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SEPTEMBER 2024

Living

MAGAZINE

New AGAIN

Residents share their home renovation experiences

Meet Katherine Southmayd

EDUCATION

Blackened spatchcock chicken

RECIPE

From education to birds, Whitten gives her time

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WELCOME

ERASING the disco era

Jolene and I bought our first home in the mid-1990s, and we stretched ourselves financially to do so. It was a split foyer home that was built in the 1970s — and it looked like it.

The appliances and countertops were green, typical of the era. We hired a company to paint the appliances white, and they looked like 1970s appliances that were painted white. This was a great example of the expression about putting lipstick on a pig. My dad and I installed the new countertops, and we did a good job for a couple of amateurs.

The kitchen had a fake, red, brick veneer over the drywall, which was, again, typical of the era. We primed and painted it, and it looked much better.

The bathroom had a dark brown toilet. Seriously. Dad and I installed a new one and moved that one to the basement. It worked, and it was good for a few laughs.

The ceiling had what I thought were wooden beams. Upon closer inspection, I learned they were made of Styrofoam. I called Jolene into the room and asked her to watch while I knocked them down with one hand. She was impressed, for a few seconds.

We sanded the dark interior woodwork and doors and painted them lighter colors, and we gave the exterior a makeover from the dark brown and white barn look to more neutral and earthtone colors. New landscaping and stonework gave the home a much-improved street appearance as well.

We did our best — on a very limited budget and a lot of sweat equity — to update this house and erase those disco-era features. Looking back, it was fun, and we learned a lot.

Over time, we were able to hire professionals to do other improvements as well. All this remodel work helped to make this little house into a home — our home. It looked much different from the time we bought it to the time we sold it.

Five homes later, and we still smile as we look back with fond memories of our first home and the work we did to it. I am sure many of you can relate.

Meanwhile, if you are looking to update your home and need ideas, you will enjoy the examples in this month's cover story, as local residents share experiences of their home improvement efforts. And if you want a brown toilet, I know where you might be able to find one.

Thanks for reading. ■

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Elizabeth Scharf added color to her kitchen with a new backsplash. Photo by Todd Rullestad

New AGAIN

Residents share their home renovation experiences

By Ashley Rullestad

For many homeowners, the day comes, sooner or later, when they look around their abode and wonder when the carpet was ever stylish, the wall color ever stunning and the layout ever functional. They realize new curtains, throw pillows and artwork won't be enough to freshen things up, and the only solution to the weary look of their home is to bite the bullet and invest in some major improvements. And, when the work is done, their home — and enthusiasm for it — feels new.

FEATURE

BEFORE



The Schocks opted to get rid of their nondescript backsplash and countertops for something more modern and stylish.

Wall and dark colors had to go

When Kevin and Sarah Schock moved into their home nine years ago, they knew immediately they wanted to change their kitchen.

"We knew that we would need to open up the kitchen to the dining and living rooms,"

AFTER



A subway tile backsplash and white upper cabinets gave the kitchen a bright and modern look.

Sarah Schock says. "We had four small kids at the time and needed to be able to have good lines of sight."

The kitchen was painted orange, with cherry-wood cabinets and a tan backsplash. Schock knew the dark colors would have to go, but she had painted the cabinets in the kitchen

of their old house, so she felt comfortable doing that in the new place.

As they contemplated the renovation, the Schocks focused on an updated look using materials that would last. They wanted bright spaces and a modern feel.

The plan included removing the wall that



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FEATURE

joined the kitchen and dining room for a more open concept. Taking down that wall forced them to take down an upper cabinet, so they decided to relocate that to the other side of the kitchen.

"We ended up buying a new lower cabinet to match the existing ones, so everything looked seamless. We added new quartz countertops and a new granite sink, and I completed the subway tile backsplash."

Their contractors added a bar top to separate the kitchen and dining area, which gave the family a little more seating as well. Schock painted the cabinets since the wood wasn't in the best shape. Later, they changed the flooring as well.

"I also wanted a deep sink, and we were able to get that when we had the countertops replaced. The only thing I wish we could have done was relocate the microwave from over the range to a different location, but that would have involved changing the layout of the kitchen more than we wanted to," she says.

The Schocks were happy with the results. Their real estate agent helped them connect with a contractor who did the bulk of



Kevin and Sarah Schock renovated their home to better suit their family's needs when their kids were young.

the work. They also used recommendations for other elements of the project.

"Check with your trusted sources to find great people and contractors to work with," Schock says. "That can make a big difference on how you end up feeling about the

project. The process went well for us. I think any remodel can be stressful, but having the recommendations of trusted people helped with the stress."

