

Panora TIMES

POPPING THE QUESTION

THE PROPOSALS,
ENGAGEMENTS AND
LOVE STORIES OF A
FEW LOCAL COUPLES

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FROM THE COVER: Cameron Little picked a natural scene for his proposal to Rachelle. Photo special to Panora Times

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FROM THE COVER: Cameron Little picked a natural scene for his proposal to Rachelle. Photo special to Panora Times



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A PROPOSAL IN LETTERS

It was 32 years ago when I asked my wife, Jolene, to marry me. We had been dating for a few years, and we both seemed ready to tie the knot. We were not ones to travel the world or take on outlandish activities, so a simple proposal seemed fitting, at least to me. What we did do was play a lot of board games, especially during the cold winter months. That gave me an idea.

One evening, I carefully placed the engagement ring I purchased for her in the bag of letters in a Scrabble game. I asked her if she wanted to play. She didn't react positively, but I eventually talked her into it. I nervously unfolded the board and set up the racks. Then I

drew my letters. She did the same.

As the game proceeded, Jolene kept drawing her replacement letters, and I kept looking at her face, awaiting her reaction when she would pull out the ring.

More rounds of play. More letters drawn. We were getting down to the end, and she still had not found the ring. Was it not there? Did I lose it? Or did she know my plan and was messing with me the entire time?

With her last draw, she felt something



**Shane
Goodman**

different in the bag and remarked, "What is in here?" Then she turned the bag upside down and shook it, bouncing the ring off the table and onto the floor. I, of course, quickly picked it up and dropped to one knee, asking her to marry me. Fortunately, she said yes. And, fortunately, the ring was still intact.

Considering what we do in our jobs today with publishing and printing and journalism and words, maybe using the Scrabble game was a good fit. I would like to tell you I had that connection planned out, but I didn't. We simply liked playing Scrabble. And we like being married, too.

In this month's cover story, we share the engagement stories of local residents, telling how they gained the courage to ask for their partner's hand in marriage.

Have a great month and thanks for reading. ■

Shane

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POPPING THE QUESTION

The proposals, engagements and love stories of a few local couples.

BY RICH WICKS
Panora Times

When it comes to marriage proposals and engagements, there does not seem to be a right or wrong way. In romantic relationships, it is often said that birds of a feather flock together. But, it is also said that opposites attract. Some people believe in love at first sight, while others say love must grow gradually through shared experiences. Some prefer a private proposal, while others pop the question while being televised on a Jumbotron screen at a public event.

So, what is the best approach? That depends. Falling in love, proposing marriage and building a life together are all unique experiences that each couple navigates in their own way based on their unique situation. Below are the proposal, engagement and love stories of a few local couples.

JENNA CASTLE AND HUNTER KLOEWER

Jenna Castle and Hunter Kloewer are a young couple in Panora planning a May 2026 wedding. Castle, who works as a physical therapist at Guthrie County Hospital, told the story of their engagement.

"We had been going on four years of dating, and the proposal happened this past summer. I was not expecting it at all," Castle said. "It was the Saturday before



Hunter Kloewer pops the question to Jenna Castle.



Jenna Castle embraces Hunter Kloewer.

Mother's Day. I was under the impression that we were going to get family pictures at Boulder Beach the whole day. That's what his mother wanted to do for Mother's Day."

When the couple arrived at the spot, Castle noticed something odd.

"Once we got there, there was nobody there. He had it all set up, and that's where he proposed. It was just the two of us at first," she said. "He's a triplet, and his two sisters were there. They had set everything up, and then they were hiding, recording and taking pictures. I didn't see them until the last minute. But once I saw them, I kind of knew what was up."

Kloewer had more surprises up his sleeve.

"He secretly invited all of my family. So, right after he proposed, my parents

showed up, my grandparents showed up, and all of our friends, too," Castle said. "He had this whole party planned at his family's lake house. That was nice to be able to share that with them, too."

Castle admits she was impressed that Kloewer was able to keep things a secret with so many people in the loop.

"It's hard to keep a secret from me. I tend to find out, so it's very impressive that he was able to keep it hidden," Castle said. "I found out later that the ring was in the glove box, and I had driven his truck multiple times, but I had no idea."

Although the proposal timing was a surprise, Castle said the couple had talked about the idea of getting engaged and had even shopped for rings.

"We had gone and looked at rings back

in October prior, but then he waited until May," she said.

According to Castle, no family members or friends were surprised the couple chose to become engaged. In fact, some seemed to wonder what took so long.

"I don't think anybody was surprised," Castle said. "Most of the time, it was like, 'Finally!'"

Castle said that after dating four years, being engaged doesn't feel any different.

"We are getting married May 2, so almost one year from when we got engaged," she said. "We're still the same people. The only thing different is now we're planning a wedding."

Castle said the couple expects around 250 to 300 guests. With the wedding only a few months away, planning is running full



Miranda and Skylar Meinecke

speed, but the couple isn't feeling stressed — yet.

"I haven't hit that part yet," Castle said.

As often happens, the groom-to-be is happy to defer to his fiancée on most decisions about the upcoming nuptials.

"He and I are pretty easy going, and he just says, 'Whatever you want,'" Castle said.

MIRANDA AND SKYLAR MEINECKE

Miranda Meinecke works at B & B Marketplace in Panora. Her husband, Skylar, is the son of Kandi Meinecke, owner of B & B Marketplace. So, both are quite familiar with the process of planning the many details involved in scheduling a wedding.

The proposal, engagement and marriage of Miranda and Skylar is proof that there is no cookie-cutter plan for such events. Two major surprises impacted their planning. The couple explained the unusual circumstances that led to the timing of their progression to marriage.

"We dated for not even two years. We were living together in Ankeny. We knew we were going to get married," Miranda said. "We had to do everything quickly because it was a dark time. We had found out that my mom had cancer, stage four, very aggressive and very rare. They only gave her six to 12 months to live. My brother had just gotten married, and then we decided that we wanted her to be there for



A beautiful surprise for Miranda.

this. So, we started planning a wedding before we were even engaged."

On the day after Thanksgiving 2019, the couple went to check out a possible venue in Webster City for their wedding day, which was set for April 11, 2020. But, unknown to Miranda, Skylar had a secret in store for her.

"My mom and my sister decorated the gazebo where they hold outdoor weddings," Skylar said. "There was a trail to it, and we tricked Miranda into coming out there."

"I had said I wanted an outdoor wedding, and they said, 'Well. Let's go check out the gazebo,'" Miranda said. "We walked out there, and then I realized it was all decorated, and there were all my favorite chocolates, and I didn't realize the ring was there, too."

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As far as Miranda knew, the ring was still in a jewelry store.

"I had picked out a ring in Webster City, but I knew he hadn't picked it up yet," Miranda said.

Skylar's sister, Kaylinn, had picked up the ring so that Miranda would be surprised. It worked. With the proposal accepted, the couple began planning their April wedding.

"That was Thanksgiving," Miranda said. "Then COVID came."

The pandemic and resulting lockdown made the couple's April 2020 wedding plan impossible, so they scrambled to reschedule. The challenge was that no one knew when lockdown restrictions would be lifted. Fortunately, the couple found a potential makeup date that would fit the calendars of all the event's vendors.

"Luckily, everyone had the Fourth of July available, which was a Saturday."

The couple also set a secondary backup date of Thanksgiving 2020, in case COVID protocols did not allow the wedding to happen as scheduled on July 4.

"The Fourth of July worked out, which I'm thankful for because my mom passed away three weeks later," Miranda said.

"It was very hot that day, and I had planned all of our outfits for an outdoor wedding in April. Those poor guys were so hot," Miranda said.

"We were in suit jackets, brand new blue jeans and cowboy boots, and it was like 105 degrees or whatever that day," Skylar said.

The heat nearly prevented Miranda's mother from attending.

"My mom almost didn't come," Miranda said. "But then she called back and said, 'I can do this.'"

The couple is very appreciative that everyone worked with them to reschedule around COVID and still have the wedding in time for Miranda's mother to participate.

Since marrying in 2020, the couple has been blessed with a son, Reed.

RACHELLE AND CAMERON LITTLE

Rachelle and Cameron Little married just over three years ago and now live in Yale. Rachelle shared the story of their unique and comical proposal moment.

"Cam and I met on Facebook, and we were friends for a year before we started dating, and then we got engaged six months after we started dating," Rachelle said. "We got engaged April 17, 2022."

Rachelle explained the proposal happened while looking for a suitable outdoor spot to marry.

"My daughter, Taylin, and I are from West Des Moines. So, Cam and Taylin and I were checking out Springbrook Park, looking for possible wedding venues because we knew we were going to get engaged, and my daughter and I were going to be moving out here," Rachelle said. "But I didn't know that my daughter and Cam had kind of put together a plan for the proposal. So, we were driving around looking at the shelters in the park, and we went to the youth group area. He suggested we get out and look around, and then we started taking some pictures."

