Des Moines marathon takes you through the heart of downtown and beyond. If the full marathon is too much runner for you (we don't blame you), then there is also a half marathon, 10K and 5K, with each run, or jog, (again, no judgement from us) taking you all over.

PANDA FEST

Outlets of Des Moines, 801 Bass Pro Drive, Suite 125, Altoona
www.pandafests.com

Oct. 2-4

After launching in 2024 with 13 events being wildly popular, this festival brings Asian street food, activities, market fairs and live entertainment.

COMING UP

SUBMIT ENTRIES AND PHOTOS TO EDITOR@DMCITYVIEW.COM



Photo by Bekah Benoit

DES MOINES BUCCANEERS

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

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

Home games:

- **Oct. 2** vs. Omaha Lancers at 7:05 p.m.
- **Oct. 3** vs. Tri-City Storm at 6:05 p.m.
- **Oct. 10** vs. Lincoln Stars at 6:05 p.m.
- **Oct. 16** vs. Waterloo Black Hawks at 7:05 p.m.
- **Oct. 30** vs. Youngstown Phantoms at 7:05 p.m.
- **Oct. 31** vs. Youngstown Phantoms at 6:05 p.m.



A live performance at last year's Madison County Covered Bridges Festival. Photo by Teddi Yaeger

MADISON COUNTY COVERED BRIDGES FESTIVAL

Winterset Square, Winterset
www.exploremadisoncounty.com
Oct. 10-11

Experience the delightful sights that is Madison County's Covered Bridges with their annual festival celebrating their beauty and history with vendors and entertainment throughout the weekend. Starting at 9 a.m.



2026 GEM, JEWELRY, MINERAL AND FOSSIL SHOW

Iowa State Fairgrounds, 3000 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines
dmlapidary.org
Oct. 17-18

The Des Moines Lapidary Society aptly named this event. It showcases all of the incredible finds by Iowa enthusiasts of lapidary. There are plenty of items for sale that make great gifts or decorations. They also do demonstrations and host discussions.

RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM AND BAILEY: THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

Casey's Center, 730 Third St., Des Moines
www.ringling.com

Oct. 1-4

Ringling Bros. has reinvented itself for the new generation of viewers, bringing a fast-paced, high-energy circus back to stardom.

DRAKE FOOTBALL

2719 Forest Ave., Des Moines
godrakebulldogs.com

- **Oct. 3** vs. Dayton at 12 p.m.
- **Oct. 17** vs. Marist at 12 p.m.
- **Oct. 24** vs. Butler at 12 p.m.

DECADES ON THE ORCHARDS

Winterset Cidery,
1638 US-169, Winterset
www.unfilteredevents.vip

Oct. 17

Rewind and experience the decades of times gone by at the Winterset Cidery. The Orchard is taken over with nonstop music from every era, with the oldies, classic rock, 1990s alternative and even 2000s emo anthems. The Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, Not Quite Brothers and Emo Kids will be performing. There is also local food trucks, craft beer, ciders and plenty more.

AMERICA'S HARVEST FESTIVAL

Iowa Capitol Complex,
1007 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines
www.americasharvestfest.com
Oct. 24

This event transforms the Capitol grounds into a celebration of history, agriculture and community. There are exhibits, entertainment like face painting, carnival games and hands-on demonstrations, live music, food and Iowa-made goods.

CASEY'S CENTER

223 Center St., Des Moines
www.iowaeventscenter.com/caseys-center

- **Oct. 8:** Zach Top "Cold Beer and Country Music Fall Tour" at 8 p.m.
- **Oct. 22:** Thomas Rhett at 7:30 p.m.
- **Oct. 29:** Ella Langley: The Dandelion Tour at 7 p.m.

BUSINESS JOURNAL



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.

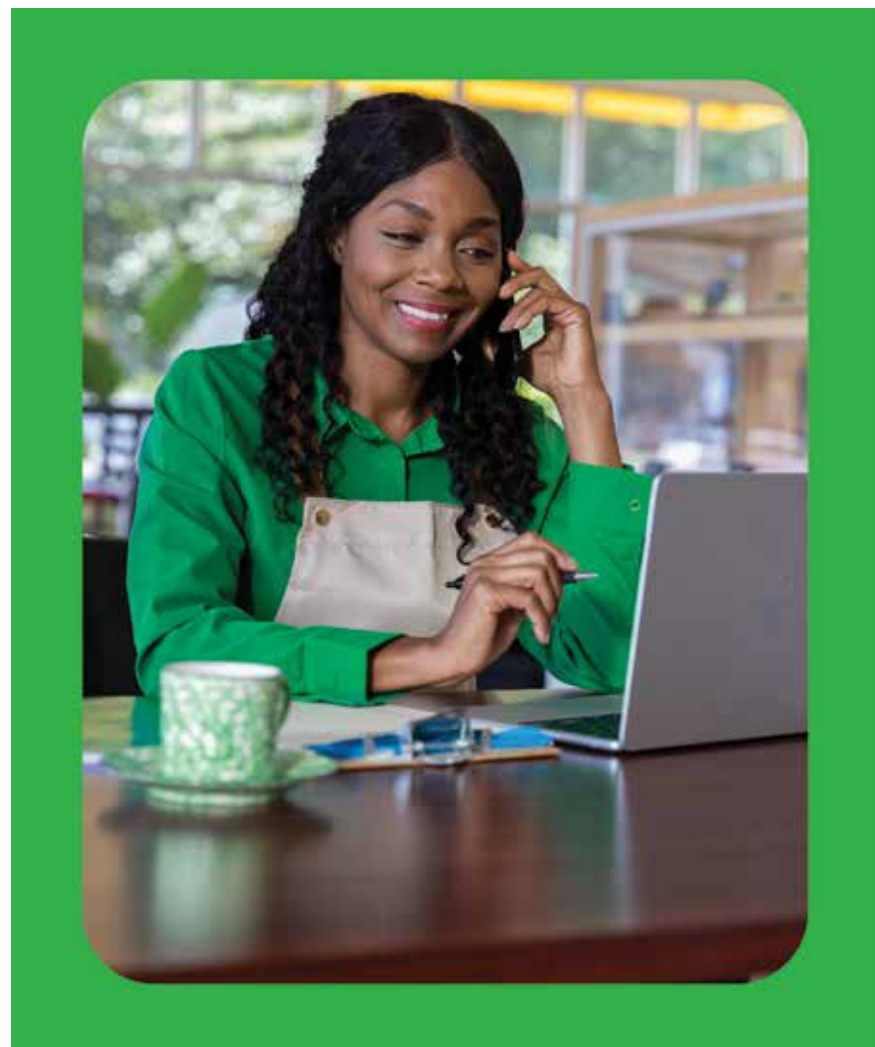
Auctions can be a lot of fun, Lupher said. Live, in-person auctions create a sense of community, allowing people to meet face to face while searching for interesting items.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3326 UNIVERSITY AVE., DES MOINES
DATE: 2026-05-15
SALE PRICE: \$320,000
SELLER: BSQUARE PROPERTIES LLC

BUYER: MARLENA HOLDINGS LLC
ACRES: 0.310
SQUARE FEET: 2,400

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 ■

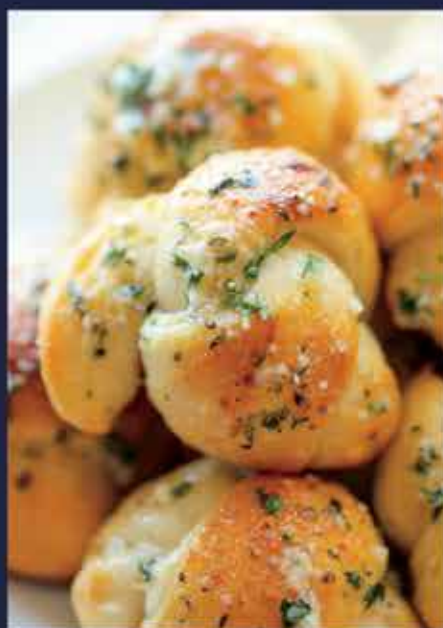
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SIDES

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Crispy Green Bean Casserole [1/2 pan]
Garlic Butter Yukon Mashed Potato [1/2 pan]
Sage-Roasted Turkey Gravy [64oz]
Traditional Homemade Stuffing [1/2 pan]
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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	JOHNSON	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

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ANDI DYAR, CHARLOTTE SUCIK AND GAIL BARNETT

Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm invites you to discuss your important legal needs with Andi Dyar, Charlotte Sucik and Gail Barnett.

Andi Dyar recently joined the firm as an associate attorney. She helps clients plan for the future through wills, trusts and estate planning, guides families through probate and estate administration, and assists with real estate matters.

Charlotte Sucik focuses her practice on helping clients form and manage their small businesses. Working alongside CPAs, financial planners and other advisors, she

crafts business documents that match tax, financial and business goals, now and in the future.

Gail Barnett helps clients apply for Social Security Disability and Medicaid benefits. She also works with families to obtain guardianships and conservatorships for loved ones who can no longer care for or protect themselves.

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Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm

Andi Dyar, Associate Attorney
Charlotte Sucik, Partner
Gail Barnett, Partner

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Life & Legacy Advisors, LLC

Vicki L. Monaco

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Vicki L. Monaco is CEO of Life & Legacy Advisors, a firm providing comprehensive financial, retirement and estate planning services throughout central Iowa. In 2026, Vicki proudly celebrates 20 years of serving individuals and families through Life & Legacy Advisors. As a fiduciary and Investment Advisor Representative, she is committed to putting her clients' best interests first, providing objective, personalized guidance designed to build financial confidence and peace of mind. Vicki is also an active community leader and serves on the board of the Central Iowa Senior Education Network. Her commitment to client education, transparent planning and helping individuals confidently navigate retirement has made her a sought-after speaker and trusted resource throughout the community.



ANN BUCK, CHRISTINE BRANDON AND TAMMY JONES CHRISTENSEN

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DO YOU BELIEVE IN

ghosts?

A visit to Farrar Elementary left this skeptic wondering what exactly followed me out the door.

By Kristian Day

I'm not a believer. And if people ever ask me to explain what that means, I won't tell them. You can interpret that however you want to. That's fine by me.

A week before writing this story, I took a trip to Farrar Elementary School in Maxwell. I knew nothing about it outside of what I had found on the internet. My immediate interpretation was this place was another tourist trap for cheap thrills and carnival tricks helmed by two Gen Z YouTube stars, Sam and Colby — two people I have never met and I know nothing about.

When I was a kid, I would watch all those haunted tourism shows on Fox Family when they aired their 13 Days of Halloween block in the 2000s. Shows like "Scariest Places on Earth" tracked urban legends and paranormal sightings in the style of a grim travel show. Then the floodgates opened with "Ghost Hunters" and "The Dead Files" that took paranormal investigations into everyday culture.

Before those last two shows hit the mainstream, I began doing my own research of the paranormal. I

sleuthed through the early internet, searching GeoCities websites for local legends in Cedar Rapids, all against a Web 1.0 aesthetic. I took a trip to the "Thirteen Steps" at Pleasant Ridge Cemetery in Palo, Iowa. The story goes that you count 12 steps going up during the day but 13 at night. Some friends of mine and I drove out to the Black Angel in Iowa City long before it was a tourist attraction. I thought one friend even fell ill under the Black Angel's curse, which took years to release him. (Those details are for another story.)

THE VISIT

Farrar Elementary was my first time visiting a place with a documented history of paranormal activity since I was 15. It was a Tuesday afternoon, Sept. 8, when I drove to Maxwell. It was cloudy and warm with a storm on the way. I drove up Highway 65 to Northeast 112th Street until I saw the giant brick structure. Built in the early 1920s as a Collegiate Gothic-style rural public school, it is the largest building in town. Across the street is the small Farrar Cemetery and the supporting church. I passed by them as I turned into the driveway of the school.

When I arrived, two men on lawnmowers were trimming the grass, and three cars were parked in the gravel lot. Mine was the fourth. When I stepped out of my car, I faced the building as if it was an adversary. It loomed over me. I looked at every window I could see. Many had shades drawn, and some were just black.

I entered the front door and found myself at the bottom of the steps. I looked up to see a few of the classrooms still labeled with the names of former teachers. I walked up the stairs to the main floor thinking I would find some kind of office or staff room with a person waiting for me. There was no one. I called out “Hello!” several times with no answer. Finally, I heard a door swing open from the bottom of the stairs and quickly threw out another “Hello,” giving my host a jump.

THE GUIDE

Anna Christiansen has been manager of the property for YouTubers Sam and Colby for the past year. In her previous life, she was a dog groomer. Her father sparked her interest in the paranormal. Instead of conventional family dinners, they often watched “Ghost Adventures,” “Ghost Hunters” and similar programs on TV together.

“I kind of bonded with all the old people that used to work here, and I was like, ‘Man, if you ever need help — if you ever need volunteer work — I only live like 30 minutes away. Just let me know.’ And they’re like, ‘We’re not looking for volunteers, but if you’d like a job, we’re hiring.’”

When the school opened, it served kindergarten through 12th grade. By the time it closed, it served only fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders. We walked through three of the old classrooms on the main floor: Mrs. Martin’s room, which is believed to be the most active room on the floor; Room 206, the former science room; and Walter’s room, which has no electricity. All three rooms were once active classrooms. When the school was open, students didn’t want to sit in the back rows because they said they often felt someone was standing over them.



Anna Christiansen

As we toured the rooms, Anna explained the types of activity that took place in each of them. Mrs. Martin’s room was home to a spirit they called Justin, whom Anna explained was most likely a 10-year-old spirit from the 1700s and not a former Farrar student. She described Room 206 as active, too. In Walter’s room, she said, a grumpy old man dislikes her, and she has heard footsteps running toward her when nobody was there.

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THE PRINCIPAL

As we walked up to the top floor, Anna warned me of a stronger presence that would be waiting for us. This was where the principal's office was located, and people reported a figure standing in the doorway. This was also the first time Anna warned me about something in the building.

"It's gonna get really warm up here; I apologize. There's a 6-foot shadow figure that hangs out on this floor, and that's usually his office. They call it the principal, but I don't know if he's actually the principal. I think he just kind of looks out for the place. He's not evil. He's just an authority figure."



It was on this floor where Anna also explained to me that not every presence in the building is thought to be connected to the school. She believes Farrar attracts former neighbors, people from the cemetery, relatives accompanying visitors and temporary "travelers." One of the rooms was filled with dolls that were deliberately placed to unsettle guests. She explained this was just good showmanship and had nothing to do with the spirits in the building.