They don't have firm plans for having additional work done, but Sarah is

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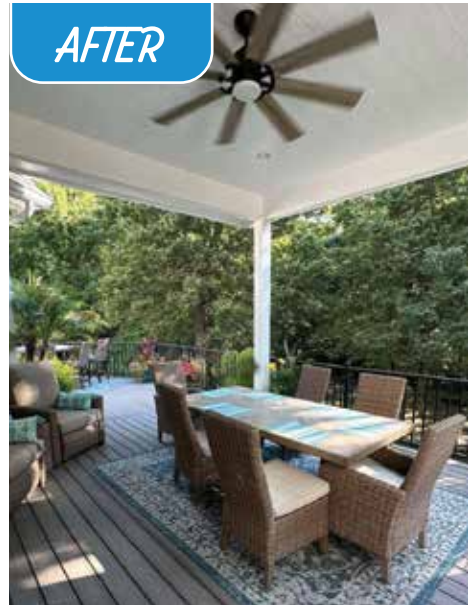
BEFORE



AFTER



AFTER



The Harris family wanted to make better use of their outdoor space, so they added a roof and fan over the deck and a screened-in porch.

already thinking about painting the lower cabinets a different color.

Her advice for anyone remodeling is to make changes you want to live with, not necessarily what is best for resale. Don't be

afraid to customize your space.

"We're very happy with how it turned out. My favorite thing is how removing part of the wall has opened up our space; everything feels bigger and brighter," she says.

All decked out

Emily Harris and her family moved into their Grimes home in June 2017. Though they knew there were things they wanted to change about the house, costly repairs and replacements of

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FEATURE

BEFORE

AFTER



The Scharfs finished off the kitchen in their new home with a backsplash and hardware that added stylish touches.

their furnace, air conditioner, septic system and roof meant those things would have to stay on the back burner for a bit.

“We wanted to update the outside space and make it more usable,” Emily says. “The deck needed replacing, and we weren’t using it much because it was hot and in direct sunlight. The walkout basement went out to a concrete slab. We decided to update the deck, add a roof and fan, and create a screened-in porch off the walkout basement.”

The family needed a contractor to do the

work. They were familiar with Mawdsley Home Improvement because the company had been the subcontractor on work they did on a bathroom. Emily sent the business pictures of what they liked, and those ideas were incorporated into the plans.

“We absolutely love the results,” Emily says. “We eat out on the deck all the time now that there is a roof and fan. The screened-in porch is probably our most-used room in the house now. We have couches, a swing and a TV out there, so the space is used all the time.”

Top notch tile

The Scharfs have been in their house for four years. Since it was new construction, they knew they would have to add a few things like hardware for kitchen cabinets and a backsplash. They also wanted to upgrade the master shower from a standard insert to something sleeker, so those items were first on their home improvement list.

“I knew exactly what I wanted for the kitchen backsplash before we started the project,” Elizabeth says. “Our house was a new



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FEATURE

build when we moved in, so we wanted to add some character and our own style to the neutral designs and color palette in the rest of the house.”

The Scharfs asked friends and family for recommendations, which is how they found Cody Bailey Construction and Remodel. Cody tackled both the master shower and kitchen backsplash. Cody was able to suggest tile options and design ideas and helped bring to life some custom ideas.

“For anyone planning to renovate, I recommend sticking to your personal design style, and don’t be afraid to try something new,” Elizabeth says. “I went with a black herringbone tile for my kitchen backsplash, which a lot of people were unsure about, but I think it contrasts well with our white cabinets and looks great. We have been extremely happy with how our projects turned out.”

Master bedroom makeover

The Sanders family chose their home in Grimes because it was turn-key. That said, most houses need a bit of love to make it the family’s own. Theirs was no different.

“We moved in five years ago, and we had super minor projects we wanted to do,” Paige Sanders says. “We did some painting updates and added a fun accent wall to our master bedroom. We still want to redo our deck and expand it or possibly add in a screened-in porch in the future.”

Cody Bailey had worked on many projects for the Sanders family at their old house in West Des Moines, so they knew who to call for the job.

As for many modern homeowners, Pinterest designs were a source of inspiration. Paige had her own design boards, and Cody added to her inspiration.

“He had done some work that matched my dream bedroom Pinterest boards, so I couldn’t email him fast enough to add us to his list. I love the bold color and how the wood design adds a nice texture element to the room. I’m a big fan of accent walls over headboards, and he brought our vision to life.”

For those looking to make a change in their own homes, Paige recommends starting small if change seems scary or you aren’t willing to commit to a huge renovation.



Paige Sanders started with inspiration from Pinterest then worked with a contractor to make her vision of an accent wall in the bedroom a reality.