This was the spot where the surprise and the comedy happened. At first, Cameron did not get the proposal response he was expecting.

"So, then my daughter said, 'OK, turn around and face the woods,' and she took a picture that way," Rachelle said. "Then Cam had moved back and got down on one knee, and he proposed, and I have motion sickness, so I was a little out of it from the winding roads of Springbrook, so with that, the first thing I said was, 'What, Cameron?'

"So that's our huge joke now. But, I said yes. I was very shocked and very excited," Rachelle said. "I didn't know but my daughter was recording us the whole time. But that was really cool, she got to be part of it, and she got to help me pick out my ring."

Immediately after the proposal, the

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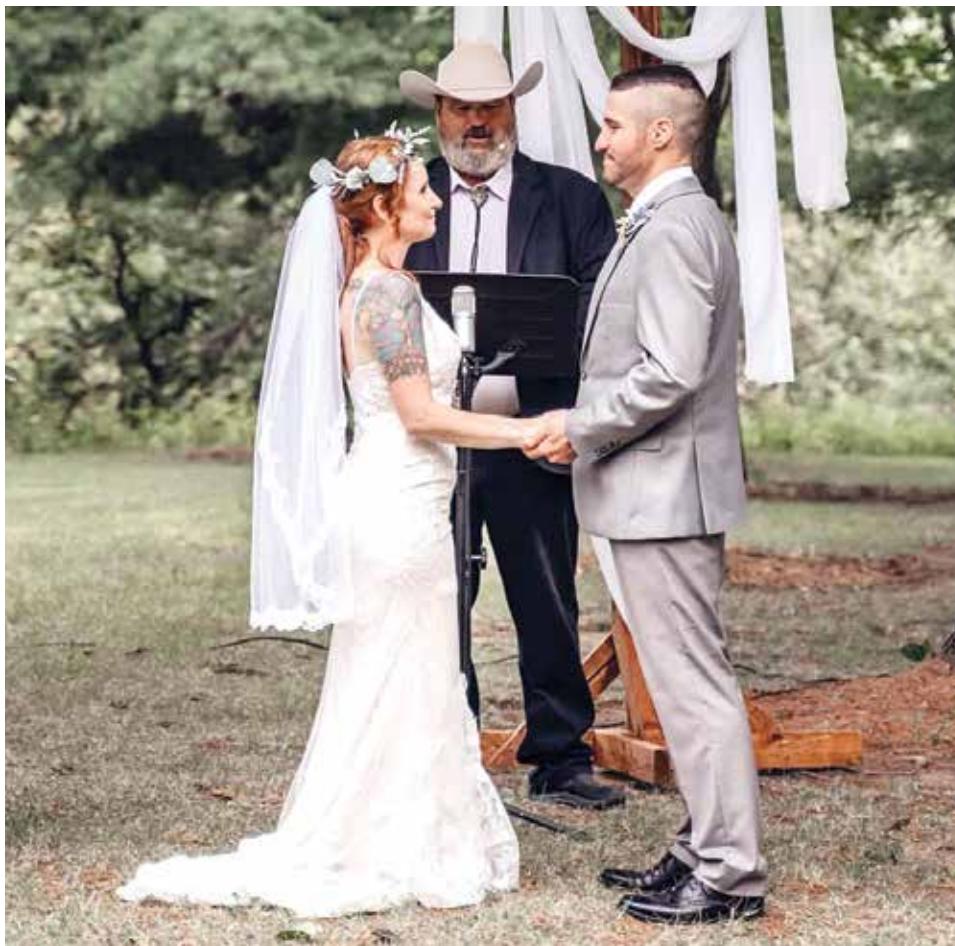


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Rachelle and Cameron Little exchange vows.

three went to share the news with Cameron's parents. Rachelle found that nobody seemed surprised at the engagement.

"I think everyone kind of knew that we would get engaged," she said. "I think everyone was excited more than anything. People were just waiting for it to happen."

That April day of scouting out the park resulted in a scenic outdoor wedding.

"We got married five months later, Sept. 17, 2022. We actually got married at Springbrook Park. It's very special to us, and I'm a photographer, so I like to be out there when I can," Rachelle said. "It was perfect for us." ■



Cameron and Rachelle celebrate being married.

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Panora TIMES WEDDING GUIDE

Here comes the bride. This time that means you. Or maybe it means your daughter. Or, possibly, the one who will dress in white is engaged to be your wife. Whomever it is, before the wedding bells ring, you need to plan. Start your research early, don't be afraid to ask others to help out, and read the following Wedding Guide for ideas on how to pull off the perfect day.

5 TIPS TO ENHANCE WEDDING DECOR

Family Features

Wedding days are meant to be filled with love and celebration, and what better way to ring in the new stage of life as newlyweds than with a well-decorated venue to match the joyous occasion? Whether a couple is on a tight budget or picky when it comes to theme ideas, these decorating tips can help add more flair for the big day.

1. USE A NATURAL VENUE.

Many couples choose wedding venues that require immense amounts of decorations, but a venue with organic scenery or a beautiful view can help alleviate the stress. Consider having the ceremony near a garden or beach with enough natural surroundings to keep guests in awe.

2. MAKE THE CAKE A CENTERPIECE.

Wedding cakes are almost guaranteed to be filled with flavor, but they can also serve as a decorative centerpiece for the reception. Choosing a cake topped with flowers, highlighting bright colors and placing it in a prominent spot at the reception can grab guests' attention while also keeping them eager for a bite.

3. CHOOSE TABLE ACCESSORIES THAT POP.

Leave guests in amazement as they make their way to their seats for the re-

ception with beautifully decorated tables. Table accessories can be anything ranging from patterned table runners to flowers in full-bloom placed in simple, elegant vases. If you are not having a formal sit-down reception, try using paper lanterns or hanging flowers from the ceiling to create an eye-catching atmosphere to remember.

4. ADD CLASSIC LIGHTING.

At times, finding the right lighting to match the mood of a wedding venue can be tricky. In this case, less may actually be more. Try opting for a classic candlelit ceremony or reception to create a more romantic setting. This can save both money and countless hours spent attempting to configure elaborate light fixtures, and also provide a timeless feel.

5. PLACE ENGAGEMENT PHOTOS AROUND.

With any wedding, you want the day to feel personal and intimate for the couple and guests alike. Consider decorating the venue with engagement photos of the soon-to-be spouses as they popped the question. This can allow the newlyweds to reminisce while guests view those cherished moments and revel in the occasion. ■

For more tips to prepare for life's special moments like marital bliss, visit elivingtoday.com.



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HOW TO HANDLE SEATING WEDDING GUESTS

Family Features

Receptions may be big or small, lavish or casual. But regardless of their size or style, receptions all share a common element: They will require couples set up seating arrangement for guests. Even though assigned seating isn't mandatory, selecting seats for a sit-down dinner makes things simpler and reduces confusion. Some reception venues may even require assigned seating so that catering staff can service tables accordingly.

Seating guests can be tricky, but employing a few strategies can make the process go quickly and smoothly.

- **Use a seating chart.** A seating chart, whether it's venue-specific or one couples make themselves, is essential. If you are using a self-made chart, inquire with the venue about the shape of tables, how many guests each table can seat, and the location of tables around the space.
- **Start with the wedding party table.** Couples can ease themselves into the task of seating by doing the easy

tables first. The primary one is the wedding party table. This traditionally can be a dais or a sweetheart table flanked by the wedding party. According to Martha Stewart Weddings, the table should be centrally located, and the wedding couple should sit in the middle. A male-female pattern follows on either side of the couple, consisting of the ushers, bridesmaids, best man and maid of honor. If much of the wedding party is already married, couples may opt to have the wedding party sit with their spouses instead of at the dais.

- **Organize family tables.** Tables for parents, grandparents and immediate family members of the bride and groom also are high priority. Both families can be combined at one table, or they can be separated into two tables. These tables should be the closest to the bride and groom.
- **Consider mobility issues.** Next seat guests who have specific needs at tables. Elderly guests may want to



be away from the band, deejay or speakers. Guests in wheelchairs may need an accessible seat near the exit.

- **Get some help.** Enlist the help of parents to seat their friends and extended family members. Parents may know best who gets along and who should be separated.
- **Seat dancers near the dance floor.**

To encourage dancing, place guests who tend to be lively close to the dance floor so others can see them getting up to dance and join in.

Couples can use apps, lists or self-made charts to plot their reception seating arrangements. Create place cards or a central chart so guests can find their seats promptly and easily. ■

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LOCAL FILM REVIEWS

NEIL DIAMOND. KING DAVID. SHAKESPEARE. AND THREE MOVIES WITH A CHARACTER'S NAME IN THE TITLE.



