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DES MOINES' 55-PLUS LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE



FEBRUARY / MARCH 2026

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

We all collect something

We all collect something, whether we want to or not. Sometimes, we don't even realize we are collecting something until we simply can't ignore the pure mass of it.

When my wife, Jolene, and I had our first home, she had an antique Coca-Cola cooler. It was red, metal and kind of cool. She also had a giant Coca-Cola puzzle she put together and had framed. That was also kind of cool. Friends and family members thought so, too, so much so that they kept gifting Jolene all kinds of other Coca-Cola stuff. We ended up having a Coca-Cola room in our home, but not because we wanted to. We simply had to find a place for all this Coca-Cola stuff. Jolene eventually put a stop to this madness and sold it all at a garage sale.

I had a few sports trading cards as a kid. Not hundreds or thousands like the true collectors, but maybe a dozen. One of them, though, is OJ Simpson's rookie card. It might be worth a few bucks today, if I could find it. The rock band KISS also had trading cards, and I collected all of them, along with that nasty bubble gum that came in the package. I have the cards rubber-banded in a plastic bag. Somewhere.

Some other collections aren't so cool, but we just can't resist adding to them, or at least I can't. I have a box of speaker wires, cable TV wires, ethernet wires and a lifetime of cell phone chargers in my basement that I just can't seem to part with — and I keep adding to it. I might need them someday. That also goes for the pile of wood in my garage that keeps stacking up. You can't throw away a perfectly good 2 by 4, can you?

In this month's issue of Senior View, we share the stories of residents with much better collections than I have ever had. Their chronicles may inspire you to add to one of your collections — or start a new one. And if that collection involves old wires, I might be able to contribute.

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Collecting

**Treasured items bring joy
to area seniors.**

By Jackie Wilson

Remember the first time you admired a unique object? That one-of-a-kind item caught your eye, reminding you of the good old days. But, what if you had the same item in a different color or model? Before long, shelves and rooms are filled with personal treasures and you engage in the never-ending hunt for more “just one more” to complete your collection.

In this month’s cover story, we feature three Des Moines area residents whose collections include authentic vintage railroad equipment, Civil War memorabilia and a funky assortment of psycho ceramics.

David Davidson collects authentic Civil War items, religious relics and more. He displays them in both his house and his dental office.



Dana Grefe began collecting railroad items 35 years ago.

MUSEUM-TYPE RAILROAD COLLECTION

When I arrived at Dana Grefe’s home, authentic railroad crossing signal lights flashed, as if to welcome me. As we stepped into his secured outbuilding to view his railroad collection, we walked through his immaculate garage and workshop. Behind another door, it was like stepping into a well-curated museum.

This collection didn’t consist of a few trinkets or railroad memorabilia. This professional and expertly restored collection features thousands of original railroad artifacts, manuals, maps — anything to do with railroad travel, engines, equipment and more.

All four walls are lined with metal railroad signs, which originally appeared near railroad stations and tracks. Warning signs, railroad crossings, railway names and no trespassing signs were among the hundreds plastered on the wall.

Encased in museum-type glass displays were essential railroad supplies, including lanterns, oil, cans, lock and keys, hand tools and locomotive horns, all used by the railroad workers, with too many items to mention.

Another dozen cases include railroad passenger amenities. For example, each railroad that offered dining cars had its own engraved china, matchbooks, menus and everything with the railroad logo or name.

A rotating glass display similar to a jeweler’s case includes hundreds of passengers’ tickets. Tickets from 1877 and 1890 were valid on travels from the Davenport and NorthWestern Railway.



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Conductor hats, uniforms and promotional railroad material are also displayed. Conductor and passenger maps and schedules are well preserved in lay-flat, pull-out drawers. Files among the thousands include train logs, reports and paperwork including timetables, annual reports, passenger counts, incidents and more. Each locomotive line had its own user and maintenance manuals. On a tip, Grefe once grabbed a locomotive manual from a dumpster since the railroad wasn't allowed to give it away.

All of these items have one thing in common — the memorabilia and items were from railroads that passed through Iowa including the Rock Island, Milwaukee & Chicago NorthWestern and Burlington.

So, why collect?
It started when Grefe was a child growing up in Sioux City. He rode his bike to the railroad, which was a mile from his home. He watched trains and fed the squirrels. One day, a switch engineer invited him into the cab. Grefe blew the whistle.
“As a kid, I thought it was neat,” he recalls. “I had nothing else to do when I was young. Trains kept me occupied.”
About 10 years later, he returned to same Sioux



Dana Grefe’s extensive railroad collection includes railroad items from major railways that passed through Iowa.

City railyard. A train mechanic had an old switch lock — a device used to secure a track switch so it can’t be moved or ultimately derailed — and gave it to him.

“No two locks are like,” he explains. “It got me thinking, it’s neat. I’d like to have more train items.”
That was 35 years ago.
Through the years, he has obtained railroad items from auctions, scrap yards and personal collections. Many arrive in original conditions, and he meticulously restores each item in his workshop.
The one-of-a-kind items are specific to each railroad, the manufactured year and other unique qualities.

“Each railroad item is authentic,” he says.
A prized possession includes a rail car headlight from the final farewell excursion on a Fort Dodge to Des Moines passenger rail in 1955. The conductor unplugged it and kept it. Grefe later purchased it from the conductor’s son.
In 2014, as his home and garage filled up with items, he built a secure outbuilding, filling it a little each day. He declares to own the largest private railroad collection in Iowa that is not a museum. He collects for several reasons, including the unique history.
“Without the railroad, the U.S. would never have won World War II,” he explains. “They shipped so much equipment by rail.”

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Grefe serves on the Iowa Chapter of National Railway Historical Society and is well known among train enthusiasts for his collection. Before digital cameras, Grefe was an avid train photographer.

He is dismayed how railroad interest is declining, but he cites how “closet rail fans” emerge when steam engines come into town.

“It’s sad that railroads are going away, and they don’t need them anymore. Everything had a purpose. The railroad needed workers. Running a train was manual work, including turning on and off signals and lights,” he says. “Today, everything is automated.”

One might assume that with his vast collection, he owns practically everything. Not quite. For years, Grefe has searched for an Iowa Central switch key and lock.

“Some people hunt and fish. I collect railroad stuff. It’s my little man cave,” he says.

As we ended the tour, his wife popped her head in, asking what railroad item he purchased that day.

“There’s always something you want,” he says, showing her his latest find.

CIVIL WAR MEMORABILIA

A trip to the dentist’s office is often fraught with fear and anxiety. Yet, one dentist’s collection resembles a museum-like atmosphere including a stuffed alligator and other centuries-old artifacts.

David Davidson of Davidson Family Dentistry collects civil war pieces, religious artifacts, taxidermy and other items. He displays these at his dental office and at his home as well. The now-retired dentist says the décor puts folks at ease, as they admire the displayed items.

Davidson’s Civil War collection includes original Civil War uniforms, artillery and his signature Civil War piece — a real cannon used in battle.

The one-ton cannon is now on display at his winter home in Florida. The cannon was obtained from a hunter who also finds cannonballs and shells in a non-national park area close to original battlefield locations. The wood carriage to hold the cannon had rotted out. He found a reproduction carriage designed just for the cannon. The cannon sat in his garage for a long time. However, when he remodeled his dental office, he designed supported floors to display the cannon.

Another prized collection is an autograph of Abraham Lincoln, which is from him signing papers for the common commission of officers.

“Abraham Lincoln saved America,” Davidson says.

He likes artillery items and authentic war items, including un-cleaned Civil War uniforms, which are a prized find.

“It might have blood on it from being in battle. You know it’s authentic and has not been sitting in someone’s closet,” he explains.

One thing Davidson doesn’t have is an authentic confederate flag.

“It’s the epitome of the Civil War and part of history,” he explains. “But, I’ve shied away from it due to the controversy.”

Davidson became interested in collecting items at a young age. When he was a youth living on a farm outside of Adel, his dad dropped him off at the State Historical Building by the Iowa Capitol. As a 9-year-old boy, he spent his summers walking through exhibits to pass the time.

“I thought about 95% of the exhibits were cool, including the taxidermy animals. In my brain, I thought I’d like to have my own museum someday



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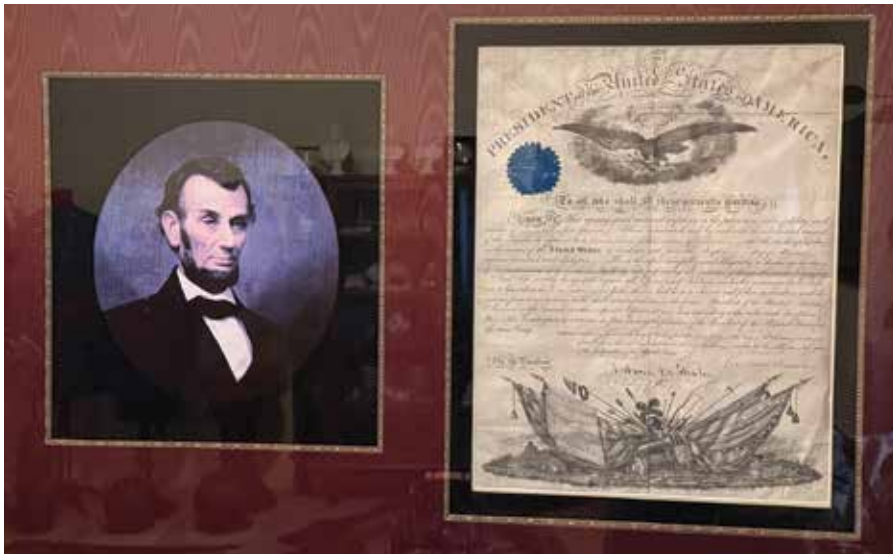




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One of David Davidson’s favorite Civil War collectibles is an original document signed by President Abraham Lincoln.

and collect relics,” he recalls.

