

ALTOONA

AUGUST 2024

# Living

MAGAZINE

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Residents share their experiences as beekeepers

Meet Talen Birchmier

EDUCATION

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Air-fryer bang bang chicken tenders with rice

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WELCOME

# THE BUZZ about bees

Apiophobia. Apiphobia. Melissophobia.

Call it whatever you want. I call it a fear of bees — and for good reason.

As a 5-year-old boy, I was stung by a bee — right in the eye. I remember playing in the neighbor's lawn and seeing that blasted buzzard making a bee-line toward my face. After the sting, I made my own one-eyed bee-line across the street, looking for my mom to make it all better. And she did. She laid me down on the couch and, with a set of tweezers, pulled that stinger out of my eye and immediately strapped an icepack on my face. After that incident, I made sure that bees and I never saw eye to eye again. Here's how.

On a kindergarten field trip, we visited a classmate's bee farm. I stayed on the bus.

When the birds and the bees discussion came about, I opted for the aviary.

And, today, when an occasional bee makes its way inside my car, I immediately exit the vehicle.

This is not to say that I have not been stung again by bees since the eye incident. I most certainly have, including the time a bee flew in my shirt sleeve and stung me repeatedly in the armpit until I stripped myself and repeatedly stomped that varmint.

Despite my anguish over bees, there is one thing about them I really love — honey. I have a teaspoon of it with skim milk in my coffee every morning. This has been a healthier option than the creamer I enjoyed so much, and, I am told, the local honey helps with my allergies.

In this month's Living magazine, you will learn about local bee producers and what draws them to this hobby that is fascinating and, for people like me, fearful.

Now you know what the buzz is all about.

Thanks for reading. ■



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# WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

Residents share their experiences as beekeepers

By Sean Dengler

While the Iowa DNR reports the number of native bees in Iowa continues to decline, more and more apiarists (beekeepers) are emerging to nurture the bee population. As of Jan. 1 of last year, Iowa boasted 36,000 bee colonies for operations with five or more colonies, according to the USDA. That's a big uptick from the prior year's 26,000 colonies and the 15,500 colonies the year before that. But who are these beekeepers, and what drives their passion? Some local apiarists share their stories.

Chris Gorman became interested in beekeeping to help improve his gardens and orchard.



Mike Sander, left, and wife Julie Sander, right, show the inner workings of their hives to Abigail Kelly and Olivia Kelly.

### Enjoying the bees

Finding one's way into beekeeping can take many different paths. What it took Mike Sander to become interested in caring for one of nature's smallest creatures was family.

"My youngest son said he wanted to build a beehive for woods class at high school," he says. "At the time, covenants kept us from keeping bees, so I had to tell him he wouldn't be able to raise bees at our place."

Despite this setback, the itch never went away. In fact, Sander became more interested in the topic after learning more about the lives of bees.

"I started wondering who would even want to keep bees knowing you will probably get stung," he says. "One day, I ran across a beginning beekeeper class put on by our state apiarist. I decided to take it, hoping I could find out more about why so many bees were dying. By the end of the class, I discovered that this was something I could probably do, and most of my

fears about bees were irrational."

Sander thinks his fear of bees formed from watching too many 1970s TV movies about killer bees. After taking the beginning beekeepers class, which was sponsored by the Iowa Honey Producers and delivered by State Apiarist Andy Joseph, and getting over his fear of bees, it was time to find hive locations.

"We found some people willing to let us put bees in their backyard or farm fields," Sander says. "We ordered bees in late February, early March, and put all the information we learned at the beginning beekeepers class to work. Then we started harvesting honey. Turns out, we were good at raising bees, so we started selling nucleus hives in the spring. Of course, continuing to research and learn about bees is a lifelong, ongoing process."

Beekeeping has been a wonderful experience, Sander says. He has enjoyed seeing what the bees can produce and how they survive through the tough Iowa winters.



Julie Sander brings her grandson along to check the beehives.

"Honey harvest is a great reward," he adds. "When you have taken good care of a hive, and it gets through the winter alive, strong and ready for spring, it is a great feeling."

The beekeeping community has also made the effort worthwhile, Sander says.

"The best rewards have been all the great people we have met and formed relationships with," he says.

Of course, beekeeping is not always easy.

"Some of the biggest challenges have been the logistics of having enough equipment and

locations to place a hive of bees that is needing a split,” Sander says.

Then there are pests to control.

“Dealing with mites can sometimes be a challenge,” he says. “The mite is a newer parasite, at least in the USA, that transferred to honeybees from a different species. We are constantly learning more about this mite and how to deal with it. It is called ‘varroa destructor’ for a reason.”

Despite these challenges, harvest provides an opportunity to use the honey and wax in multiple ways.

“Honey is harvested, blended for consistency and to have the widest variety of nectars and pollens possible for our customers that use it for allergies,” Sander says. “It is sold at local stores, farmers markets and vendor fairs. Wax is processed and used to make soap, lotions, lip balms and healing ointments. Some is made into beeswax candles, and the rest gets sold to customers who use it for similar purposes.”

For those interested in becoming a beekeeper, Sander has a few ideas.

“Find a mentor and take a beginning beekeeper class,” he advises. “They usually start in late January or early February. The Iowa Honey Producers usually has a list of them on its website, [www.iowahoneyproducers.org](http://www.iowahoneyproducers.org). I would encourage anyone to find a local club that meets in person. Facebook is a good place to locate one. Find someone local willing to mentor you.”

It is also important to know the rules around beekeeping in your city.

“Find out about your city ordinances,” he says. “If they are not allowed in your area, you can start talking with people to find out if they would allow you to rent some space on their property if ordinances allow.”

One of the best ways to improve one’s beekeeping experience is to volunteer.

“Volunteer with club activities,” Sander says. “When we started, I volunteered with the Iowa Honey Producers and Central Iowa Beekeepers. They have plenty of things that someone could assist with if they are interested in keeping bees or just getting started. What I found was that, as I was helping out, experienced beekeepers would eventually ask me how my bees were doing. That opened the door for me to ask for help or call on their vast knowledge and experience. I have found most beekeepers are very willing to share and help out a newbie, especially if they have put in the effort to at least take a beginner’s course.”

YouTube channels can also be helpful, Sander says, but he suggests asking a local beekeeper which are good channels because there is a lot of



Chris Gorman’s bees help pollinate many fruit trees.

misleading information shared. Also, beekeeping practices vary in different parts of the country due to differing climates, landscapes and local vegetation.

Being a beekeeper has been a beneficial experience, Sander says, and it helps to have a good sense of humor.

“Beekeeping can be a really sweet hobby but sometimes has a bit of a sting,” he jokes.