"Ella McCay"

BY MICHAEL C. WOODY

Panora Times

It's the end of the year, so let's clean out the film closet and throw everything that we have got against the wall and see what sticks. And, just to be different, let's start with the worst movie in this batch and end with the best.

"ELLA MCCAY"

With the talent behind and in front of the camera, this movie was set up like few others to be successful. It was written by James L. Brooks, who wrote "Broadcast News," "As Good As It Gets" and co-wrote "Terms of Endearment," which was nominated for just shy of a dozen Academy Awards. It stars Jamie Lee Curtis, Albert Brooks, Rebecca Hall, Julie Kavner and Woody Harrelson. That being said, this an absolutely horrible movie. Emma Mackey, whose last credit was the Barbie movie, is so miscast as a political power person in the middle of a scandal and chomping at the bit to make a name for herself. This movie



"David"

should have never been made. I sat in on a screening, and it was all I could do to stay in my seat. **GRADE: D-**

"DAVID"

This is a look at the biblical King David as a young warrior trying to make a name for himself and help his people escape the cruelty of their enemies. "David" is an excellent animated film that is so much better than the other cartoon stuff that kids have been fed all year. I was not expecting a great animated film, but that is exactly what I got. And, as a life-long Catholic, I learned some things about my faith. **GRADE: A**



"JAY KELLY"

Here is one more movie with a character's name in the title. The film is George Clooney's long-awaited return to movie theaters. His last movie was "Wolfs" with Brad Pitt, and it was not great. Here, Clooney plays Clooney, a famous actor living with his beautiful family in France and preparing to be celebrated for his career of excellence. Adam Sandler, in



"Jay Kelly"



"Rental Family"

a rare serious role, plays his manager. Great to see Clooney on screen again, but we need a better story next time. **GRADE: B+**



"WICKED: FOR GOOD"

Unless you were hiding under a rock for the last six-plus months, you are certainly aware that the second half of the movie "Wicked" opened this past fall. This is the conclusion of the first movie, and expectations were way over the top. How could any movie expect to live up to that hype? Well, I'm hap-



"Wicked: For Good"



"Song Sung Blue"

py to say that this one did, and it was a fantastic experience — even better than the first. The voices are great, the sets are crazy good, and the story seemed more focused. This was one of the better times I have had in a theater this year. **GRADE: A**

"RENTAL FAMILY"

"Rental Family" is a curious but charming little film about a man (Brendan Frazier) who is hired by families overseas for certain jobs. This job is to write a story about an old man. The film is full of great joy and great sad-



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"Eternity"

ness, but you walk out of the theater feeling better about yourself and the world we live in. I would expect to see Frazier's name when the Oscar nominations come out. He is just that good. **GRADE: B+**

"SONG SUNG BLUE"

I've been a Neil Diamond fan for many years, and this new film, "Song Sung Blue" is based on a true story about a couple of Neil Diamond impersonators, played perfectly by Kate Hudson and Hugh Jackman. I would do no justice to the film if I told you more than that. Just go see it and love every minute. My 92-year old mother-in-law told me there was nothing about that movie she didn't love. I agree. **GRADE: A**



"Hamnet"

"ETERNITY"

Another wasted opportunity awaits you with this movie. At the beginning of the film, an old man dies (no secret there) and is sent to eternity, which is a weigh-station, if you will, as he awaits his wife. She does show up, but so does one of her old beaus, and then there is a decision to be made. It is an interesting movie with something important to say, but it could have been said better. **GRADE: C+**



"HAMNET"

This film is based on the true story of William Shakespeare and his loss of a young son named Hamnet. It is a sad tale of loss and grief, but the performances



"Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery"

were excellent, and it is most likely headed for at least a few Oscar nominations. Again, this is one of the year's best films. **GRADE: A**



"WAKE UP DEAD MAN: A KNIVES OUT MYSTERY"

This is at least the third in this murder mystery series starring Daniel Craig in a Sherlock Holmesian role. I was not a big fan of the first two, so maybe it was best that I went in with a low expectation. I really enjoyed this chapter and might even revisit the previous films on one of these bitter cold nights. It's a mystery, so I can't tell you much other than to check it out. **GRADE: A**



"TRAIN DREAMS"

This is another great movie I did not see coming, but, at the end of the day, it



"Train Dreams"

might be the best one I have seen all year. It is a quiet film about a solitary man, written by a writer in Iowa's Writer's Workshop. Playing on Netflix. Do not miss this one. **GRADE: A**

Have a great holiday season and a safe and fun New Year. Why not take a holiday trip into Waukee and see a movie in the IMAX? You will be so spoiled. See you next month. ■

Michael C. Woody has been reviewing movies on radio and television since 1986. He and his wife, Susan, are residents of Guthrie County.



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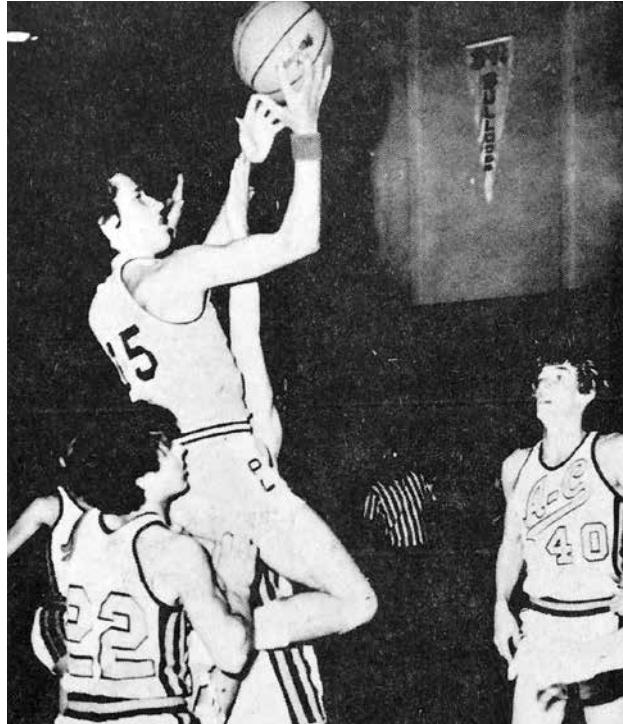
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YESTER YEARS

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50 YEARS AGO



From the *Guthrie Center Times*, Jan. 21, 1976

TALL IN A CROWD. Tim Watts seems to soar toward the basket while Jerome Wedemeyer and Steve Bireline watch for the results. It was good.

40 YEARS AGO



From the *Guthrie Center Times*, Jan. 4, 1986

FIRST WINNER. Shannen Hafner of Linden, left, was the first winner of the Panorama Booster Club's calendar lottery drawings. Presenting a check to Hafner for \$250 is Carla Fitzgerald. ■

30 YEARS AGO



From the *Guthrie County Vedette*, Feb. 4, 1996

PANTHERS UNBEATEN. The Panorama boys basketball team is unbeaten through its first four games largely due to the play of eight returning letterwinners. Front, from left, Travis Geopfert, Shaun Moylan and Bob McFadden. Standing, Tim Arganbright, Jamie McDermott, Thad Stanley, Justin Snyder and Jarad Wolfe.

20 YEARS AGO



From the *Guthrie Center Times*, Jan. 26, 2006

CHURCH MAKE-OVER. From left, Jeff Arganbright, Casey Spicher and Steve Baker of Baker Painting are shown repositioning scaffolding in the sanctuary at St. Cecilia's Catholic Church in Panora. Restoration as well as redecoration is scheduled for completion in the near future.

10 YEARS AGO



From the *Guthrie County Vedette*, Jan. 27, 2016

SORTING AND SHOPPING. A group of women including (from left) Carole Peterson, Mary Kay Hamilton, Laura Koch, Connie Ridgley and Elaine Raines spend time sorting and shopping for clothes and household items at 3Cs Children's Clothes Closet in Panora.

5 YEARS AGO



From the *Guthrie County Times Vedette*, Jan. 28, 2021

WINTER BLAST! A snow plow works to clear a portion of Church Street Tuesday morning. A winter snow storm most of Monday and into early Tuesday dropped about 14 inches of snow in parts of Guthrie County, making travel virtually impossible until midmorning Tuesday. Schools in the county closed for both Monday and Tuesday, and all activities were canceled. The next expected snowfall is forecast for this weekend. ■

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THE MONTH IN PANORAMA SPORTS

PHOTOS BY BETTY COOPER | SPECIAL TO PANORA TIMES



No. 11 Cruz Crandall led the Panthers with 18 points in their close loss to I-35 on Dec. 16.



Gracie Recker at the Panorama Girls Wrestling Invite on Jan. 6.