His collection grew, and he began displaying pieces at his dental office, which is now run by his son.

When presidential candidates began campaigning in Iowa, he began collecting politician autographs and political buttons.

“I’d write to presidents and politicians as a kid and they would send me an autograph,” he says.

He says he is always on the hunt, and his latest collection focuses on

medieval items.

Religious items are also important due to his faith. Dental patients comment about the angels in his dentist office, which offered comfort.

Davidson says he sticks to a budget.

“If I can’t afford it, I just admire it.

Sometimes I get non-buyer’s remorse after an auction. There are millions of things to collect. It’s like a giant vending machine of stuff,” he explains.

He says he collects because of his love of history and a passion for the past.

“Everything goes back to the historical building,” he says. “I love how people learn something throughout history over the years.”

PSYCHO CERAMICS

A cast of unusual characters made of ceramic are on display in Sheri LaZella’s home.

These ceramic pieces measure about 4 to 12 inches in height and are called “psycho ceramics.” Wide-eyed colorful beatniks, elegant heirs, mental conditions and more are the psycho



Sheri LaZella’s psycho ceramic collection includes a piggy bank, among hundreds of others. Each ceramic portrays unusual, intense or creepy habits and emotions.

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ceramics categories.

The mini statues were created by Murray Kreiss in 1946. The hand-painted inexpensive items came from Japan and included a variety of characters. Some doubled as ashtrays or toothbrush holders; others are bejeweled or Christmas-themed.

Her favorites are the “mental conditions.” “In the late 1950s, experts started to diagnose different mental disorders and acknowledged that people had issues that were diagnosable.”

A “grumpy” ceramic’s tag declares, “I was born this way.” A split personality portrays two sides of a head. A nervous cigarette habit, a dieting diva and other oddities are represented. An elegant heirs collection includes family members who are bums, alcoholics or in jail. The beatniks are cool dudes at poetry readings.

LaZella became interested in psycho ceramics when she and her husband, Ed, owned an antique store in Valley Junction. After attending auctions, she became intrigued with the bizarre items.

“I liked them because they were different.

They would pop up, and I’d stash them for myself,” she recalls.

Her first statue was the creepy Santa. Her favorite is the deceased Santa who got stuck in the chimney. The more valuable ones are those that remain unpainted and contain an original tag.

LaZella’s friends question why she collects “ugly” objects.

“I’ve always been anti-establishment,” she admits. “What is ugly to someone is cool to me. I’m different than most of my friends, and this celebrates it.”

LaZella has experienced the rush of finding a new one for her collection, but she recently backed down from acquiring others.

“Nobody in my family would want these if I’m gone,” she says.

One reason she loves antiquing is the fascinating history behind the object.

“Antiques have staying power. It’s an object that’s been cherished by someone for a long time. They bring a spirit of celebration and love, and it makes you think about humanity,” she says. “Collections don’t have a purpose, except they make me happy.” ■



Sheri LaZella holds “Grumpy Santa” from her psycho ceramics collections.

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Couch theater

"THE HOUSEMAID" (R)

After Sydney Sweeney's silly ad about jeans started to tank her career and cost her "Christy" film to bomb, she was forced to apologize and get it together ahead of the premiere of her erotic psychological thriller. (Which ended up being somewhat of a success!) Co-starring the lovely Amanda Seyfried ("The Testament of Ann Lee") and Brandon Sklenar ("Drop"), the film follows a young woman named Millie (Sweeney) who has a criminal past and becomes a live-in housekeeper for the wealthy Winchesters. Millie soon learns that Nina (Seyfried), the mother and wife of the family, is mentally unwell and quickly begins to suffer the consequences of being her housemaid. It is only when Millie is pushed to the brink that she realizes why she was hired for the Winchesters and who this family really is. Out to rent. (Amazon Prime Video)

"HAMNET" (PG-13)

This historical tragedy film stars two powerhouse actors in the drama genre, Jessie Buckley ("Wicked Little Letters") and Paul Mescal ("Gladiator II"). Mescal and Buckley respectively play William Shakespeare and Agnes Hathaway, with the film recounting the story of their relationship as William becomes a successful playwright. William and Agnes marry quickly, with kids following shortly, including twins named Hamnet and Judith. But with the bubonic plague spreading its deadliness throughout Europe, it's a matter of time until someone catches the disease. And when the disease catches Hamnet at 11 years old, his poor parents are left to cope with the tragedy of his death. Chloe Zhao ("Nomadland") directs this Oscar-nominated film that is out now to rent. (Amazon Prime Video)



Courtesy of MovieStillsDB

Wagner Moura stars in "The Secret Agent."

"THE SECRET AGENT" (R)

You might know Wagner Moura from his portrayal as Pablo Escobar in "Narcos" or his role in "Civil War," but his role in this political thriller is what got him a Golden Globe for Best Actor in a Motion Picture (Drama) a month ago. Taking place in 1977 during the Brazilian dictatorship, the film picks up as professor and single father Armando (Moura) returns to his hometown of Recife, Brazil, hoping to reconnect with his son, Fernando, and find some semblance of peace. However, Armando shortly finds out that because of a previous political scuffle with a business executive, a contract killing for him has been ordered, leaving him with very few options and a murky, unknown future. Out now to rent. (Apple TV+)

"A KNIGHT OF THE SEVEN KINGDOMS" (TV-MA)

Fans of George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" franchise should be quite happy to receive a third TV-series adaptation based on Martin's immersive books. This new prequel series takes place 90 years before "Game of Thrones" and about 70-80 years after "House of the Dragon." Starring Peter Claffey ("Bad Sisters") and Dexter Sol Ansell ("The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes"), the series follows a lowborn hedge knight named Ser Duncan the Tall (aka Dunk) and his squire, Ageon "Egg" Targaryen. The odd duo wanders throughout Westeros, naturally getting themselves into trouble and into some great adventures indeed. The first four episodes are out now to stream. The remaining two will premiere during the last two Sundays of February. (HBO Max) ■

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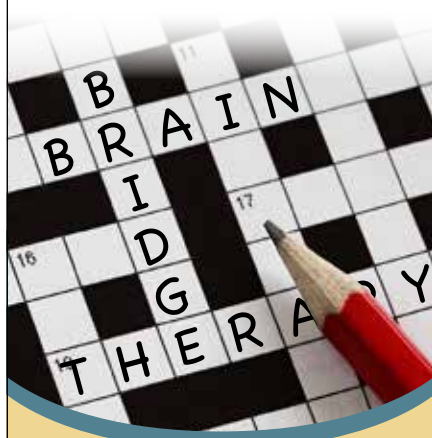


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GAMES: KING CROSSWORD

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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59					60					61		

ACROSS

- 1 Canine cry
- 4 Dalai --
- 8 Sultry Horne
- 12 Uncle, to Juan
- 13 Bard's river
- 14 401(k) relatives
- 15 Provider of free groceries
- 17 Lapel jewelry
- 18 Fawn's mom
- 19 Nome resident
- 21 Nuanced
- 24 English cathedral city
- 25 100%
- 26 Poseidon's realm
- 28 Follow
- 32 L-Q bridge
- 34 Cover
- 36 Gear teeth
- 37 Avid
- 39 Kauai souvenir
- 41 Last (Abbr.)
- 42 Conducted
- 44 Justice Antonin

- 46 Movie promo

- 50 Sprite
- 51 Campus mil. group
- 52 Eats for parakeets
- 56 Jazzy James
- 57 Singer Braxton
- 58 French assent
- 59 Twain hero
- 60 Jazz legend Getz
- 61 ER workers

DOWN

- 1 Justice Dept. agency
- 2 2016 Olympics city
- 3 Gourmand's online journal
- 4 File stickers
- 5 Director DuVernay
- 6 "-- Lisa"
- 7 Bracelet site
- 8 Feign singing
- 9 Composer Satie
- 10 "Peter Pan" dog
- 11 Professional gp.
- 16 Speck

- 20 Pub pint
- 21 "Ditto"
- 22 Forearm bone
- 23 Snaky fish
- 27 Be sick
- 29 1997 Vanessa Williams film
- 30 Hybrid fruit
- 31 "Como -- usted?"
- 33 Louisiana symbol
- 35 -- Moines
- 38 Seminary subj.
- 40 Stranded during a blizzard
- 43 Unpaid bills
- 45 TV alien
- 46 Not kosher
- 47 Indian flatbread
- 48 Envelope abbr.
- 49 Funny person
- 53 Genetic letters
- 54 Wilder's "-- Town"
- 55 Insult, slangily

SEE ANSWERS ON PAGE 42

SENIOR SOCIAL EVENTS

COPPERWOOD SOCIAL FRIDAYS

Feb. 27th, March 27th, April 24th 2026 | 3:30-5:00 PM
CopperWood Senior Living | Ankeny, IA

Join us for live music, great company, and a relaxed evening at CopperWood! Mingle with residents, enjoy chef-prepared hors d'oeuvres, and sip on a specialty cocktail or mocktail. Take in the ambiance, explore the community, and see why life at CopperWood feels like home.