We walked into the former auditorium. It has an old, wooden stage with built-in light sockets under the floorboards. Anna said the school later divided that space into four classrooms, but it has since been restored into one large room. She showed me a box of old playbooks including one titled "No Time for Skirts." She also recalled a school play involving the dead and a passage in Latin. She wonders whether it affected the building's activity but could not recall its title. Other titles came up in our conversation, though we did not establish which plays the Farrar students actually performed in or when.



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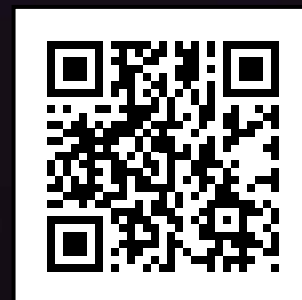
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AN ENTITY

As we stood on the top floor, I asked if there was a basement and, of course, there was. This brought up discussion of a new presence in the building, an entity so old that it either dates to the era before Christ or it was never once alive. It is said to be something that was never a former human, at least as we usually imagine spirits.

Anna led me down the steps to the bottom floor and through the former school kitchen. The staff used a dumbwaiter to send the food down and into the gym where kids would have lunch. The gym itself took me back to my former junior high school back in Rock Island, Illinois. It was also old. In the center of this room is one of those rainbow parachutes with several balls laid out on top of it. The staff members use the gym for investigations, sometimes setting out balls or playing games with the child spirits that are believed to occupy the building.



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THE RESIDENT

About 45 minutes into the tour, we were joined by Miranda Cory, a 21-year-old staff member who once lived in Farrar Elementary School. Her grandmother, Jacqui Carpenter, was a psychic and paranormal investigator who helped former owners Jim and Nancy Oliver conduct investigations and manage paranormal events between 2006 and 2014. When Miranda’s mother and stepfather lost their apartment, the Olivers invited the family to live temporarily inside the school.



Miranda Cory

Miranda consequently spent part of her childhood at Farrar. She rode a tricycle in the gym, accompanied her grandmother during investigations and celebrated birthdays and her high school graduation in the building.

“I was very sensitive as a kid,” Miranda said. “My grandma would use me in the investigations to speak with the spirits. I would play with the spirits. I was like a little piece of equipment for her.”

Miranda’s most significant childhood story concerns a girl named June. Miranda said she was playing in the gym when she repeatedly felt drawn toward the boiler room, an area she had been forbidden to enter. June allegedly appeared, warned her not to go, and then instructed her to find her grandmother. Miranda said June later appeared after a near-fatal car accident outside of Pella to tell her everything was going to be OK.

THE SYMBOLS

Anna, Miranda and I walked through the hallways, and they showed me the employee room that was off limits to the public. It took two doors to get into this room. It was modern, clean and cozy, almost like a break room for the employees who work until the early hours of the morning. The doors had symbols painted on them, and I asked what they were. They explained that the symbols were there to protect the staff. I later looked them up. One was a pentacle, a five-pointed star enclosed in a circle. This symbol is commonly associated with ceremonial magic with the words “Vade retro Satana” Latin for “Begone, Satan.” This was the Christian formula for rejecting Satan and evil. The letters around it reference the St. Benedict protection formula:



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“Vade Retro Satana
Nunquam Suade Mihi Vana
Sunt Mala Quae Libas
Ipse Venena Bibas”

“Begone, Satan. Never
tempt me with your vanities.
What you offer is evil. Drink
the poison yourself.”

Another symbol looked like
a sigil-style mark. I could not
identify it with certainty. It
didn’t feel like ordinary graffiti.



THE BOILER ROOM

We walked further down the hallway and into a room that just off the gymnasium. This was the boiler room where the entity — which, again, was either older than the time of Jesus Christ or something that was never once human — lived. The boiler room is where the tour’s tone changed. Upstairs, Anna spoke about playful children, a grumpy man and a shadowy authority figure. In the basement, she became guarded.

The room was cluttered from recent foundation and maintenance work. There was a strong “wet basement” odor coming from the original heating system, and portions were closed to guests for ordinary safety reasons. Guests have said they often felt oppressed when inside here.

“Their chest got really tight. They felt fine everywhere else, but as soon as they went down to the basement, they were like, ‘No, I can’t do it anymore.’ ”

Both women resist giving the alleged presence a definitive identity. Anna contrasts it with the “Principal,” the upstairs shadow figure she views as stern but protective. The basement presence may have acquired different names and stories from investigators over the years, but Anna cannot verify its origin. The boiler room is also where Anna’s responsibility as a guide becomes most evident. She monitors guests for fear and physical distress, believing panic can spread through a group. She will end an investigation instead of escalating it for entertainment.



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A CARNIVAL ATTRACTION?

As we walked outside, I asked a question that has rattled me for more than 20 years. It was something I asked myself when I visited the Amargosa Hotel near Death Valley, California, another hotspot for paranormal activity. “What happens to these spirits and energies when they are made into a carnival attraction? When someone buys a building bringing heavy activity with constant walk-throughs by the living?”

“There are some days, especially by Saturdays, you can tell that they’re more worn out because we’ve been doing tours Thursday and Friday, Saturdays, and we do two tours a night,” Anna said.

She added that this is not consistent, as sometimes the activity is just as strong on Saturday as it was on Friday. During the quieter Sunday-to-Wednesday stretch, she thinks the spirits may get lonely but also have time to “re-energize.” That is one reason she sometimes visits without a tour, bringing her dog and listening to music.



THE PARTING SHOT

Before I left, I mentioned that I wanted to take a few photos outside, including the cemetery. I asked them to hold on one moment before going inside so I could make sure I had my keys because, for some reason, they weren’t in my pockets. I walked up to my car and saw them inside, and we said our goodbyes.

I walked down the gravel driveway to get a few shots of the cemetery. I was framing the gate from the middle of the road when I heard a “meow.” I’m a cat fan, so I looked for where this little fiend might be. Nothing. I framed the shot again to take the picture, and I heard another “meow.” What caught my ear was that the “meow” sounded like it was coming from a human, not an animal. I looked back to the two guys who were done mowing and were watching me from their truck. I wondered whether they thought the sound was coming from me. I concluded that it was time for me to go.

JUSTIN’S JOKE

I walked back up the gravel driveway to my car and found the driver’s side door open. I told myself I probably just forgot to shut it after checking for my keys. I got in the car and drove out to Northeast 112th Street where I would normally start to increase my speed, but my car wouldn’t go past 55 mph. I was flooring it. I tugged on the floor mat, thinking that maybe my feet pushed it up under the metal and I couldn’t get it going. Then I hit Highway 65 where I needed to go a minimum of 65 mph. My car wouldn’t go any faster. I kept my eyes on the road, but, within minutes, I was in Bondurant and blasted through a red light going 85 mph. If the truck that had the right of way hadn’t stopped to honk at the maniac (me) running the red light, I would have cut him in half. It was as if I skipped 10 minutes of time and awakened at the red light. I pulled off at the Casey’s store in Bondurant to grab a water and collect myself. I walked around their parking lot six times just trying to calm down. I felt like I drank a black cold brew coffee on an empty stomach. My vision moved in as if I was seeing a 16:9 rectangle in a 4:3 frame.

That night, I wrote a thank-you email to Anna and Miranda. I told them what happened. Anna responded: “Regarding what happened when you were leaving, I believe you heard something. We have a black cat that hangs around the outside of the school property, though we don’t really call it a cat! Strange things happen there. As a side note about your car, that was probably Justin messing with you. That’s his other party trick besides crawling on the ceiling. He messes with my vehicle from time to time if he’s upset or mad at me. It could have been because I didn’t introduce you to the spirits yesterday, or have you introduce yourself, so they might have felt a bit off put. What’s funny is that once I hit Bondurant, my car goes back to normal, too — It’s like it crosses a threshold, and they can’t affect it anymore.”

I mentioned what I went through to a few people. Two people think I was possessed. One felt I just needed rest or needed to speak to a doctor about loss of consciousness. It’s been a week now, and nothing else has happened.

You can interpret all this as you see fit.

For more information on the Farrar Elementary or to book a tour, visit www.hauntedfarrar.com. ■

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Portofino and The Empire are oases for bargain seekers

These are the value restaurants of the year.

This appears to be the year of bargain stalking. It's the No. 1 thing our readers ask about, and that's never happened before in our 38 years on the food beat in Iowa. Young people are foregoing the old rites of youth like going out to restaurants and bars on dates, binge drinking alcohol and showing off. Their discretionary budgets are stressed by new definitions of "necessities," which now include cell phone service, streaming platforms, internet connections, sorority rush coaches and Taylor Swift tickets.

There is little money for the old necessities like mortgages, 401K contributions, drinking binges and eating out regularly. So, bargain stalking is a thing. We dedicate a full column to the subject in RELISH and write about it five times a week in The Daily Umbrella. Now, due to popular demand, we are honoring two places this October as "the value restaurants of the year."

Other than friendly prices, Portofino's and The Empire have little in common. Portofino's is a rare, independently owned restaurant on the chain-linked neon strip of Ankeny Boulevard. It took over a 150-seat space previously owned by Taste of Texas BBQ and India Chef. Empire is the latest restaurant of the local group Full Court Press, which has done more than anyone to make downtown Des Moines' food scene unique and worldly while preserving historical buildings. Empire was excavated, literally after FCP moved Fong's Pizza to a larger space. It was reborn as its "turn of the previous century" self and has a 10-seat lunch counter, four 4-tops and four tables for six. Portofino's serves Italian fare; Empire offers an old fashioned diner menu. Portofino's serves lunch and dinner, until 9 or 10 p.m. The Empire does most of its food business before 2 p.m.

Their commonality is most pertinent to this time in history. They offer excellent scratch-made food at the most affordable prices in their respective genres. Empire's bargains included chicken fried steak with mashed potatoes and gravy and hot beef sandwiches for \$10; breaded pork tenderloins for \$8; Chicago beef or cheese steak sandwiches for \$11; and a \$6 sandwich menu that includes pastrami and cheese, sloppy Joe's and ham and cheese. Breakfast deals included biscuits and gravy at \$4 or \$7; sausage, egg and cheese biscuits for \$4 and strawberry cheesecake Danish for \$4. Flatbreads cost \$9-11, and cheeseburgers were \$7. Even drinking was a bargain at The Empire, as specialty cocktails were \$5-8 and beers \$2-7.

Portofino owner Simon Mekaj is a chef. He comes



Portofino's veal picatta



from a restaurant family that owns seven cafes in the Dallas-Fort Worth metro and one in Mason City. His recipes are exceptional heirlooms. Portofino's veal picatta was my favorite version of the classic ever. It was generous with two slices of tenderized scallopine and lots of large capers. Its lemon-forward sauce was thicker than most. It was served on a bed of spaghetti, with a choice of salad or soup, for less than \$20. Lobster ravioli, covered with shrimp and fresh garden produce in a sweet pink sauce, cost \$22, the same price as Mahi Mahi or red snapper dinners with pasta and seafood sauces.



Empire hot beef



Salads were ice cold, and dressings were original. The house vinaigrette was made with red vinegar and tasted sweeter than any I've tried. Complimentary bread baskets were served piping hot from the oven. Pizza were made in four sizes, and all the largest (16-inch) pies were priced less than \$20. Lunch specials were all priced less than \$13 and included soup or salad and freshly baked rolls. ■

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



Dmitry Iakovlev at Irina's Steak & Seafood

We talked about changes in the restaurant business and the couple's long, strange trip to Iowa and citizenship.

Dmitry Iakovlev owns Irina's Steak & Seafood in West Des Moines with his wife, Irina Khartchenko. Since the restaurant is now 20 years old in Des Moines, we asked him to lunch to reminisce and talk about changes in the restaurant business and the couple's long, strange trip to Iowa and citizenship. He suggested we meet at Irina's, which opens daily at 3 p.m.

Twenty years is amazing in one of the toughest of businesses. Less than half of all new restaurants last five years. It must have taken a lot of scrambling and adjustments?

"We opened Irina's on 50th in West Des Moines in 2006. I remember her saying 'Keep an eye on that weird guy in the red sneakers. I think he's taking notes.'"

That would have been me. The first thing I remembered then was the extravagant flower arrangements. To this day, Irina's does flower presentations and lighting better than anyone else in town.

"That's all Irina. She loves flowers. Sometimes, we collaborate now with Boesen's. They are great, and a local company."

Irina's today is a nearly isolated local independent in the midst of international brand names of the Jordan Creek hood. How is that working?

"Twenty years ago, that was important. People liked supporting locals. It helped us on Hickman when we moved there in 2008. Today, in this neighborhood, I don't think people care one way or the other whether you are local or not. They just want to go somewhere they can have a good time."

Dmitri and Irina have probably done more renovation work than any other restaurateurs in Des Moines. They moved Irina's to Hickman in 2008 and then opened the current place on South Prairie View Drive in 2022. Which job was bigger, turning Razamatazz Bar on Hickman around, or transforming Bonefish into the present restaurant?

"The place on Hickman was a mess. The previous owner left in a hurry. There was an abandoned safe, and when we opened it, we found white powder. We just threw it all away. There was so much water damage that we had to tear off the drywall. We found contraband in the walls."

Then a few years later, someone sawed through the ceiling, probably looking to saw through the drywall?

"That was one theory. That was a crazy place back then. Here, when Bonefish left, they took everything. The bar was just a wall. No booths were left, nothing in

the kitchen. It was a complete rebuilding job."

Since opening in Jordan Creek, several new, all-prime steakhouses have moved into the neighborhood. The competition must be brutal?

"When we opened here, there was only Fleming's, then came Ruth's Chris and Prime & Providence. Plus, Oak Park opened in Des Moines. All those places appeal to our customers. We pivoted more to the high end. Our beef is Australian wagyu; they are 51% Japanese. In Japan, I think they take marbling too far. Look at this (he shows me photos of supermarket beef counters in Japan), even among the cheap cuts, the marbling is all above what would be USDA Choice here and you never see anything close to USDA Select, let alone USDA Good there.

"We spent months developing our gunpowder seasoning after Morton's quit selling it. We do other classic treatments. (I love Irina's black garlic jus with Bearnaise.) We found our ager in Germany. It can dry age 350 days, but I don't think Iowans want anything more than 30 days, sometimes 40. We only use King salmon and true Patagonian sea bass. And King crab. They are considerably more expensive, but I think people go out to taste something special."