## Figuring out what it takes

Chris Gorman of Upstream Gardens became interested in beekeeping to help improve his gardens and orchard.

“We initially got interested in bees in order to better pollinate our gardens and orchard,” he says. “We had about 100 fruit trees and an acre of gardens and wanted the bees to help get better production from our plants. Originally, we didn’t have much interest in harvesting honey or wax, but that came later as my interest in bees escalated.”

Despite a long and winding road, it took finding the right mentor to help Gorman get successfully started in beekeeping.

“I took a class at DMACC in 2007 but did not start bees for several years after that due to a cancer diagnosis and loss of my wife,” Gorman says. “I floundered miserably for my first three seasons until I met a great mentor who gave some great advice and eventually sold me all his equipment when he retired.”

It took a few years to learn how best to navigate the Iowa winter and mites, but Gorman has found success.

“Several years of failed over-wintering bees has finally led me to some tips and tricks

that have helped me get to a 70-90% success keeping my bees alive over the winter,” he says. “I initially tried to go chemical free, but, unfortunately, bees need mite treatments if they are going to survive well. I landed on a mild product that is acceptable even for certified organic producers, and that has made a world of difference.”

Another challenge is the clock.

“Seems these days my biggest failure in beekeeping is time,” he says. “Trying to do too much and not being as invested in the management of the bees as I should.”

When he reaps his harvest, Gorman has several markets.

“We retail our honey at our pick-your-own garden just northeast of Altoona as well as at several local farmers markets including Ankeny, Bondurant, Pleasant Hill and Valley Junction,” he says. “We also have a couple retail shops that carry our honey: Hidden Treasures in Altoona and Mayalu Coffee shop on the southside of Des Moines.”

For aspiring beekeepers, Gorman has a few tips.

“One, get a mentor,” he says. “Two, read, study, take classes. Three, don’t get discouraged. You will have failures. Four, learn from your mistakes.”

Gorman is also willing to help fellow beekeepers.

“I am by no means an expert, but I’ll always answer questions if someone wants to talk bees and ask for suggestions for issues they are facing,” he says. “They can get hardware, bees, or just ask questions from my website [www.upstreamgardens.com](http://www.upstreamgardens.com).” ■

# ALTOONA

# AUGUST 2024

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## OLDE TOWN FAÇADE GRANTS

A pilot program is offering matching grants up to \$10,000 to be used towards the improvement of the street facing physical appearance of commercially zoned properties in the Olde Town neighborhood. Completed grant applications and materials are due by August 30, 2024. To learn more, follow the QR code.



## NEW MURAL – ALTUS

Work was completed this month on the new mural in Olde Town, Altus. The mural depicts dozens of scenes and sites from Altoona's past, present and future and was installed and designed by Austin based artist, Mila Sketch.

Earlier in August, the Altoona Arts and Culture Commission celebrated Mila's work at a community event in Olde Town. The mural will be recognized again later this year when work is completed on the adjacent Olde Town Plaza pocket park.

For more information on the mural and other art in our community, visit the Arts and Culture Commission page on the city's website.



## DRAINING YOUR POOL

It's time to plan for fall and cooler weather. If you have a pool you need to drain at summer's end, please:

- Discontinue adding salt and chlorine a few weeks before you drain your pool or spa. Chlorine levels need to be reduced to 0.1 mg/L before you drain because salt and chlorine are deadly to freshwater aquatic life.
- Discharge all salt water into a sanitary sewer through a drain in your home.
- For non-saltwater draining,
  - Please drain directly into the sanitary sewer via a drain in your home, or
  - Slowly discharge the water across at least 15-feet of a flat, vegetated area before it gets to the street or storm sewers.
  - Do not flood your neighbors' yards.

For more information, contact Altoona's Stormwater Department or visit [iowastormwater.org](http://iowastormwater.org).

## ROADWORK UPDATES

Progress is being made on several large road projects in the city this summer. While it's exciting and vital that these projects are carried out, they can lead to slower commutes and disrupted travel.

Along with sharing project updates on the city's homepage and social media channels, the city's Engineering Department tracks project progress on the project tab of their page on the city's website. You can find that page by following the QR code.



## BRUSH DROP SITE OPEN ON SEPT. 7

The city's brush drop site is open for fall drop off on Saturday, Sept. 7 and Saturday, Oct. 5. These will be the final days that the site is open this year. Residents can access the site from 8 a.m. – Noon both days. Information on how to access the site is available on the city website and social media accounts.

Please have information identifying you as a City of Altoona resident ready when you drop off brush. No loose or bagged leaves or bushes are allowed.

## CITY OFFICES CLOSED FOR LABOR DAY

Please remember that City offices and the Altoona Public Library will be closed in observance of the Labor Day holiday on Monday, Sept. 2. Trash pickup will be delayed by one day due to the holiday on Sept. 3 and 4.



# RECIPE

## TASTY recipes to combat the hustle and bustle

(Family Features) Jam-packed calendars and little spare time at home can make heads spin. When those hectic weeknights are giving your family fits, turn to delicious recipes you can have ready in 30 minutes or less.

Start with kitchen staples like chicken and rice. They're easy to prepare and versatile enough to let you cook a variety of meals without feeling like you're stuck in a dinner rut. For example, these air-fryer bang bang chicken tenders with rice offer a kid-friendly take on bang bang chicken that's both sweet and spicy.

This air-fryer favorite requires just half an hour in the kitchen and calls on the quality and convenience of Success Boil-in-Bag Jasmine Rice to make busy weeknights a breeze. In just 10 minutes, the aromatic rice cooks up soft and fluffy with a uniquely delicious flavor that's naturally gluten free, Non-GMO Project Verified and free of MSG and preservatives.

Find more ways to solve dinnertime dilemmas at [SuccessRice.com](http://SuccessRice.com). ■

### Air-fryer bang bang chicken tenders with rice

Prep time: 10 minutes  
Cook time: 20 minutes  
Servings: 4

- 1 pound chicken tenders
- 1/2 cup sweet chili sauce, divided
- 1/4 cup sriracha hot sauce, divided
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 1 bag Success Jasmine Rice
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 bag (12 ounces) coleslaw mix
- 1/2 English cucumber, thinly sliced
- toasted sesame seeds, for garnish (optional)
- green onions, for garnish (optional)

#### DIRECTIONS

- Toss chicken tenders with 2 tablespoons sweet chili sauce and 1 tablespoon sriracha. Drizzle with sesame oil.
- Preheat air-fryer to 400 F. In two batches, without overfilling basket, air fry chicken tenders, turning basket halfway during



- cook time, 10-12 minutes, or until chicken is golden brown and cooked through.
- Prepare rice according to package directions. Stir mayonnaise with remaining sweet chili sauce and sriracha until blended. In large bowl, toss coleslaw mix with 1/4 cup bang bang mayo sauce.
- Divide rice among four bowls. Top with chicken, coleslaw mix and cucumber. Drizzle with remaining bang bang mayo sauce.
- Garnish with toasted sesame seeds and green onions, if desired.