ST PATRICK'S DAY BINGO AT COPPERWOOD

Thursday, March 5th 2026 | 5:30-7:00 PM
CopperWood Senior Living | Ankeny, IA

Celebrate the change of the seasons with a fun-filled evening of Bingo at CopperWood! Join us on the first Thursday of December, March, June, and September for light appetizers, refreshments, great prizes, and plenty of laughs. It's a relaxed, community favorite — open to all who enjoy good company and a little friendly competition.

SIP & STROLL A TASTE OF SPRING AT COPPERWOOD

Thursday, April 16th 2026 | 3:30-5:30 PM
CopperWood Senior Living | Ankeny, IA

Spring is in full bloom at CopperWood Senior Living, and we're celebrating the season with refreshments, friendly conversation, and a peek at life in our community. Join us for Sip & Stroll: A Taste of Spring — enjoy a glass of wine or sparkling punch, sample chef-prepared bites, and wander through model apartments and gathering spaces. Come see how easy it feels to connect, relax, and enjoy life at CopperWood.

BINGO NIGHTS

Thursdays: March 12th & April 9th, 2026
6:00-7:30 PM | Holland Farms Senior Living
Norwalk, IA

Enjoy two lively evenings of classic Bingo, light refreshments, and friendly competition. Connect with residents, meet neighbors, and experience the fun, welcoming atmosphere of our community.

HEALTHY LIVING FOR YOUR BRAIN & BODY

Thursday, March 12, 2026 | 3:00-4:00 PM
Holland Farms Senior Living | Norwalk, IA
Hosted by the Alzheimer's Association

Learn valuable lifestyle tips and science-backed strategies for healthy aging in this educational session presented by the Alzheimer's Association. Gain insights on nutrition, activity, cognitive health, and daily habits that support long-term wellbeing.

ROGUES AND HEROES PRESENTATION BY AUTHOR ANN HANIGAN KOTZ

Thursday, April 23, 2026 | 3:00 PM
Holland Farms Senior Living | Norwalk, IA

Iowa's history is full of wonderful and not-so-wonderful people. Join Iowa historical fiction author, Ann Hanigan Kotz, as she takes you back in history to learn about some of these forgotten people. You can also play along with her in an Iowa trivia competition and perhaps win a prize for your extensive Iowa knowledge.

Contact Erik with Questions
515-425-3262 or eofloy@copperwoodsl.com



2855 SW Vintage Parkway, Ankeny, IA 50023

Contact Linda with Questions
515-981-1888 or Lfoster@hollandfarmsliving.com



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A performance of "The Outsiders." Photo by Matthew Murphy

DES MOINES PERFORMING ARTS

Des Moines Civic Center, Cowles Commons, Stoner Theater, Temple Theatre, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines
www.dmpa.org

- Feb. 24-28: March 1: "The Outsiders"
- March 20-22: "Meredith Willson's The Music Man"
- March 28: "The Wizard of Oz In Concert"

BLUE COMPASS MEGA RV SHOW

Iowa Events Center, 730 Third St., Des Moines

www.bluecompassrv.com/locations/iowa

Feb. 19-22

There will be a huge selection of the country's best RV brands on display and on sale for those looking to purchase an RV. Tour the country or camp in style. Trades are welcome, and more than 60 units will be on display.

IOWA ARTISTS 2026 - HENRY PAYER: AAGAKINAK HACIWI: WE LIVE OPPOSITE EACH OTHER

Des Moines Art Center, 4700 Grand Ave., Des Moines

www.desmoinesartcenter.org

Through June 17

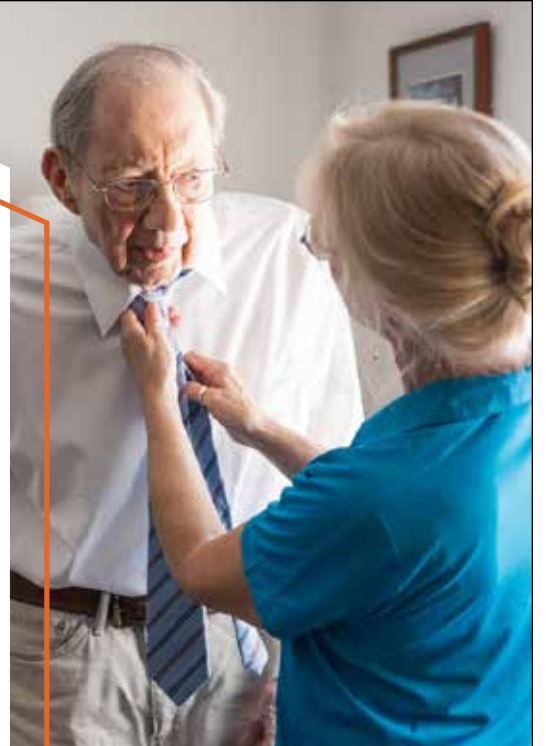
The Des Moines Art Center's Iowa Artist 2026 series continues with Sioux City-born artist Henry Payer. Payer, a member of the Ho Chunk people, the exhibit will feature Payer's signature mixed media works with imagery from both Native traditions and Western popular culture.



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The Iowa Wild are one of the most well-attended teams in the AHL.
Photo by Tim Garland, courtesy of Iowa Wild

IOWA WILD

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

Home games:

- Feb. 24 vs. Milwaukee Admirals at 7 p.m.
- March 20 vs. Ontario Reign at 7 p.m. | ALS Awareness Night
- March 21 vs. Ontario Reign at 5 p.m.
- March 25 vs. Chicago Wolves at 7 p.m.
- March 29 vs. Rockford Icehogs at 6 p.m. | Crash's Birthday

IOWA WOLVES

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

Home games:

- Feb. 22 at 3 p.m. vs. Rio Grande Valley Vipers | State Fair Day / State Fair-inspired Jersey
- Feb. 27 at 6:30 p.m. vs. Mexico City Capitanes | Get Lucky
- March 8 at 1 p.m. vs. Memphis Hustle | Women's Empowerment Game / Lynx-inspired Jersey
- March 16 at 6:30 p.m. vs. Salt Lake City Stars (Utah Jazz)
- March 18 at 6:30 p.m. vs. Salt Lake City Stars
- March 26 at 6:30 p.m. vs. Oklahoma City Blue (Oklahoma City Thunder) | Cars-inspired Jersey Weekend
- March 28 at 6:30 p.m. vs. Oklahoma City Blue | Cars-inspired Jersey Weekend



Photo courtesy of Des Moines Metro Opera

WINE, FOOD AND BEER SHOWCASE

Des Moines Marriott Downtown
700 Grand Ave., Des Moines
www.desmoinesmetroopera.org

March 6

Since 1985, the Wine, Food and Beer showcase has been a yearly favorite for all those named. The event features 30-40 of the best restaurants, caterers, wineries, breweries and distilleries in the area. It also serves as the signature fundraiser for the Des Moines Metro Opera, as all proceeds support the education and community engagement programs of the opera.

FLEA MARKET

Iowa State Fairgrounds
3000 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines
www.iowastatefairgrounds.org

March 7-8

Patrons will find antiques, collectibles, home décor, jewelry, purses, bags and more at the Iowa State Fair Flea Market.

HOYT SHERMAN PLACE

1501 Woodland Ave., Des Moines
www.hoytsherman.org

- Feb 21: The Black Jacket Symphony Presents Pink Floyd's "The Wall" at 7:30 p.m.
- March 5: Gaelic Storm at 7:30 p.m.
- March 9: Steven Curtis Chapman at 7 p.m.
- March 10: Jeff Tweedy with special guest Sima Cunningham at 7:30 p.m.
- March 11: An Evening With TOTO at 7:30 p.m.
- March 13: Trisha Yearwood: The Mirror Tour at 7:30 p.m.
- March 27: Jake Owen at 7:30 p.m. ■

The old guy in the mirror

Embrace the slow down.

By Joe Weeg

The yell is muted. Not because it is from some distant room in this Vienna hotel where I am staying. Nope. It is all me making that sound right here in my very own room. And, yes, I am ordinarily not a yeller or screamer or even an exclamer. In fact, my reputation as a criminal prosecutor was that when things went south, I was the guy folks called. It's all going crazy? Call Joe. It will be all right.

But, here I am giving a screech of surprise. Muted, sure. But only because I stand naked in a hotel bathroom deep in an old building in the heart of Vienna and don't want the Austrian police knocking on the door. Even so, there is no denying that was a cry that came out of my mouth.

And why? Well, there is a strange-looking guy in the bathroom. Yup, that guy right there. An intruder perhaps. I certainly don't understand what he is doing in my mirror. And — this is important — whoever he is, he sure let himself go. My goodness. Doesn't he have any pride?