Have dining habits changed much since COVID?

"Definitely. They are different in West Des Moines than in the city, too. People here today go home after work, change clothes and then go back out. 6 o'clock is the new 5 o'clock. We extended Happy Hour following COVID to 7 p.m. Also, customers go out less frequently. We have fewer customers who go out three or four times a week than we used to. Probably because of social media, there is a fascination with new places. I think more customers today try more different places. To stick around 20 years, you must adjust."

What adjustments has Irina's made?

"We don't have Russian dinners anymore. We used to book over 200 reservations for them but after the war in Ukraine began, we didn't want to be associated with them. Also, we used to be well known for our European vodkas, vodka flights and vodka shots. Not so much anymore. Some Russian vodkas are banned or effectively banned by tariffs. We used to supply rides for bachelorette parties doing vodka flights, not anymore. We still have some rare vodkas, but that's not part of our identity anymore."

The couple spent 10 years chasing the American Dream across Canada and California before moving to Iowa to start their family. When they first arrived,



in Montreal, they were broke. It took all their savings to get to Montreal. Neither spoke English or French.

"We were young. We could sleep in a car and live in garages. A lot of people in Southern California live in garages. But when Irina became pregnant, we needed a more peaceful place. We had friends in Postville who invited us there so we moved to Iowa.

"We only lasted a short time in Postville.

Immigration raids and factories were shutting down, so we moved to Des Moines and loved it immediately. Irina worked at Homemakers, and I worked at construction while studying graphic design. When we saved enough money, we opened the first restaurant."

They both have restaurant blood.

"I was raised in a restaurant in Sochi. That's a Black Sea resort town. Because it's circled by the Caucasus mountains, it has a winter season, but its climate is mostly like middle Florida. Irina grew up in Moscow. We met when she moved to Sochi."

Dmitri is a chef himself, but he leaves the kitchen all in the hands of Chef Gabe Grugello now. We think Gabe is the best chef in Des Moines that no one knows about. He came to Des Moines to open Mondo's in 1996. That was the first restaurant here to feature fresh and local product, before Bistro 43, Sage or Daniel.

"He's influenced Des Moines dining ever since. He's been with us eight years. He added a lot of Southwestern touches. His Southwest octopus with chorizo is the best treatment ever." ■

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



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The Huddle scores with Waukee sports fans

New Kettlestone Central sports bar combines 36 TVs, game-day fare, cocktails and a covered patio.

BY JACKIE WILSON

Football season kicked off more than a month ago, and one question is on the minds of sports fans everywhere: Where can I go to watch the game?

Fortunately, Des Moines and its suburbs have sports bar options galore. One of the newest, The Huddle, is recruiting hungry and thirsty fans who are ready to cheer on their favorite teams.

Located at 2285 Grand Prairie Parkway in Kettlestone Central, The Huddle sits in a growing area of Waukee near the Kee Town Loop and Vibrant Music Hall. Kettlestone is a sprawling development featuring businesses, neighborhoods, trails, entertainment and more, with additional attractions planned for the area.

The Huddle is part of the Dark Side of the Spoon venture, which has several local establishments, including Shirley's Bar & Grill, Merll's and Wellman's Pub. Co-owner Travis Tovrea says, "We're here to make memories; we're not just a sports bar."

Inside, The Huddle features an exposed ceiling, concrete floors and black-and-tan tables. A large corner booth can easily accommodate 10 friends, with plenty of other roomy booths throughout the restaurant. And with 36 televisions, there is no bad seat in the house when it comes to watching your favorite team.

Outside, a covered patio with a fireplace extends the outdoor season a little longer — something Iowans appreciate when temperatures begin to dip.

The decor is sports-themed without going over the top. Deflated basketballs from the All Iowa Attack basketball academy, located just around the corner, line

the entryway. A photo of Indiana Fever player Sophie Cunningham directs guests to the restrooms. Inside the women's restroom, whimsical koalas are shown in various activities, including drinking beer and eating burgers, giving guests something to look at while waiting for an open stall.

The food and drink menu features standard sports bar fare with most appetizers and entrees ranging from \$12 to \$18. The house classic cocktails include my new favorite with a caffeine kick: an espresso martini made with Smirnoff Vanilla Vodka and Mr. Black Cold Brew Coffee Liqueur (\$12).

A variety of bottled and draft beers, wine by the bottle and glass, seltzers and mocktails should satisfy nearly everyone's thirst.

Appetizers include meatballs, seared ahi tuna, Brussels sprouts and a feta-and-hummus platter, along with staples such as buffalo chicken dip, wings and more.

The salads offer crunchy, savory options including an Apple Walnut Salad, Sesame Crunch Salad and my latest obsession, the Wedge Salad. The iceberg lettuce is topped with bacon, tomatoes, blue cheese and red onion, then finished with blue cheese dressing (\$15).

Flatbreads come with toppings such as hot honey and Graziano's Italian sausage and range from \$15 to \$17. A gluten-free crust is available for an additional \$3.

The burgers and handhelds include wraps, a gyro, club, tenderloin, grinder and more, served with fries or tots. The Huddle Burger (\$17) includes a choice of dipping sauce and "crunch." Options include Doritos,



bacon bits or Flamin' Hot Cheetos.

Entrees include several pasta dishes, a chicken grain bowl and salmon. And if you are looking for dessert, you can get a taste of the Iowa State Fair with the deep-fried Oreos (\$10).

So, when it's time to huddle up with friends for the big game, The Huddle in Waukee gives sports fans a new place to grab a bite, order a drink and settle in for the action.

Just remember to arrive early. The only thing worse than watching your team lose is discovering the best seat in the house was taken by someone wearing the other team's jersey. ■

Jackie Wilson has written hundreds of articles for CITYVIEW and the Iowa Living magazines. She has covered many ordinary people living extraordinary lives.



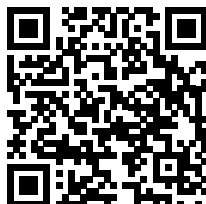
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BOOK REVIEWS

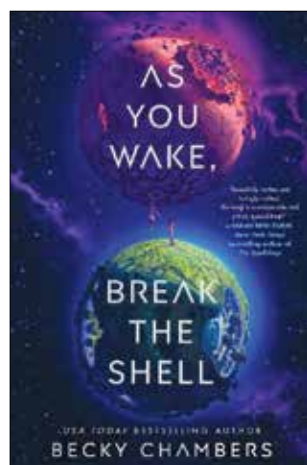
COURTESY OF BEAVERDALE BOOKS

'As You Wake, Break the Shell'

Becky Chambers has built a career proving that science fiction's true final frontier isn't deep space but deep feeling. How can something as vast as space be the setting for something so cozy and comfortable? How does she balance her deeply character-driven stories while still tickling the sci-fi traditions that keep us nerds happy? I'd call her a magician, but that's a different genre.

Set on a fractious, resource-starved planet called Fortune, the novel braids two timelines around Signy, a quietly rebellious botanist, and Cora, a space pilot whose symbiosis with her living ship is both wondrous and a creeping liability. The structure cuts between a present tender peace and the perilous past that led to their almost salvation.

Chambers' prose remains my favorite part of her works. Sharp and soothing with a melancholy accent — it's so lovely. While time-skipping is not a new narrative gimmick, it works so, so well here, acting as an argument that intimacy is always assembled retroactively, one fragment at a time. That's an excellent word for this book, intimate. I ached and cried and cheered and never wanted it to end. ■ — Review by Julie Goodrich



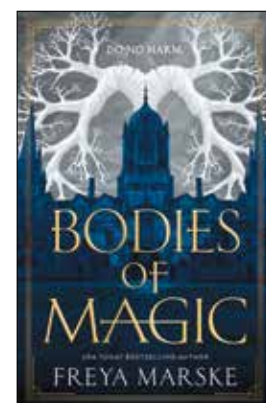
By Becky Chambers
10/13/26
480 pages
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'Bodies of Magic'

Usually, if a book has "everything," I'm more than a little skeptical. It's difficult enough to pull off one genre, let alone several. Yet Freya Marske has managed to make a medical-fantasy-dark-academia-murder-mystery sing with all its twining threads. This book was an absolute joy to read. It was surprisingly philosophical at times and a delicious mystery that kept me up way too late.

At the Academie in the Blue City, healing magic is a licensed trade, and the licensing exam is a five-day gauntlet for five randomly chosen students. When our intrepid scholars stumble on a corpse during their first day of testing, they are suddenly forced to face much more than an exam. Power, class, institutional corruption and their own ambitions are all at play in this twisty tale.

This is a book about institutional rot and the isolation of medical workers, making clear parallels to our current health care crises. Yet, the world still has a lived-in feel and a brilliant cast of characters rendered with real granularity and distinct personalities. There are explorations of ambition, resentment and grief in between the drama, and the mix is handled so deftly. This is a dazzling example of mixed-genre storytelling. Don't miss it. ■ — Review by Julie Goodrich



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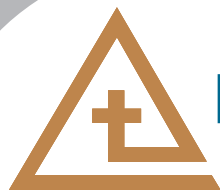
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Cost management for a healthy, happy furry friend

5 Ways to save money while giving your pet excellent care

(Feature Impact) You're not imagining it – like many goods and services, pet care costs have gone up.

In fact, Healthy Paws Pet Insurance reported a 38% increase in pet services over the past five years with pet parents spending more than \$4,200 a year on routine expenses for a cat or dog.

Lots of factors are driving increased costs, from higher ingredient prices for pet food – like meat and grains – to veterinary drug shortages. Add in rising labor and transportation costs and those everyday expenses can start to take a bigger bite out of your budget.

There are simple ways to keep costs in check, however, while still giving your furry friends the care they deserve:



52% of pet parents skipped or declined veterinary care services in 2025, with the majority citing cost as the key barrier.

Pet insurance can help manage risk. Most policies reimburse a percentage of covered veterinary costs after you meet a deductible, helping offset unexpected bills. Plans

vary, but average monthly premiums are around \$60 for dogs and \$30 for cats.

It's also important to be open with your veterinarian about financial concerns. In many cases, clinics may be able to offer payment plans, or look for low-cost-veterinary care resources in your area.

To find a local provider and learn whether pet support is available in your area, visit mealsonwheelsamerica.org/lovepets.



1. Prioritize preventive care

Routine checkups, vaccinations and screenings can catch health issues early when they are easier and less expensive to treat. Most pets should see a veterinarian at least once a year, while puppies, kittens and senior pets may need more frequent visits.

Preventive medications play an important role as well. Treating heartworm disease, for example, can cost thousands while monthly prevention costs \$15-\$30.

2. Focus on daily wellness

Consistent exercise helps reduce the risk of chronic conditions and supports overall health. Most dogs benefit from at least 30 minutes of daily activity while cats need regular play to stay active.

Feeding appropriate portions can also help with weight maintenance. Portion sizes vary, but a good starting point is the feeding guidelines on your pet food label, adjusting as needed with your veterinarian's input.

3. Find support in your community

Many local humane societies and rescue groups offer resources that make pet care more accessible, including low-cost vaccinations, spay and neuter services and discounted supplies.

For seniors, local Meals on Wheels providers can be important resources. With support from PetSmart Charities, many local providers offer free pet food and, in some cases, services like veterinary care and grooming. To date, 20 million pet meals have been delivered through this collaboration, helping keep pets healthy and in loving homes with older adults.

4. Plan ahead for unexpected costs

Even with routine care, unexpected illnesses or injuries can happen – and costs can add up. The PetSmart Charities-Gallup State of Pet Care research revealed

A companion through it all

A devastating cancer diagnosis left Lois hospitalized for eight months. Afterward, she began receiving home-delivered meals through her local Meals on Wheels provider. That connection proved to be a lifeline.

"When I was sick," Lois said, "the Meals on Wheels volunteers ... were the only company I had."

That changed when a small white kitten with calico markings showed up at her front door. Today, that kitten – now named Grace – is rarely far from Lois's side.

Though Grace softens Lois's loneliness, caring for a pet on a fixed income isn't always easy. For many seniors, it can mean making difficult choices, like stretching groceries or delaying medical care, just to afford pet food and supplies. Through support from her local provider, food is delivered for Grace as part of Lois's regular meal service, helping keep them both healthy, happy and, most importantly, together. 🐾

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CITYVIEW BEST 2024

THE WILD AND BUCCANEERS RETURN TO THE RINKS

Our local hockey teams hit the ice for another season.

By Cyote Williams

The Iowa Wild hockey team has reached 27 wins in three straight seasons now, finishing last year with a record of 27-36-6-3. Last season, the Wild hired a new head coach in Greg Cronin. Cronin's stint in Iowa was short-lived, now having left to be an assistant for the St. Louis Blues in the NHL. With a vacant spot open, the Wild hired Stu Bickel to replace him.

The hiring of Bickel means the Wild are on their third head coach in three years. Each of the previous two coaches have seen stretches of both good and bad hockey but hasn't been able to stick in Iowa. For the players' and fans' sake, they hope Bickel, a younger coach at just 39 years old, can call Iowa home for more than a season or two.

Jean-Luc Foudy scored five goals and had 20 assists for the Wild in 2025-26. Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of Iowa Wild

DEVELOPING A WINNER



Wild players celebrate with their team’s all-time leader in points, Gerry Mayhew.
Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of Iowa Wild

Winning will be on the mind of the coaching staff and players alike with hopes to turn the team’s performances around. One of the players Bickel is likely to lean on is center Gerry Mayhew.

Mayhew has logged plenty of minutes in Wild gear and added many good performances in doing so. In January of last year, Mayhew broke the Iowa Wild’s all-time points record. His 200th point with the team put him atop the Iowa Wild’s record books.

“I never really knew that I was that close to it, and I honestly never thought I’d come back to Iowa. And when I had the chance last year, it was awesome,” Mayhew said. “I started to hear rumblings about it, and you know there’s some really good names up at the top of that list who I’ve also played



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Bickel had a lengthy playing career, lasting a decade before transitioning into coaching. He spent the last five seasons as an assistant coach in the AHL and four seasons with the Coachella Valley Firebirds. In all five of those seasons, his teams made the Calder Cup Playoffs, something the Wild hasn’t done since 2023. We asked him what he was able to take from his playing days into his coaching career.