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# 7 TIPS for first-time homebuyers

Purchasing a home can be complex, but you can ensure a smooth journey to homeownership by doing the right research ahead of time. Here are seven tips for first-time homebuyers to set you up for success.



**1. Get preapproved before home shopping:**

Choosing a lender and getting preapproved should be one of your first steps in the homebuying process. In fact, some real estate agents and sellers won't meet with you before you have a mortgage preapproval.

**2. Determine your home-buying budget:**

Next, your lender will approve you for the maximum total you can afford; however, that's not necessarily the number to take as your target home price. Keep in mind the other expenses that come along with owning a home, such as property taxes, utilities, insurance and more.

**3. Work with a Realtor:** While you're not required to work with a Realtor, having an expert guide you through your first homebuying experience typically helps alleviate stress and anxiety, instills confidence throughout the homebuying journey, and makes the overall process smoother.

**4. Make a timely offer:** It's time to make an offer. While buying a home is a big decision that shouldn't be rushed, remember the market is competitive and homes aren't staying on the market very long. Don't wait too long to make an offer once you think you've found "the one."

**5. Conduct a home inspection and calculate maintenance costs:** A home inspection will point out any large repairs that need to be done before closing. Depending on the results of the home inspection, you may be able to negotiate price reductions or needed repairs.

**6. Learn about alternative down payment options:** Saving for down payments often

holds people back from buying a home right away. However, there are financial options that require little or no money down. Talk to your lender about other down payment options to consider.

**7. Check your credit report and be mindful of your credit:** Your credit report will likely be reviewed in the mortgage preapproval process; it may also be reviewed again before closing. Any changes to your credit score, such as opening new lines of credit or failing to make payments on existing credit cards, could result in changes to your loan.

By following these steps, learning more about the homebuying process and what to expect, you'll likely be on your way to homeownership in no time. ■

Information provided by Lori Slings, Bankers Trust, NMLS ID: 406021, 3820 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-245-5624, lslings@bankerstrust.com, BankersTrust.com/LSlings, Bankers Trust NMLS ID: 440379.

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# KEEPING the dream alive

White Eagle Multicultural Pow Wow to be held Sept. 20-22.



The White Eagle Multicultural Pow Wow features not only Native American dance, but dancers from many other cultures as well.

Ralph Moisa III had a dream — one in which all people lived as one, despite differences.

“He wanted to bring races together to understand each other so that we wouldn’t be so fearful of people we didn’t know, and that we have similar goals even though we have different heritage and customs,” says his father, Ralph Moisa.

Tragically, Ralph Moisa III would pass away on Dec. 5, 1995, at the age of 19. But out of this tragedy came the White Eagle Multicultural Pow Wow, which continues to this day.

This year will mark the 25th year of

the pow wow, which will be held Sept. 20-22 at Jester Park near Granger. The event will not only showcase some staples of Native American heritage, but other customs as well. Finding common ground among all people is something we should all strive for, says Moisa.

“Our hope is that, by bringing people together and learning a little bit about their culture and their heritage, foods and other things, we will find that we aren’t that different,” he says. “We all have things in common, and no one is better than anyone else. We all have things to share. We want people from all four races



# COMMUNITY

represented at the event, and you'll see the colors of them all around. Everywhere you go there will be red, yellow, black and white. We want everyone to be a part of the circle."

The pow wow, which will feature dance, food, singing, speaking and more, is open to all comers, Moisa says.

"Anyone can attend, and they don't even have to spend any money if they don't want to," he says.

People have traveled from all across the globe to be a part of the event over the years, Moisa says. More than 35 people are directly involved in setting things up and getting the event ready for the more than 1,500 participants who are expected to be a part of the pow wow this year. Moisa says that, during the peak years of the event, there were upwards of 15,000 people in attendance. COVID took a toll, however, and it's been an uphill battle to get numbers back to where they once were. Moisa has hope, however.

"We think that people are getting up and about and around more again, and we think the numbers will begin to grow again," he says.

Around 25 vendors will be at the event, as well as dancers from 15 communities that have committed to share their heritage with others.

For more information and schedule of events, visit [www.whiteaglepowwow.com](http://www.whiteaglepowwow.com). ■



# A DIFFERENT kind of hope

Hope. It's an interesting thing. We must have it, or we will die on the inside. And yet, this life can be filled with frustration, disappointment and loss — reasons to lose hope.

What if there were a different kind of hope? A hope that can't be touched by politics, economics or even death itself. A hope that remains, regardless of the state of our world or the state of your life.

Before Jesus returned to heaven after his earthly ministry, he told his followers that he would prepare a place for them, and, when he came back, he would make everything new. These early followers of Jesus placed their hope in this promise. This hope sustained them when they faced persecution, insults and martyrdom. Almost 2,000 years later, followers of Jesus cling to this same hope as we face challenges in this life.

However, there are misunderstandings in our culture about this hope that cause it to be less than compelling. There is an idea of eternity that I'll call "cartoon heaven." It involves people sitting on clouds participating in eternal, harp-led church services. To be honest, thinking of that going on and on for eternity doesn't sound very exciting.

The good news is that the Bible paints a very different view of Christ-centered hope. It's not "cartoon heaven;" it's a new earth full of life. This hope includes new bodies that don't hurt or get sick. There will be new relationships that don't break or get complicated. You will have an amazing purpose tapping into your gifts and passions. There will even be new food. Here's how the prophet Isaiah described our future:

"On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine — the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken" (Isaiah 25:6-8).

Christ-centered hope is so much better than we can imagine. All wrong will be made right. All our God-given desires will be fulfilled.

If you are looking for a different kind of hope than this world can offer, look to Jesus. Examine his promises. His hope is not for people who are good enough, but rather for people who know they are not good enough and need Jesus. This life will have its challenges and losses, but there is a hope nothing can touch. Hold on to that hope. ■

Information provided by Pastor Nathan Anenson, Lutheran Church of the Cross, 1701 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-967-4818.





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# A PLACE to settle down

After 30 years, Swains still glad they picked Altoona.



Dr. Kari Swain, on behalf of the Altoona Chamber of Commerce, presents a check to the Altoona Police Department K-9 Unit.

Growing up, Kari Swain and her husband, Scott, moved all over the state of Iowa.