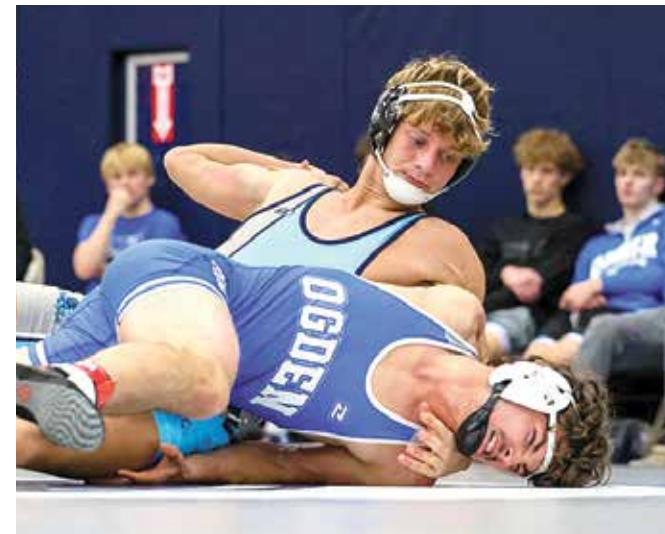
No. 1 Brayden Prescott shields the ball from the I-35 opponent on Dec. 16.



No. 44 Brayden Galvan is averaging 9.6 ppg, 4.5 apg and 4.5 rpg.



No. 12 Morgan Crees led the Panthers in points (23), rebounds (nine) and steals (five) in a win over I-35 on Dec. 16.



Blake Schwartz defeated his Ogden opponent by fall at a home quadrangular on Dec. 18.

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No. 5 Ines Gimeno-Perez controls the dribble against I-35 on Dec. 16.



Miley Nolan won the Panthers' lone championship at the Panorama Girls Wrestling Invite on Jan. 6.



Laicey Lutz sizes up her opponent at the Panorama Girls Wrestling Invite on Jan. 6.



No. 13 Nerea Gimeno Perez had five rebounds and two steals against I-35 on Dec. 16.



Caleb Prescott works for the fall during the Dan Christensen Invitational on Friday, Dec. 12.



No. 5 Reed Draper at the free throw line in the game against I-35 on Dec. 16. ■

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GUTHRIE COUNTY SUPERVISORS VOTE FOR 9-MEMBER EMS COMMITTEE

BY RICH WICKS

Panora Times

DEC. 23 - BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT, VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE

At the Dec. 23 meeting of the Guthrie County Board of Supervisors, County Engineer Josh Sebern discussed the plans for bridge replacement project BROS-C039-8J-39 on 240th Street over Seely Creek, south of Highway 44.

"It's a three-span timber bridge currently, and we're going to replace it with a concrete slab bridge. This is federal aid, 100% covered by federal aid. It will pass through the local budget, but it's 100% reimbursed," Sebern said.

Sebern said the construction would likely happen either in 2026 or 2027. The board unanimously approved the final plans of the project as described by Sebern.

Board Chair Maggie Armstrong brought up the possibility of moving the General Assistance/ Veterans Affairs office into a different office space within the courthouse. She said the reason for considering such a move is for privacy concerns. Armstrong said she discussed the situation with Beth Watson, department head of the GA/VA departments.

"We all know what it's like when there's somebody in Beth's office and they're trying to conduct a meeting, and we have a meeting. It's just very loud, and that has brought up some privacy concerns," Armstrong said.

Armstrong said the best option appears to be having the GA/VA office move downstairs into the former "mental health room." Armstrong said if the move is approved, clear signage would be needed to help all visitors know how to reach the GA/VA office. Armstrong said the proposed move was an idea

that Watson brought to her attention, so Watson is in favor of the idea.

The supervisors unanimously approved the office move as described by Armstrong.

DEC. 30 - MORE EMS DISCUSSIONS, PARCEL INQUIRY, PROPERTY VALUATIONS, PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Discussion was again held regarding the county's interest in pursuing EMS as an essential service. Supervisor Steve Smith shared his opinion that the supervisors should allow the EMS committee (once it is formed) to handle most matters, including the specific makeup of an ad hoc committee.

"This is the committee's task, not ours," Smith said. "Number one, we've got to decide how many should be on the committee, and number two, make

sure that everybody has some kind of representation. And, after that, it's like, it's yours."

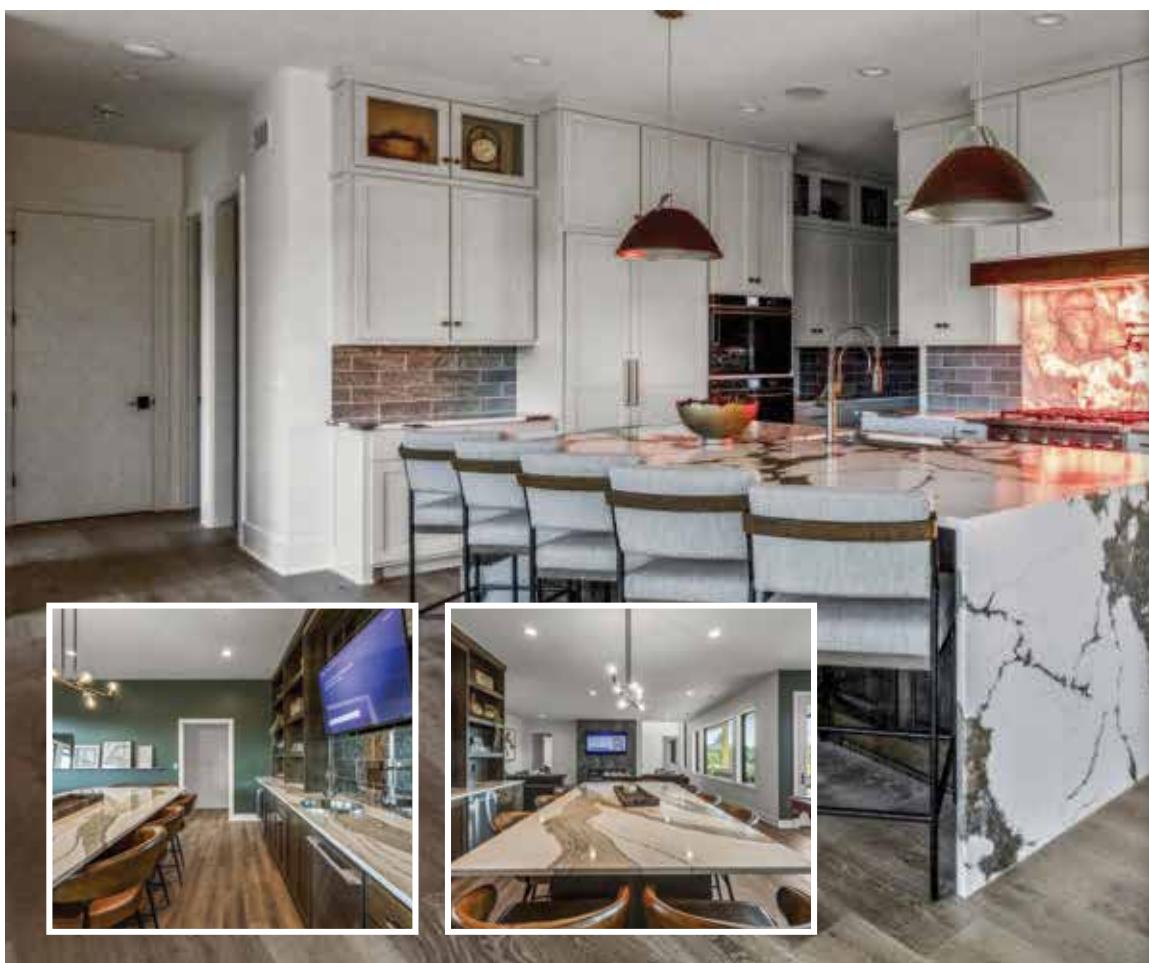
No formal action was taken at this time.

Supervisor Brian Johnson explained Mike Webb's inquiry about purchasing Parcel 0000711800, which is adjacent to Webb's property. The parcel is .63 acres. Supervisor Mike Dickson suggested County Engineer Josh Sebern should be consulted to see if there is any expected need, such as widening the adjacent roadway at some point.

"We'll check with Josh," Johnson said.

No action was taken at this time.

County Auditor Dani Fink shared data on the county property valuations and outlined the fiscal year 2027 budget process. Fink shared that while Guthrie County supervisors have traditionally held a second weekly meeting during budget season, some counties have the



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budget meetings all within one or two weeks. After discussion, the supervisors plan to hold budget meetings with department heads the week of Jan. 26. The meetings will be scheduled for 9 a.m. to noon.

The supervisors discussed how best to hold performance reviews for county employees. Smith shared his opinion that if the review includes only one or two supervisors (rather than all five), employees are more likely to engage in productive conversation. Chair Maggie Armstrong agreed.