“I think there are certain aspects of coaching you learn when you get into coaching, being on the other side of the door and being a part of the conversation. I’ve learned a ton. I think, as a player, you don’t see all that work behind the scenes, so you definitely develop a new respect for that,” Bickel said. “But I also think that there are a lot of things that you can take away from your experience as a player, and there are a lot of positive and negative outcomes. I think that’s super valuable to be able to have those things that you can talk about and things that you’ve learned from that you can share with your players and help them along in their journey.”

During his playing days, Bickel spent some time with the Iowa Wild in 2014-2015. His professional playing career started with the Iowa Chops in 2008, so Bickel has spent time in Iowa before.

“I had a great experience in Iowa. It’s a great community, a great spot to raise a family. I’m familiar with the community, the fan base. We saw that as a huge positive for us for the opportunity. It was a really exciting opportunity because I know the people. I know they’re great people, and I know they want to win. I just saw that all as an overall positive for us,” Bickel said.



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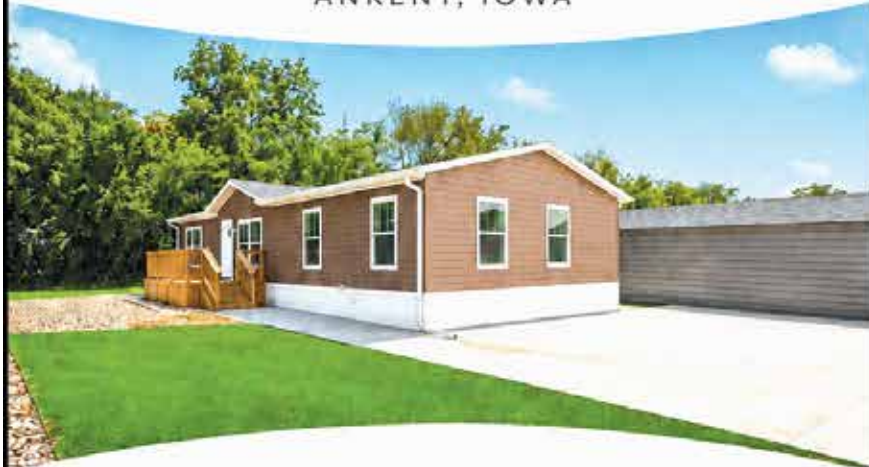


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Gerry Mayhew scored 22 goals and had 20 assists in 60 games for the Wild. Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of Iowa Wild

with for years, so it was a special moment for me, and I'm lucky to be back again. So maybe I can put that out of reach for some guys."

AHL teams, in general, experience lots of roster turnover, whether it be players changing teams for a new opportunity or players moving up and down the Wild organization. Mayhew spending so much time in Iowa has been a benefit for the fans, and seeing him back on the ice in Des Moines for another year will be a welcome sight.

At the time of our interview, Mayhew had recently spoken with his new head coach for the season and shared his thoughts on their conversation.

"We had a great talk, just got the lay of the land, asking questions back and forth. He seems like a great guy. I've heard nothing but good things about him. He seems up-tempo, which is awesome. He was just a great guy to talk to. He listens. I think that's an important thing to have. It is that back-and-forth communication with players and coaches to see what's going right, what's not going right," Mayhew said.

Managing a team that goes through so many changes on a year-by-year and week-by-week basis is one of the skates that Bickel will have to balance on as a first-time head coach.

"That's the process that I'm very used to being around, having been in the American League as a player for 10 years, and then the last five as a coach. I think it's super important that, as a staff, we're very clear that we have packages together to be able to get players up to speed quickly with how we do things. Certainly, we are going to have members of our leadership group who are going to be going up and down. It's surprising sometimes, in a great way, when you see young players that start to harness a leadership role in their own right. Those are traits that we'll be looking to develop in all of our players," Bickel said.

For a player's perspective on the same issue, we asked Mayhew what it's like for the players who can see their friends, and sometimes best teammates, being regularly shuffled around.

"I just try to look at it like it's a business, right? Guys are going to go up. Guys are going to come down. For me, regardless of whether I was up or down, I try to keep the same attitude, play the same way. Every team goes through that. You just have to adapt, and you can't really make an excuse for it," Mayhew said.

Both of them will have a main focus on turning the Wild back into a winning program. Bickel likes to be up-tempo as he and Mayhew stated, but he still needs to balance his style with how Minnesota wants to play so his players are ready for the NHL once they make the jump.

"We're going to be largely mirroring the systems of Minnesota, but we are looking at building a culture and building a winning expectation. That's going to be something that we talk a lot about with our group early on. I think it's important that you get your leaders on your team involved in the conversations early," Bickel said.



Wild fans consistently top attendance charts in the AHL. Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of Iowa Wild

He wants to develop a winning team, and part of developing good players is developing guys who want to win.

Mayhew spoke about the development of the rookies from last season and how another year of hockey under their belts should bode well for the Wild's win column.

"The rookies last year have had a year now, so in their second year, hopefully, their confidence is higher and they've adapted to the league. My expectations? I want to be top of the league, top of the division for sure. Playoff hockey is awesome. It's fun, and not to make it is a bummer. Last year we made a good push at the end, but it was just too little, too late, and I want to get back into playoff hockey," Mayhew said.

PROMOTING THE IOWA WILD

Another major part of what it takes to run a successful hockey team is how the organization makes the fan experience worthwhile. For that perspective, we interviewed the vice president of business operations, Allie Brown Korinek.

Korinek was part of the staff in 2013 and helped market Bickel when he joined the team as a player in 2014. Now, Korinek is further up in the front office, and Bickel is leading the Wild on the other side of the door.

"I'm excited to work with him. I've talked to him a couple of times, and he's really excited, pumped up to be here again. He has a family of his own that he's moved into the area, and I'm excited to see him in a different capacity as our coach. From what he said, he loved his time in Iowa and in Des Moines," Korinek said.

She deals with some of the same challenges that Bickel does with the rotating roster. Sure, she may be able to promote Mayhew and his excellent goal-scoring ability for most of the year, but the roster is continually changing, and she needs to let fans know who is here.

"From the marketing standpoint, it is important to tell that story of 'Hey, you get to see NHL players before they get to the NHL,' because the majority of them will go up to play in Minnesota or other teams around the NHL. That's a big push of ours. Come see them for less here, and see them before they make that complete switch," Korinek said. "The other thing is we focus a lot on the energy and the value in creating a big experience, not just around the sport of hockey and watching hockey, but also how can we just be a fun event for you to take your family to or your friends to."



Allie Brown Korinek.
Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of Iowa Wild

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- **Oct. 10** vs. Rockford IceHogs at 6 p.m. | **Kids Opening Night**
- **Oct. 21** vs. Milwaukee Admirals (Nashville Predators) at 7 p.m. | **Wild Wednesday**
- **Oct. 23** vs. Manitoba Moose (Winnipeg Jets) at 7 p.m. | **Hoptoberfest**
- **Oct. 24** vs. Manitoba Moose at 6 p.m. | **Book Club Night**
- **Oct. 30** vs. Charlotte Checkers (Florida Panthers) at 7 p.m. | **Wizard Night**
- **Nov. 1** vs. Charlotte Checkers at 3 p.m. | **Hockeyween**
- **Nov. 5** vs. Rockford IceHogs at 10:30 a.m. | **School Day Game**
- **Nov. 13** vs. Grand Rapids Griffins (Detroit Red Wings) at 7 p.m. | **Local Heroes Night**
- **Nov. 14** vs. Grand Rapids Griffins at 6 p.m. | **Veterans Appreciation Night**
- **Dec. 1** vs. Chicago Wolves (Carolina Hurricanes) at 7 p.m. | **TWOSday**
- **Dec. 5** vs. Grand Rapids Griffins at 6 p.m. | **Teddy Bear Toss**
- **Dec. 6** vs. Grand Rapids Griffins at 3 p.m.
- **Dec. 9** vs. Milwaukee Admirals at 7 p.m. | **Wild Wednesday**
- **Dec. 18** vs. Lehigh Valley Phantoms (Philadelphia Flyers) at 7 p.m. | **Winter Wonderland**
- **Dec. 19** vs. Lehigh Valley Phantoms at 6 p.m. | **Peanuts Night**
- **Dec. 29** vs. Texas Stars (Dallas Stars) at 6 p.m. | **\$2 Beer Night**
- **Dec. 31** vs. Texas Stars at 6 p.m. | **New Year's Eve Bash**
- **Jan. 4** vs. Chicago Wolves at 7 p.m.
- **Jan. 13** vs. Chicago Wolves at 7 p.m. | **Wild Wednesday**
- **Jan. 15** vs. Rockford IceHogs at 7 p.m.
- **Jan. 16** vs. Rockford IceHogs at 6 p.m. | **Country Night**
- **Jan. 29** vs. Henderson Silver Knights (Vegas Golden Knights) at 7 p.m. | **Military Appreciation Night**
- **Jan. 30** vs. Henderson Silver Knights at 6 p.m.
- **Feb. 12** vs. Tucson Roadrunners (Utah Mammoth) at 7 p.m.
- **Feb. 13** vs. Tucson Roadrunners at 6 p.m. | **Pink in the Rink**
- **Feb. 24** vs. San Diego Gulls (Anaheim Ducks) at 7 p.m. | **Women in Sports Night**
- **Feb. 26** vs. San Diego Gulls at 7 p.m. | **Neon Night**
- **March 7** vs. Grand Rapids Griffins at 3 p.m. | **Crash's Birthday**
- **March 12** vs. Manitoba Moose at 7 p.m.
- **March 13** vs. Manitoba Moose at 6 p.m. | **Racing Night**
- **March 24** vs. Milwaukee Admirals at 7 p.m. | **Wild Wednesday**
- **April 2** vs. Milwaukee Admirals at 7 p.m.
- **April 7** vs. Chicago Wolves at 7 p.m. | **Wild Wednesday**
- **April 9** vs. Texas Stars at 7 p.m. | **Fan Appreciation Weekend**
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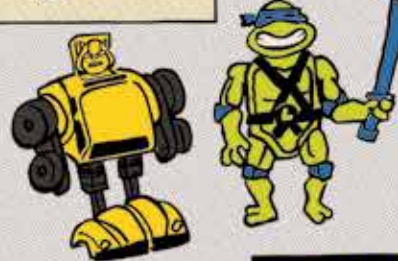
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The Wild’s front office has made a habit of winning awards from the AHL. In recent years, they have received recognition for their marketing. This offseason, the Wild won the Community Relations Excellence (Western Conference) Award. During last season, through their promotions, the Wild raised \$263,684 for local organizations, schools and nonprofits.

“It makes us proud to be able to make an impact. It’s exciting to be recognized by the league and to be that team that’s showcased throughout the league. What the Wild are doing in the community is really meaningful, and I think it’s just it’s really neat to continue to grow that. We’ll look to do that for years and years to come,” Korinek said.

The Wild will be doing similar promotions for local organizations this year. Some of the organizations they will be helping are the ALS Association, Boy Scouts of America, the John Stoddard Cancer Center and their regular reading program partnership with Des Moines Public Schools. Plus, they have partnerships with Blank Children’s Hospital, the Gabe Fleming Memorial Hockey Scholarship Fund, the Des Moines Youth Hockey Association and more.

In addition to helping those communities, the Wild have theme nights throughout the season ranging from Hoptoberfest to Wizards Night, Local Heroes Night, Veterans Appreciation Night and more.

DES MOINES BUCCANEERS

The Des Moines Buccaneers have an everlasting fanbase. The Bucs play in the United States Hockey League, the top junior ice hockey league in the country. Last year, the team made it into the playoffs after finishing fourth in the Western Conference with a 27-27-3 record and 62 points.

This was the first time the Bucs had made it into the Clark Cup Playoffs since the 2022-2023 season. The team would fall in the first round to the Lincoln Stars, but a return to the postseason was a welcome change.

This offseason, the Bucs have made several changes with one of them being the addition of a Hockey Analytics Department. Their plan is to utilize data and technology to make better-informed hockey decisions on and off the ice. The Bucs say it will be led by Addison DeBoer, whose role is expanding into general manager and vice president of hockey analytics. Joining DeBoer will be Drake University graduate Jeff Raymond, who will be the office manager and data analyst.

The Bucs also had several additions to their front office this offseason. The team hired David Driscoll as senior advisor, player development and sports performance. Connor Gagnon was also hired as assistant general manager, and Emily Reynolds was brought on as a skating coach.

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With these new additions to the team, the Bucs are aiming to return to their once-consistent dominance. With eight total titles to their names, missing the playoffs for several years is something they hope to avoid going forward.

For fans coming to watch the junior hockey players at the MidAmerican Energy RecPlex, the team put together a new season of promotions. This year will include opening day celebrations, Pink in the Rink, College Rivalry Night, 80s Night, Faith and Family Night, Zoo Night and more. ■

DES MOINES BUCCANEERS
HOME GAMES



- Oct. 2 vs. Omaha Lancers at 7:05 p.m. | Home Opener
- Oct. 3 vs. Tri-City Storm at 6:05 p.m. | Kids Opening Day — hat and mitten toss
- Oct. 10 vs. Lincoln Stars at 6:05 p.m. | Pink in the Rink, post-game jersey auction
- Oct. 16 vs. Waterloo Black Hawks at 7:05 p.m. | College Rivalry Night
- Oct. 30 vs. Youngstown Phantoms at 7:05 p.m.
- Oct. 31 vs. Youngstown Phantoms at 6:05 p.m. | Mutt Strut
- Nov. 13 vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints at 7:05 p.m. | Veterans Appreciation and Scouts Night
- Nov. 20 vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks at 7:05 p.m. | Red Out
- Nov. 21 vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks at 6:35 p.m. | 80s Night
- Nov. 27 vs. Chicago Steel at 7:05 p.m.
- Nov. 28 vs. Chicago Steel at 6:35 p.m. | Faith and Family Night, Teddy Bear Toss
- Dec. 4 vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders at 7:05 p.m. | Youth Sports Night — Bucs pennant giveaway
- Dec. 15 vs. Cedar Rapids RoughRiders at 7:05 p.m. | Silent Night, Ugly Sweater Out
- Jan. 2 vs. Omaha Lancers at 6:35 p.m. | Farmers Appreciation, post-game jersey auction, post-game skate
- Jan. 8 vs. Madison Capitols at 7:05 p.m. | Margaritaville Night
- Jan. 9 vs. Madison Capitols at 6:35 p.m. | Zoo Night
- Jan. 15 vs. Sioux Falls Stampede at 7:05 p.m. | Bingo Night
- Jan. 17 vs. Waterloo Black Hawks at 3:05 p.m. | Frosty Cup; Sensory-Friendly Game and Autism Awareness Night
- Jan. 21 vs. Tri-City Storm at 7:05 p.m.
- Feb. 12 vs. Waterloo Black Hawks at 7:05 p.m. | Women in Sports Night
- Feb. 13 vs. Dubuque Fighting Saints at 6:35 p.m. | Lunch bag giveaway, post-game skate
- Feb. 19 vs. Fargo Force at 7:05 p.m. | Des Moines Youth Hockey Association Night
- Feb. 20 vs. Fargo Force at 6:35 p.m. | Guns N’ Hoses; Family and Billet Appreciation Night
- Feb. 27 vs. Sioux City Musketeers at 7:05 p.m. | Country Night
- March 2 vs. Lincoln Stars at 11:05 a.m. | School Day Game
- March 5 vs. Waterloo Black Hawks at 7:05 p.m. | Dupaco Night — Dupaco giveaway
- March 6 vs. Sioux City Musketeers at 7:05 p.m. | Barkaneers, post-game jersey auction
- March 10 vs. Muskegon Lumberjacks at 6:35 p.m. | Winger’s Birthday
- March 27 vs. Omaha Lancers at 6:05 p.m. | Hard Hat Appreciation Night — post-game jersey auction
- April 2 vs. Sioux Falls Stampede at 7:05 p.m. | Fan Appreciation Night

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AROUND TOWN

PHOTOS BY MARY FOWLER

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DES MOINES FORGOTTEN

BY KRISTIAN DAY

Where movie fans found their tribe

Best Place Ever was a place where curious teenagers could discover everything from obscure horror to Criterion classics.