And, what I particularly don't like is that the mirrors cover three sides of the bathroom and provide no angle that is flattering. So, I'm left to look. A hard look.

Body-shaming

Seventy-one years old. And, trust me, I have never been a beauty. In my late teens and 20s, I suffered such bad cystic acne that the scars are present today. By age 40, I had spent 20 years losing my hair as I went from comb-overs to a total shave-down. And then, my entire adult life, my glasses got thicker and thicker. How thick were they, you ask? Well, they were so thick I could burn a hole in a piece of paper if the sun was positioned just right — bada-bing.

All that fun body-shaming aside, am I a classic hunk? Probably not. But, I navigated my life all the way to retirement as if I was presentable to the world. And, I was. I stood in front of judges and juries and cops and lawyers and law students with nary a thought about appearances. My wife

could attest that I cared nothing for clothes except comfort, which embarrassed her to no end. I was oblivious. I had my dad's old suit refitted. I wore his bubble-toed dress shoes. I owned the opposite of whatever the style of tie was at any given time. And, my Rolex watch was a Timex with a waterproof band that I purchased at Kmart. And, that was just fine.

But this guy in the mirror? This old guy with the sagging belly and nonexistent chest? When did this happen? I never signed up for this adventure. Is this the promise of old age? Really?

Body-snatching

Let's start this quest by seeing if there is a simple explanation for the appearance of this guy sharing my towel. Hmmm, maybe I'm suffering from something medical? Perhaps something diagnosable like body dysmorphia. Let's see, Mayo Clinic says body dysmorphia is a mental health condition of hyper-focusing on one or more defects or flaws. But, does that really fit? I'm not focused on a body defect when I look in the mirror; I'm focused on a BODY SNATCHING — someone stole my whole body and replaced it with a very inferior model. That seems a little different than body dysmorphia.

Perhaps my confusion at seeing the stranger in my mirror is my failure to keep up with the ever-changing me. In other words, there is a new "I" in the mirror that is different than the old "I." This is an idea that the philosopher Galen Strawson labels as "episodic" — the past self and the future self are different than the present self. Maybe this is why I have a stranger in my mirror. I'm looking for that 36-year-old self out of my 71-year-old eyes.

Well...

Does this really explain my shock in the Vienna hotel? Because why wasn't I shocked when I looked in the mirror yesterday? Or the day before yesterday? Or when I was 55? Or when I was 36 years old and one day? Admittedly, I had very few mirrors in my life, but I have looked

in a mirror before. Why the surprise today? I'm afraid philosophy leaves me with that famous philosophical gesture — the confused shrug.

The science of storytelling

Will Storr wrote a wonderful book called "The Science of Storytelling" where he explores the current neuroscience about the brain. He concludes that what we see, hear and smell might not be all that accurate — in fact, our reality is more myth and hallucination. We see things that aren't really there, and we don't see things that are there. Well, isn't that a doozy?

Of course, this is old news to criminal lawyers. In 1982, I was doing criminal appellate work and an old prosecutor took me along to second chair a burglary trial he had in another county. The case had an eyewitness. That seemed like a slam dunk to me. During the two-hour drive, the old prosecutor stressed that an eyewitness was nothing but problems because seeing and hearing were frequently not accurate. And, he said this way before all the advancements in neurobiology verified his experience. I remember that guy sharing an old trial-lawyer aphorism that still applies: "I would rather have one fingerprint in a case than the Pope as an eyewitness swearing on a stack of bibles." Why? Because what we see may not be real. Period.

But, myth or reality, does it matter? There is a stranger in the mirror, and he is shocking the pants off me — if I had any on. So, who cares whether we call it a myth or an hallucination or reality. What you see is what you get. So, not very helpful.

What are we left with?

Borrowed time

Booty was old when I was 9 years old. I remember him as physically slight but wiry and unbent. He was always working on projects in his garage when I came over to hang with him. Why did I seek him out? I don't know. But, I do remember

him giving me his full attention when I appeared. There was never a rush or a timer or an agenda. He was all about talking with me. And, since I came from a family of eight kids, that counted.

One Saturday as we sat together between the yards in plastic lawn chairs, I asked to see his pacemaker before he was to have it updated by his doctor the next week. Off went his work jacket, then the ironed work shirt was pulled back, then the white union suit was unbuttoned to mid chest, and, finally, there it was — the pacemaker buried beneath the skin of his narrow chest. I was fascinated.

“Borrowed time,” Booty laughingly told me. “The pacemaker gives me borrowed time.” Then he pulled his clothes back together and sat happily next to me in the plastic chair. Saying nothing. Doing nothing. Just sitting. And we watched the neighborhood ebb and flow.

Booty had nothing but borrowed time. Perhaps that is the gift of the old man in the mirror — time. And, even more pointedly, the slowed-down time mandated by old age.

But, isn’t that notion of slowed-down time absolute malarky? Because, if you’re like me, time does nothing but speed up as I age. My granddaughter is born. Wonderful. Two minutes pass and, abracadabra, she is in first grade. OK, didn’t we skip some years in there? Come on, I’m getting cheated. Give me back those years!

And, look at what happens to physical strength and time as we age. My oldest son turned to me this last year in the back of a rented U-Haul and told me I would NOT be allowed to lift the other end of a couch. Whaaaaaat? But I am Joe, THE GREAT AND POWERFUL JOE (cue thunder and lightning). Well, I was great and powerful yesterday. OK, not yesterday? Then last weekend. No? Twenty years ago. Really?

Don’t look behind the curtain, indeed. I jumped from my perceived age of 51 to my real age of 71 in a couple of moving van weekends. I’ve been robbed of 20 years.

Heck, I’ve even lost the turn of the century. When I’m asked to sign and date a form, I’m pretty good with the signature, as I bet you are. And, surprisingly, I can nail the date. But the year? I begin by writing “19.” Oops, we are long out of that century. I cross that out and put “20”

and then am totally stymied from there. I know it is 2020 something. But, what year? And, finally, I get it right. See what has happened? Someone took all my years in the 21st century. I am still somewhere back in the 1990s. Yup, again, theft. Not identity theft. Too easy. We are back to the obvious: the pod people have snatched my body.

Logarithmic time

So, time doesn’t slow down as we age; it speeds up. There are multiple theories as to why this occurs, but I like the notion of “logarithmic time.” This is the idea that when you are 1 year old, one year is 100% of your life. One year is a long time, right? But when you are 71 years old, one year is .71% of your life. One year is a much shorter part of your life. See, time speeds up.

But, and this is a big “but,” old age physically and emotionally slows YOU down. Your body slows down. Your thoughts slow down. Your relationships slow down. You S-L-O-W D-O-W-N. So the days and weeks and months and years may pass more quickly, but, ironically, the moments themselves pass more slowly. They slow down.

And, that might also be the answer.

Embrace the slow-down

There’s an idea out there that slowing down is a way to get stronger and healthier and wiser. You might remember Joe Henderson, the runner and former chief editor of “Runner’s World,” who wrote about the value of LSD (Long Slow Distance) as key to stronger marathon running. And, more recently, there is the “Slow Jogging” movement that argues that slow jogging is how a person gets more fit while remaining injury free. Dr. Hiroaki Tanaka is one of the promoters of this slowing down to a walk/run. He call the pace of this slow jogging a “smile” pace. Not a bad way to think of slowing down with aging.

And this slowing down isn’t a new idea in the area of eating and enjoying food. There has been a long history of slow eating so as to taste and savor... and to lose weight as a byproduct. The Cleveland Clinic suggests chewing your food 15-30 times and putting down your fork between bites. Yikes. There were 10 people in my family growing up, and if I chewed my food more than

twice, I’d never see a second helping. But, I get it. Certainly aspirational.

And, don’t forget Tai Chi. Slow. Dance-like. Focused. “The Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi” by Peter Wayne states: “Tai Chi training integrates slow, intentional movements with breathing and cognitive skills (for example, mindfulness and imagery). It aims to strengthen, relax and integrate the physical body and mind, enhance the natural flow of Qi, and improve health, personal development and self-defense.” Heck, Tai Chi might even do the supper dishes if you could get your Qi to cooperate.

So, maybe that’s the answer to my dilemma about aging — embrace the slow-down. Perhaps that’s what the stranger in the mirror is saying to me: gravity is taking my body down to the ground, so I’d better take my head out of the sky and plant it firmly in the ground also. Slowly. Because, in slowing down, I get to sit in the plastic chair and actually see the ebb and flow of world. And, by slowing down, I get to provide comfort to the young boy sitting next to me. Pretty awesome things.

Admittedly, this whole argument may just be an explanation to my wife as to why I don’t want to vacuum the house — “I’m practicing slowed down time.” But, I do want to sit in the proverbial rocker. I do want to sleep later than 6 a.m. And, yes, I do want to wear shorts and five-toed shoes all year round. And, maybe I do want to watch the leaves gradually turn red on the big maple tree on the corner. Slowing down means you get to do all those things. And the treat to be found in the slow-down box?

JOY!

Shhhhhh, don’t say that too loud.