"I think changing it to just two people leads to more fluid conversation," Armstrong said.

The supervisors suggested getting feedback on this idea from department heads. Armstrong will contact department heads to ask their preference.

JAN. 2 - ANNUAL APPOINTMENTS

Supervisors held a special meeting on Friday, Jan. 2 to make annual appointments. Steve Smith was appointed chair of the board for 2026. JD Kuster was appointed vice chair.

Board Chair Maggie Armstrong voiced appreciation regarding her chairing of the board through 2025.

"I do want to thank the board, the departments heads, elected officials and all county staff, basically everybody who supported me during my year as chair. It's always a pleasure to serve the people of Guthrie County," Armstrong said.

The supervisors then went through the list of various annual appointments. There was no change to the regular meeting schedule and approved holidays. The mileage reimbursement rate will be 72.5 cents per mile.

Most other appointments remained unchanged. Among the other annual appointments were Smith for Region XII, and JD Kuster to replace Smith as

alternate for Midwest Partnership. Armstrong will be the representative to the Adair/Guthrie County EMA, with Smith as alternate.

JAN. 6 - MAKEUP OF AN EMS COMMITTEE, INSURANCE RATES

Chair Steve Smith shared the recommendation from Brian Johnson and himself that the supervisors decide on the basic makeup of an EMS committee. He explained that the recommendation includes nine entities, but each entity would be able to designate a specific person who would serve on the nine-member committee.

Smith listed the nine recommended entities as city of Bayard, city of Bagley, Union Township, Adair Fire and Rescue, city of Guthrie Center, Guthrie County Hospital, city of Panora, city of Stuart, and Guthrie County Sheriff's Office. Smith stressed that the cities listed could choose anyone (a council member, city administrator, first responder, etc.). Smith also said the recommendation is for a larger ad hoc committee, but that would be determined by the nine-member committee, if approved.

Supervisor Maggie Armstrong voiced support for the recommendation. Supervisor Mike Dickson disagreed.

"I don't like it," Dickson said. "I don't like the structure that you're going with either. The rationale is you're limiting it to nine. I'm thinking it needs to be larger. Why not give representation from each township?"

Smith said a larger committee creates challenges in assuring participation from all members, and that a larger ad hoc committee would allow for broader

input. He also added that the final decisions would be made by the county supervisors.

"There are missing pieces, but we can add all of those to the ad hoc," Smith said. He clarified that he believes the nine-member committee (if approved) should decide who is invited to any ad hoc committee.

The supervisors voted 4-1 in favor of the nine-member committee as proposed. Dickson voted against.

Becky Benton (State Street Insurance) presented information on insurance rates and coverage options for the county to consider. Guthrie County participates in coverage through ICAP (Iowa Communities Assurance Pool), which covers 75 of Iowa's 99 counties. The supervisors reviewed and renewed the coverage.

JAN. 13 - SALARY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMPENSATION BOARD

The supervisors discussed the recommendations from the county compensation board regarding 2026-2027 salaries for elected officials. Eric Reinhart summarized the compensation board's salary increase recommendations for elected officials.

"The comp board met on Jan. 5. Based on my time on the board, we've always come to you guys with just one general number for all departments. This year, it was determined by the board to take a different approach," Reinhart said. "We recommend for the supervisors 4%, the county attorney 6%, the treasurer, recorder and auditor all 7%, and then for the Sheriff's office, we recommend 15%."

Reinhart explained the board's process in determining these recommendations involved considering population rank, workload and other factors, comparing to other counties.

"The county attorney and the supervisors are about on point, but everybody else is lagging. The sheriff's office, in particular, compared to other similar counties, he's far behind. Fifteen percent would get him into that middle range," Reinhart said.

The supervisors talked of the possibility of implementing a certain proportional percentage of these recommended raises. No formal action was taken regarding salaries at this time.

The supervisors set a public hearing regarding the Scott Calmer Minor Subdivision. The hearing will be 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 27.

Board Chair Steve Smith brought up his idea of having one supervisor be the "board PR person" that could deal with requests from the media for statements. He agreed that all five supervisors have the right to speak on issues but simply asked the supervisors to "mull over" the possible benefits of having one person be the point person to speak for the board at times.

The supervisor voted to appoint the board chair and vice chair as the standard members to sit in on employee performance reviews. Steve Smith is currently chair, and JD Kuster is vice chair.

The supervisors meet regularly on Tuesdays at 9 a.m. The public is welcome to attend in person (at the courthouse) or via remote technology. To join remotely, call 323-792-6123, then use meeting code 547029216# ■



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HEALTH

GCH TRUSTEES APPOINT OFFICERS

BY RICH WICKS

Panora Times

During the Dec. 29 meeting of the Guthrie County Hospital Board of Trustees, the trustees voted to appoint officers for 2026. Cheryl Marks will serve as board chair with Doug Kent as vice chair. Dana Tews will be the board secretary, and Mike Underwood will be the treasurer.

Chief Human Resources Officer Mary Anderson reported on recent staff hirings.

"We hit the employee count of 150, and we're still going. I've not seen that since I've been here," Anderson said. "That's fantastic. We're getting the workplace built up."

Chief Operations Officer Travis Martin reported on the cardboard clinic space mockups at the Big Green Umbrella Media building in Guthrie Center.

"We've been working on the mockups. We have one more department left to do. That is respiratory therapy, and hopefully that will

be done this week and we can get that team out there to review that space," Martin said.

The board set a public hearing regarding the proposed purchase of the Panora clinic (103 Southeast 13th St.) by issuing revenue bonds or borrowing, not to exceed \$3 million. The public hearing will take place at the January board meeting Jan. 22.

Foundation Director Dennis Flanery reported the employee appreciation campaign was successful. He also noted the annual Handbags and Bingo event is set for April 10.

"Registration for that opens up tomorrow," Flanery said.

The next regular meeting of the trustees is set for Thursday, Jan. 22 at 4 p.m. The public is welcome. ■



Cheryl Marks



Brian Dorsett

CITY GOVERNMENT NEWS

PANORA CITY COUNCIL NAMES DORSETT TO EMS ADVISORY COUNCIL

BY RICH WICKS

Panora Times

During the regular meeting of the Panora City Council on Jan. 12, the councilmembers dealt with a request from the Guthrie County Board of Supervisors. The city of Panora is one of nine entities being asked to select a representative to serve on the county EMS advisory council. Each entity is also asked to select an alternate. The Panora council selected Brian Dorsett with Roger Dorr as alternate.

The council held a public hearing on the proposed restated plan for the Panora Urban Revitalization Area. City Administrator Lisa Grossman summarized the requirements for tax abatements.

"You have to make improvements to your property over a certain percentage," Grossman said.

Grossman noted that all residential properties in Panora are eligible to apply for tax abatements, if qualifying improvements have been made. New properties also can apply.

Brenda Dudley addressed the council with an

annual update and funding renewal request regarding Midwest Partnership. She summarized the work of Midwest Partnership as "economic development for Guthrie and Adair counties." The council approved funding for renewal of membership with Midwest Partnership.

Dudley told of a program called "Hometown Pride," which would involve up to eight communities working together on a program in their communities.

The council reviewed and accepted the city's fiscal year 2025 financial audit.

The next regular meeting is set for Monday, Jan. 26 at 5:30 p.m. The public is welcome. Interested persons may attend in person or electronically by visiting the website <https://meet.goto.com/cityofpanora> or by phone 1-312-757-3121 (Access Code 295-099-701, Audio PIN 220#). ■

Panora ASK TIMES

Q: HOW MANY PEOPLE SHOWED UP FOR THE FIRST DAY HIKE AT SPRINGBROOK PARK ON JAN. 1?

A: According to Times Reporter Rich Wicks, an estimated 80 individuals of all ages (plus a few dogs) showed up at Springbrook State Park on New Year's Day for the "first day hike" that many Iowa state parks host. During the hike, frequent stops allowed park staff Anne Riordan and Reagan Oakleaf to share information about the history and notable features of the park. After a two-mile hike, attendees were treated to tasty refreshments.

Q: HOW DO I APPLY FOR A GUTHRIE COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT, AND WHAT IS THE DEADLINE?

A: Applications are due by Jan. 31 for any organizations wishing to apply for a grant from the Guthrie County Community Foundation. As in previous years, applications may be submitted from nonprofit organizations, governmental entities and educational organizations. Dozens of local organizations received funds in 2025. Funds will help support quality of life in Guthrie



Submit your questions at
www.panoratimes.com or email
shane@gctimesnews.com.

County. Details can be found on the website www.guthriecountycommunityfoundation.org.

Q: WHAT IS THE AVERAGE HOME VALUE IN THE CITY OF PANORA?

A: According to hometownlocator.com, the average home value in the city of Panora is \$180,503. The median home value is \$170,732. There are a total of 496 housing units with 318 being owner-occupied and 126 renter-occupied. A total of 52 were listed as vacant.