So, when it came time for the couple to settle down together, they knew they wanted to find a forever hometown and a place for Swain to build her chiropractic practice.

As the Swains traveled the state checking out different communities, it was a referral from previous Sugar Shack owner, Dwayne Seiberling, that sent her to Paulette Franklin, the director of the Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce at the time.

“It was a warm welcome and a perfect fit,” Swain says. “Thirty years later, it has been even better than I imagined.”

While there are many things Swain loves about her home itself — the view and the location among them — it’s the neighborhood she enjoys most.

“We have a multigenerational

neighborhood,” she explains. “Some have been neighbors since our children were born and have watched them grow up. We have neighborhood gatherings, an occasional food truck and a support system.”

Swain also appreciates the Altoona community at large.

“I love what a great community of small businesses we have that are owned by people who live in our community,” she says. “As a small business owner, I feel so lucky to have a strong network of support among my fellow business owners and from our community.”

Outside of her full-time work, Swain is actively involved with the Altoona Chamber and its many programs and events, including being a founding member of the Women of Vision group. Its purpose is to inspire, motivate, encourage and empower women in Altoona’s businesses and community through

connectivity and collaboration.

“Bringing local women in business together for support and networking helps build relationships with other small business owners, as well as gives me the opportunity to share about chiropractic,” Swain says. “My favorite annual event is our Women’s Health Panel that I am honored to be a part of.”

For Swain, living and working in Altoona simply “fills my heart with joy.”

“Even with all of the growth we have experienced, we still feel like a small community,” she says. “I am passionate about making a lasting impact on the health of our community, and I have been blessed to take care of the wonderful people in Altoona and our surrounding communities for the past 30 years. I look forward to many more years of living in and serving our outstanding community.” ■



# 5 SEP RAMS

# SE

## VARSITY FOOTBALL

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 30	7:00PM	WDM Valley	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 6	7:00PM	Ankeny High School	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 13	7:00PM	Prairie	Cedar Rapids Prairie High School
Sep 20	7:00PM	Ankeny Centennial	Northview Middle School
Sep 27	7:00PM	Sioux City East	Southeast Polk High School
Oct 4	7:00PM	Johnston	Johnston High School
Oct 11	7:00PM	Waukee	Southeast Polk High School
Oct 18	7:00PM	Dowling Catholic	Valley Stadium
Oct 24	7:00PM	Des Moines Lincoln	Des Moines Lincoln

## JV FOOTBALL

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Sep 2	6:00PM	WDM Valley	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 9	6:00PM	Ankeny High School	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 16	6:00PM	Prairie	Prairie
Sep 23	6:00PM	Ankeny Centennial	Ankeny Centennial High School
Sep 30	6:00PM	Ankeny High School	Ankeny Stadium
Oct 7	6:00PM	Johnston	Johnston High School
Oct 14	6:00PM	Waukee	Southeast Polk High School
Oct 21	6:00PM	Dowling Catholic	Dowling Catholic High School

## VARSITY VOLLEYBALL

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 27	5:00PM	Multiple Schools	Winterset High School
Aug 29	5:00PM	Multiple Schools	Southeast Polk High School
Aug 31	TBD	Bondurant-Farrar	Bondurant-Farrar High School
Sep 3	7:30PM	Johnston	Johnston High School
Sep 5	7:30PM	WDM Valley	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 14	8:00AM	Multiple Schools	Southeast Polk High School more..
Sep 17	7:30PM	Waukee	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 19	7:30PM	Waukee Northwest	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 24	7:30PM	Ankeny High School	Ankeny High School
Sep 28	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Carlisle High School
Oct 1	7:30PM	Urbandale	Southeast Polk High School
Oct 5	8:00AM	Multiple Schools	Urbandale High School
Oct 8	7:30PM	Dowling Catholic	Dowling Catholic High School
Oct 12	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Cedar Rapids Prairie High School
Oct 15	7:30PM	Ankeny Centennial	Ankeny Centennial High School

## JV VOLLEYBALL

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Sep 3	5:45PM	Johnston	Johnston High School
Sep 5	5:45PM	WDM Valley	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 7	8:30AM	Multiple Schools	Norwalk High School
Sep 17	5:45PM	Waukee	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 19	5:45PM	Waukee Northwest	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 21	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Des Moines East High School
Sep 23	5:00PM	Multiple Schools	DCG-Meadows Gym
Sep 24	5:45PM	Ankeny High School	Ankeny High School
Sep 28	8:30AM	Multiple Schools	Johnston High School
Oct 1	5:45PM	Urbandale	Southeast Polk High School
Oct 5	8:30AM	Multiple Schools	Ankeny High School
Oct 8	5:45PM	Dowling Catholic	Dowling Catholic High School
Oct 15	5:45PM	Ankeny Centennial	Ankeny Centennial High School
Oct 19	8:30AM	Multiple Schools	Johnston High School



### FOR ALL RAMS SCHEDULES

Schedules are subject to change.  
Scan for most up-to-date schedules.

# GOOD LUCK ON



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# POLK RAMS

## SPORTS SCHEDULE

### FALL 2024

#### BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 29	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Marshalltown Community College
Sep 3	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Dallas Center-Grimes Middle School
Sep 12	4:00PM	Multiple Schools	Marshalltown Community College
Sep 19	5:00PM	Cedar Falls	Birdsall Park - Cedar Falls
Sep 26	5:00PM	Multiple Schools	Pickard Park
Oct 3	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Southeast Polk High School XC Course
Oct 10	5:45PM	Multiple Schools	Lakeside Municipal Golf Course

#### GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 31	TBD	Multiple Schools	Johnston High School
Sep 7	8:45AM	Multiple Schools	Abraham Lincoln High School
Sep 12	4:00PM	Multiple Schools	Marshalltown Community College
Sep 17*	4:55PM	Multiple Schools	Valley Southwoods Freshman HS
Sep 21	11:00AM	Multiple Schools	Central College
Oct 3	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Southeast Polk High School XC Course
Oct 10	5:20PM	Multiple Schools	Lakeside Municipal Golf Course

\*JV only

#### GIRLS SWIM

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 27	5:30PM	Indianola	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 3	5:30PM	Dowling Catholic	Dowling Catholic High School
Sep 9	5:30PM	Waukee	Waukee Natatorium
Sep 14*	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Linn-Mar High School
Sep 17	5:30PM	Johnston Swimming	Southeast Polk High School
Sep 28	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Cedar Rapids Kennedy High School
Oct 1	5:30PM	WDM Valley	Valley High School
Oct 8	5:30PM	Waukee Northwest	Southeast Polk High School
Oct 12*	8:00AM	Multiple Schools	Summit Middle School
Oct 15	5:30PM	Ankeny Girls Swimming	Southeast Polk High School