“There are so many great ways to make a huge impact on a small room or on a small budget,” she says. “Paint makes a world of difference all on its own. Have fun and make your home reflect you and what you love. We spend so much time at home, so we might as well love the space we’re in.” ■

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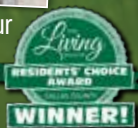
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Rain Barrel Seminar and Workshop

Seminar: Sept. 24 at 6 p.m.
Workshop: Sept. 28, 1 p.m.
Grimes Public Library, 200 N.E. Beaverbrooke Blvd.

Speakers from the Rain Campaign and the City of Grimes Stormwater Department will present the whys and hows of harvesting and using rainwater to water plants, lawns and gardens on Sept. 24. Registration is required and is available at grimeslibrary.org. As a second part of the seminar, Grimes citizens will be able to build and take home a rain barrel at the Rain Barrel Workshop on Sept. 28. Registration is required and is available at grimeslibrary.org.

Volunteer orientation

First Monday of the month,
5:30 p.m.
Rhythms of Grace, 23625 River Heights Drive, Dallas Center

Rhythms of Grace offers a one-hour orientation monthly for those who would like to learn more about Rhythms of Grace before committing to a volunteer application, background check and training. To register, visit <https://rhythmsofgraceequine.org/volunteer>.

GodSpeed Equine Barn Warming Celebration

Saturday, Oct. 12, 6 p.m.
Victory Ranch, 30151 250th St., Dallas Center

Those 16 and older are invited to an evening of food from Big Al's BBQ, fellowship, music, dancing and, of course, horses. This event will be held in the indoor arena, so put on your cowboy best. Doors open at 6 p.m. with presentation of colors at 6:45 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m., program about GodSpeed Equine at 8 p.m. and music and dancing to finish the evening from 8:30-11 p.m. Tickets are \$85 each and \$550 for a table of eight. For tickets, scan the QR code.



Rock Around the Clock Concert

Thursday, Sept. 26
Heritage Park, 1055 N.E. Beaverbrooke Blvd., Grimes

The Rock Around the Clock Concert Series is back. Damon Dotson will perform from 5:30-8 p.m. In addition to rocking out, organizers have partnered with the local food pantry, Grimes Storehouse, to help families in need. Bring a donation of a nonperishable food item or a monetary donation for admission.

Fall Festival

Oct. 12, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
South Sports Complex, 750 S. James St., Grimes

Grimes Parks and Recreation and the Polk County Sheriff's Office are teaming up once again to host the annual Fall Festival. The festival will be packed with fun activities and booths for kids of all ages, including the Candy Crawl. There will be food trucks, local vendors, games, bouncy houses and much more. Costumes are highly encouraged. ■



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Social Security is complex, and the details are often misunderstood even by those who are already receiving benefits. It's important to understand some of the basic rules and options and how they might affect your financial future.

Full retirement age (FRA): Once you reach full retirement age, you can claim your full Social Security retirement benefit, also called your primary insurance amount or PIA. FRA ranges from 66 to 67, depending on your birth year.

Claiming early: The earliest you can claim your Social Security retirement benefit is age 62. However, your benefit will be permanently reduced if claimed before your FRA. At age 62, the reduction would be 25% to 30%, depending on your birth year. Your benefit may be further reduced temporarily if you work while receiving benefits before FRA and your income exceeds certain levels. However, when you reach FRA, an adjustment is made, and over time you will regain any benefits lost due to excess earnings.

Claiming later: If you do not claim your benefit at FRA, you will earn delayed retirement credits for each month you wait to claim, up to age 70. This will increase your benefit by two-thirds of 1% for each month, or 8% for each year you delay. There is no increase after age 70.

Spousal benefits: If you're married, you may be eligible to receive a spousal benefit based on your spouse's work record, whether you



worked or not. The maximum spousal benefit, if claimed at your full retirement age, is 50% of your spouse's PIA (regardless of whether he or she claimed early) and doesn't include delayed retirement credits. If you claim a spousal benefit before reaching your FRA, your benefit will be permanently reduced.

Dependent benefits: Your dependent child may be eligible for benefits after you begin receiving Social Security if he or she is unmarried and meets one of the following criteria: (a) under age 18, (b) age 18 to 19 and a full-time student in grade 12 or lower, (c) age 18 or older with a disability that started before age 22. The maximum family benefit is equal to about 150% to 180% of your PIA, depending on your situation.

Survivor benefits and divorced spouses: There are benefits available for spouses in scenarios of death and divorce. These benefits will differ depending on the age of both you and your former spouse. For more information on these complex situations, please reach out to check your eligibility or visit www.ssa.gov. ■

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LEGAL

By Cynthia P. Letsch, J.D.