So, stranger in the mirror, hello! I’m wondering if you can dance a jig if I do this? How about this? Oops, don’t slip and fall.

Maybe it’s time I leave the bathroom. ■

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

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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- 1. GEOGRAPHY: What is the capital of Honduras?
- 2. FOOD & DRINK: What is the name of the Pillsbury Doughboy?
- 3. TELEVISION: In which state is the sitcom “Roseanne” set?
- 4. PSYCHOLOGY: What is the fear represented in the condition called arachibutyrophobia?
- 5. MUSIC: Which 1992 Radiohead song has the lyric “I wish I was special”?
- 6. MOVIES: Who is Indiana Jones’ nemesis in “Raiders of the Lost Ark”?
- 7. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Which president is known for giving the longest inauguration speech to date?
- 8. LITERATURE: “Cry, the Beloved Country” is a novel set in which country?
- 9. HISTORY: Which organization was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1917?
- 10. ANATOMY: Which element is a primary component of bones?

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SEE ANSWERS ON PAGES 41-42

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WORDS HEARD IN A CONTROL TOWER

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I F D B Z E T I D E P X E F A

X W U N S Q T M T O N R L O W

J A F F I R M A T I V E H E N

F D C A O A G E E Y W G V K U

T S Q B P O G B N L L O K A R

I H A F T E C A B Z B R Y T S

W G N I D N A L Y K W A U Q S

V U X S D N U O R A O G N R O

Q A P N M L D N E C S E D U R

T R O H S D L O H J B M I L C

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally
Unlisted clue hint: **CLEARED FOR -**

- Abeam

Abort

Affirmative

Climb

Cross runway
- Descend

Expedite

Go around

Hold short

Landing
- Roger

Say again

Squawk

Taxi to gate

Unable

GAMES: WORD SPIRAL

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L

O

O

A

W

Fill in the missing letters to reveal the nine-letter word that starts at one of the four corners and moves clockwise around the perimeter before ending in the center.

SEE ANSWERS ON PAGE 41



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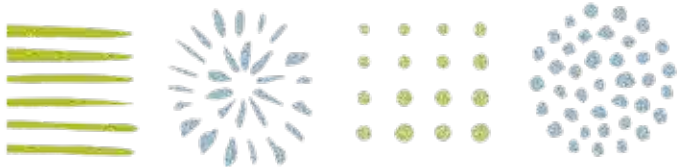
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Come what may, *be ready.*

But are you? Many older adults simply don't have plans in place for future care needs. Perhaps they assume Medicare or their private health insurance will cover future care costs. But what they may discover about their assumptions isn't good news:

- Medicare typically covers only temporary in-home medical care or short-term stays in a long-term care center.
- Long-term care insurance policies are often relatively inflexible and costly. After a claim is reviewed, the insurer is expected to cover part or all the policyholder's costs, but will only do so when the need for care and the way it's delivered meet policy requirements.

Poor planning and false assumptions can result in financial hardship and lack of access to care when it's needed.



Readiness means

WellAhead.

WellAhead is a continuing care at home program designed to empower older adults who desire to stay independent at home with a plan for future care. Membership requires a one-time fee to join — only a fraction of the cost of even one year in long-term care — and ongoing monthly fees. Unlike long-term care insurance policyholders, WellAhead members enjoy benefits from the start, including personal wellness coaching, access to fitness centers and classes, and select at-home services. If a member ever develops a need for more extensive care, the program covers most primary costs within a WesleyLife community or through WesleyLife at Home.



A closer look:

WellAhead vs. long-term care insurance



The key difference between long-term care insurance and WellAhead is the philosophy behind these approaches to future care planning.

- Long-term care insurance policies often include a 90- to 100-day waiting period before benefits begin. Many also cap daily coverage amounts, which may fall short of the actual cost of skilled care. In addition, individuals typically must lose the ability to perform two to three activities of daily living before any benefits are triggered.
- WellAhead helps you invest in your well-being and empower your independence as you age. Even if you never require long-term care, you can benefit from your membership's access to healthy living services. And if your needs change, WellAhead ensures you'll receive the care you need at the same predictable cost for which you're already budgeting.

	WellAhead	Long-term care insurance
Support for healthy aging at home?	Yes	No
Daily cap on health care coverage?	Varies by plan	Often
Guaranteed access to health care?	Yes	No
Waiting period before benefits kick in?	No	Often
Medical approval needed at the time of health care activation?	No	Often
Annual increase amount known ahead of time?	Yes	No
Personal assistant to help you navigate the health care system?	Yes	No
Personal wellness coach dedicated to your needs?	Yes	No



Take charge of your future with WellAhead, the proactive approach to aging planfully at home

No matter what the future holds, the independence, support and peace of mind you gain make the WellAhead program well worth the investment.

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COOKING for one or two

You can rediscover the joy of cooking.

By Jackie Wilson

Cooking and baking is a long-time passion for many folks. Generous-sized pans of lasagna, a family-sized tuna noodle casserole and decadent layer cakes often fed the whole clan.

Now that kids moved out of the house, cooking the same cherished recipes yields too much food. And, who wants to eat reheated casserole leftovers five days in a row?

Joanie and E.J. Zisk created more than 600 single-serve recipes at www.onedishkitchen.com.

FEATURE: COOKING FOR ONE OR TWO

Keeping up those culinary skills is still possible when cooking for one or two.

Joanie Zisk is a chef and an online food blogger for One Dish Kitchen. When her son went to college, she created single serve meals for him. Shortly after that, she realized other empty-nesters and cooks desired smaller-portioned recipes. Today, she offers more than 600 free small-portion recipes.

Joanie and her husband, E.J., test and tweak small-batch recipes, which can be easily doubled. Cooks have rediscovered the joy of cooking.

Joanie explains, “We hear it all the time — why bother cooking when it’s just me? They say I should just get take-out.”

Most people try to simply halve the recipes, Joanie says that often doesn’t turn out right. For example, how do you split an egg?

Popular recipe categories at One Dish Kitchen include desserts and casseroles. The website offers videos plus an ingredient finder, which lets you use food on hand.

“A lot of people want comfort food and basic meals they can’t get in a restaurant,” Joanie explains.

Joanie says cooking for one or two is important.

“It’s the ultimate form of self-care,” she says. “It’s a passion to provide people with their cooking skills and knowing we are helping someone.”

For free one-serving recipes, visit www.onedishkitchen.com, or scan this QR code.



Smaller serving dishes, such as ramekins, found at Kitchen Collage in East Village, start at \$3 for the 4-ounce size.

TOP TIPS

- The freezer is your friend. Buy a bag of chicken breasts to cook one at a time. Freeze individual servings if you have leftovers.
- Buy smaller individual freezer containers and serving dishes, such as ramekins, for baking.
- Break out the fancy china and linen, light a candle and pour single-serve wine to make mealtime special.
- If it is in your budget, try Fresh Fit Meals, Dinner Delights or Hello Fresh delivery, which come in single-serve portions, cooked at home.



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Recipe from One Dish Kitchen

CASHEW CHICKEN FOR ONE

SAUCE INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon grated ginger or 1/8 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon water

CASHEW CHICKEN INGREDIENTS

- 1 (6-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breast cut into 1-inch cubes.
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1/2 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped thickly chopped onions
- 1/2 cup broccoli florets
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup unsalted cashews

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make the sauce: In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, honey, olive oil, ginger and water. Set aside.
2. Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Heat the olive oil in a medium skillet over medium high heat. Add the chicken and cook for 4 to 5 nutes until fully cooked.
3. Add the onions, broccoli and garlic to the skillet. Cook for about 1 minute, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables begin to soften.
4. Stir in the cashews and pour the sauce over everything. Bring to a gentle boil, then lower the heat. Simmer for about 3 minutes so the sauce thickens and coats the chicken and vegetables.
5. Serve the cashew chicken as is or over cooked rice.



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Recipe from One Dish Kitchen

EASY APPLE CRISP FOR ONE

FILLING

- 1 medium apple: peeled, cored and diced
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon all-purpose flour
- 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

TOPPING

- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons old fashioned oats
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons salted butter, softened

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make the filling
2. Heat oven to 350 F.
3. Mix together the chopped apples, sugar, flour, cinnamon and vanilla in a small bowl.
4. Transfer the apples to a 10-ounce ramekin.
5. Make the topping: In a small bowl, stir together flour, oats, brown sugar and cinnamon.
6. Cut the softened butter into small pieces and add them to the bowl. Blend in the butter using a fork or your fingers and mix until well combined.
7. Scatter the topping evenly over the apples. Place the ramekin on a small, rimmed baking sheet.
8. Bake for 30-35 minutes or until apples are soft and the topping is golden.





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A healthy new season of aging

Why hearing health matters more than you think

As the seasons change, many of us pause to reflect on our health and habits. Whether it's the quiet reset of winter or the motivation that comes with a new year, this is often when people recommit to aging well, staying active, mentally sharp, and socially connected. While exercise, nutrition, and heart health usually top the list, one essential part of healthy aging is still often overlooked: hearing.



Healthy aging isn't just about avoiding illness. It's about preserving independence, confidence, and meaningful relationships. Hearing plays a powerful role in all of these areas, yet hearing loss often develops so gradually that it goes unnoticed for years. When left untreated, it can quietly impact both physical and cognitive health.

