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SEPTEMBER 2024

# Living

MAGAZINE

# New

# AGAIN

Residents share their home renovation experiences

**Meet Keri Lindstrom**

EDUCATION

**Blackened spatchcock chicken**

RECIPE

**For Sammler, volunteering benefits others and herself**

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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.
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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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# New AGAIN

Residents share their home renovation experiences

By Sean Dengler and Jackie Wilson

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.

Nga Vuong decided to update her closet to provide better use of the space.

## FEATURE



**BEFORE**

### Creating the perfect closet

Deciding what home improvement projects one wants to tackle can be based on a variety of reasons. When Nga Vuong decided to update her closets, it was for practical reasons.

“I decided to redo my closets because I wanted a more organized and efficient space that fit my lifestyle,” she says. “Over time, I realized that my old closets weren’t making the best use of the space and felt cluttered.”

It took time before Nga decided to take action.

**AFTER**



After customizing her closet, Nga Vuong can better organize her clothing and accessories.

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“I had been thinking about this home improvement project for quite a while, probably for over a year,” she says. “Every time I struggled to find something in my cluttered closet or felt frustrated with how disorganized things were, it crossed my mind. But it wasn’t until recently that I decided to take the leap. Once I committed to the idea, I was excited to finally turn those thoughts into reality, and I’m so glad I did. It’s made a big difference in how I enjoy and use the space every day.”

She enlisted Tailored Closet to provide the design.

“I wanted a design that not only looked great but also made it easier to store and access everything I needed,” she says. “I decided on the new design after thinking about what would truly make my daily life easier. I wanted a solution that was both stylish and functional, with custom features tailored to my specific needs, like adjustable shelving and dedicated compartments for shoes and accessories. The renovation has completely transformed how I use the space and has brought a sense of order and satisfaction to my daily routine.”

Nga says she chose Tailored Closet because

of the company’s reputation for quality craftsmanship and attention to detail.

“They took the time to understand my vision and offered creative suggestions that elevated the project beyond what I initially imagined,” she says. “Their expertise and commitment to delivering a flawless result made them the perfect choice for this renovation.”

Nga was impressed with how smoothly the process went.

“The team was very professional and kept everything on track, so it actually took about the same amount of time as I expected,” she says. “They kept me informed throughout, and the careful planning and communication made it easy to manage. Overall, it was a positive experience that stayed within the timeline, and seeing the final result made it all worth it.”

The organization her new closet provides made this home improvement project worth it for Nga.

“It’s amazing how everything has a specific place now, from shoes and accessories to seasonal clothing,” she says. “I especially love the adjustable shelving, which makes it so much

easier to keep everything tidy and accessible. It’s a perfect blend of style and functionality, and it brings a sense of calm and order every time I walk into the closet.”

Finally, for those looking to do their own home improvement project, Nga has advice.

“Take the time to really think about how you use the space and what your priorities are,” she says. “Make a list of the features that are most important to you, and don’t be afraid to invest in quality where it counts. Also, do your research when choosing a contractor or company — find someone who listens to your vision and has a strong track record of delivering results. Lastly, stay flexible. There might be small changes along the way, but trust the process and keep the end goal in mind. With the right planning and team, you’ll be thrilled with the results.”

### Creating a relaxing oasis

When Joey and Edward McIlhon moved their family into their Clive home in 2000, they were attracted to the large, wooded lot.

With four busy kids, there was plenty of room to play and hang out. However, Joey



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A pond at the McIlhon home was replaced with an easier to maintain waterfall.



Joey McIlhon enjoys adding garden features around the wooded lot of the home her family moved to in 2000.



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wanted gardens and more space, so they took out some shrubs and trees to better expand the backyard.

About 10 years ago, the family put in a pond deep enough that they could have fish. However, it proved difficult to maintain the correct chemical makeup for the fish, so Joey called in the experts at Just Add Water.

The company suggested a waterfall and a “waterless” pond, which was not as deep.

“The waterfall is more manageable than the pond,” she says.

The waterfall doesn’t use as much water. She monitors it on an app, which conserves water. The waterfall is now the highlight of the backyard.

“It’s been a lot of work, but it’s worth it. I get so many compliments on it. It’s very relaxing,” she says.