THE DIFFERENCE between politics and politicians

We are well into the presidential political season, so it is time for a primer on politics. First, politics is not politicians. Remember that we can have a civil discussion about politics without ever mentioning any politician by name. Politicians come and go. U.S. politics, the mechanism by which we govern ourselves, is rooted in principles and documents that founded this country nearly 250 years ago.

The U.S. Constitution is the basis for federal laws. Federal laws are laws that help all the states function together as one when they need to and must not be inconsistent with the U.S. Constitution. Therein usually lies the debate: When do we need to function like one unit and when do we (the states) need, deserve or want our own autonomy? For example, we have only one currency across the country. Thanks to the Commerce Clause, we are never more than three miles from a Walmart, Target, Starbucks or Dollar General. And, except for the GPS announcing, "Welcome to Missouri," we would never have known that we crossed a state line.

Each state has its own constitution, which by virtue of our agreement to be "united," cannot be in conflict with the U.S. Constitution. State laws must not be inconsistent with either its own state constitution or the U.S. Constitution.

Who makes the laws? Not the president or governor. Surprise. Of course, the president or governor either must sign the law or the law must be passed by enough of the congress to not need the president or governor's signature for it to actually become law. It is popular for a presidential or gubernatorial candidate to promise to make specific laws that will be popular to certain groups because it is effective in getting votes. Why? Because we were passing notes in high school government and do not understand how laws are actually made.

Then who makes laws? Not lawyers. Another surprise. Of the 535 members of Congress, only 177 are lawyers. Of the 150 lawmakers at the Iowa Statehouse, only 14 are lawyers. Stop blaming us.

Support whatever political candidates, also known as "politicians," that you believe hold values that match your own values for how we should be governed at the federal versus state level, not for any particular law he or she promises to pass. When we pledge our allegiance to the country and the Constitutional process, rather than an individual politician, we all win. ■

Information provided by Cynthia P. Letsch, J.D., Letsch Law Firm, 112 N.E. Ewing St., Suite D, Grimes, 515-986-2810, www.LetschLawFirm.com.



NAVIGATING the complexities of Medicare

6 things you need to know.

Medicare is a critical component of retirement planning, but it can be complex and confusing. Here are six things you need to know:

1. You could pay more if you enroll late.

To avoid these penalties, make sure your employer completes the necessary form confirming that you have had qualified coverage since turning 65. If you're not yet 65 and already retired, your enrollment period begins three months before your 65th birthday, so start the process early to avoid delays in coverage.

2. It's not a one-size-fits-all program.

You have options, including Original Medicare (Parts A and B), Medicare Supplements (Part C), and Prescription Drug Plans (Part D). Each option fills different gaps in coverage, so it's essential to understand how they work and



which one best fits your needs.

3. Medicare isn't free. While Part A of Medicare is typically free, Part B has a monthly premium based on your income. It's crucial to work with a retirement planner to understand how your income, including Roth conversions, can impact your Medicare premiums.

4. You enroll in Medicare through Social Security. Many people are surprised to learn that you enroll in Medicare through Social Security, not directly through Medicare. Keep an eye out for your Medicare card, which will come from the Department of Health and Human Services or the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), as it may look like junk mail.

5. You don't always have to sign up at 65. If you or your spouse is still working and covered by a qualified employer health plan, you may not need to sign up for Medicare at 65. However, if you're on COBRA or a marketplace plan, you'll need to enroll in Medicare when

you turn 65 to avoid penalties.

6. You are not stuck with your plan.

You're not locked into the same Medicare plan forever. Each year during the Annual Enrollment Period (Oct. 15 through Dec. 7), you can review your coverage and make changes to ensure you're set up for success in the coming year. This is important because insurance carriers often renegotiate provider contracts, which can change the terms of your supplement plan and impact premiums, copays, deductibles and covered services, including benefits like X-rays, prosthetic devices and physical therapy. Benefits like gym memberships and chiropractic care can also be added or dropped from plans.

Understanding these six aspects of Medicare can help you make more informed decisions and avoid costly mistakes as you navigate your retirement journey. ■

Information provided by AnnaMarie Morrow, Director of Medicare, Merkle Retirement Planning, 1860 S.E. Princeton Drive, Grimes, 515-278-1006.



Learn about another important Medicare fact in this episode of *Retiring Today with Loren Merkle*. Scan the QR code to watch this episode now.