Hearing isn't just an ear issue, it's a brain issue. When sound signals don't reach the brain clearly, the brain must work harder to fill in the gaps. Over time, this extra effort can affect memory, focus, and mental processing. Research from institutions such as Johns Hopkins shows a strong association between untreated hearing loss and an increased risk of cognitive decline. The Lancet Commission has also identified hearing loss as one of the leading modifiable risk factors for dementia, meaning it's something we can address.

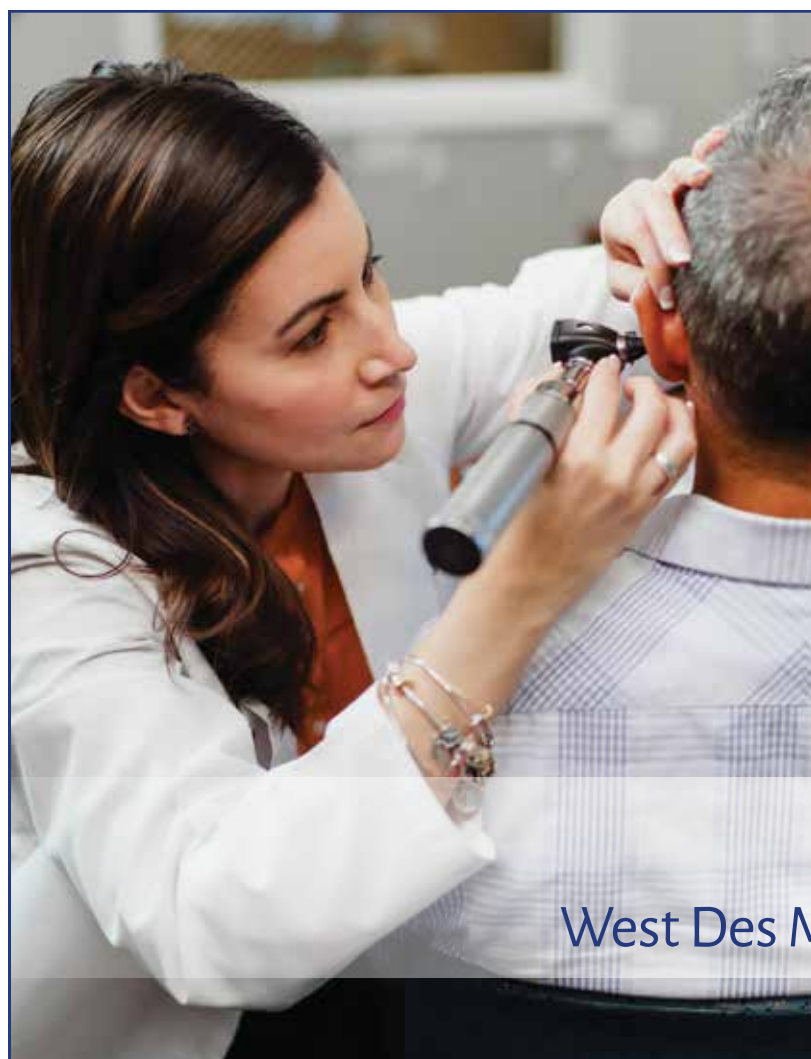
Good hearing also supports balance and safety. Reduced hearing can limit spatial awareness and the ability to detect important environmental cues, increasing the risk of falls, a leading cause of injury among older adults. Maintaining strong hearing helps support independence and confidence as we age.

Perhaps most importantly, hearing keeps us

connected. Social engagement is a key contributor to emotional well-being and longevity, yet hearing difficulties often lead people to withdraw from conversations and gatherings. Modern hearing technology is discreet, comfortable, and designed to adapt to real life, helping people stay engaged in the moments that matter most.

If you're over 50, now is a great time to establish or update a baseline hearing test. Just like eye exams and annual physicals, hearing evaluations are an important part of preventive care. Healthy aging is built on proactive choices and caring for your hearing today helps ensure a fuller, safer, and more connected life in every season ahead. ■

Information provided by Nathan Holmes, Hearing Instrument Specialist, ASI Beltone, 515-225-2242, www.asibeltone.com.



Healthy Aging Begins with Better Hearing

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Grief has no timeline

Grief is often misunderstood as something we “move through” in neat, predictable stages. In reality, grief rarely follows a straight line, and it certainly doesn’t operate on a schedule.



There is no finish date, no checklist, and no moment when loss is officially “behind us.” Grief has no timeline — only a deeply personal rhythm that is unique to each individual.

After the loss of a loved one, many people feel pressure, whether spoken or unspoken, to heal within a certain amount of time. Friends may gently ask, “How are you doing now?” Employers may expect a return to normal routines. Even well-meaning family members may assume that time alone will ease the pain. While time can

soften grief, it does not erase it, and it does not do the same work for everyone. Some days, grief feels quiet and manageable. Other days, it can return suddenly and unexpectedly — triggered by a song, a holiday, a familiar scent, or a memory that catches you off guard. These moments don’t mean you’re moving backward. They simply mean you loved deeply. Grief often comes in waves, and learning to live with those waves is part of the healing journey.

It’s also important to remember that grief doesn’t always look the same from person to person. Some people find comfort in talking openly about their loss, while others prefer private reflection. Some cry easily; others may not cry at all. There is no “right” way to grieve. Comparing your experience to someone else’s can lead to unnecessary guilt or self-doubt. Your grief is

valid, exactly as it is. Over time, many people discover that grief changes shape. The pain may become less sharp, making room for gratitude, memories, and even moments of joy. This doesn’t mean forgetting the person you lost. Instead, it often means learning how to carry their memory forward while continuing to live fully.

If you are grieving, be gentle with yourself. Allow space for your emotions, whatever they may be. Seek support when you need it — through trusted friends, family members, faith leaders or grief support resources. Healing doesn’t mean “moving on”; it means finding a new way forward. When it comes to loss, there is no timetable — only understanding, remembrance, and care. ■

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

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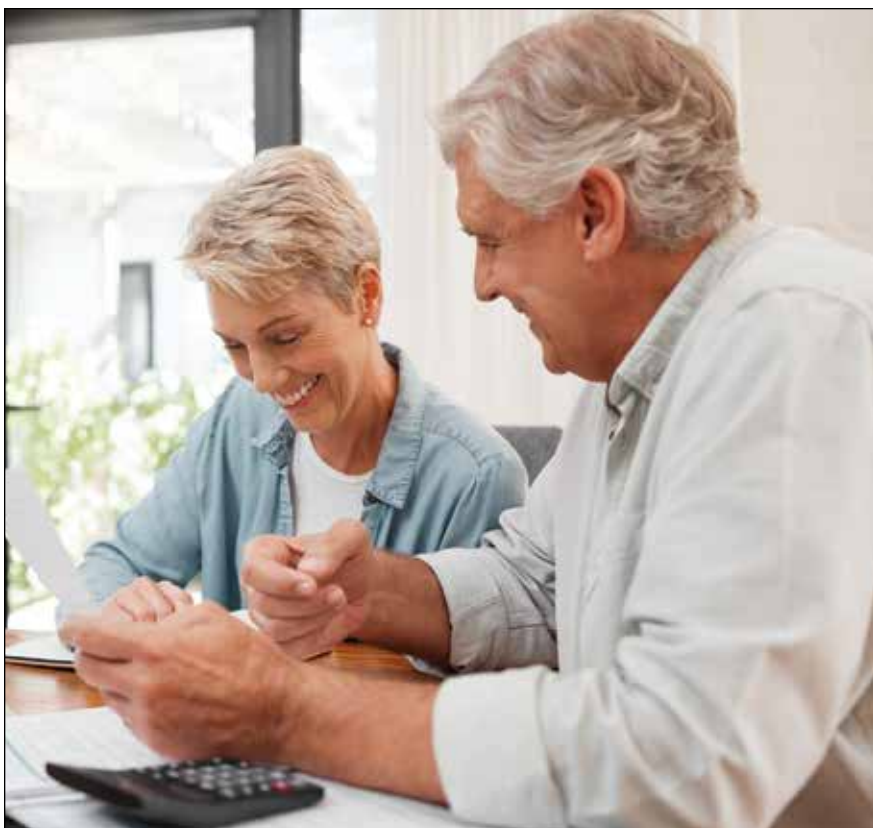
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Staying home through the end

When care is built for life's final chapter

For many people, the final wish is simple: to remain at home through the end of life. Not in a hospital room. Not in a revolving-door facility. Home — surrounded by familiarity, routines and people who know them.

For a long time, this wish was treated as emotional rather than practical. End-of-life care was assumed to require institutional settings, clinical infrastructure and constant shift changes. Home was viewed as a comfort preference, not a care solution.

That assumption is no longer accurate.

Modern in-home care models have evolved to support individuals through advanced illness and end-of-life with consistency, safety, and dignity — often more effectively than traditional settings. The difference is not equipment or credentials alone. It is execution.

In the home, care is one-to-one. The same caregiver shows up day after day, learns the person's rhythms, notices subtle changes and adjusts in real time. This continuity reduces anxiety, prevents unnecessary crises and allows symptoms to be managed before they escalate into emergency events.