Photos by Adam Seneca

I loved going to the video rental store as a kid. In the Quad Cities, there was Hogan's Video in Moline along with The Movie Store and Jeff's Corner in Milan. The first two shut down when chains such as Blockbuster Video moved in. Jeff's got in trouble for dubbing bootleg tapes to increase its inventory and make more money on rentals.

In Cedar Rapids, there was Mr. Movies, a place where I could rent seven movies for \$7 — a cheap weekend thrill for a kid with a working single mother. This is where I found my taste for movies such as "Faces of Death," "Phantasm" and "Class of Nukem" High." They set the tone for what I would fall in love with later in life.

Des Moines had its spots, too. When I moved here in 2007, I was instantly told about Best Place Ever. Sadly, I never made the pilgrimage. Everything I have come to know about the place has been through friends who found it during the impressionable years of their lives.

You may have seen the stickers: "Have you ever been to the BEST PLACE EVER?" For teenagers Angelo Rossi and Saulaman Schlegel, spotting those stickers around the Drake neighborhood was the beginning of a mystery.

Rossi, who cleaned windows and swept floors at The Lift and Vaudeville Mews while in high school, remembers joking with friends about the name. Schlegel recalls driving around a corner in the Drake neighborhood and realizing the place actually existed. What they found was a video store with shelves that could send any teenager with a taste for cinema into a euphoric state.

Best Place Ever opened in 2003, according to founding owner TJ Wood. He, Adam Senecaut and Grant Wilson were in their early 20s and looking for something to build together. They loved Oddities, a

video store in Sherman Hill, and felt the void when it closed.

They developed a business plan for a store of their own while sitting at the now-gone Cup O' Kryptonite coffee shop. Wood said his parents mortgaged the family home to secure the loan. The three took a space near Drake on 24th Street, renovated it and built the shelves themselves.

Rossi remembers the layout being similar to a chain rental store but with "the atmosphere of a Midwest church basement." Its selection, he said, was another matter. Instead of dozens of copies of a blockbuster, there might have been one copy of "Hated: GG Allin & the Murder Junkies."

The founders wanted to stock the films they had trouble finding elsewhere. Wood said Grant developed a room devoted to Criterion releases. The partners sought obscure titles and cultivated customers who shared their curiosity. They advertised, cross-promoted with neighboring businesses and put coupons in Big Tomato Pizza boxes.

"That appetite for discovery shaped the screening room in back. Inside the doors, there were a couple of couches and a large television," Wood said.

Customers could reserve the room to watch films, and roughly a dozen titles were restricted to in-store viewing because they were costly or difficult to replace. Wood recalled an official DVD of "Begotten," the 1990 experimental horror film that became an obsession for him, and a rare Criterion edition of "The Killer."

To play some imported DVDs, the store acquired region-free players that could handle discs American players could not. Rossi says much of his time at Best Place Ever has become blurred, but watching that film in the back room has not.

"That's an important one for me," he said.

Schlegel took friends there to watch "Begotten," "Rubber Johnny" and "Eraserhead," sometimes returning to a film more than once. He remembers renting "American Hardcore" and a documentary about GG Allin. His mother found out about the latter, made him watch part of it with her and told him never to bring anything like it into her house again.

He took dates to Best Place Ever, too, and he suspects that it did not always make a favorable impression.

Wood left after about six years when the startup loan was paid off. He does not know precisely why the store later closed, but, at the time, Netflix was a four-letter word. It killed Blockbuster, Movie Gallery and Family Video with its mail-order DVD program, which is now long gone, too.

I asked Wood if he thought video stores could make a comeback here, as they have in other communities. We riffed back and forth on the idea, but one thing seems clear: If streaming fatigue is ever going to create an opening for the old video-store experience, that moment may be here.

Because people are not just tired of scrolling through 14 streaming services trying to decide what to watch. They miss discovering something. They miss wandering the aisles. They miss arguing with a friend over what to rent. They miss the weird movie tucked between two movies they have never heard of. They miss taking a chance.

Maybe that is what Best Place Ever really sold. Not movies. Possibilities. ■

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 KFME. Instagram: @kristianday | Twitter: @kristianmday



AROUND TOWN

PHOTOS BY AARON BURNS



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FILM REVIEW

BY DAVID ROWLEY

'Coyote vs. ACME' is the Looney Tunes movie nobody was supposed to see

The cleverly named law firm of Avery, Jones and Maltese (after legends Tex Avery, Chuck Jones and Michael Maltese) tells you right away how much affection is baked into this merrie melody.

It's a small miracle "Coyote vs. ACME" exists. Warner Bros. shelved the finished film as a tax write-off, and, well, that was all, folks ... for about three years.

Then came a wave of public and industry backlash, and Ketchup Entertainment stepped in to distribute and got it into theaters. That history makes the movie's message hit harder, because this is a story about never giving up when the game looks rigged.

Loosely inspired by Ian Frazier's New Yorker piece from 1990, the film drops cartoons and humans into the same world, a la "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?" After decades of undying loyalty to ACME's busted gadgets and paying for them in pain, Wile E. Coyote decides to sue.

Enter Kevin Avery (Will Forte), a small-time personal injury attorney whose whole strategy is to sue and settle. But the Coyote wants his day in court.

The canine forces his lawyer, kicking and screaming, to demand satisfaction for years of pain, humiliation and hunger. Kevin will even come face to face with ACME's high-priced legal team, including college nemesis Buddy Crane (John Cena) and the reigning rooster in the ACME hen house, Foghorn Leghorn. But the more Wile and Kevin dig into the company's books, the more apparent a conspiracy exists that includes informants, missing celebrities and corruption that goes all the way to D.C. (DC?)

What I loved most is how aware these characters are that they're cartoons. The fourth-wall breaks, and sign gags are some of the best jokes in the movie. The film keeps revisiting Wile E.'s old failures, because it clearly understands why he's been funny for so long.

The human cast is a real strength, too. Kevin is also way more relatable than I expected. He's the kind of guy who keeps taking on jobs and somehow ends up where everything seems destined to fail. Will Forte is the ideal lead; the same way Wile E. is the ideal driving force for the story. He commits completely, even when Kevin is totally tapped out, and he has real rapport with his animated co-star.

As for Wile E., he's a terrible client. He's stubborn. He doesn't listen. He shreds paperwork and acts like nothing happened. And he keeps lying to Kevin, because he has his own desired endgame for the lawsuit.

Then there's the supporting cast of toons. Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and Tweety Bird are minor characters that support the story instead of driving it. The film opts for



"Coyote vs. ACME"

PG | 1 hour, 40 minutes

Director: Dave Green

Writers: Samy Burch, James Gunn, Jeremy Slater

Stars: Will Forte, Lana Condor, John Cena

deeper (deeper in the sense that kids probably wouldn't recognize them) cuts like Dr. Lorre or Foghorn Leghorn. Foghorn Leghorn is the powerful head of ACME, and it's a perfect joke for a character whose whole blowhard personality is being the loudest person in the room and saying whatever comes to mind. Elmer Fudd chairs a Senate investigating committee, acting as the inside man for Leghorn in the government.

The plot around the toons, a shady product-testing program called Project Sisyphus, gives the David-and-Goliath story some bite. Swap in a Big Tech oligarchy for ACME, and you get the idea.

The courtroom stuff is OK, but the movie can't quite decide whether it's aiming at adults, who are supposed to catch the sendups of Looney Tunes creators, or kids, who get to wallow in the antics. My 8-year-old son was laughing throughout the slapstick but asking more questions during the legal antics. It probably should have picked one, but it still works.

Occasionally, "Coyote vs. ACME" gets so enmeshed in its legal thriller setup, it forgets the gonzo glee that should be in the punchline. A bit like an actual New Yorker joke, it impresses the mind, but the humor never quite spreads to the gut (or heart).

Like the much-aggrieved coyote, it deserves to be championed for his determination and resilience rather than henpecked for not being the perfect witness. Not since the days of Roger Rabbit on the big screen has anyone so clearly understood the appeal of these Looney Tunes treasures.

"Coyote vs. ACME" is an affectionate throwback that works as a legal comedy, a slapstick showcase and a surprisingly moving story about friendship, all at once. Not every joke lands, but the heart of it does. If you grew up on these cartoons, give it a chance. ■

PREVIEWS

BY DAVID ROWLEY

"Primetime"

R | 1 hour, 50 minutes

Director: Lance

Oppenheim

Writers: Luke Dittrich,

Ajon Singh

Stars: Robert Pattinson, Merritt Wever, Skyler

Gisondo

In 2006, "To Catch a Predator" host Chris Hansen (Robert Pattinson) sets out to make television history with his segment on Dateline NBC. At its core, "Primetime" is not an indictment of the show itself, although it expertly recreates the aesthetic of the era to highlight how "To Catch a Predator" not just blurred the line between journalism and entertainment but gleefully stepped over it every chance it got. Rather, the movie is a meditation on the performative nature of the people purporting to be telling the truth.



"The Stunt Driver"

R | 1 hour, 39 minutes

Director/Writer:

Michael Dowse

Stars: Jay Baruchel, Ed

Helms, Ben Foster

The film is based on the true story of Montrealer Ken Carter (Jay Baruchel), the "Mad Canadian" stunt driver who tried to jump the Saint Lawrence River in a rocket car in the mid-1970s. Carter's dream was to end his 30-year career with a big jump, a big paycheck and mega stardom. In the process of accomplishing it, he hired a big sports manager and enlisted the best in rocket car design with the National Film Board of Canada filming a documentary leading up to the event.



"Digger"

R | 2 hours, 8 minutes

Director: Alejandro G.

Iñárritu

Writers: Sabina

Berman, Jez

Butterworth,

Alexander Dinelaris

Stars: Tom Cruise, Riz Ahmed, John Goodman

"Digger" is an upcoming black comedy directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu and starring Tom Cruise as an eccentric oil tycoon who triggers a global ecological disaster. The film, which also features John Goodman, Riz Ahmed and Sandra Hüller, follows the most powerful man in the world as he embarks on a frantic mission to prove he is humanity's savior before the disaster he's unleashed destroys everything. ■



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The audio immersiveness of great radio theatre

Halloween brings a special theatricality to our lives. A glut of horror film reruns and literary choices are as plentiful as pop-up Halloween supplies shops with classics from Poe to the modern king of horror Steven King to more recent delights such as R. L. Stine.

For many, it's the seasonal live performing productions that truly titillate. Macabre surprises, and mayhem within a myriad of haunted houses attract countless fans of fright. The tradition of costuming, whether for youthful trick-or-treating or for adult cosplaying, lets young and old alike adopt an alter ego for a brief time.

Few things match the audio immersiveness of great radio theatre. Harkening to the bygone audio artform that captivated America, this earliest form of mass entertainment played out through radio stations across the nation as they beamed their shows into the national homefronts. Add the beguiling charm and wit of the commercials peppered throughout these shows, and every listening audience soon became fixated with tuning into their favorite weekly offerings.

This appealing performance art has been rekindled by Final Act Ensemble (FAE), based at the Des Moines Playhouse. In true opportunistic creation, this talented group has conjured a concoction of Halloween-y delight with their new show, "Fright Night." This show promises to hold a bucketful of Golden Age of Radio treats, original works in the vein of that era, and a generous dose of rib-tickling commercials and content. FAE Director Jerry Eisenhour spared time to provide some details.

CS: Give us an overview of the FAE.

JE: The FAE is an old-time radio group of senior citizens, 55 or 60 and older, who love old time radio. We've been doing this for almost 20 years now. We take old-time radio scripts, edit them down, put several of the skits together, write some nutty commercials, do some songs from the 1940s, the Golden Age of radio. We put them together and go to retirement centers, churches, schools, the Iowa State Fair.

CS: Talk a little about preparing for your performances.

JE: We have a lot of fun. We rehearse the songs, we rehearse the segments and put in light sound effects. This is a very valuable part of the show, just like old-time radio. It's all about getting the story across to people. That's the thing.

People have loved hearing stories from cave days, and that's what the FAE does. We tell a story, we're reading a story to (the audience), adding sound effects and music. A lot of our shows are comedy. We love to do comic shows. Fibber McGee & Molly and George Burns &



Ira Lacher, Molly Ketchum, and Barbara Keck of the Final Act Ensemble. Photo courtesy of Des Moines Playhouse

Gracie Allen represent some of the material we use.

CS: Share something about your special Halloween show.

JE: It has three segments. First is a story about a woman who lived 300 years ago, but her husband in the present day doesn't know she's that old. Second, we have a segment written by a member of the group, Susie McCaulley, who has written several scripts for us. This one is about a group of teenagers who are taking a ride after a late-night rehearsal, and things get complicated and frightening. The last segment is a short story by Ambrose Bierce. I don't want to tell too much, but it's one of the most horrifying things we have every done. It's ghostly, there's murder, all sorts of ghostly things. We also have two commercials written by group members that are absolutely nuts. One is about selling products to movie monsters.