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CRISPY grilled chicken with a kick

(Family Features)

Those first school bells may be ringing, but they don't have to signal the end of grilling season. This blackened spatchcock chicken keeps the meat moist, tender and tasty with crispy skin and a spicy seasoning to keep your summer spirit alive. Visit Culinary.net to find more recipes that keep your grill lit all year long. ■

Blackened spatchcock chicken

- 1 whole chicken
- 1 cup melted butter or ghee
- 2 tablespoons heat-and-sweet seasoning
- 1/2 tablespoon garlic powder
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

- Heat grill to 375-400 F.
- Use kitchen shears or knife to remove backbone from chicken to lay flat. Remove rib cage, if desired, or push flat with hands.
- Mix butter, heat-and-sweet seasoning and garlic powder. Using meat injector, inject mixture into chicken. Rub remaining buttered seasoning over chicken and season with salt and pepper, to taste.
- Place spatchcock chicken breast-side up over indirect heat and cook 35-40 minutes.
- When internal temperature reaches 145 F, flip chicken breast-side down over direct heat 5 minutes, or until internal temperature reaches 165 F.
- Let rest 10 minutes before serving.



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HOW routines benefit mental

Having a regular routine gives our brains a sense of order. Routines create a balance and sense of purpose in our lives and help us avoid overwhelming feelings that can lead to anxiety, depression or unhealthy behavioral habits like overeating, overdrinking, etc. Here are some tips to help you get back into a good, mindful routine.

- **Start mornings off right.** Begin each day the same, whether leaving or staying in. Eat breakfast, take a shower and make your bed. Find music you like for a morning ritual that brightens your mood from the get go.
- **Plan your day.** A plan helps us stay focused on our daily to-dos and ensures we don't skip over important events.
- **Take breaks.** Regular breaks throughout the day are a must. Take a short walk or spend a few minutes deep breathing or stretching. Studies show those who take short breaks tend to be more productive.
- **Protect your sleep.** Too much screen time interferes with sleep. Use an app to help you set healthy limits. A health care provider can help if you have sleep concerns.

Want to go deeper? Read "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen R. Covey or "Atomic Habits" by James Clear. ■

Information provided by Vanessa Andersen, LISW, Licensed Mental Health Therapist, Pink Couch Wellness, 1220 N.E. Station Crossing, Suite 204, Grimes, IA 50111. www.pinkcouchwellness.com.





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Q: What is stopping you?

A: Think about it right now. Is there a fitness goal you have been wanting to achieve? Is there extra weight you have been wanting to get off? We all know life gets in the way. We all know that it is so easy to come up with an excuse and put it off for another day. In doing so, it gets easier and easier to wait, and the goal gets farther and farther away. Why do we wait though? Why not just start now? You hear it all the time. "If it is truly a priority, you will make time for it," and, honestly, that is not wrong. Life is full of obstacles or random things popping up, but it is how we deal with them that really proves to ourselves that we can handle it. Why not make your health a priority? Think about your day. We all have the same 24 hours to use up. Try to find 45 minutes right now that you can prioritize to your health. Whether it is getting into the gym or doing a workout at home, I bet you can find that 45 minutes somewhere. I want you to do two things right now. First, imagine if you were to start today (eating healthier or simply going on a walk), where would you be one month from now? Second, if you didn't start today, where would you be one month from now? Be honest with yourself. What is truly stopping you? ■



Information provided by Haley Powers-Risdal, certified personal trainer/head coach at Anytime Fitness 255 S.W. Brookside Drive, 515-300-9262, GrimesIA@anytimefitness.com.

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TOUR TIPS: Finding a senior living community

Whether you're considering an independent living, assisted living, or memory care community for your loved one or yourself, you'll want to make sure it's a great fit. The number of housing options for seniors is increasing. That makes it harder to choose the right community. It's important to explore the possibilities with someone you trust. Asking the right questions and keeping an eye out for some common indicators of quality should give you more insight into what you'll find in any given senior living community.

What is the quality of life there?

When you visit a possible new residence, current residents are your best resource. Don't be afraid to ask how they like living in their community. Ask for an activity calendar that you and your loved one can review to find matching or new interests.

Are the community surroundings clean and inviting?

You want to be sure you are in an environment where you are confident about the cleanliness — and completely comfortable with living there. Look at the outdoor spaces as well as the indoor ones. Are there walking paths and gardens? Are there opportunities for residents to enjoy these spaces comfortably and safely? What kind of care does the community provide? How do they meet the needs of their residents? Because everyone's needed level of care is different, it's important to let staff know

exactly what you are looking for. Make sure you familiarize yourself with the specifics offered in assisted living, independent living, rehabilitation and memory care. Ask about assistance with the daily tasks of living, including medication management, bathing, dressing and attending meals or events around the building.

Are the staff kind and caring?

The importance of staff to the senior living experience cannot be overstated. Ask residents how they feel about staff. You should also observe staff and resident interactions throughout your visit.