Now, with 14 grandkids who live nearby, the younger generation enjoys playing in the water, throwing rocks and splashing.

“The dogs love it, too,” she adds.

They installed windows in a three-season patio. Inside, when she’s working on a project, she has a great view of the waterfall.

“It used to be sunny, but now, as the trees get bigger, it’s more shade,” Joey says.

A privacy fence was added after the neighbors installed a swimming pool.

“I’d rather see wildlife and nature instead of the neighbors swimming,” she says.

A rock path along the side of the home replaced dead grass, where pine needles fall and hinder any growth. The area tucked in the trees is quiet and void of any nearby traffic noise.

Through the years, Joey has planted a variety of flowers in both the front and back yards and often changes things up. Some new plants include different varieties of roses and bleeding hearts — one of her favorites.

The home has undergone many changes over the years, including updating new light fixtures and painting. A play structure remains for the grandkids. The home continues to offer a comforting place for entertaining family and friends. Her greatest joy is sharing the beautiful home with her family.

“With four kids and 14 grandkids, I treasure them all,” Joey says.

## When one project leads to another

Starting a home improvement project can often lead to additional work, whether it turns out to be a larger undertaking than anticipated or sparks a desire to do even more. Such was the case for Char Robinson.

“I started actually with my driveway because it was all cracked. It was uneven,” she says. “I do my own snow blowing in the wintertime, and when you have that unevenness, all that cracked cement, it’s really hard to use a snow blower. I can’t even have anybody come and push the snow because they would just really make a mess of the concrete.”

Char, who manages Sassy’s Boutique in Valley Junction, says she was surprised by how excited she gets about her new concrete. She hired DB Concrete to do the work based on the recommendation of a neighbor whose son worked for the business. They were also reasonably priced, she says.

“I don’t know how anybody could get excited about concrete, but I really, really love the people that did it,” Char says. “They did a



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# FEATURE



Char Robinson's new garage floor is aesthetically pleasing and easy to clean.



fabulous job, and I can't tell you how many compliments I get on my driveway. It's silly, I mean, but it looks fabulous."

It took Char awhile to decide to undertake the expense of fixing the driveway.

"I was super annoyed with the driveway for a long time, but I just felt like the expense would be too much," she says. "But then I just finally decided it was so hard in the wintertime for me to do the snow myself. Now, I feel like this winter I'm kind of looking forward to seeing how this works."

Char Robinson had her crumbling driveway taken out and new concrete poured to make it easier to clear snow and to improve the curb appeal of her home. She followed that up with having a new garage floor put in that makes the area feel like an extension of the home's interior.

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As for the driveway, she says she has been shocked by the responses she has received about it.

“I just never thought I’d get all the compliments on the concrete,” she says. “I had some girls across the street come over last week and they go, ‘We just have to say we’re jealous of your cement.’ I’m like, ‘What? Really?’ It kind of makes the whole front of my house pop.”

Char says another benefit of the new driveway is its curb appeal. She says the house looks newer because of it.

“That’s what you should hopefully hear is that people are a little jealous of what you have because you made the right decision,” she says. “I just seriously never thought who would care about that, but it does make a difference.”

Along with the new driveway, some incidental related fixes were also completed.

“I had a drain spout that was running out into the yard, and they took up a little piece of sidewalk right next to the corner of my house next to my driveway,” Char says. “They buried the drainage from my roof underground. So, I don’t have to deal with that anymore.”

After improving her driveway, Char realized

**“I would definitely shop around. Take your time. I know it’s kind of a pain, but it’s worth your time to shop around and also get recommendations from friends or family.”**

— Char Robinson

it was time to improve another part of her house.

“I started with the driveway, and then my garage floor just looked terrible. It was all pitted from salt or that brine they use on the roads in the wintertime,” she says.

For her new garage floor, she chose PremierGarage after speaking with owner Joy Halfpap. Like the new driveway, Char says the new garage floor makes her home feel newer.

“I love the garage floor just because it looks awesome, and it’s part of the house. So, when I’m in it, it looks like another room extension,” she says. “I painted all the walls, so it’s really

clean and nice and light, and it doesn’t look like a garage. I’m kind of a neat freak, so everything’s got its place now, so, it looks good.”