CS: Are there any misconceptions people should dispel about FAE?

JE: People that hear this is a group of senior citizens doing the performances, they think of — I hate to say this — "doddering old people." This group of people is anything but doddering. They are lively, they are enthusiastic, they are spirited and, boy, do they have fun... maybe more fun than they should.

More Halloween mayhem

Perhaps inspired by their senior counterparts at the Playhouse, the continually developing programming at Class Act Productions (CAP Theatre) in Altoona is giving young performers a similar experience as they produce their first radio theatre. Drawing from the Gothic fiction and horror of Edgar Allan Poe, this group of budding thespians presents "CAP Radio Hour: Poe's Dark Tales" in early October. The Kate Goldman Family Series delivers a seasonally appropriate show in the Junie B Jones franchise, "Junie B Jones in Boo...and I Mean It." Plus, the kooky, quirky Addams Family comes to life

BARE BOARDS CHATTER

About Time Theatre. "Building a Wall." Oct. 2-11.

Des Moines Performing Arts – Temple Theatre. "Bluebird Improv." Oct. 3.

Des Moines Performing Arts – Live at the Temple Theater. Alysha Brilla. Oct. 2.

Iowa Stage Theatre Company. "Reefer Madness." Oct. 2-11.

CAP Theatre – CAP Radio Hour: Poe's Dark Tales. Oct. 2-4.

About Time Theatre. "Building the Wall." Oct 2-11.

Des Moines Performing Arts – Temple Theater. "Bluebird Improv." Oct. 3.

Des Moines Playhouse. "Come from Away." Through Oct. 4.

Ankeny Community Theatre. "Clue." Through Oct. 4.

Des Moines Performing Arts – Temple Comedy Series. "Hold on to Your Butts." Oct. 6-11.

Des Moines Performing Arts – Temple Made in the Midwest. "Tae & The Neighborly." Oct. 15.

Des Moines Playhouse – Kate Goldman Family Series. "Junie B Jones in Boo...and I Mean It." Oct. 16 – Nov. 1.

Des Moines Performing Arts – Wellmark Family Series. "Velveteen, A New Musical." Oct. 17.

Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre. "The Addams Family School Edition." Oct. 23 – Nov. 1.

Des Moines Performing Arts. "Spamalot." Oct. 20-25.

Des Moines Playhouse – Final Act Ensemble. "Fright Night." Oct. 27.

Des Moines Performing Arts – Dance Series. "Ailey II." Oct. 27.

Des Moines Symphony. "Beautiful Monsters – John Williams and Symphonie Fantastique." Oct. 31 - Nov 1.

Des Moines Performing Arts. "Jim Henson's Fraggle Rock: Back to the Rock Live." Nov. 6.

through Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre. Plenty of showtime treats for all. ■

John Busbee produces "The Culture Buzz," a weekly arts and culture radio show on www.kfm.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.



BEAT brings King Crimson's progressive rock legacy to Waukee

Adrian Belew, Tony Levin, Steve Vai and Terry Bozzio reunite to reinterpret the music that helped define prog rock.

In 1968, as rock styles emerged with the Beatles, the Who and other classic rock groups, one genre slowly began making headlines: progressive rock.

Leading the prog-rock revolution was King Crimson. The band's 1969 debut album, "In the Court of the Crimson King," is regarded as a landmark of progressive rock. The band released seven albums in the 1970s before breaking up as its members moved on to other projects.

Various iterations of King Crimson evolved over several decades with longtime band member Adrian Belew playing a key role. Belew sang, played guitar and wrote songs for King Crimson while also performing with other bands and pursuing a successful solo career.

In 2019, Belew wanted to honor King Crimson's 1980s albums. His vision was simple: Present a creative reinterpretation of the band's albums "Discipline," "Beat" and "Three of a Perfect Pair." Belew's producers assembled a band, but the COVID-19 pandemic halted production.

"We all had other commitments," he said. "It took five years to corral all the guys back."

In 2024, BEAT formed, featuring a powerhouse foursome of experienced musicians: Belew, Tony Levin, Steve Vai and Terry Bozzio.

BEAT kicked off a 40-concert tour with the first show selling out in three hours. The successful tour led to international dates, including stops in South America and Japan.

"We did a show at the Budokan. It was my favorite and a memorable venue," he said.

The tour continued through Europe with 31 shows in 21 countries. Now BEAT is back in the United States, performing King Crimson's music at Vibrant Music Hall in Waukee on Oct. 18.

King Crimson developed a distinctive sound that

incorporated electronic drums, synthesizers and other experimental elements, blending rock with classical, jazz and other genres. The musicians pushed boundaries with longer songs, complex arrangements and unusual time signatures.

Over the years, King Crimson's resurgence and presence on social media have introduced the music to a new generation.

"The younger generation has tuned in," he said. "There are no other bands that sound like it."

When Belew first took guitar lessons at age 16, he never dreamed he would have a career in music. Record making was a slow process, and he was 27 before experiencing significant success.

"Frank Zappa heard me playing in a dark nightclub and asked me to come in for an audition," he said. "Within four years, I played with Frank Zappa, David Bowie, Peter Dinklage and Talking Heads. I came in riding high on Bowie's success. My music career? I came in the back door."

Throughout his career, Belew has recorded 28 solo albums, writing, playing all the instruments and singing on each one.

Along the way, he has played with numerous bands, including Nine Inch Nails. He also won an Oscar for a Pixar movie. Yet performing the music of King Crimson endured.

"I took a left turn playing King Crimson. It wasn't always a popular band, but it was the music for me. I don't regret it," he said.

As a longtime musician, Belew has witnessed numerous changes in the music industry.

"Live performance is really the only way you can make money. It's not about album sales," he said. "I'm not a businessman. I'm a creator."

He understands the impact of social media yet is



Adrian Belew. Photo by Igor Vereshchagin

often discouraged by public comments.

"There are a lot of things not true. I have to stop myself from looking at Instagram or Reddit. If you're in the public eye, you're a target," he said. "The only truth I want people to know about are the 28 solo records that I wish everyone would listen to."

Making music has not always produced hit records.

"I don't care," he said. "I write what I want to hear. I write to get it out of my head."

Belew says he is fortunate to perform for his fans.

"It's all about the fans. When the love pours back at a concert, it's an adrenaline rush. You feel great. People tell me that I can't stop smiling," he said. "The show is done in a flash. It's not a bad job to have." ■

SOUND ADVICE

BY JACKIE WILSON

Join the Winterset Cidery for "Decades On The Orchard" on Oct. 17. The Winterset orchard located offers a stage beneath open skies with concert music from the oldies to classic rock, to 1990s alt to early 2000s. Each set promises to "take you back and keep you dancing." Bands include **Dirty Rotten Scoundrels**, **Not Quite Brothers** and **Emo Kids**. Tickets are \$30. Discount tickets are available at the Winterset Cidery on Oct. 10. For more info, visit www.unfilteredevents.vip/event-

[details/decades-on-the-orchard](http://www.unfilteredevents.vip/event-).

Congratulations to Des Moines area musicians **Standing Hampton** and **Damon Dotson**, who were inducted into the 2026 Iowa Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame. Blues and rock musician **Bob Pace** received a Lifetime Achievement Award. Local "admitted" band groupie, **Valerie Kane**, was presented with the Spirit Award. For information on other Iowa inductees, visit www.iowarocknroll.com/halloffame.

Formerly known as Summer Sundays, Autumn at the Amphitheater brings free live music to the Jamie Hurd Amphitheater in West Des Moines on Sundays. On Oct. 4, catch the **Weary Ramblers**; Oct. 11 is **Standing Hampton**. ■

Jackie Wilson has written hundreds of articles for CITYVIEW and the Iowa Living magazines. She covers ordinary people living extraordinary lives.



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Halloween music, death dances and artists on fire

At its haughtiest levels, the art world believes it is more evolved than everybody else. It is married to the concept of the avant-garde, always pushing boundaries and defying convention. It is a cult beholden to no outside influences. It occupies the cool kids' table and rarely grants a seat to outsiders, until its funding is jeopardized. Money, it turns out, is its life blood just like it is to the unwashed masses.

Last month the uber elitist board of the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York experienced an existential crisis. Their annual Met Gala, the ultimate celebrity roll call that this year raised \$42 million in one night, was forced to retreat from its plan to make John Galliano its latest Jean Genet revival.

Genet was a 20th century career thief and prostitute who was resurrected by the art world to praise the "beauty of evil," particularly the evil of insurrectionists in Palestine and the black ghettos of California. Galliano was a designer for elite brands Givenchy, Dior and Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy. He was fired by them all after being convicted in France for anti-Semitic and racist tirades and for praising the evil works of Hitler, all on video.

Longtime Met Gala Chair and Vogue icon Anna Wintour (Merle Streep played her in "The Devil Wears Prada") announced that Galliano would not be the subject of this year's Costume Institute exhibit, which was supposed to be his resurrection moment. It turned out that wealthy New Yorkers have had enough Anti-Semitism for this decade. Like all things Vogue, Wintour polished the turd. "John's decision to ask the museum to postpone the exhibition devoted to his work is very courageous and a measure of the man he is." That did not appease the outrage. Wintour was rumored to be in trouble holding on to her reputation and job, by Inside Edition.

In Des Moines, the arts scene is neither canceling or postponing plans. Des Moines Art Center's annual gala in September went off without insults or apologies. The museum expands its long exploration of Caribbean artists in October with a painting show, "Let Us Gather in a Flourishing Way," which expands the Caribbean to include Central American Latinx artists. Also, the intriguing print show "Artists on Fire" continues through Jan. 10.

Des Moines Symphony's Oct. 31 through Nov. 1 show celebrates Halloween with John Williams' "Devil's Dance," Mussorgsky's "Night on Bald Mountain," Liszt's virtuosic "Totentanz" and Berlioz's "Symphonie Fantastique." Liszt Prize winner



Louise Bourgeois' Spider in Pappajohn Sculpture Park

Derek Wang will play piano on "Totentanz."

At Moberg Gallery, David Dahlquist's new works opens Oct. 2 and plays into November. Olson Larsen's Gallery Night show will be "Human Experience," with six Midwestern artists whose works express different facets of being human. While some of the artists use their own body as a stand-in for broader metaphors, you'll see others tap into the tradition of art historical tableau paintings contrasted with nostalgic plus contemporary scenes of everyday life. Iowans Brittany Brooke Crow, Tim Olson and Mitchell Squire are joined by Minnesotan Ruth Shively, Michigan's Rachael Van Dyke and Nebraska's Watie White.

Civic Music Association's 101st season begins Oct. 2 with a collaboration by Boston Brass and Turtle Island blending classical, jazz and crossover styles reimagining

of "Romeo and Juliet." Then they move from Kabalevsky and Prokofiev to Elvis Costello's "Juliet Letters" and Bernstein's "West Side Story."

Des Moines Ballet takes stage at Hoyt Sherman theater Oct. 23-24 featuring a world premiere inspired by Edgar Allan Poe — "Ghost Ballads," choreography by Adriana Pierce, more famously the founder of Queer the Ballet. The show continues with excerpts from "Giselle," the peasant girl betrayed by a noble fraud who returns as a ghostly spirit tricking her lover to dance to his death. A "Thriller" improvisation concludes those shows. ■

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

Art you can't predict

Des Moines-area vending machines trade candy bars for miniature original artwork, and the surprise is part of the fun.

Put a few coins or dollars into a vending machine, and you usually know what is coming out: a cold soda, a salty snack or a sweet treat for a quick pick-me-up. Vending machines are all about instant gratification.

But one new vending machine concept in the Des Moines metro offers something a little different. Instead of a snack, drop four quarters into the slot, and out comes an original, miniature piece of art.

The art vending machines are a joint effort between Operation Downtown, the Greater Des Moines Partnership and Mainframe Studios. Operation Downtown approached Mainframe with the idea after organizers noticed similar machines in other large cities and were intrigued by the unique offering. Operation Downtown then recruited Mainframe Studios artists to provide the artwork.

Artists create original pieces small enough to fit inside the machines, generally no larger than 4 inches by 4 inches. Currently, the work of 22 artists is represented in five machines across the metro.

The fun is in dropping in the quarters and not knowing what you will get. Each machine showcases the work of five to six artists at varying locations.

Libby Crimmings, Mainframe's community engagement coordinator, says the vending machines have become a surprising attraction for art lovers.

"It's the nostalgia aspect when somebody puts in a quarter. We purposely made it as a surprise. There's a lot of excitement. It's very popular," she said. "It's a childlike wonder when they pull out the piece."

Some people visit all of the vending machine locations in an effort to collect every miniature art piece.

"It's like a scavenger hunt. Some treat it like Pokémon cards and they want to collect them all," she said. "You can't even buy a pack of gum for a dollar, but you can buy a piece of art."

The machines are not just for art collectors. The artists themselves enjoy the challenge of creating a miniature piece.

"It's an especially fun challenge for some artists who are used to making humongous paintings," Crimmings said. "Now it's a new format. Artists have gotten stuck in a creative rut and this helps provide a new challenge."

Each piece is a limited edition. Once it is dispensed, that particular piece will not be



"Buzz Off" by Jay Vigon



"Mushroom" by Jeff Rider



"Candy Snail" by Maddy Fusco



Libby Crimmings

available again. A few artists have even placed a one-of-a-kind surprise in the machines, similar to a "golden ticket."

The artwork includes stickers, line-cut designs made on rice paper, handmade and signed prints, and even a miniature piñata that folds up and pops out.

Artists are paid through Operation Downtown, and the artwork often includes links to the artists, helping promote their work.

Once the machines are emptied, a new batch of artists and artwork will be loaded. Organizers hope to feature new artists every four months.

Mainframe Studios is the largest nonprofit studio for artists in the United States. The facility is at 100% occupancy, with 181 studios and 220 creatives, as some artists share studio space. Nine nonprofits also are located at Mainframe, and a waitlist exists for studio space.

First Fridays is an open house held the first Friday of each month, giving the public an opportunity to meet artists and purchase art while experiencing art activities, live entertainment and food options. In recent months, 2,400 people have attended First Fridays.

"The mini art is a great way to promote artists. Des Moines is impressive. You can be a working artist here. The art and culture scene is thriving," she said.

For a list of vending machine locations and participating artists, visit www.mainframestudios.org/mini-art-vending-machines. ■

Jackie Wilson has written hundreds of articles for CITYVIEW and the Iowa Living magazines. She covers ordinary people living extraordinary lives.