\*Varsity only

#### BOYS VARSITY GOLF

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 15	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Beaver Creek Golf Course
Aug 20	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Copper Creek Golf Course
Aug 22	10:00AM	Cedar Rapids Washington	Cedar Rapids Washington
Aug 29	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	The Legacy Golf Club
Sep 4	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Otter Creek Golf Course
Sep 11	8:30AM	Multiple Schools	Jester Park Golf Course
Sep 16	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	Veenker Memorial Golf Course
Sep 18	2:30PM	Multiple Schools	Briarwood Golf Course
Sep 19	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	Elmwood Country Club
Sep 23	10:30AM	Indianola	Indianola Country Club
Sep 25	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Copper Creek Golf Course

#### BOYS JV GOLF

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 15	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Beaver Creek Golf Course
Aug 20	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Copper Creek Golf Course
Sep 4	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Otter Creek Golf Course
Sep 11	8:30AM	Multiple Schools	Jester Park Golf Course
Sep 17	2:00PM	Ames	Veenker Memorial Golf Course
Sep 18	2:30PM	Multiple Schools	Briarwood Golf Course
Sep 23	10:30AM	Multiple Schools	Indianola CC
	12:00PM	Multiple Schools	Briarwood Golf Course
Sep 25	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Copper Creek Golf Course
Sep 26	8:30AM	Multiple Schools	Blank Golf Course
Sep 30	3:30PM	Multiple Schools	American Legion Golf Course

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# EVENTS IN THE AREA

To submit calendar items for consideration, send to [tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com)

Be sure to check for cancelations.

## Prairie Meadows Shows

### Finish Line Show Lounge

- Aug. 27, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Senior Tuesday Entertainment, Jerry Beauchamp Band
- Aug. 30, 10-11:55 p.m., Taylor King and Nicholas Sinclair
- Aug. 31, 10-11:55 p.m., Hold On
- Sept. 3, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Senior Tuesday Entertainment, Jerry Beauchamp Band
- Sept. 6, 10-11:55 p.m., Grind 80s Rock Show
- Sept. 7, 10-11:55 p.m., Dan Trilk
- Sept. 10, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Senior Tuesday Entertainment, Tom Hofer and the Iowa Playboys
- Sept. 13, 10-11:55 p.m., Jordan Beem
- Sept. 14, 10-11:55 p.m., Beggar's Bargain
- Sept. 17, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Senior Tuesday Entertainment, Dale Menning and the Stardusters
- Sept. 20, 10-11:55 p.m., Back To Vinyl
- Sept. 21, 10-11:55 p.m., Hold On
- Sept. 24, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Senior Tuesday Entertainment, Tommy Browder and The Country River Band



## Oktoberfest

Saturday, Sept. 14,  
11 a.m. to 11 p.m.  
Adventureland  
Theme Park & Resort

## Altoona Music in the Park

Aug. 25, 6 p.m.  
Haines Park Outdoor Stage,  
700 Block of Third Ave. S.E.

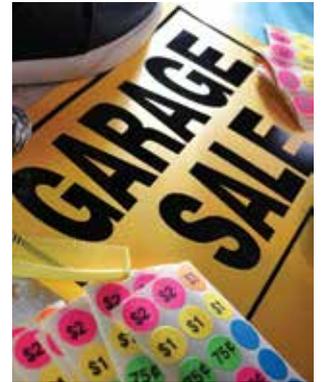
Enjoy a free concert in the park. Sponsored by Altoona Parks and Recreation Board. CAP Theatre will provide popcorn and pop for sale to support the children's theatre.



## Brightside Market

Thursday nights through  
Sept. 26, 5-8 p.m.  
Brightside Aleworks, 480  
Center Place, Altoona

Enjoy this farmers market with "grow it or make it" vendors, food trucks, beer, music and theme nights that are fun for the whole family.



## Citywide garage sales

Sept. 5-7  
Throughout Altoona



## American Legion Post 682 Annual Car Show

Sept. 2, 8 a.m.  
Lutheran Church of the Cross,  
1701 Eighth St. S.W.



## Book signing

Sept. 7, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Hidden Treasures,  
Altoona

Shelba Oberto will hold a book signing of her latest book, "On My Way Home," her third children's book. This 28-page children's Christian fiction addresses the belief in an eternal home.

## Ingersoll Live

Aug. 24, 3-10 p.m.  
2300 Ingersoll Ave.  
[www.theavenuesdsm.com](http://www.theavenuesdsm.com)

Ingersoll's annual block party returns with vendors of all kinds, live music and plenty of family-friendly fun.

## Singles Again 50-year celebration

Sept. 18  
Machine Shed, Urbandale

Fifty years ago, in 1974, a group was formed which has since had a great impact on the lives of many people in the Des Moines area. Singles Again, Inc., was organized as an alternative to Parents Without Partners for those single or previously married people who didn't have children, and, therefore, were not eligible to join PWP. In 1985, SA was opened to all single adults. Many lasting friendships have formed over the years and, although this is not a dating service, they have seen many marriages as well. The group holds approximately 10 activities per month ranging from happy hours to cultural offerings, educational programs and occasional day trips. On Sept. 18, the group will hold an anniversary luncheon. To learn more about Singles Again, call 515-277-9976.

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Be sure to check for cancelations.

## Christian Authors Fair

Saturday, Sept. 21, 1-4 p.m.  
The Church at Union Park,  
821 Arthur Ave., Des Moines.

The Des Moines chapter of Word Weavers International is hosting a Christian authors fair with the following authors participating: Angie Dicken (romance, historical fiction), David Burrier (children's), Dawn Ford (young adult fiction), Derek Dunnagan (biblical fiction), Diane Holmes (historical fiction, memoir), Glenda Mathes (nonfiction, middle-grade fiction), Jolene Philo (nonfiction, mystery), Kathleen Bird (speculative fiction), Kenan Bresnan (nonfiction), Lois Kennis (contemporary novel), Patricia Tiffany Morris (poetry), Sherry Kubalski (children's), and Susan R. Lawrence (historical and contemporary fiction, middle-grade fiction, devotionals). For additional information, enter Iowa Christian Author Fair in Facebook search. With chapters across the country, Word Weavers meets monthly to critique each other's work and provide a forum to encourage writers and help them develop their craft. Local writers — aspiring or published — are welcome to join. For more information, contact Judy Hagey, [judy.hagey@gmail.com](mailto:judy.hagey@gmail.com), or Susan Lawrence, [srlauthor@mchsi.com](mailto:srlauthor@mchsi.com).