Char has a few tips about what one can do when going down their home improvement path.

“I just say get recommendations and get several bids because there’s quite a difference in price on some of these things,” she says, “I would definitely shop around. Take your time. I know it’s kind of a pain, but it’s worth your time to shop around and also get recommendations from friends or family.” ■



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# Residential refresh

## Personalized touches for your home

*(Family Features)* Your home is an expression of you, your personality and your lifestyle. When it comes to personalizing your home's aesthetic, try leaning into your senses to inspire change within your space. Inspiration can be found everywhere around you — from taking cues from Mother Nature to “shopping” your own house or, with a little help from Air Wick, finding and incorporating your home's signature scent. Give yourself a residential refresh with these tips.

### Rearrange living spaces

Breathing fresh air into a room doesn't always require a complete overhaul, or even any construction or DIY projects. Sometimes all you need is a little rearranging. Shifting furniture to better suit your needs or let more natural light in can significantly improve the space's aesthetic.

Additionally, the items you currently own are most reflective of your style; try “shopping” your own house by repurposing items from other areas or rooms to give them a fresh feel. When decor pieces are overused in one spot, they may feel brand new in a different space. These are practical and cost-effective tactics to create a new and inviting space for both you and any guests entering your home.

### Introduce plants and greenery

When sourcing your design inspiration from nature, adding greenery is an inherent way to bring in the beauty and freshness of the great outdoors. To personalize your home with plants, visit a nursery or local flower shop and choose ones that are appealing to you based on their shape, color or size. Live plants offer multiple benefits, like naturally purifying the air, and studies have shown numerous therapeutic benefits of spending time with nature. Therefore, designing with natural elements, like house plants or flowers, can bring a sense of serenity into your home.

### Find your “scentscape”

A home upgrade rooted in nature includes more than just what you can see and feel, it also includes engaging the sense of smell. One of the latest home decor trends, “scentscaping,” is growing in popularity as a way for individuals to enhance the ambiance of their homes through tailored scent.

“Scent is an often-overlooked aspect of design,” said Egypt Sherrod, HGTV personality who is both an interior designer and real estate broker and Air Wick partner. “People tour homes and experience spaces with all their senses. It adds a new layer to home personalization, as an authentic



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

fragrance experience often heightens the aura of your space beyond its physical layout. Scentscaping is the perfect way to add a bespoke vibe for your home that reflects your personal style, in turn creating a welcoming atmosphere.” Explore more inspiring ideas for incorporating a breath of fresh air into your home at [airwick.us](https://airwick.us).

### Update colors

Introducing color to a room can transform its look, and the scale of change is up to you. You might repaint the entire space, simply paint an accent wall or even just spruce up a corner with a pop of color. Incorporating accessories or decorative elements with new colors can also create some variety, such as including pops of seasonal-inspired colors in artwork and textiles.

### Switch out light fixtures

A room's lighting is an important detail for personalizing the type of mood and ambiance you are trying to achieve. Swapping out light fixtures for dimmers, for example, can create a brand new atmosphere, allowing you to adjust the light to the time of day and for your intended experience. Consider updating old lighting fixtures with new ones to enhance the presence of natural light or changing the bulb wattage to further impact the mood. ■

# COMMON estate planning myths

There are a lot of misconceptions surrounding wills and estate planning, so here are some common myths explained:



**Myth: Estate planning is for rich people**

Everybody needs a will. A will allows you to designate who will receive your property when you die. If you die without one, your assets will be distributed under the terms of Iowa’s intestate succession laws. That means your money and property could end up with family members you haven’t spoken to in years instead of a close friend or a charity you support.

Your estate plan should include a durable power of attorney for finances and a health care directive. These documents allow you to designate someone to act on your behalf if you

become incapacitated.

**Myth: If I die without a will, everything will go to my spouse**

If you die without a will, your inheritance will be divided among your spouse and your children. Under Iowa law, if you have children from another relationship, your spouse only receives half of your assets, and your children receive the other half. This can be a surprise for people in a second marriage.