JOE'S NEIGHBORHOOD

BY JOE WEEG

Riding the carousel in Union Park

Look at that. The giraffe is cocking her head and looking at you with those soft, human eyes, wondering when you're going to hop up into the saddle. Wow, and she's standing next to that black racing horse decked out in carnival gear, who is standing next to the bucking zebra with her mouth open in a whinny. And all three are in front of that hopping bunny — who is just behind the sprinting ostrich. Unbelievable.

My granddaughter chooses the panda.

The Heritage Carousel of Des Moines in all its wonder — 16 horses, two rabbits, two zebras, two bears, one tiger, one panda, one ostrich, one giraffe, one stork, one cat, one baby elephant and one sea creature. Am I missing anything?

Planted on the high ground in Union Park, this carousel is 32,000 pounds of pure joy. A kid rides for 50 cents. Smiles are free.

In a world where AI is beckoning us into a dark alley, where severe storms, drought and weird weather are today's forecast, where we are all too willing to "other" anyone who doesn't look like us, talk like us,

vote likes us, worship like us or is us — the carousel is a joy-filled gift from heaven, available to one and all.

"But no matter their colors, the horses all go at the same speed as they circle round and round. They start together. They finish together, too. Nobody is first and nobody is last. Everyone is equal when you ride a carousel." — Sharon Langley and Amy Nathan, "A Ride to Remember: A Civil Rights Story."

How did this carousel even happen?

Let's start with J.C. "Buz" Brenton.

"He was in Hartford, Connecticut, on business (in the 1970s), and he had some time before he had to leave, and so he went to Bushnell Park. And there's a carousel there. And he sat there watching the people come. Families, grandparents and grandkids all came. And he just watched them for a couple hours, and just thought — Des Moines needs this."

Jackie Cacciatore tells me this story over a cup of coffee. She is the executive director of the Des Moines Carousel Foundation — the group that Buz Brenton put together to accomplish his dream. It is a not-for-



profit organization with a volunteer board and Jackie as a part-time director.

The carousel took until 1998 to be installed in Union Park. But it is pure art — hand-carved animals, hand-painted artwork, and an old-fashioned Stinson band organ. Each animal took five weeks to make. And the painted scenes of old Des Moines, like an 1844 map or the Iowa State Capitol in 1884, are a wonderful surprise.

Today, Jackie works hard to staff, maintain and expand on Buz Brenton's vision and the carousel. (Buz

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Brenton is still an honorary member of the board). But the focus is still on joy and the coming together of people.

“I’ve never seen anybody get off the carousel with a frown. Here’s an example. We offer something called the Carousel Experience. Different kinds of nursing homes and memory care homes come and I talk to them about the carousel and let them have a ride. And the memory care patients are just my favorites because they’ll completely not paying attention during the presentation, and then they get on that carousel, and the music starts, and they’re transported back to another time.”

Jackie pauses and then looks directly at me. “To bring them happiness for two and a half minutes, it is so worth it.”

Each of the animals are adopted and named by their adopted family. One young man, according to Jackie, adopted a bear and didn’t want to name it until he proposed to his girlfriend.



“Three years passed with no name,” Jackie says with a smile.

My goodness. Finally, the young man arranged a private rental of the carousel. He hired a string quartet. Jackie and the young man’s sisters set up lights and candles. And the bear finally got a name.

“And they recently had a baby, so I’m waiting for that first birthday. He has since adopted a second animal.” Jackie laughs.

Which gets us back to feeling joy in a complicated

world. Admiral William McRaven, in a 2014 graduation address at the University of Texas, said there were 10 lessons he learned in training as a Navy SEAL. The first lesson was to make your bed.

“If you make your bed every morning, you will have accomplished the first task of the day. It will give you a small sense of pride and it will encourage you to do another task, and another.”

Charles Duhigg, in his book “The Power of Habit,” says: “Small wins fuel transformative changes by leveraging tiny advantages into patterns that convince people that bigger achievements are within reach.”

There you go. You ride the carousel. You feel a small joy. Which will lead to another small joy. And then another. And before you know it, you can be a joyful person in the midst of complicated times.

It’s still early in Union Park. I watch as a grandfather holds his granddaughter on the rising and falling horse. The child laughs with glee and then takes her hands off the pole and raises them high in the air. The old man smiles.

Two and a half minutes. Can you spare it? ■

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.





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CITYVIEW

Healing with a horse

After surviving a devastating brain injury and witnessing her husband's struggles with trauma, Alexis Thompson found a different path to healing.

Alexis Thompson's life changed in an instant when she survived a horrific car accident as a young adult. The crash left her with broken bones, a ruptured tailbone and four brain hemorrhages. She was briefly confined to a wheelchair, and the traumatic brain injury forced her to leave college and begin an extensive rehabilitation process.

She tried various treatments for her brain injury, but one thing helped her focus more than anything else: spending time with a horse.

Through that experience, Thompson learned how to read horses and, in the process, better understand her own emotions and the anxiety she was experiencing.

"I didn't realize until I started working with horses," she said.

Her own injury, combined with witnessing the struggles of her military husband, eventually led Thompson to establish Willow Fields Equine Therapy.

Unlike traditional talk therapy, equine therapy uses interactions with horses to help clients process emotions such as anxiety, stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and grief. Thompson works with military veterans, adults and children with autism and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

During sessions, clients work with horses through grooming, leading and other activities. Thompson incorporates sensory processing and the vibrations of the horse as part of what she describes as a holistic approach to healing.

"People open up more when they're with a horse and grooming them, because they're having an emotional experience. It helps get feelings out. It's pretty powerful for a lot of people," she said.

One veteran struggling with anxiety and stress was taking medication to lower his heart rate, which was 99 beats per minute.

"He was working with one of our horses who got his heart rate down to 82," she said. "He couldn't believe it."

Thompson's husband's military service also led him to seek counseling through the Veterans Administration, but he experienced little success.

"I suggested we try something different."

Thompson, a certified equine therapy practitioner and trauma wellness coach, began working with him through equine therapy and soon noticed a difference.

Between her husband's transformation and her own brain rehabilitation, Thompson realized how important it can be to explore different approaches to healing.

"Because I have traumatic brain injury, a lot of times I experience instant anger, anxiety and mood shifts. I learned to calm myself before I walk up to this 1,200-pound animal," she said. "Horses teach you to take a breath and calm down."

Thompson says horses can hear a person's heartbeat from about 4 feet away and often mirror the client's heartbeat.

"That's where that magnetic connection comes from. Horses relieve some of that stress and bring your heart rate down. They take that from you and you're able to leave the anxiety behind," she said.

Clients do not ride the horses. Instead, they groom, lead and work with them across 60 acres of quiet, rolling hills outside Pleasant Hill.

Three horses — Willow, Theo and Phox — are used in the therapy sessions. According to Thompson, the horses often seem to "pick" the people they want to work with.

Phox typically gravitates toward people with high energy and anxiety. Willow tends to connect with people experiencing PTSD and trauma. Theo, a rescue horse who was abandoned, ironically seems drawn to people dealing with abandonment



Alexis Thompson with her therapy horses.

and confidence issues.

Thompson recalls one client who was working through grief and anger.

"I thought Willow would pick her, but instead Theo did. It was different because he usually picks abandonment issues, not grief. I was surprised, but thought the horse knows best," she said.

Two sessions later, the woman began talking about abandonment issues.

"I got goosebumps when she told me that. Obviously Theo knew that."

After her brain injury, Thompson knew she wanted a profession focused on helping people.

"I want to bring the love," she said.

She believes healing is not a one-size-fits-all process, particularly for people who have experienced trauma.

"It's not a one-size-fits-all with regards to healing, especially those with trauma, like myself and my husband. If people feel stuck in their current therapy, this is a great alternative to try something different."

Thompson also has a different perspective on what healing means.

She says healing does not necessarily mean becoming the person you were before trauma.

"Sometimes healing means discovering who you can become because of what you've survived," she said.

For Thompson, that discovery came with four brain hemorrhages, a long rehabilitation process and an unlikely partner in recovery: a 1,200-pound horse.

For more information on equine therapy, visit willowfieldsequinetherapy.com. ■

Jackie Wilson has written hundreds of articles for CITYVIEW and the Iowa Living magazines. She covers ordinary people living extraordinary lives.





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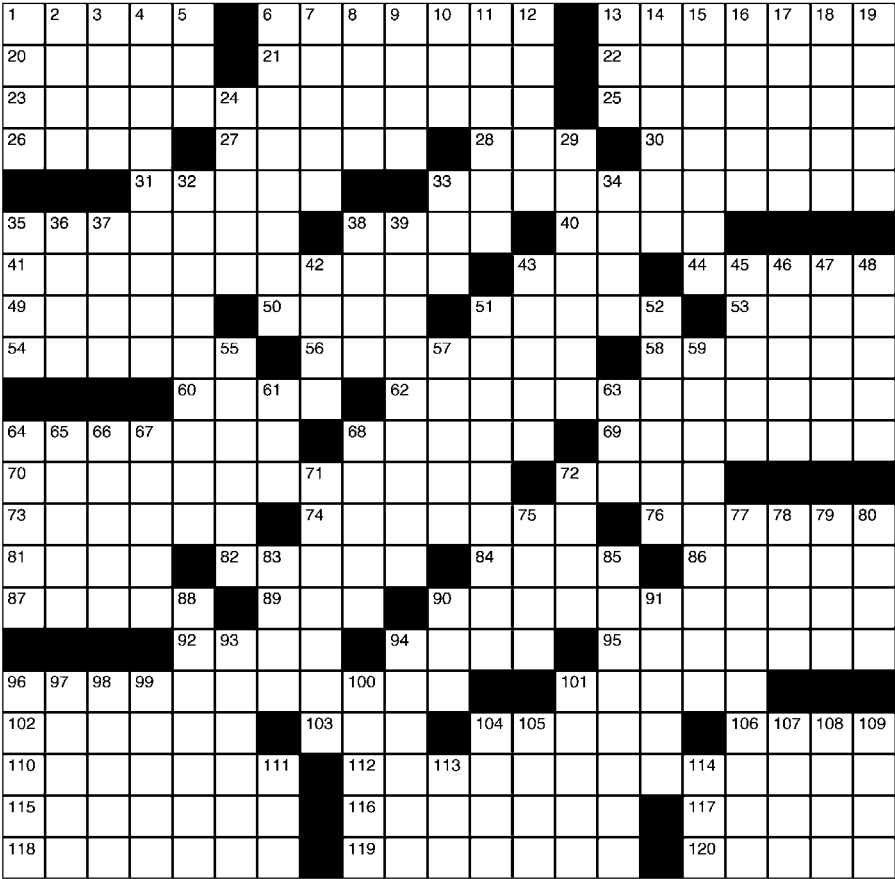
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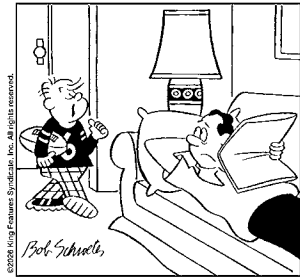
I BELIEVE I CAN FLY



- ACROSS**
- 1 Italian resort isle
6 Infantry weapons
13 Villainous sorts
20 Disney's "Little Mermaid"
21 Shoulder ornament
22 Not in favor of
23 Parasitic loafer
25 Examine by touch, as for a physical
26 Former Swedish car
27 Gluten source
28 Genetic ID
30 Man's wig
31 Build
33 Alternative to a blender
35 Gold-medal alpine skier Shiffrin
38 Lowly laborer
40 Ghost sound
41 Supposed realm of existence in the celestial spheres
43 Top of a cup
44 Big rigs
49 Requires
50 Throne, e.g.
51 Pulsate
53 Crate
54 Country singer Willie
56 African nation since 1993
58 Geologic time units
60 Little cut
62 Test run of a new policy
64 Stars and Stripes' home
68 Coin tosses, e.g.
69 Damaged by erosion
70 Pompous reactionary, in Britspeak
72 Giant-screen film format
- 73 Family on "Dallas"
74 Flax plant grown for its oil
76 Striped jungle cats, in French
81 Pilot
82 Entity
84 Scott in an 1857 court decision
86 Handsome, in Spanish
87 Fiery felony
89 Approx. amount
90 Small possum sometimes kept as a pet
92 Fruity drinks
94 Knock noises
95 Kazakhstan border lake
96 Stream resulting from a high-energy collision of protons
101 Make warped
102 Colorful ring of anatomy
103 Some lawn moisture
104 Transports in a big rig
106 Apple tablet
110 Translates
112 Starts traveling like seven key words in this puzzle
115 Brightest star in Scorpius
116 Knickknack
117 Digression
118 Occupies, as a hotel
119 Gathers
120 Sipping aid
- DOWN**
- 1 Zooming requirements, for short
2 Song from 108-Down, e.g.
3 -- colada
4 Growths on gingers' chins
5 Not well
6 Breathable, visored headwear items
7 Disturb
8 "Family" actress Thompson
9 Actor Russell
10 "Do Ya" rock gp.
11 Muscle-bone connector
12 Courtroom typist
13 Brief slumber
14 Christie of mystery
15 Western bars
16 Tilt skyward
17 Like extras purchased via the program
18 Lauder of cosmetics
19 Pilot
24 "The Seven Year Itch" actor Tom
29 Navy bigwig
32 Thinking logically
33 Rival
34 Singer Perry
35 "Voices Carry" singer Aimee
36 "Oh, gotcha"
37 "Hooked on ..." record company
38 Jack of old talk TV
39 Authorizing
42 Onion relative
43 Emu relatives
45 GI tract bacterium
46 Central Georgia city
47 "-- the Sheriff"
48 Frank formerly of CNN
51 Caught in a lie, e.g.
52 Pound on, as a door
55 Least vicious
57 Pares down
59 Big name in acrylic plastic sheets
61 Ore. neighbor
63 "Kapow!"
64 Fast Amtrak train
65 Grass-cutting machine
66 "The Baker" actor Koteas
67 Sonata section
68 Lighter igniter
71 Became ecstatic, with "out"
72 Notion
75 Units of work
77 Most culpable
78 X-ray units
79 Sword variety
80 Marsh-dwelling rail
83 Foot back
85 Choose by picking slips of paper, say
88 Hammer users, often
90 Fri. follower
91 Mill fodder
93 Vicinity of the U.S. Capitol
94 Apply more heat to
96 Law firm aides, briefly
97 "-- we all?"
98 Designer Oscar de la --
99 In current times
100 Volkswagen compact
101 Private pupil
104 Egg sources
105 Queries
107 Twosome
108 Verdi opera
109 Actress Barrymore
111 Old JFK flier
113 Rio carmaker
114 Includes

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!