Q: I HEARD THAT WINTER IS THE BEST TIME TO PRUNE TREES. IS THAT TRUE?

A: According to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, yes. January and February are the best time months for tree pruning because trees are dormant in the winter. Learn what tools you need to properly prune a young tree in your yard with the three step method within the video "Winter Tree Pruning" on YouTube, viewable at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VB29w_T2MH8. ■



EDUCATION

PANORAMA SCHOOLS EXPLORING POSSIBILITY OF FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK

BY RICH WICKS

Panora Times

During the Jan. 12 regular meeting of the Panorama School Board, the board-members discussed the possibility of switching to a four-day school week. Superintendent Kasey Huebner stressed that the board is merely exploring the idea at this time, and no decisions have been made.

"Our current focus is on gathering information and practical logistics to ensure this transition would benefit our students and community based on other districts' experiences," Huebner said.

The school board is requesting additional information from other school

districts and is investigating how such a schedule would work. If the board wishes to pursue the idea, a survey will be sent to families.

The board also heard an update on planned roof replacement.

"The board has approved the design proposal from SVPA, an architectural firm. They will oversee the replacement of the elementary school roof, which is planned for this summer, pending favorable bids," Huebner said. "We have also included the roof above the weight room as an alternative in this proposal, contingent on receiving favorable bids."

The board's next regular meeting is set for Monday, Feb. 9 at 5:30 p.m. The public is welcome. ■

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BY RICH WICKS

Panora Times

Dana and Dan Stark of rural Panora (1977 A Ave.) own and operate Stark's Performance Horses. Dana shared how the business started and her philosophy.

"I grew up in northwest Indiana, and I was a 4-H member. I always loved horses, and I wanted to be a horse trainer. When I moved here, we bought this place in 2008, and I did some lessons. So, I ended up working for a trainer, and I did some lessons for him. Then I took a break to have kids," Dana said. "When I came back, I decided I wanted to put up my own barn on my own property and start my lessons again."

Dana explained the basic approach she takes with the clients she works with.

"We mainly have paint horses and quarter horses," she said. "In my opinion, they make the best kids' horses. I always tell people we're a how-to barn. So, at first you learn how to touch a horse, and eventually you learn how to ride a horse. We do a lot of what's called Western pleasure horsemanship. Think of more of a leisurely, comfortable ride."

Most of Stark's clients are children, starting as young as age 4.

"I have a couple riders in the 4- to 6-year-old range. They're always on a line and led by me," Dana said. "Usually around the age of 6, they get comfortable and can ride by themselves."

Dana said that many riders in the 6-plus-year-old range are ready to join group lessons rather than individual lessons. Another point that Dana clarified is that her clients do not need to own a horse. She is happy to match up a horse with a client, based on size and ability.

For those who imagine becoming a horseback barrel racer or rodeo star or professional jockey, Stark's does not of-



PHOTOS SPECIAL TO PANORA TIMES

Safety and fun go hand-in-hand at Stark's Performance Horses.

fer those types of lessons.

"We do trail class, not trail riding. I don't do any type of fast activities."

Dana also emphasizes that her clients need to learn the various chores involved in horsemanship, including brushing and grooming horses.

"Tack cleaning, the parts of the saddle, the parts of the bridle," Dana said.

Dan and Dana noted that the recent popularity of the TV show "Yellowstone" has brought more families into the horse-riding hobby.

"It's about cattle ranching in the Yellowstone area," Dan said.

"Ever since 'Yellowstone,' so many kids are interested in horses. And as somebody that's been in 4-H and gone

through all the stuff, I love it," Dana said. "There are a lot of people interested in horses now."

Dana noted that she works with riders throughout the year, but the warmer months are the busiest season.

"I have about 20 kids I work with and I do about 20 hours a week in lessons. I have a variety of ages. I have the kids 5-9



Dana Stark (in yellow) with clients on horseback.



Dana and Dan Stark of Stark's Performance Horses.

years old, and then the teenagers, and a group of 65 and older," Dana said. "I have what I call my moms' group."

"The entire program is designed around not just riding around in circles but learning everything you need to know to properly be a horse owner," Dan said.

Dan shared a favorite story of a shy young rider who quickly gained confidence with horses.

"She loved horses but was super shy. When she first started coming, she was super nervous," he said. "And then she won a buckle at the State Fair last year."

The Starks make sure safety is a top priority.

"We go over all safety information.

We teach how to lead a horse, where to stand, and all the basic knowledge," Dana said.

Another offering from the Starks is that if a rider bonds with a particular horse, the family is welcome to buy that horse, if they wish.

"Part of my business plan is purchasing horses and putting them through the program, and, ideally at the end of the program, someone will purchase that horse for their own," Dana said.

"That's what I'm looking to do is provide more kids a quality horse at an affordable price."

For anyone interested in learning more, check out the Stark's Performance Horses Facebook page. ■

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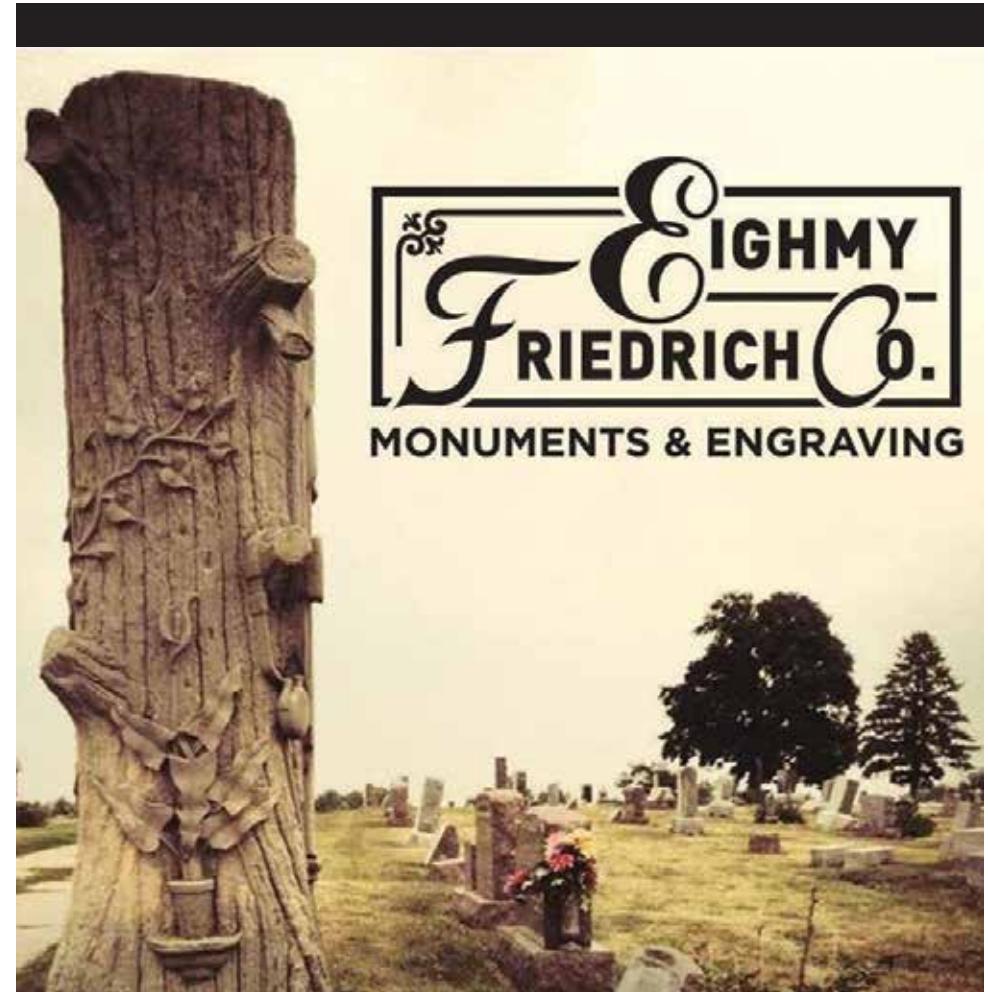


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ANGELS ABOUND AT BEA REYNOLDS' HOME

"I've always just liked angels, ever since I was a little girl," she said.

BY RICH WICKS

Panora Times

Billy Graham once said, "Look up, take courage, the angels are nearer than you think." He could have been talking about Bea Reynolds' apartment, because she has gradually accumulated quite a few angel figurines, which are displayed throughout her home.

"I grew up in Keokuk County," she said. "At one time, I kind of thought about being a nun, but then I fell in love with Arvin. I got married when I was 18."

Although Arvin has passed away, Bea is 100 years young and looking forward to turning 101 in March. Arvin and Bea raised six children.