**Myth: If I have a will, my estate won’t go through probate**

All wills are subject to probate. In probate, a court determines whether the document is valid and ensures that relatives and creditors are notified. Probate is a straightforward process, and it isn’t necessarily something to avoid. But if you have a lot of assets or real estate in multiple estates, it may be advisable to find

non-probate alternatives.

One way to avoid probate is to put your property into a living trust. A living trust is a legal document you create to hold property, such as brokerage accounts and real estate. When you die, the property is transferred to your beneficiaries. This transfer occurs outside of probate, which could save your heirs a lot of time and money.

Take the time to set up a simple plan for yourself and your loved ones. Periodically review your plan and update your will or trust to reflect major life events, such as a divorce or the birth of a child. Consult with an experienced attorney to ensure that your estate plan is current and accomplishes all of your goals. ■

Information provided by Ross Barnett, Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm, 2560 73rd St., Urbandale, 515-278-0623, [www.ARPCLaw.com](http://www.ARPCLaw.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 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](http://www.meadowviewclive.com).



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## INVESTMENT

By Daniel Rundahl

# I DON'T need a financial advisor... or do I?



“Why would we need a financial advisor in our life?” Let’s start with a few considerations:

• **Nearing retirement:** As the length of time you’re likely to spend in retirement continues to grow, it’s more important than ever to have knowledgeable advice to help prepare financially for that next phase of your life. Many financial decisions you’ll have to make in retirement are often more complex than those leading up to it.

Five or 10 years before you plan to retire, whether that will be at your full retirement age or far earlier, it can be helpful to ask yourself questions like: What steps should I consider taking now so that I won’t outlive my money? When should I claim my Social Security benefits? How will I fund any unforeseen medical costs and long-term care needs?

• **Receiving an inheritance:** A sudden influx of cash or assets raises immediate questions about what to do with it. A financial advisor can help you think through the ways you could put that money to work toward your personal and financial goals. You’ll want to think about options of paying down existing debt and how much you might consider investing to pursue a more secure future. An advisor can also help you rethink when you may want to retire. When you are done spending the “emotional” value, what do you do with the rest?

• **Life changes:** Marriage, divorce, remarriage and starting a family are milestones that can call for careful planning. Will you have enough income to support your lifestyle? How will your investments and other assets be divided? You may very well need to change your financial strategy to keep your goals on track, and an advisor may be able to offer thoughtful ideas in this navigation of life.

Getting married, you may need to blend your finances, rethink your goals and create an estate plan, but a second marriage later in life when you both may have children and substantial assets can involve more complex considerations. Do you need an estate plan for the two of you? Are there children from a previous marriage with inheritance considerations? Can life insurance assist in your planning? How might marriage affect your Social Security benefits? These are just some of the questions that a knowledgeable advisor may be able to assist with.

The list could go on and on. As I ponder on that question, I’ll answer it in short, “Because life has a funny way of presenting questions to us, and, as hard as we all try, there always comes a time when we need to recognize that someone else may have a better answer.” The key is to never lose the desire to keep learning. ■

Information provided by Daniel Rundahl, Financial Advisor, Rundahl Financial Consultants, 6165 N.W. 86th St., Johnston, drundahl@rundahlfinancial.com, 515-727-1701, www.rundahlfinancialconsultants.com.



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Be sure to check for cancellations.

## Clive Parks and Recreation offerings

See more details and register at <https://cityofclive.activityreg.com/calendar.wcs>

- Crime STEAM Investigation, Oct. 1 and Oct. 3, 6-7 p.m.
- Jurassic Paleontology Quest, Oct. 8 and Oct. 10, 6-7 p.m.
- Bingo for Seniors, Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2-3 p.m.
- Concussion Care & Prevention, Tuesday, Oct. 8, 6:30-7:45 p.m.
- Tai Chi at Harbach Center - Saturdays starting Oct. 12, 8:45-9:45 a.m.



- Harbach Free Clothing Closet, Oct. 18 and Oct. 19, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Oct. 18 and 9 a.m. to noon on Oct. 19.
- Memory Loss Caregiver Workshop, Tuesday, Oct. 22, 6:30-7:45 p.m.
- Spooktacular STEAM, Tuesday and Thursday, Oct. 29 and Oct. 31, 6-7 p.m.