Write

CRAWLS _____

Gift

WORDE _____

Idiom

LOGIN _____

Thing

TIME _____

TODAY'S WORD

SUDOKU

7				9	3	5		
5	2				7		3	
6		8	5					
3			7	8		6		
			1	6			2	3
		6	2		9	8		
		3		1		7	5	
7				8		6		
9					2	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: ♦♦♦

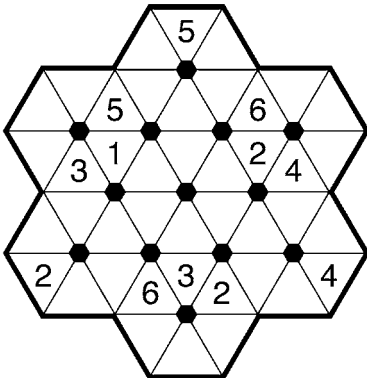
♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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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.

	-		-		=	5
-		+		-		
	+		÷		=	7
+		+		×		
	-		×		=	8
=		=		=		
8		12		4		
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 SPIKE SUMMERS FROM PIXABAY

This month's winner

"If that one French fry found in your basket of fried shrimp was a person."

- Aaron Mundell



IMAGE BY GRATISOGRAPHY

Runners-up

"Hunger Games: The Next Chapter." - Dave Fisher

"Those goggles aren't for style; they're the only thing stopping the mushrooms from recruiting her into their spore army." - Jeannie T.

"She didn't take the wrong exit... the mushrooms took the wrong dimension." - Mike A.

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CARS IN THE CITY

BY JACKIE WILSON

E-Bikes are changing the way we ride

From pedal assist to 80-mph modifications, electric bikes are bringing new riders — and new rules — to Iowa's roads and trails.

For this month's Cars in the City column, I am trading four wheels for two and taking a look at the growing popularity of e-bikes.

An e-bike is a bicycle equipped with an electric motor and rechargeable battery. The motor provides assistance while you pedal, making it easier to travel longer distances or tackle hills. Electric bikes are increasingly common on bike trails, sidewalks and streets, sharing the space with traditional bicyclists and pedestrians.

As a traditional road-bike cyclist, I have heard fellow bicyclists say riding an e-bike is "cheating." So, I decided to take one for a spin and quickly discovered there are some significant differences.

For starters, an e-bike is heavier and bulkier than a traditional bicycle. The Mokwheel Asphalt (\$1,499) I tested was a step-through model, meaning you do not have to swing your leg over the seat. Instead, you simply step through the open frame, which does not have a center bar. These frames were once commonly referred to as "girl" bikes, while bicycles with a top bar were called "boy" bikes.

The controller is located on the handlebar and controls the speed. The thumb throttle is particularly touchy. A slight movement can send the bike jerking forward quickly.

Turning corners also takes some getting used to. Because of the larger frame, e-bikes require wider turns. Think of the difference between turning a Honda Civic and maneuvering a Dodge Ram.

Slowing down or stopping is not as simple as applying the brakes or taking your hand off the controller. A gradual slowdown is necessary. But if you are traveling too slowly and are not pedaling, the bike can simply stop.

A typical e-bike battery lasts 35 to 80 miles, depending on how much power is used. The bikes can weigh 40 to 70 pounds, which can make loading one into a vehicle a challenge.

Todd Wilson of EZip-N-Zoom says the biggest consumers of e-bikes are middle-aged people who want to continue exercising but need a little boost.

But it is not just adults who have embraced

e-bikes. Elementary through high school-age kids enjoy the freedom of traveling quickly without having to work quite as hard.

That popularity has created some friction. Walkers, bicyclists and motorists across the Des Moines metro frequently complain about e-bikes speeding past them or traveling in groups along streets. Cities are also working to establish or update ordinances governing e-bikes and other motorized devices.

Under Iowa's low-speed electric bicycle law, motors must be less than 750 watts. Most e-bikes fall in the 350- to 500-watt range. Riders of any age can operate them, and they can be ridden on bike paths, bike lanes and streets. They are limited to 20 mph, and riders must follow the same rules as other bicyclists.

"It's considered a personal conveyance device, or PCD," Wilson said. "It's the same as any pedestrian walking down the street or sidewalk."

On the flip side, bikes capable of traveling faster than 20 mph cannot legally be operated on sidewalks. Some riders have installed two motors or modified their bikes, pushing them beyond 1,000 watts and outside the state's low-speed e-bike classification.

Wilson has even had a customer bring in an e-bike capable of reaching 80 mph.

"There's no way this could be legal. State code doesn't have a way to classify e-motorcycles versus e-bikes. That's the problem," he said.

Despite the challenges, the benefits of e-bikes are easy to see. They provide an alternative to gas-powered vehicles, require relatively little maintenance, are easier to park and can get you where you are going faster than walking. With pedal assist, riders still get exercise while enjoying the fresh air.

E-bikes are here to stay. They are sharing our trails and roads, changing the way people get around and, perhaps most importantly, proving that sometimes cheating can be a lot of fun. ■

Jackie Wilson has written hundreds of articles for CITYVIEW and the Iowa Living magazines. She covers ordinary people living extraordinary lives.



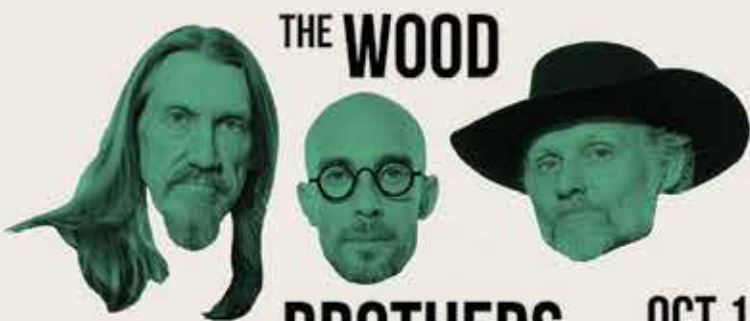
Flint Pro lightweight 60 lbs



Mesa lite



Ebike Step through



THE WOOD

BROTHERS

NOV 17

OCT 18



DOG STAR

THE STORY
SO FAR



OCT 31

RYAN AND THE TEXAS
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From balloons to big dreams

Travis Green turns a pack of balloons into elaborate works of art, from immersive installations to a marriage proposal for NBA star Tyrese Haliburton.

Balloon art can take shape in many forms. Some people think of the small, classic creations seen at county fairs or made by clowns. There is nothing wrong with those creations, but some artists dare to think bigger. Travis Green is one of them.

Green, a graphic designer by trade and an artist at heart, discovered balloon art almost by accident. His wife's aunt was having a birthday party, and Green decided to experiment with a pack of balloons.

"I started messing with them, and I'm an artist at heart, so I want to make something cool. So I was like googling how to do it, and I just learned that way of making balloon animals. And then I started an Instagram page to curate my pictures that I was making," Green said.

That was about five years ago. After posting his creations on Instagram, Green began hearing from friends who wanted him to create balloon art for their birthday parties. Some even offered to pay him.

"I was like, 'Whoa, I don't want to be paid. I just do it for fun.' And then the girl was like, 'Oh, I'm gonna pay you,' so she gave me like 50 bucks, and then from there it just took off," Green said.

And, like an untied balloon, it took off.

Green eventually launched Squeak Balloon and Decor, taking on home parties, private events and corporate gatherings. His work has also taken him to conferences and events with the Balloon Guild.

"The Balloon Guild asked me to be a team lead in Florida. For their conference, they basically gave me 12 people and said, 'You're in charge of this room,' so then I had to direct them on what we need to build and all that," Green said.

Creating large-scale balloon art requires specialized equipment. Green happened to catch a break when another balloon business was closing at about the same time he was getting started. He was able to purchase some inflators at a low price.

Today, Green's creations span genres, events and milestones. He has transformed entire rooms into jungle-themed experiences, including one he created for the Balloon Guild in Florida. He has also played a role in one memorable engagement.

"I got a call from my contact at Iowa State, and she wouldn't tell me the name at first, and it ended up being Tyrese Haliburton. He wanted to get engaged to his fiancée on the court and wanted a long path from where you enter the stadium to the center of the court. It was like 100 foot path of rose petals, and so my wife took care of all that. And then on the center court, we did a bunch of flower bouquets and a big arch, and then our marquee letters that said: 'Will You Marry Me.' It was really cool," Green said.

The project became even more memorable because Haliburton was filming a documentary with Netflix at the time. That meant Green eventually got to see his balloon creations on television.

Despite becoming a seasoned professional, Green still feels pressure when tackling major projects. Coordinating a team of artists while trying to bring his own vision to life can be challenging.

"I build it in my mind, and I have my vision, so I just want to do it myself. That's the hard part. Like now, I'm to the point in my business that I need to give up some of those duties and give them to other people," Green said.

Some of Green's favorite moments, however, have nothing to do with the size or complexity of a project.



One came at a monster truck-themed birthday party. Green decorated the family's living room while the children waited downstairs.

"I showed up, I decorated their living room, and the kids were downstairs. They were just like coming up and looking, peeking. When they came up, one of them, he was probably 3 years old, ran up and gave me a hug," Green said. "He was so happy, and that was the coolest thing. I texted the client that was the best first look moment I've had with a client. I just like seeing that joy on their face," Green said.

For Green, that joy is part of what makes balloon art so rewarding. And judging by his ambitions, there is no limit to what he might create with a package of balloons and a dedicated team.

His biggest vision involves the Albaugh Family Center.

"I just need a big room, and we would build a big immersive art event where I would build balloons all over, all over the ceiling, all over the walls, and people would you know buy tickets and walk through it, and there'd be live demonstrations of artists, not balloon artists, but just like painters, maybe clay outside. There'd be chalk art going into the building, so that's like my vision for that, and I want to do that event and like donate it to the art center so we can raise money for them," Green said. ■

Cyote Williams was born and raised on the south side of Des Moines and writes about entertainment, sports and personalities across the Des Moines metro for CITYVIEW. Phone: 515-953-4822 x333.



Postcards of hope

After 9/11, Des Moines photographer Greg Wilcox traveled to New York and created a remarkable project showing Iowa's support for a grieving city.

Greg Wilcox has had an interesting journey. By trade, he was a computer programmer with several companies throughout the years. In his spare time, he has enjoyed photography, filmmaking and visiting art museums all over the world. But to define him as a computer programmer with a penchant for the arts would be an understatement.

If any endeavor could demonstrate his unique eye for photography, it would be his "I Love NY" project, centered around the 9/11 terrorist attack. In the wake of the event, Wilcox decided to go to New York to document what happened.

"I just drove out there, and I got to a rest area in Ohio, but I had car trouble and self-doubt. It's like, 'What am I going to do when I get there?' So, I came back home, took a bus out and I took photographs because I knew it was an historic event. I helped some kid look for his boyfriend at — I don't know if they were mortuaries or makeshift morgues or just information centers. And a lot of my recollection of it is just gone. If I didn't have those photos, it'd be like I was never there," Wilcox said.

Wilcox spent a few days in the city, photographing people and places and visiting memorials. He had a less-than-friendly encounter with some locals while at a bar.

"I remember sitting in a bar writing a postcard to someone back in Des Moines, and one girl said, 'Well, what's your story?' And I told her, and her friend was angered. She goes, 'We don't need you here. You don't need to be here.' She was hostile; the other one seemed sympathetic. I did a lot of photography, listening to people talk and interjecting once in a while," Wilcox said.

Plenty of full-time photographers went to New York to document the aftermath, but none were likely from Des Moines, and certainly none who did it as a hobby. When Wilcox returned to Iowa, the project truly began. He would go around to various people and places with the popular slogan, photograph it and send it to New Yorkers.

Who did he send these postcards to? Well, it was organized randomness.

"I would say, like, let's look at some of the names here. So, if we look at Wilcox, that's my last name. So, I would have just typed in Wilcox into Yahoo, and that address came up. Blair is my uncle's name, my grandfather's name. Murray is my cousin's name. Sometimes the card reflected the organization I sent it to. Gay bar, the Blazing Saddle, sent it to Dick's Bar. The cop cars I sent to the New York City Police Department," Wilcox said.

Some photos had "I Love NY" written in snow on Des Moines police cars. Others had the leaders of a deaf church signing the slogan and holding the sign. It was on the marquee of the Winterset theater. Written in corn or on chalkboards. A photo of the sign of the old Ellis Island bar showed an Iowa tie to New York. He would send these heartfelt messages with an Iowa twist to people and businesses in New York to show Iowa's support.

Perhaps no gesture was more apparent than having the slogan written in office



lights on the Ruan Center in downtown Des Moines, made possible with the help of DMACC students.

Wilcox received responses from several people. Some came from regular, everyday New Yorkers. Some came from businesses that had employees who died in the attacks. Some were from organizations including cycling clubs, museums and even the Metro Transit Authority. All shared the same sentiment — a thank you for thinking of them.

"There is a couple touching, heart-wrenching ones like this one. Rear Admiral Joel A. Miele, Sr. P.E. wrote me twice in 2002, and then his daughter wrote me in April 2017, saying he passed away in 2013, saying, 'Today, while going through his office, I came across the postcard you sent to the Commissioner in solidarity and support after 9/11. I wanted you to know that he had it proudly displayed on his bookshelves all this time,' " Wilcox said.

Some may have already seen the photos and project at the Iowa State Fair. In 2003, Wilcox convinced the fair to let his project be displayed in the hallway of the Cultural Center.

"The items were fixed to large foam cores and covered most of that hallway. I had a guest-signing book; people loved it," Wilcox said.

In contrast, response to tragedies around the country today might come with a like or a share on social media to show support. The days of sending postcards seem to be long gone. The approach Wilcox took is rare today and would have been even in the most popular postcard times. What it does show is the sentiment many Americans felt after the events of Sept. 11. Many people wanted to help but were not sure how to do so. Wilcox's photography and project were his way of showing support, much to the appreciation of the random, yet thoughtful, selection of the New Yorkers who received his cards.

View his gallery at <https://wilcoxgregorya.myportfolio.com/i-love-new-york> or scan this QR code. ■



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