## Blue Believers Run/Walk

Saturday, Sept. 21, 7:30 a.m.; run/walk event 8:45 a.m.

Principal Park, 1 Line Drive, Des Moines

Blue Believers, a local nonprofit dedicated to raising awareness and funds for prostate cancer, is holding a run/walk event in collaboration with Team Blue Iowa. Included is a 1-mile walk, 5K walk, timed 5K run and kids fun run. The theme is superheroes, and participants are encouraged to dress as their favorite superhero. Live local music will be featured throughout the day, and a survivor recognition ceremony will be held. A moment of remembrance will also be held. Proceeds will be donated locally to support Iowa men and families affected by prostate cancer. Register at [www.teambblueiowa.com](http://www.teambblueiowa.com).



## World Food and Music Festival

Aug. 23-25

Western Gateway Park,  
1205 Locust St., Des Moines  
[www.dsmpartnership.com/worldfoodandmusicfestival](http://www.dsmpartnership.com/worldfoodandmusicfestival)

The award-winning festival brings together two of life's greatest offerings, food and music, from all around the globe. The event was recently named the sixth best city food festival according to USA Today's readers choice awards. ■

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# MEET Talen Birchmier

Making learning “fun and meaningful”

After graduating from Southeast Polk High School, Talen Birchmier studied elementary education at Iowa State University. She is now pursuing a master’s degree in educational psychology from the University of Northern Colorado.

Following her undergraduate degree, Birchmier returned to her alma mater to teach. She is starting her fourth year teaching at Mitchellville Elementary School, and she has coached show choir at Southeast Polk High School for the last three years.



Talen Birchmier enjoys teaching fifth graders and helping them develop their leadership skills.

“I was so excited to come back to teach at Southeast Polk because I wanted to make a positive impact on the district and the people who helped make me who I am,” Birchmier says. “I love how many opportunities our district provides for students of all ages and abilities.”

Birchmier says she enjoys working with fifth graders because her students are the oldest in the school so they learn lessons about positive leadership and have the opportunity to participate in leadership roles. Her students are constantly pushed to try things just outside their comfort zone and to learn how much they are capable of, she adds.

“The greatest reward of teaching is watching my students grow over the year into even more kind, confident, empathetic and passionate people. It’s amazing to help them realize their growth,” Birchmier says.

She likes to provide at least one opportunity for her students to take part in a service learning project. Over the past three years, her students have made tie blankets to donate to Blank Children’s Hospital, researched and budgeted to buy items for Caring Hands Food Pantry, and hosted a dance marathon to raise money for the University of Iowa Stead Family Children’s Hospital.

This year, her students also came up with an idea to help raise money for Bennet, the therapy dog that visits the school each week. Bennet had torn his ACL and needed to have expensive surgery. To help raise funds, students created posters of Bennet in different outfits and asked everyone in the school to bring in coins to vote for their “favorite Bennet.”

“I love that every day as a teacher looks different. Whether I’m dressing like a 100-year-old on the 100th day of school, serving as a game show host for a math review, going on a field trip, taking our learning outside on a nice day, or being taught new lingo from TikTok by my students, I never live the same day twice. I love that my fifth graders and I are always coming up with new ideas to keep the classroom and our learning fun and meaningful,” Birchmier says.

This school year, Birchmier is looking forward to applying new learning from her classes to her teaching. She has many new ideas for how to help students develop a love for learning. She is also looking forward to meeting her new students and building a classroom family. ■

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*- Rhonda, a current resident*

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# ALTOONA Public Library news

## ADULT PROGRAMMING

(ages 18 and older)

### Cricut Basics

**Wednesday, Sept. 18, from 6-8 p.m.**

Learn how to use the Cricut from the Maker Hub. We'll go over basic design, materials and machine troubleshooting to help everyone complete their own project. All materials provided. Registration required.

### Plant Swap

**Saturday, Sept. 21, from 1-3 p.m.**

If you're needing some new plants (or have old plants that need a new home), drop off a house plant Sept. 13-20 to receive a voucher to swap for a "new to you" plant on Sept. 21. During the swap, vouchers are needed from 1-2 p.m., but anyone can stop by from 2-3 p.m. No registration required.

### How to Brew Kombucha

Wednesday, Sept. 25 at 6:30 p.m.

Learn how to brew this delicious, fermented drink at home. Carissa Thoma, from Down to Earth Living, will cover the process, ingredients, flavoring, health benefits and more. Samples will be provided. Registration required.

### Adult Coloring at Brightside Aleworks

**Thursdays, Sept. 26 and Oct. 31, from 6:30-8:30 p.m.**

Join us at Brightside Aleworks (480 Center Place in Altoona) for a fun night of coloring. We'll bring the art supplies, you bring your friends and money for drinks. No registration required.

## CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

### Baby and Me

**Mondays from 10-10:30 a.m.**

Join us for this interactive storytime designed for parents/caregivers, their infants, toddlers and their stuffies. Sing songs, listen to stories, make crafts and learn early literacy skills, with a new theme each week. Ages 5 and younger. No registration required.

### After School BINGO

**Wednesday, Sept. 11, from 3:30-4:30 p.m.**

Stop by the library to play BINGO and win books or other cool prizes. Grades K-6. No registration required.

### Shoe Box Cities

**Tuesday, Sept. 17, from 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

Learn about planning cities and build your very own tiny town. Grades K-6. Registration required.

### Altoona Public Library

700 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona  
515-967-3881

[www.altoonapubliclibrary.com](http://www.altoonapubliclibrary.com)

Monday-Thursday: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Friday-Saturday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday: 2-5 p.m.

## TEEN PROGRAMMING

### Textured 3D Painting

**Monday, Sept. 9, from 6-7 p.m.**

Are you bored with regular brush painting? Grab a palette knife and get creative with texture and color. We'll go over a few techniques to create a 3D painting using acrylic paint, acrylic medium and palette knives. Grades 6-12. Registration preferred, but not required.

### Hooks and Needles

**Monday, Sept. 23, from 6-7 p.m.**

Yarn lovers, unite. Bring a project you're working on, practice the basics, or work on a project with us. We'll have beginner patterns and supplies available for knitters or crocheters. Grades 6-12. No registration required.

### Teen Hangout

**Fridays in September, from 3:30-4:30 p.m.**

Need to unwind after a long week? Come join us in the library meeting room to meet friends and chill. There will be a weekly activity, from Waffle Week to drawing to video games, or you can just hang out, study or relax. Grades 6-12. No registration required.