"Five sons and one daughter," Reynolds said. "My daughter is the oldest. She's as old as a lot of the people here."

Reynolds noted that she now has two great-great-grandchildren, ages 2 and 4.

Later in life, Reynolds moved to Panora.

"I was still working in my garden in Panora when I was 92 years old," Reynolds said.

About five years ago, she moved into an assisted living apartment at Lakeside Village in Panora.

Reynolds does not recall when or how she became so fond of angels.

"I've always just liked angels, ever since I was a little girl," she said. Although Reynolds has dozens of angels displayed in her apartment, she has never counted to see what her total number is. She noted that some are only brought out during the holidays as Christmas decorations.

Reynolds has no explanation for her longevity.

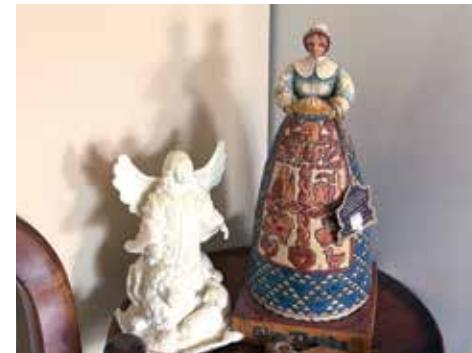
"I never dreamed I'd live to be so old. They always told me because I eat so many sweets, I would die young," she said. "I guess I'm the oldest one here right now."



Bea Reynolds is still going strong at 100.



A large ceramic angel kneels on the coffee table.



Every corner seems to boast an angelic presence.



Favorite keepsakes are displayed in a glass cabinet.



A large angel welcomes visitors to Bea Reynolds' home.

At Lakeside Village, Reynolds enjoys attending the musical and religious activities. She also enjoys time in her apartment, surrounded by her many angels. She admits that she never really purpose-

ly set out to collect them; it simply happened.

"I get them as gifts a lot, and I've bought some," she said.

Reynolds didn't expect to live beyond

a century, but she has a heart-warming theory as to why God has kept her going this long.

"I guess He wants me to catch up on my prayers," she said. ■

DEAL HONORED FOR AG IMPACT

Special to the Times Vedette

The Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Women in Ag program recognized four Iowa agricultural leaders during the ninth annual Women in Ag Leadership Conference, which was held in Ames Dec. 3-4.

The "Women Impacting Agriculture" recognition honors and celebrates those who drive positive change in Iowa by enhancing economic resiliency and stability, conserving natural resources and serving as influential agricultural leaders, family members and community volunteers.

Nominated by coworkers, neighbors, friends and family members, honorees are selected from a competitive pool of submissions. This year's recipients were chosen for their exceptional impact, leadership and unwavering commitment to Iowa agriculture.

"These honorees represent the strength and vision that drive Iowa agriculture forward," said Madeline

Schultz, Women in Ag program manager with ISU Extension and Outreach. "Their leadership and commitment inspire others to innovate, collaborate and build resilient rural communities."

The 2025 honorees include Tamara Deal, as well as Darcy Maulsby, Natalie Paino and Loretta Reimers.

TAMARA DEAL

Tamara Deal brings heart, heritage, and forward-thinking innovation to everything she does in Iowa agriculture. As president of Deal Family Farms LLC, Deal Inc., and Fair Deal Hog Farm, she carries on her family's 135-year legacy of farming in Guthrie and Greene Counties while paving the way for a more resilient future. Managing more than 1,100 acres, Deal handles grain marketing, leasing and long-term farm



Tamara
Deal

strategy, working alongside a team of younger farmers and mentoring her nephew as he prepares to join the next generation of leadership.

Deal's commitment to sustainability is deeply personal. On her land, she has implemented no-till, cover crops, and diverse crop rotations — combining traditional stewardship with modern science to protect Iowa's soil and water. Her partnerships with Practical Farmers of Iowa, the Soil and Water Outcomes Fund, and programs such as CRP and EQIP have helped expand her farm's conservation footprint while improving profitability. She believes in leading by example and frequently opens doors for others — especially women landowners — by hosting conservation luncheons that bring people together to share ideas, build relationships, and drive collaborative action to strengthen the Raccoon River Watershed.

A graduate of Iowa State University with degrees in psychology and man-

agement information systems, Deal blends business sense with empathy and community insight. She collaborates with ISU researchers on sustainability and water quality projects funded by the Iowa Water Center and NOAA, turning research into real-world results. Recognized as a Sustainability Ambassador with the Women, Food, and Agriculture Network, she connects scientific progress with grassroots leadership.

Beyond her farm, Deal's dedication extends deeply into her community. She leads the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program in Guthrie County, serves as president of the Guthrie County Community Foundation, and volunteers through her church and local nonprofits.

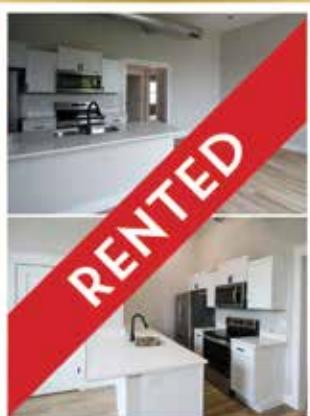
Deal embodies what it means to be a visionary in modern agriculture — grounded in tradition, guided by purpose, and driven by a genuine desire to make rural Iowa thrive for generations to come. ■

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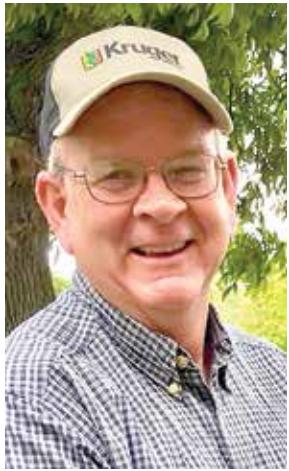
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DALE BETTS

1953-2025

Dale Craig Betts was born Oct. 30, 1953, in Richland, Washington, at the U.S. Military Hospital at Camp Hanford to Richard and Lois Betts. Dale was raised on a farm south of Jefferson. He attended Jefferson Community School until graduation in 1972. During his school years, he participated in wrestling, baseball, FFA and 4-H. He earned money doing

chores for neighbors and working at a local feed mill while also helping on the family farm. He enjoyed modifying cars and motorcycles. He shared many stories of drag racing with friends and a month-long motorcycle adventure out west with minimal money and no plan. What an adventure!

Dale met the love of his life, Connie Clause, at Spring Lake and married in 1974 in Grand Junction. They made their home south of Jefferson. Dale continued to help on the family farm and welded at Ideal. Dale and Connie became parents to two children: Alan and Jessi.

In 1981, they moved to their permanent farmstead near Winkleman Switch and began farming on their own. He and Connie worked side by side caring for their livestock and began to start their own row crop farming. Dale continued

to use his welding skills at Osmundson and later Scranton Manufacturing while farming. Eventually, he gave up the welding jobs and focused on his own operation. As the years went by, they continued to expand their row crops and cow herd until they eventually had 200 cow calf pairs. Dale took great pride in his cow herd.

Dale always had time for his kids, making sure they learned skills and life lessons that would carry them through their lives. He took time to attend the many activities they were in, and he was the same when he became blessed with four grandkids. He was a grandpa who made time for them fishing at the river, riding ATVs, teaching them hands-on skills or going to their activities.

Dale passed away Dec. 16, 2025, at the age of 72 years. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Connie; son, Alan Betts

(Tanya) of Jefferson; daughter, Jessi Riley (Andy) of Rippey; four grandchildren: Kara Heick (Eric), Cole Betts, Brent Riley and Max Riley; brother, Gary Betts (Alene); sister, Betty Hoyle (Kirby); mother-in-law, Dorothy Clause; in-laws Reg Clause (Mary), Linda Clause (Guy), Mary Ann Haver (Ed), Cindy Stubbs (Mark) and many nieces and nephews.

The family would like to thank the staff at Mary Greeley Medical Center, Greene County Medical Center and UnityPoint Hospice for their wonderful care of Dale. Also, thank you to those who have helped our family or reached out during these last three months.

Visitation for Dale Betts was held from 4-6 p.m. on Dec. 22, 2025 in the Greene Room at the Wild Rose Casino in Jefferson. Services by Slininger-Schroeder Funeral Home and Cremation Care, Jefferson. ■



CONNIE FOGLESONG

1952-2025

Connie Sue Foglesong, 73, daughter of Harry and Beverly (Derry) Sand, was born Dec. 11, 1952, in Guthrie County. She passed away at her home on Monday, Dec. 29, 2025.

Connie graduated from Menlo High School. On April 10, 1982, she married Bruce Foglesong in Justin, Texas. They made their home in Texas for five years. They then moved to Iowa and lived around the Panora area before settling in Linden for the last 30 years. Connie worked first as a dental assistant and

then as a nurse's aide for a combined eight to 10 years. Her favorite job was working for the Humane Society in Adel for a couple of years. She, along with her husband, Bruce, operated the Linden Canoe and Kayaks for 12 years, helping with answering phones and scheduling the deliveries of the canoes and kayaks.