## Harbach Center hours

8505 Harbach Blvd.  
The Harbach Center is open Monday through Friday, 3-7 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (closed Sundays). Membership is now required for all users, and you can enroll online. This will help staff better track attendance and gather important emergency contact information. Visit <https://ow.ly/UrGw50RsIXt> for more information.

## Clive Youth Basketball League

Registration is now open for the Clive Youth Basketball League. The program is for grades 2-7, and the season will start in November. More than 200 teams participated in 2023. The registration deadline is Wednesday, Oct. 2, or when full. Availability is limited. Visit [cityofclive.com/parkandrecreation](https://cityofclive.com/parkandrecreation) or email [staff@cityofclive.com](mailto:staff@cityofclive.com) for more information.



## Business Trick or Treat

Thursday, Oct. 17, 5-7 p.m.  
Campbell Park, 12385 Woodlands Parkway, Clive

All ghosts and goblins are invited to enjoy an evening of dancing, crafting, free trick or treating and to meet some of the amazing businesses right here in our community. Kids can wear a costume and collect yummy treats from local businesses.

## Gaming Lounge open at Harbach Center

Hours are Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 3-7 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For rules and more information, visit [www.cityofclive.com/parkandrecreation/facilities/harbach\\_programming.php](https://www.cityofclive.com/parkandrecreation/facilities/harbach_programming.php).



## The Des Moines Playhouse classes

Registration is now open for fall classes at The Des Moines Playhouse. Saturday morning classes are offered for students in preschool through tenth grade. New this year, classes for home schooled students K-7 will be held Wednesday mornings. Camps will also be offered over winter break. Class sizes are limited and registration is first-come, first served. Learn more about classes and registration at [www.dmplyhouse.com/education/classes-and-camps](https://www.dmplyhouse.com/education/classes-and-camps).



Students 8 and older can also audition for roles in upcoming productions. Information on auditions for the Kate Goldman Family Series and Signature Series is available at [www.dmplyhouse.com/audition-2](https://www.dmplyhouse.com/audition-2).

## Vendor and Craft Fair vendor registration

St. Paul Lutheran Church, 1100 S.E. Sharon Drive, Ankeny, fourth annual Vendor & Craft Fair will be taking registration for a booth at the event Saturday, Nov. 9, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Contact Julie at [juliegreg94@gmail.com](mailto:juliegreg94@gmail.com).

## Log Cabin Days celebration

Sept. 28-29  
Heritage Village, 1300 W. Second Ave., Indianola

Highlights of the Log Cabin Days celebration include the parade at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 28, followed by a chicken and noodles lunch and Heritage Village Experience, crafts of the past, children's craft fair, raffle and food and vendors from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. On Sunday, tournaments (cribbage, chess, horseshoes and corn hole), bingo, family games, food and vendors will be featured 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



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## OCTOBER HAPPENINGS

• **Oct. 5: Flannel Fest.** Local vendors inside the Dogpatch Urban Gardens will be stocked with all things autumn. Dogpatch Urban Gardens, 4600 N.W. 51st St., Des Moines; [www.dogpatchurbangardens.com](http://www.dogpatchurbangardens.com)

• **Oct. 5-6, 12-13, 19-20: Apple and Pumpkin Festival.** Wagon rides, corn maze, corn pool and, of course, apple and pumpkin picking. From 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays and noon to 6 p.m. on Sundays at Wills Family Orchard, 33130 Panther Creek Road, Adel; [willsfamilyorchard.com/apple-pumpkin-fest](http://willsfamilyorchard.com/apple-pumpkin-fest)

• **Oct. 5: Middlebrook Fall Festival.** Food trucks, free face painting, farmers market and adult beverages. Middlebrook Farm, 4300 Cumming Ave., Cumming; [www.middlebrookfarm.com](http://www.middlebrookfarm.com)

• **Oct. 5: Worldwide Food Truck Tour.** This food-filled tour stops in Des Moines with a wide range of food trucks and entertainment for the whole family. Cowles Commons, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines; [worldwidefoodtrucktours.com](http://worldwidefoodtrucktours.com)