To find a complete list of events and to register, visit our website at [altoonapubliclibrary.com](http://altoonapubliclibrary.com). Click on the Upcoming Events tab. ■



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## HEALTH

By Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich

# BACK-TO-SCHOOL chiropractic care

Incorporating chiropractic as part of a healthy lifestyle can help with the back-to-school transition and set kids up for success throughout the school year. Sitting in desks, using electronic devices and lack of physical activity all affect posture and the curvature of the spine. The nervous system connects the brain to the body, and, when spinal subluxations are present, the messages are distorted or blocked. A board-certified pediatric chiropractor conducts a thorough examination to identify subluxations and is specially trained to adjust children and adolescents.

Chiropractic adjustments remove interferences to the nervous system and allow the communication between the brain and the body to flow uninterrupted. This ease of communication manifests in the body as:

- improved attention span and ability to focus
- decreased behavioral issues
- balanced emotional processing
- increased postural balance and coordination

Other benefits of chiropractic care that set the foundation for success in the school year include:

- increased immune system function
- improved sleep and ability to calm
- optimal growth and development
- postural correction to counteract screen time use ■

Information provided by Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich, Swain Chiropractic, 410 Center Place S.W., Altoona, 515-967-9300.

## HEALTH

By Nikki Morgan

# BOTOX 101

Botox belongs to a group of medications known as neuromodulators and is commonly used in the medical aesthetic industry to smooth lines and wrinkles caused by muscle movement. Botox is injected directly into the muscles of the face (or other treatment areas) and works by interfering with the nerve signal to the muscles that cause them to contract. This results in relaxation of the muscles, in turn smoothing lines and wrinkles. Common treatment areas include horizontal forehead lines, frown lines between the eyebrows (“elevens”) and crow’s feet. Other uses for Botox include masseter muscle injections for jaw clenching, jaw pain and teeth grinding; trapezius muscle injections for pain and tension; among others. The effects of Botox take around two to 10 days to start to set in, with full effect seen by 14 days. Immediately following injections, you should avoid excessive sweating or facial massage for 24 hours. Common side effects may include bruising at the injection site, redness or mild swelling. Less common side effects include mild headache or weakening of neighboring muscles (rare). Results last an average of three to four months, which is highly dose dependent. Repeat injections are recommended around that time to prevent the return of full muscle movement and further creasing of the skin. Botox is a safe medication, but you should not receive treatment if you are pregnant or nursing. If you are considering Botox, consult with your medical aesthetics provider to learn more and find out if you are a good candidate. ■



Information provided by Nikki Morgan, DNP, ARNP, SkinFusion FX, 410 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-967-0587, [www.skinfusionfx.com](http://www.skinfusionfx.com), [nikki.skinfusionfx@gmail.com](mailto:nikki.skinfusionfx@gmail.com)



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# RIDE to end all rides

SEP senior Cooper Bernstein races against some of the best in the world.

When Jason Bernstein and his wife, Kerrie, of Altoona, were competing in Iron Man Triathlons, there was a little shadow off in the distance watching their every move.

It wasn't anyone nefarious. As a matter of a fact, it was their own flesh and blood. While his parents were out competing against some of the best athletes across the nation, 4-year-old Cooper was building a love for the sport all his own, competing in the Iron Kids events.

As the years went on, things became more serious, eventually culminating in a race in Canada that the now-grown Cooper would deem "his apex."

Cooper was invited by a team, North Star Development, from Minneapolis, Minnesota, to participate in the Tour of Abitibi, July 15-21 in Val-d'Or, Quebec, Canada, seven hours north of Toronto. The racing is criterium-style, much like the world famous Tour De France.

The invitation-only race featured young men ages 17-18 from teams from around the globe, including Japan, France, Mexico, Canada, New Zealand, United States, Israel and more. The race was a seven-day stage variety. The six-member teams would race approximately 70 miles each day through cities and rural areas along the route, a total of 400 miles when it was all said and done.

Two of the six team members were from Iowa. Another teammate, New Zealander Oliver Scott, finished second overall.

"That was amazing for us," Jason says. "That was the first time this had ever happened for the North Star team, to be at that elite level to be able to put a boy on the podium."

Cooper finished 78th overall, but that number means little. In cycling, things are different. There's the team lead rider, and there are the "worker bees" who do everything in their power to make sure that rider is successful. In Cooper's case, his job was to make sure the leader had water and food, or if there was an "attack" in which riders went forward up the pack quickly, to make sure his team leader was in a good position to finish high overall.

His dad was in the team car behind the competitors, carrying the food, water and team mechanics in case something broke down. The riders would fall back to the car — sometimes at speeds of up to 30 miles per hour — to pick up water and food, then ride back up into the field to disperse them to their respective teammates.

The competition took a toll on Cooper, his dad says.

"He was exhausted," Jason says. "He also mentioned that the roar of all of the wheels around him was significantly loud. He had a headache



Cooper Bernstein (green helmet, middle) of Altoona, competed in the Tour of Abitibi, July 15-21 in Val-d'Or, Quebec, Canada.



Cooper Bernstein (second from right) of Altoona, was a member of the North Star Development racing team that competed in the Tour of Abitibi, July 15-21 in Val-d'Or, Quebec, Canada. He was accompanied to the race by his parents, Kerrie and Jason Bernstein (second and third from left).

by the end of every stage because of the noise."

Training around Polk County leading up to the race was intense as well.

"He put in three-to-five-hour rides by himself, five days a week," Jason says. "He would ride his bike behind our car at about 35-40 miles-per-hour during training."

Cooper, who will be a senior this year at Southeast Polk High School, saw this event as the pinnacle of his racing career, his dad says.

"He's now satisfied," Jason says. "He loves to weld and wants to pursue a career in the trades. He's satisfied with having accomplished this task and is looking forward to a different chapter of his life." ■

# 'IT'S A guarantee'

Did you know that prepaying funeral arrangements allows you the opportunity to have service selections and merchandise selections prepaid and guaranteed?

So, what does that mean? The services provided by the funeral home that are paid in advance will be provided at no additional expense to the family at the time those services are needed in the future. Merchandise selections that are prepaid are also guaranteed to be provided at no additional expense to the family.

You might be wondering, "What if the casket I want is no longer available when I die?" Given that you are guaranteed the casket you select, or one of comparable value, your family would have a replacement option to consider that is guaranteed to not be inferior to the one that was purchased in advance.

Imagine going to the car dealership and purchasing a brand new car — but delaying delivery for several years — all with the guarantee you will be provided a brand new car when you are ready to accept delivery... at no additional cost at that time. That would be a pretty amazing deal.

That is what you can do by prepaying funeral expenses. Plus, you will be making a future event less stressful by giving thought and consideration to these important decisions now.

Ask your preferred funeral provider if they offer a guaranteed plan. ■



Information provided by Sarah Masteller, Advanced Planning Counselor, Hamilton's Southtown Funeral Home, 5400 S.W. Ninth St., Des Moines, 515-697-3679.