Connie was a Dale Earnhardt and Denver Broncos fan. She loved penguins, baby goats and dogs.

She is survived by her husband, Bruce, of Linden; sons, James (Ryan) of Yale and Mikel of Yale; daughter, Chrisi (Jonathan) of Panora; grandchildren, Mayilla, Jami Lynn, Makenna, Austin, Logan and Ashton; great-grandchildren, Ava, Olivia and Kryin; brothers, Dick (Lori) Sand of Kansas City and Tom (Denise) Sand of Stuart; and sister, Julie Sand of Stuart.

Cremation has taken place, and visitation was held on Sunday, Jan. 4, 2026, from 1-3 p.m. at the Linden Lions Club Building, Linden, Iowa.

Twigg Funeral Home, Panora, is entrusted with her services. ■



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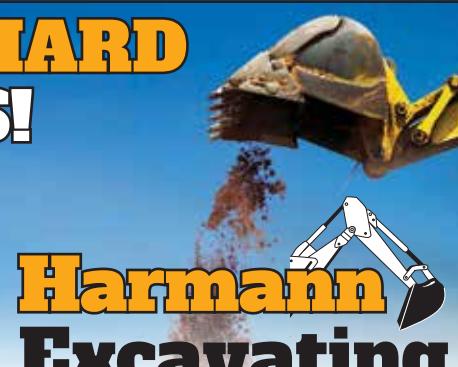
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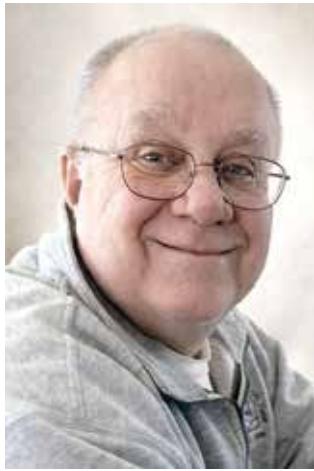


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**RONALD
LANG**
1941-2025

Ronald (Ron) Lee Lang, 84, passed away on Dec. 25, 2025, having lived a life defined by friendship, ingenuity and the mindset that every day is Saturday.

Born on April 11, 1941, in Des Moines to Oran and Mary Lang, Ron attended North High School and Parsons College, where he was a proud member of the TKE fraternity. Ron never met a stranger and maintained lifelong friendships, including decades of monthly lunches with his North High classmates,

yearly college reunions and his morning coffee club in Panora.

Ron spent most of his life in Iowa. He grew up in Des Moines, served a brief stint in the U.S. Army and moved to St. Louis for work, where he met Rita. They married in 1969 and returned to Des Moines where they welcomed a daughter, Jessica. In 1988, Ron built his home at Lake Panorama, divorced, and fully embraced lake life as a bachelor.

A self-made businessman, Ron viewed his work as a salesman as a way to make money — and friends. He bartered, traded, negotiated and wheeled and dealed his way through life, somehow always coming out the other side with a little money in his pocket and a few new friends. His final venture was creating the Des Moines Apartment and Condominium Guide. Though he officially retired in 1998, Ron never stopped dreaming up new projects.

Ron loved having fun — golfing, fishing, boating, gardening, building and tinkering filled his days. He could fix nearly anything with duct tape and ingenuity and firmly believed that “the one with the most toys wins.” Ron had a real knack for turning

his ideas into reality. One of his proudest feats was finding a way around Lake Panorama’s “boat size” rule. The regulations limited length, not width — so Ron bought two used pontoon boats, took them apart, and rebuilt a double-wide party boat. It became legendary.

Ron’s home was always open and time spent with him was an adventure. Boats broke down, things caught on fire, and the best stories came when plans changed. Ron taught those around him to be adaptable and never sweat the small stuff. His greatest lesson lives on in not taking life too seriously.

Ron is survived by his daughter, Jessica (Nick) Gerhart; his four grandchildren, Marlowe, Corinne, Wyatt and Grant; his brother, Ed (Linda); and his sister, Sandy. A private mass and burial will be held at a later date. Photos, stories and memories may be shared with his family at langslagoon@aol.com.

In Ron’s memory, smile at strangers. Strike up conversations. Tell a few tall tales and make sure to enjoy the adventure — after all, every day is Saturday in heaven! ■



**KASSEN
'KASS' DUIS**
1935-2026

Kassen “Kass” Franklin Duis, 90, son of Harb and Anna (Groot) Duis, was born Feb. 14, 1935, near Emmetsburg. He passed away Thursday, Jan. 1, 2026, at Thomas Rest Haven in Coon Rapids.

Kass graduated from Cylinder High School in 1953. On March 20, 1960, he married Karen Kay Flick at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Emmetsburg. Kass

enlisted into the United States Navy in 1963 serving until 1967. He was stationed in Coronado, California. Following his honorable discharge, Kass and Karen returned to Iowa, making their home for a short time in Laurens and then Manson. They then moved to several locations in the Des Moines Metro area. Kass worked as a computer programmer during this time. In the mid 1980s, they moved to Panora, and he opened up Duis DX station and operated this for the next 10-15 years before retiring.

Kass enjoyed coaching his sons when they were young. He also enjoyed being with his family and was a big baseball fan.

He was a member of St. Thomas Lutheran Church in Panora and the Panora Lions Club. He is survived by

his sons, Kevin (Terri) Duis of Des Moines and Kurt (Mindy) Duis of Panora; seven grandchildren, Jeffrey (Stephanie) Duis, Abbie (Sam) Zager, Tucker (Cara) Duis, Kooper Duis, Anna (Chase) Heithoff, Drake Duis and Rachel Duis; four great-grandchildren, Dominic and Gianna Zager, Flynn and Tatum Duis; and brother, Martin (Shirley) Duis of Spencer. He was preceded in death by his parents; wife, Karen; and 16 brothers and sisters.

Funeral services were at 10:30 a.m., Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026, at St. Thomas Lutheran Church, Panora. Burial will then take place at 12:30 p.m. at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery near Van Meter. Visitation will be Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026, from 5-7 p.m. at the Twigg Funeral Home, Panora. ■



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RECIPE

WHERE I FIND INSPIRATION – AND A NEW COMFORT-FOOD FAVORITE

BY JOLENE GOODMAN*Panora Times*

Today's home cooks have no shortage of inspiration. With a quick search online, we can access thousands of recipes from trusted test kitchens, community-driven platforms and individual food bloggers. While I appreciate that convenience, I still find myself reaching for cookbooks, browsing new releases at the bookstore and checking out titles from the library — a perfect way to "test drive" a recipe before committing to it.

**Jolene Goodman**

Another favorite source of inspiration is Family Features, a free recipe site filled with reliable dishes and beautiful photography that never fails to spark my creativity in the kitchen. This month's recipe, Loaded Philly Cheesesteak Baked Potatoes, brings together two of my favorite comfort foods: steak and potatoes — both of which also happen to be Shane's favorites. It takes the familiar flavors of a classic Philly cheesesteak sandwich and transforms them into a warm, satisfying baked potato meal. It's hearty, comforting and perfect to enjoy for dinner, with plenty left over for lunches throughout the week. ■

Jolene Goodman is the advertising director for Panora Times and vice president of Big Green Umbrella Media.

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LOADED PHILLY CHEESESTEAK BAKED POTATO

Recipe courtesy of Real California Milk

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 1 hour, 11 minutes

Servings: 4

**Ingredients:**

- 4 large russet potatoes, washed
- 1 cup Real California sour cream
- 1-2 tablespoons Real California whole milk
- 1/4 cup Real California unsalted butter, divided
- 1 small green bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 1/2 small yellow onion, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 pound fresh shaved sirloin steak
- 2 cups shredded Real California provolone cheese

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 425 F and line baking sheet with aluminum foil.
- Prick potatoes all over with fork. Bake until potatoes are tender and fork inserted easily comes out, 45 minutes-1 hour. Split tops of potatoes open with knife and fluff potato flesh with fork. Set aside.
- In small bowl, combine sour cream and milk, adding more milk as

needed, until sour cream is pourable. Set aside.

- In large skillet or on griddle over medium-high heat, heat 1 tablespoon butter. Add peppers and onions; cook until tender, 3-4 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Transfer to plate and set aside.
- Clean skillet then melt remaining butter. Add steak and cook until fully cooked and lightly browned, 3-4 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Return vegetables to skillet and toss to combine.
- Evenly top each potato with 1 tablespoon butter, steak mixture and cheese. Transfer to oven and bake until cheese is melted, 2-3 minutes. Drizzle with sour cream and serve. ■

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