End-of-life is not primarily a medical problem. It is a human one.

Pain, fear, confusion, fatigue and vulnerability require presence more than procedures. Families need guidance, reassurance and someone who stays — not rotating staff, not unfamiliar faces, not fragmented communication.

When care is delivered in the home, families remain participants instead of bystanders. They are supported, not displaced. Decisions are made with clarity instead of urgency. Moments are preserved instead of interrupted.

Importantly, this does not mean working without clinical partnership. In-home care works best alongside hospice and medical teams — handling the daily realities of living, while clinicians focus on symptom management and oversight. Together, they create a complete system of care without removing the person from their life.

The result is fewer hospitalizations, fewer emergency calls and greater peace for both individuals and families. But beyond outcomes, there is something harder to measure and impossible to replace: dignity.

Dying at home allows people to remain who they are until the end. A spouse instead of a patient. A parent instead of a room number. A life, not a bed.

As healthcare continues to rethink where care belongs, the question is no longer whether end-of-life can happen at home.

The question is whether we are willing to recognize that, in many cases, home is not an alternative — it is the best place. ■



Information provided by Bob Baumgart, Home Instead, 515-978-7991, www.care.homeinstead.com.

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I've been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease... now what?

No one wants to hear the words “you have Parkinson’s disease,” but each year approximately 90,000 Americans receive that diagnosis. Parkinson’s disease is a progressively degenerative disease of the central nervous system that affects movement, often including but not limited to tremors. This feels like a shocking diagnosis, but I am here to tell you that this is not a death sentence. By using resources provided throughout the community and implementing a wellness plan, you can combat Parkinson’s disease and increase longevity, and quality, of life.



If you or someone you know has been recently diagnosed, here’s what I suggest you do next:

Build your team. You don’t have to, and shouldn’t have to, navigate this disease alone. First and most importantly, I recommend finding a movement disorder specialist or another professional who is familiar with Parkinson’s disease. Next comes a physician, therapy team (including physical, occupational and speech therapy), mental health counselor and nutritionist. Together, these individuals help form a well-rounded medical team that can help you navigate every aspect of Parkinson’s.

Medical professionals are not the only part of your team — finding your community can be just as important. There are several Parkinson’s disease support groups throughout the Des Moines metro. These groups are not just educational; they provide an opportunity to connect with other persons with Parkinson’s. Having others you can learn from and relate to can be a powerful tool.

Seek out resources. There are so many resources out there for persons with Parkinson’s disease. The American Parkinson’s Disease Association has an Iowa chapter that offers educational information, support groups and events. There is also the Parkinson’s Foundation, The Michael J. Fox Foundation and the Davis Phinney Foundation. Take advantage of the many free tools these organizations offer.

Establish an exercise and wellness plan. While medications can help control the symptoms of Parkinson’s, research strongly supports that exercise can help to mitigate symptoms as well. Aerobic, strengthening, stretching and balance exercises are all recommended. There are Parkinson’s specific exercises such as LSVT BIG and LOUD or various exercise classes (think boxing, dancing, etc.) specifically designed for the Parkinson’s population. If you can’t find these options near you, incorporating any kind of movement into your day can be very effective.

Life doesn’t end with this diagnosis. With the right team and tools, you can manage Parkinson’s disease and continue to thrive. Your journey is far from over; it’s just the beginning of a new chapter. ■

Information provided by Gail McGaughy, Outpatient Therapy Manager and Physical Therapist at On With Life

February is AMD Awareness Month

Age-related Macular Degeneration, AMD, is one of the leading causes of vision loss in adults older than 60. Because February is AMD Awareness Month, it's the perfect time to learn how to protect your sight and understand the latest treatment options available in central Iowa.



AMD affects the macula, the part of the retina responsible for clear, central vision used for reading, recognizing faces, and driving. While AMD does not cause total blindness, it can significantly impact daily life if not detected early.

Two Forms of AMD: Dry and Wet. Most people develop the dry form, which progresses slowly as the macula thins with age. The earliest sign is often the presence of drusen — tiny yellow deposits seen during an eye exam. Over time, dry AMD can cause blurred or distorted central vision.

The less common form of AMD is the wet form, which occurs when abnormal blood vessels grow under the retina and leak. This can lead to rapid vision loss — but when treated quickly, outcomes are significantly better.

Early Detection Is Key. The most important step in protecting your vision is an annual dilated eye exam. Modern Imaging — like Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) — allows your ophthalmologist to detect subtle changes long before symptoms appear.

Warning Signs You Should Never Ignore. While AMD can be silent in the beginning, certain symptoms should prompt an immediate exam:

- Straight lines appearing wavy or distorted
- A gray, dark, or blurry spot in the center of vision
- Difficulty reading, even with good glasses
- Colors appearing faded
- Sudden changes in vision

Quick action is especially critical for wet AMD, where prompt treatment can preserve sight.

How You Can Reduce Your Risk. Certain lifestyle choices can slow AMD progression and support long-term eye health:

- Smoking triples your risk
- Wear sunglasses with strong UV protection
- Eat leafy greens, colorful fruits, omega-3s, and zinc-rich foods
- Manage blood pressure and cholesterol
- Take AREDS2 vitamins if recommended by your eye doctor

The Bottom Line. AMD does not have to steal your independence. With early detection, modern imaging and timely treatment, many people maintain excellent vision for years. This February, make your annual eye exam a priority — and let Des Moines Eye Surgeons help safeguard your sight for the future. ■

Information provided by Daniel Poe, Practice Administrator at Des Moines Eye Surgeons.

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Estate planning and the revocable trust

Creating an estate plan is the way to ensure that your assets pass to your loved ones following your death. There are several different estate planning options, but a common one is to create a revocable trust.



A revocable trust is an estate planning vehicle that is similar to a Last Will and Testament, but has many important differences. It becomes effective while you are alive, unlike a Will. Typically, you would be the initial Trustee of the trust, and would administer the trust for your benefit. Naming a dependable backup Trustee is a crucial part of the planning process.

Property and assets are transferred to the trust, to be held and administered by a Trustee for the benefit of the beneficiaries. The trust contains provisions outlining how to manage your assets while you are alive and how to distribute them when you die. This type of trust has several benefits.

First, a trust provides for the orderly management of assets. During your lifetime, you can manage the assets as you see fit. You can sell and acquire assets, change investments, and fully utilize your resources.

Second, a trust gives you an efficient and effective way to manage your assets. You have the authority to decide when and to whom trust distributions are made. You can also change the trust, appoint a new trustee, or revoke the trust entirely.

Third, a living trust is a good vehicle for planning for potential incapacity. By specifying a procedure for determining incapacity and then naming a successor Trustee, you can ensure the seamless administration of your affairs.

Finally, if drafted correctly and completely funded, a revocable trust avoids probate. It allows for the smooth transition of the ownership of assets. A revocable trust contains your individualized provisions with respect to the disposition of your assets. Unlike probating your estate, your private wishes will not become part of public record.

If one of your goals is to avoid probate, placing all of your assets in the trust is crucial. If you die with some assets in trust and some owned by you as an individual, your estate will have to be administered through probate to distribute the assets that aren't in the trust.

Using a revocable trust offers great flexibility in managing assets and ensuring wealth transfer. Be sure to consult with an experienced attorney when choosing a trust for your estate planning. ■

Information provided by Ross Barnett, Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm, 2560 73rd St., Urbandale, 515-278-0623, www.ARPCLaw.com.

Pelvic floor health

A powerful solution for incontinence and confidence

Pelvic floor health plays a vital role in overall well-being, yet it's often overlooked until problems like bladder leakage, urgency or reduced core strength begin to interfere with daily life. Incontinence affects millions of men and women of all ages — not just new mothers or seniors — and while it's common, it's not something you have to simply live with.



The pelvic floor is a group of muscles that support the bladder, bowel and, for women, the uterus. When these muscles weaken due to aging, pregnancy, surgery, hormonal changes or lifestyle factors, symptoms such as urinary leakage, reduced control and diminished quality of life can occur. Strengthening these muscles is key — but traditional pelvic floor exercises can be difficult to perform correctly or consistently.

That's where modern technology offers a breakthrough solution.

Our Pelvic Floor Chair provides a non-invasive, comfortable way to help strengthen the pelvic floor muscles without undressing, needles or surgery. Using advanced electromagnetic stimulation, the chair activates deep pelvic floor contractions while you remain fully clothed and relaxed. In a single session, the pelvic floor muscles can be engaged thousands of times — far more effectively than voluntary exercises alone.

Clients choose the Pelvic Floor Chair because it fits seamlessly into busy lives. Sessions are quick, painless and require no downtime, making it easy to incorporate into a wellness routine. Many people seek support for concerns such as bladder leakage, urgency, post-pregnancy recovery, post-prostate support and core stability. Others simply want to be proactive about pelvic health and long-term confidence.

Pelvic floor strength doesn't just affect bladder control — it influences posture, core strength, sexual wellness and everyday comfort. Addressing these muscles can lead to improved confidence, freedom and quality of life.

At Asuta Health, we focus on personalized care and education, helping clients understand their bodies and feel supported every step of the way. If incontinence or pelvic floor weakness is holding you back, there is a safe, effective, and modern option available.