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# IMPORTANCE of brain health

Brain health is arguably just as important as your physical health. Brain health requires effort to improve your cognitive function and memory. Here are a few simple ways we can improve our brain health and enhance our memories.



### Brain games

Sudoku, crosswords, chess, word searches — these are a variety of different mind improvement games that can help us stay sharp while we age. There is the adage: "If you don't use it, you lose it," which is the premise that the benefits of brain games are operating under. Engaging your brain in regular activities, such as word games, can help you maintain your cognition and reduce the chance of memory loss.

### Diet

What we put in our bodies is vital to our brain health. Plant-based foods have been shown to slow cognitive decline. Eating green, leafy vegetables, such as spinach or broccoli, which are rich in vitamin K and folate, is linked to improving cognitive function. Harvard University has found that omega-3 foods are found to have "healthy unsaturated fats that have been linked to lower blood levels of beta-amyloid, the protein that forms damaging clumps in the brain" that can result in dementia. Two or more daily servings of strawberries and blueberries have also been found to slow memory decline, as well as different types of nuts with high levels of protein, such as the protein found in walnuts.

### Caffeine

Great news for many of us. Caffeine found in your morning coffee or tea can provide more than a short-term boost. Johns Hopkins University completed a study showing that participants with a higher caffeine consumption performed better on mental function tests. Here are a few more tips to keep your brain healthy and active. Keep your body active, engage in social interactions, keep your stress level down, let go of worry and fears, and play those brain games with family or friends and reach out for help if you need it. ■

Information provided by Stephanie Proper, executive director, Valley View Village, 2571 Guthrie Ave., Des Moines, 515-265-2571.

# SOCIAL media during election time

Maintaining your brand identity and voice during election year noise can be incredibly challenging. Businesses feel the need to side-step certain topics of discussion for fear of alienating sectors of their audience or consumer base. So, how do you do it?

According to Sprout Social Listening data, from January 1 to March 6, 2024 there were almost 7.6 million conversations about the presidential election which garnered almost 45 million engagements and more than 103 billion impressions. Of these conversations, less than half were positive. A proof point that illustrates what many social marketers already know: Presidential elections make social media a hard place to navigate, even if your brand isn't inherently political.

To make it through this year unscathed, brands should consider what audiences actually expect from them, and have a plan in place to protect their brand safety.

A recent study found that 75% of brands have been exposed to a brand safety incident within the past year. Nearly half of those companies received some sort of fallout on social media because of these incidents.

In this new world of social advertising, brand safety issues aren't an "if" — they're a "when."

As the paid social game grows, potential risks grow alongside it. Communication and marketing professionals have to account for a slew of potential brand safety threats, including:

- Paid social ads appearing alongside harmful or damaging content
- User-generated content featuring false claims about a product or brand
- Scandals involving creator or influencer marketing partners

Thankfully, social also doubles as a powerful risk detection and prevention tool. One of the many benefits of social listening is that you can use it to monitor the larger conversation around your brand, illuminating any sources of potential controversy before they spin out of control.

Consumer conversations are more transparent than ever in the age of social media. From call-outs to shout-outs, there are endless opportunities to learn about your audience. This includes:

- Topics and trends that your customer base is passionate about
- Ways for your company to outshine your competitors
- Emerging pain points and challenges your customers face
- Which types of marketing messages really resonate

The problem? Brands are often guessing and not listening.

Social listening overcomes this challenge. With social listening, brands can look at customer conversations on a large scale. This helps you tailor your plans more specifically to reach more customers for the best results. The result is a more meaningful and effective social media marketing strategy.

Do yourself a favor and listen to the conversations of your customers, build a better strategy and stay above the fray. Your business brand depends on it. ■



2024

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# NATIONAL Night Out

National Night Out in Altoona was Aug. 6 at Sam Wise Youth Complex.



Lisa and Carl Cumings



Denise Green and Chris Williams



Cailyn Jasmer and Mik Rodriguez



Owen Twohey, Wyatt Turner, Gage McDaniel and Connor McCoun



Ellie McDaniel



Mike Omundson, John Champion, Denise Lestor and Mark Kolstead



Lidia and Angela Jones



Jess and Tiffany Reed and family



Debbie and Randy Bowlby



Natalie Carroll



Ryan Herrick, Norman Wrigley, Lillian Herrick, Adriana Tabor and Jaylyn Boggs

# OUT & ABOUT



Jon Yesulis and Pennie Carroll at Perk Before Work Aug. 6 at Over The Top Ice Cream.



Troy Paterson and Joe McChurch at Perk Before Work Aug. 6 at Over The Top Ice Cream.



Kyle Lee and Jake Campbell at Perk Before Work Aug. 6 at Over The Top Ice Cream.



Natalie Carroll and Carson Odle at Perk Before Work Aug. 6 at Over The Top Ice Cream.



Daniel Hoyos, Pennie Carroll and Natalie Carroll at Perk Before Work Aug. 6 at Over The Top Ice Cream.



Kennedy Horton and Linda Lawson at Perk Before Work Aug. 6 at Over The Top Ice Cream.



Mario Cruz, Sophia Riddle, Alex Blakenburg and Christiane Agee at National Night Out in Altoona Aug. 6 at Sam Wise Youth Complex.



Grace Harvey, Jami Harvey, Harold Cox and Mallory Shabak at National Night Out in Altoona Aug. 6 at Sam Wise Youth Complex.



Jeff Jontz and Stacy McVicker at National Night Out in Altoona Aug. 6 at Sam Wise Youth Complex.



John and Mason Kamienski at National Night Out in Altoona Aug. 6 at Sam Wise Youth Complex.



Allison Doran, Tracy D'Alessandro and Jacque Guy at National Night Out in Altoona Aug. 6 at Sam Wise Youth Complex.

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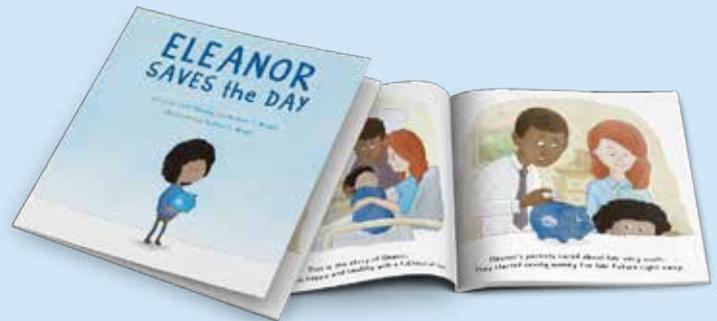
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