Were you invited to dine at the community?

How was the experience? Mealtime is central to the quality of life at every care community. Are the food choices fresh, healthy and tasty? What is service like in the dining room? Are there choices for variations on the daily dining experience? Would you want to eat there again? While choosing the right community may take some time, asking the right questions can bring you closer to finding what you want. Don't be afraid to return to a community and tour it again before selecting it. Pay attention to your instincts, as well. Many times, you will "know" if a community feels like the right one. The answers you receive will confirm those feelings. ■

Content provided by Meadowview of Clive, 3300 Berkshire Parkway, Clive, www.meadowviewclive.com.



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WHERE WE LIVE

By Lindsey Giardino

FROM the city to the country

Baker enjoys sharing her ranch with others.

For more than a decade, Lacey Baker enjoyed the small-town charm of Dallas Center.

During the pandemic, though, she started to feel claustrophobic and cramped living in the town proper.

"A friend was having similar feelings living in the country, so I asked her if she wanted to trade homes," Baker explains. "Long story short, I sold my house in town in eight hours and moved to the ranch. I'd always wanted to get back to country living."

What she enjoys most about where she lives are the gorgeous sunsets behind her windmill and the vast, starry skies.

With all the land her property provides, Baker also has the opportunity to care for a lot of animals, including cats, goats and mini donkeys. This past January, she launched Mini Dreams Ranch on the property as a place for people to escape to from the hustle and bustle of life and enjoy her furry friends. She also hosts things like farm tours, goat yoga and nursing home visits.

It seems that Baker has something going on at her ranch most of the time.

"It's never dull around here," she says.

Thankfully, help isn't too far away should Baker ever need it.

"We have great neighbors always willing to lend a hand with whatever the project may be," she says.

Baker keeps active within the community as well. She coaches youth sports through Grimes Parks and Recreation, is on the DCG School Improvement Advisory Committee, speaks about women in agriculture and agribusiness opportunities in local classrooms, volunteers at Timber Creek Therapies assisting people with disabilities as they ride horses, is involved at Eternity Church and provides the mini donkey for Dallas Center's Hometown Christmas live nativity scene.

Baker certainly keeps busy, but she wouldn't have it any other way. For her, it's a joy to live in and give back to the DCG community.

"The small business owners in the area supporting other small businesses is almost overwhelming," she says. "And the friends and connections made with parents of other children from sporting and school events is invaluable." ■



Lacey Baker was happy to move to the country where she could enjoy sunsets, have some mini donkeys and share the joys of her Mini Dreams Ranch with others.





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EDUCATION

By Ashley Rullestad

MEET Katherine Southmayd

Kindergarten teacher is a longtime DCG fan.



Katherine Southmayd has taught kindergarten all 18 years she has been with the district.

It's not terribly often these days that teachers stay in the same place since their teaching career's inception, but Katherine Southmayd is doing just that. She began teaching kindergarten at Dallas Center Grimes 18 years ago, and she's still teaching kindergarten in the district, currently at South Prairie. She attended Central College for her undergraduate degree and earned her master's degree from Viterbo University.

"I come from a family of teachers. I didn't think I wanted to be one when I was in high school. When I was in college, I had a preschool placement and fell in love with this age of kids. I loved their stories, jokes and watching them interact and learn through play and discovery. They've always made me laugh."

After her student teaching placement in kindergarten, she was hooked. She says she knew she needed to be with the little learners. In kindergarten, every day is a challenge, but every day also brings new ideas, fresh learning, and lots of little people to laugh with.

Southmayd says she is proud to have been at DCG for her entire career. Watching the district grow and change over her time there has been a gift.

"I've loved getting to know students and families throughout the year, along with teachers and administrators across curriculum and grade levels. I'm grateful for the sense of family and community here. South Prairie has been my home and a huge part of our family's life as our three boys have gone through the grades and absolutely adore their teachers and staff. South Prairie has a very special place in my heart."

One of the hardest challenges and greatest rewards of being a teacher is differentiating instruction to meet 20 to 24 students' needs. They all have different needs, strengths and weaknesses, and Southmayd says she and her teammates want to meet them as best as they can.

A few fun facts about Mrs. Southmayd: She is married to Mike, who is also in education as the K-12 PE/Health curriculum coordinator at Des Moines Public Schools. The couple has three boys, a dog and a cat.

"We are pickleball fans, Iowa Hawkeyes and movie lovers. I love to walk, read and serve at my church, Hope Grimes," she says. ■



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FROM education to birds, Whitten gives her time

Volunteering is a passion for Grimes resident.

When Heather Whitten started volunteering in her 20s, it was a way to meet people in a new town.