Take the first step toward stronger pelvic health and renewed confidence — your body will thank you. ■

Information provided by Dr. Ole J. Olson, D.C., Board Certified in Neuropathy and Chronic Pain Syndromes, Asuta Health, 210 N.E. Delaware Ave., Suite 110, Ankeny, www.AustaHealth.org.

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Movement snacks

A movement snack is a small amount of intentional movement done on its own, not as part of an exercise routine, set of chores or other activity.

They are an excellent way to “sit less and move more.” Periodically, maybe every hour, move in your chair or get up and move around for one to 10 minutes. It’s a snack — it doesn’t need to be big.

Fun ideas include dancing to music. After a snowfall, trudge around the yard drawing pictures. If the weather is good, get up, go out the door, walk/run around the house, and come back in for no reason.

Another idea is to do things that improve daily life skills. Get ready for gardening season by holding the counter and doing deep knee bends. Improve your leg strength by standing up and sitting down three times whenever you normally stand up. Get down to the floor and back up again every so often to make it easier when you really need to do it.

Whether you keep a ball at your desk and bounce it on the wall over your head or you stop and swing on the swingset at the playground, keep snacking! ■

Information provided by Katherine Roccasecca, CPT, Roccasecca Fitness, 515-360-3832, www.roccasecca.fitness.



TRAVELING ABROAD?

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Travel medical insurance helps protect you from the unexpected, so you can focus on enjoying the adventure.





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Advisor

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Travel medical insurance helps mitigate risks

Travel medical insurance is an essential safeguard for anyone traveling internationally. Many travelers underestimate its importance, but medical emergencies abroad can be unpredictable and extremely expensive. Healthcare costs in other countries are often higher than expected, and most U.S. health insurance plans provide little or no coverage outside the United States. Without proper protection, even minor medical issues can result in significant out-of-pocket expenses. Travel medical insurance helps reduce these risks by covering emergency treatment, hospitalization, evacuation, repatriation, and limited dental care.

A critical feature of these policies is emergency medical evacuation coverage. In serious cases, travelers may need transport to a better-equipped facility or back home for continued care — services that can cost tens of thousands of dollars. Many plans also offer 24/7 assistance, helping travelers find medical facilities, coordinate care, and overcome language barriers in unfamiliar healthcare systems.

Beyond financial protection, travel medical insurance offers peace of mind. Knowing that medical care and support are readily available allows travelers to focus on their trip rather than potential emergencies. Ultimately, it is a vital part of responsible trip planning and an important protection against unexpected health-related challenges abroad. ■

Information provided by Nicki Michaud, Health Insurance Advisor, LLC, 6000 Grand Ave., Suite H, Des Moines, IA 50312. Sources: Medicare.org



The 2026 Retirement Checklist

The start of a new year may be a perfect time for retirees to take stock of their financial lives. With changing tax laws, shifting markets and rising costs, I believe a clear plan matters more than ever. This 2026 Retirement Checklist highlights some practical steps I recommend every Iowan age 65-plus should consider to begin the year with confidence.



Update Your Income Plan

Income needs change over time, and your plan should, too. Review how much income you take from each source and confirm it remains sustainable. During market volatility, consider drawing more from stable or guaranteed income sources and less from risk-oriented accounts. A balanced approach helps protect savings while still allowing growth.

Re-evaluate Your Investment Allocation

Many retirees haven't adjusted investments in years, yet interest rates, bond yields and market behavior look very different heading into 2026. I feel it is important that your portfolio includes an appropriate mix of growth, income, and principal-protected assets — enough growth to combat inflation and enough stability to reduce stress.

Get Ahead of 2026 Tax Planning

Review how Social Security, IRA withdrawals, dividends and pension income affect your taxes. Revisit Roth conversions, tax-efficient withdrawal strategies and Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs). Even small adjustments can create meaningful long-term savings. With the increased standard deduction for those 65-plus in place through 2028, there may be a valuable window to recognize additional income at favorable rates.

Review Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs)

RMD rules continue to evolve, and mistakes can be costly. I strongly suggest that you verify your required amount, understand its impact on your tax bracket, and explore ways to reduce future RMD exposure. Proactive planning now can create flexibility later.

Revisit Medicare and Healthcare Costs

Each year brings new Medicare premiums, updated IRMAA thresholds and prescription plan changes. Review your coverage, identify gaps and understand how income decisions may affect healthcare expenses.

Refresh Your Estate and Legacy Plan

Review your will, trust, beneficiary designations, powers of attorney and healthcare directives. Keeping documents current can save loved ones time, money and stress.

In my experience, a successful retirement doesn't happen by chance — it's built one smart step at a time. Working with a fiduciary who specializes in seniors can help you navigate these decisions with clarity and confidence. By following this checklist, you can enter 2026 organized, prepared, and ready to enjoy the year ahead. ■

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Pair simplicity and flavor with seafood pasta

(Family Features)

Some recipes come from a well-worn family card, and others are born on a busy weeknight when you need dinner to feel special without being complicated. Shrimp spaghetti falls squarely into that second category for me. It's the kind of meal that looks impressive on the plate but comes together quickly — perfect for those evenings when you want something comforting, a little indulgent, and absolutely reliable.

I love shrimp because it cooks fast and pairs beautifully with simple ingredients. Toss it with garlic, olive oil, a hint of heat, and a squeeze of lemon, and suddenly an ordinary box of spaghetti feels elevated. This is the dish I reach for when I want a break from heavy sauces but still crave big flavor. It's light enough for warmer months, yet cozy enough to enjoy year-round.

Simple, satisfying, and full of flavor. This shrimp spaghetti is proof that a good meal doesn't have to be complicated to feel special. Find more quick dinner solutions by visiting Culinary.net. ■

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



Shrimp Spaghetti

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"
Servings: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound spaghetti noodles
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/4 cup avocado oil
- 1 package (12 ounces) raw shrimp
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder, divided
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 cup frozen or fresh spinach
- bread, for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

- Cook spaghetti noodles according to package instructions. In skillet over medium heat, add butter, avocado oil and shrimp. Mix in 1 tablespoon garlic powder and paprika.



- Remove shrimp after they begin to turn pink; set aside.
- Add chicken broth, Parmesan cheese, heavy cream, remaining garlic powder, onion powder and spinach to skillet; mix well.
- Add shrimp back to skillet to finish cooking. Mix in noodles and serve with bread.



DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE RECIPE?

I would love to see it, and the story that goes along with it.
Send to jolene@iowalivingmagazines.com. Happy cooking!

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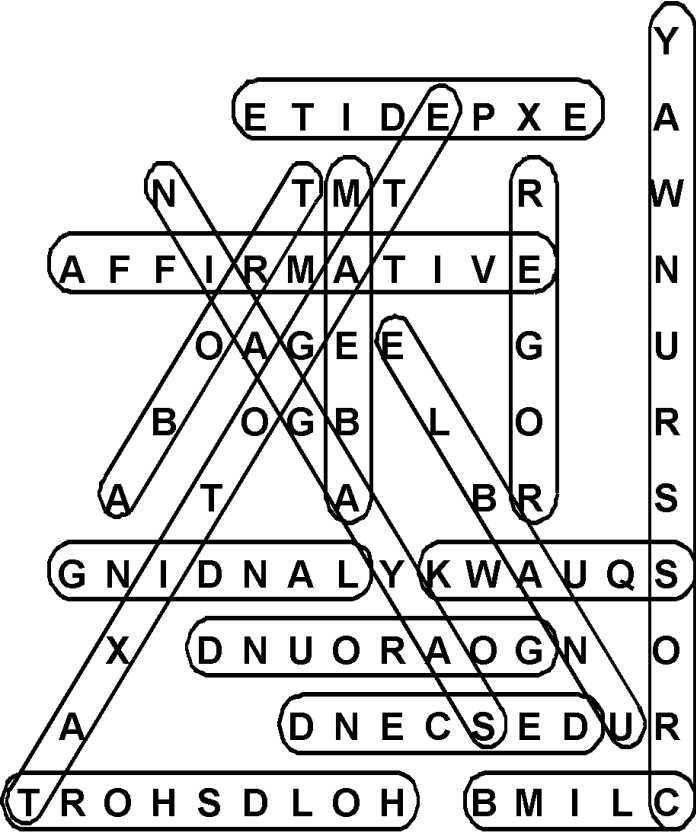
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MAGIC MAZE: PAGE 21

WORDS HEARD IN
A CONTROL TOWER



WORD SPIRAL: PAGE 21

WAGONLOAD

TRIVIA TEST: PAGE 20

1. Tegucigalpa.
2. Poppin' Fresh.
3. Illinois.
4. Fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of one's mouth.
5. "Creep."
6. Dr. Rene Bellog.
7. William Henry Harrison, 1 hour and 45 minutes.
8. South Africa.
9. International Committee of the Red Cross.
10. Calcium.

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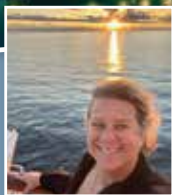


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GAMES: ANSWERS

KING CROSSWORD: PAGE 14

Solution time: 25 mins.

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SUDOKU: PAGE 20

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