Over the years, she's grown her passion for volunteering and bettering the community in which she lives. Today, that's Grimes.

Whitten and her family moved to town in October 2020. Shortly after, they began hosting foreign exchange students, which is how she became involved with the Dallas-Center Grimes Community School District. When one of her exchange students wanted to join the basketball team, Whitten learned about the DCG Booster Club.

She thought the organization did great things for students, so she volunteered to be an "overseer," running the concessions stand at various sporting events. Later she became treasurer — a perfect fit being that she's an accountant by trade.

This past year, Whitten also joined the Friends of the Fine Arts (FOFA), which raises funds for the school district's various fine arts programs. She recently became treasurer for that organization, too.



Tim Short of Edward Jones presents the Good Neighbor certificate to Heather Whitten.

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By volunteering for both groups, Whitten is putting her time where her heart is — supporting education and students.

"I'm a really passionate person," Whitten says. "I know I've been very gifted in this life from opportunities I've gotten, like education and a good job, and I like to spend time giving back to those who are less fortunate than me or raise money for causes I believe in."

In addition to her work with the Booster Club and FOFA, Whitten helps with Iowa Bird Rehabilitation, an organization that recovers, rehabilitates and releases wild birds in Iowa.

She has a soft spot for animals, so, six months ago, when she saw a bird that was hit by a car, Whitten reached out to Iowa Bird Rehabilitation, which sent a volunteer out to assess the bird. By the time they arrived, the bird had recovered and flown off.

Still, Whitten was interested by the group's work. Shortly thereafter, she saw someone post on Facebook that the Iowa Bird Rehabilitation was needing help. She joined on as a volunteer, primarily in an outreach capacity, but she's also helped rescue a few birds, including an injured goose.

Ultimately, Whitten says giving back to various organizations is fulfilling and a good use of her time.

"Volunteering has kind of become my hobby, because I enjoy it so much," she says. ■

Do you know a Good Neighbor who deserves recognition?

Nominate at tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.

GRIMES Public Library news

Back to school means new 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten finishers. 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten is a nationwide program hosted at Grimes Public Library to encourage families to read 1,000 books together before a child reaches kindergarten. It is a fun and free way to start your child on the path to success with prizes at every 100 books. Stop by the library to sign up.



Name: Meredith Richardson
Parents: Adrian and Celeste Richardson
Age: 5 1/2
Favorite book: "Creepy Crayon"
Favorite animals: rabbit and giraffe



Name: Anthony Mainelli
Parents: Tony and Kelsey Mainelli
Age: 5
Favorite book: "Marvel Encyclopedia"
Favorite animal: cheetah



Name: Miles Hanson
Parents: Andrew and Emily Hanson
Age: 5
Favorite book: "Gingerbread Baby"
Favorite animal: penguin ■

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CHAMBER

By Adam Bunge

WELCOME to the 2024 school year

A message from the board chair of Grimes Chamber and Economic Development

As the 2024 school year begins, I am filled with excitement and pride to welcome back our students, educators and families. The start of a new school year is always a special time, full of possibilities and fresh opportunities for learning, growth and community engagement.

Education is the foundation of our community's success. Here in Grimes, we are fortunate to have a strong educational system to prepare our future leaders, innovators and citizens. The partnership between our schools, families and the broader community is key to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

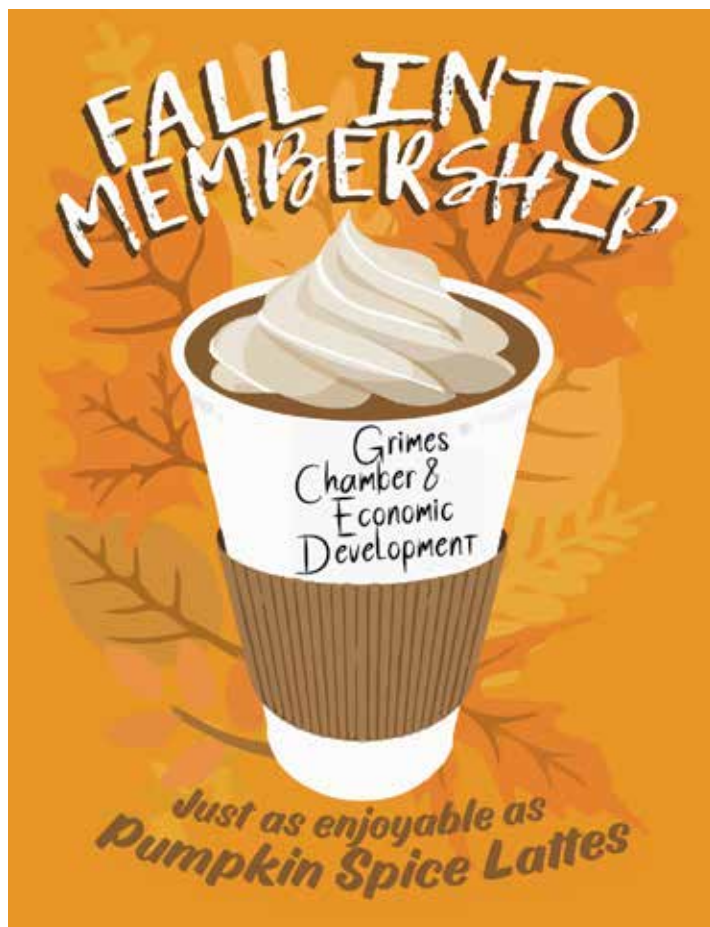
As the board chair of Grimes Chamber and Economic Development, I see firsthand how closely our schools and local businesses are intertwined. The skills and values cultivated in our classrooms are the very ones that will drive our local economy forward. Whether it's through reading books to a kindergarten classroom, supporting school programs, or participating in community events, our business community is committed to investing in the future of Grimes.

This year, as we welcome new students and teachers to our schools, I encourage everyone to think about how we can continue to strengthen the bonds between our educational institutions and the broader Grimes community. Together, we can create a supportive environment where every student can thrive — in the classroom and beyond.

To our students, I wish you a year full of discovery, hard work and fun. To our teachers and school staff, thank you for your dedication and commitment to guiding our young people. And to our parents and guardians, your role is invaluable in supporting your children's education and helping them navigate the challenges and joys of school life.

Let's make this school year one of the best yet, filled with learning, growth and community spirit. Here's to a fantastic 2024 school year. ■

Information provided by Adam Bunge, Board Chair, Grimes Chamber and Economic Development





A ribbon cutting was held for Off Course Golf Carts, 3000 S.E. Grimes Blvd. Suite 600, on Aug. 7.



A ribbon cutting was held for Wandering Raccoon Books, 250 W. First St. Suite A, on Aug. 6.



A ribbon cutting was held at Sport Clips Haircuts of Grimes, 1101 E. First St., Suite 111, on Sept. 4.



Alan Nicks, Jacque Nicks and Margaret Weber at the ribbon cutting for Sport Clips Haircuts of Grimes Sept. 4.



Maddy and Summer Milby at the ribbon cutting for Sport Clips Haircuts of Grimes Sept. 4.



Joan Warren and BobbiJo Wolfe at the ribbon cutting for Sport Clips Haircuts of Grimes Sept. 4.



Mike Bleskacek and Gloria Perry at the ribbon cutting for Sport Clips Haircuts of Grimes Sept. 4.



Brian Buethe and Ben Butzke at the ribbon cutting for Sport Clips Haircuts of Grimes Sept. 4.



Sport Clips owner Larry Smith with Grimes Chamber Ambassador Andy Stoecken at the ribbon cutting for Sport Clips Haircuts of Grimes Sept. 4.



Madison Taiber and Adam Bunge at the ribbon cutting for Sport Clips Haircuts of Grimes Sept. 4.

CROSS Country

The DCG junior high cross country team participated at the meet at Johnston High School on Sept. 5.



Lahna Boehm



Adalyn Chadwick



Mia Rude



Hudson Cunningham



Hayden Ibeling



Jackson Iwig



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Lucan Knaack



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How to Ease Back-to-school Anxiety



1. Provide a safe space for children to share feelings.

Create regular one on one times with little distraction. Creative activities like playing and drawing in a low-key environment will encourage children to express their feelings to you.

2. Listen, listen, listen.

Let your child lead conversations. Resist the urge to do all the talking. When it is your turn to talk, remain calm and speak kindly and reassuringly.

3. Recognize that anxiety is normal.

Let your child know that being anxious or nervous is something that everyone goes through from time to time. Remind children that when they have a problem you are there to help.

4. Encourage kids to pace themselves.

Some teenagers particularly can become overextended. Encourage them to slow down and teach time management skills at an early age.

5. Maintain a normal daily routine.

Aim for your children to wake up and go to bed at the same time each day. Stay hydrated and keep up with a healthy diet. Encourage daily physical activity outside of school.

Consult your pediatrician if your child shows any of the following behaviors:

1. Has a significant change in sleep or eating habits.
2. Has repetitive, self-destructive behaviors such as hair-pulling or skin-pinching.
3. Withdraws from family, friends or activities.
4. Shows excessive worry about the future or needs constant reassurance.
5. Talks about self-harm or suicide.



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