• **Oct. 5: Waukeoberfest.** Put on by the Waukee Area Historical Society, this day full of fun features live music, delicious German food, beer and an exciting stein-holding contest. Don't forget to wear traditional attire if you can. Downtown Waukee Triangle, Ashworth Drive and Sixth Street; [www.waukeechamber.com](http://www.waukeechamber.com)

• **Oct. 7, 14: Zoo Brew.** Have a brew at the zoo. Blank Park Zoo, 7401 S.W. Ninth St., Des Moines; [www.blankparkzoo.com](http://www.blankparkzoo.com)

• **Oct. 11: Preseason NBA game.** Minnesota Timberwolves vs. Philadelphia 76ers. Wells Fargo Arena, 730 Third St., Des Moines; [www.iowa.gleague.nba.com/preseason24](http://www.iowa.gleague.nba.com/preseason24)

• **Oct. 11-13: Capital City Gaming Con.** Back with a new name is Des Moines' very own board game convention. Buy, play, test and enjoy board games of all types. Hilton Garden Inn, 205 S. 64 St., West Des Moines; [www.cardboardcaucus.com](http://www.cardboardcaucus.com)

• **Oct. 12: Indigenous Iowans Day.** Explore the early cultures that shaped Iowa. Living History Farms, 11121 Hickman Road, Urbandale; [www.lhf.org](http://www.lhf.org)

• **Oct. 13, 26: 5K Fun Run.** The 2024 Iowa Brewery Running series continues through the fall at various breweries in central Iowa. All beginning at noon; [www.breweryrunningseries.com](http://www.breweryrunningseries.com)

• **Oct. 12-13: Madison County Covered Bridge Festival.** Celebrate Madison County's history while also taking in its iconic covered bridges alongside food and art vendors, a car show, a parade and more. Starting at 9 a.m. at the Winterset Square, Winterset; [www.madisoncounty.com/covered-bridge-festival-2](http://www.madisoncounty.com/covered-bridge-festival-2)



• **Oct. 18-20, 25-27: Living History Farms hosts a Family Halloween event.** Various start times, at 11121 Hickman Road, Urbandale; [lhf.org/event/halloween](http://lhf.org/event/halloween)

• **Oct. 19-20: Great Iowa Pet Expo.** Adopt, shop, learn and contests for all pet lovers to enjoy. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. 2100 N.W. 100th St., Clive; [www.greatiowapetexpo.com](http://www.greatiowapetexpo.com)

• **Oct. 20: IMT Des Moines Marathon.** Since 2002, the annual marathon has been taking participants on a run through Iowa's capital. 1001 Grand Ave., West Des Moines; [desmoinesmarathon.com](http://desmoinesmarathon.com)



• **Oct. 26-27: Des Moines Comic and Toy Show.** This Halloween-themed event starts at 10 a.m. at Merle Hay Mall, 3800 Merle Hay Road, Des Moines; [www.quadcitycon.com](http://www.quadcitycon.com)

• **Oct. 27: Des Moines Jazz Hall of Fame Gala.** Celebrate some of the city's jazz heroes from over the years, including John Krantz, who was inducted into the Hall of Fame. Community Jazz Center of Greater Des Moines, 1326 Walnut, Des Moines; [www.cjc-dsm.org](http://www.cjc-dsm.org)

• **Weekends in October: Phantom Fall Festival.** Every weekend in October, Adventureland hosts its fall festival with several haunted houses, ghosts, ghouls, goblins and more. 3200 Adventureland Drive, Altoona; [www.adventurelandresort.com/discover-adventureland-resort/Phantom-Fall-Fest](http://www.adventurelandresort.com/discover-adventureland-resort/Phantom-Fall-Fest) ■

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# SAMMLER sees the benefits of volunteering

Says she benefits as well as those she serves

Martin Luther King, Jr., stated, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, what are you doing for others?” Pat Sammler has found her answer to that question



through her volunteering with Clive Community Services.

“I started right after I retired in 2017,” she says. “I got started with the women’s group and the food pantry.”

She gradually turned her focus to the pantry and is still volunteering there each week. Her role is to manage the food in the pantry’s “anytime room.”

“Anytime we’re open, people can come in and ‘shop’ in there with one of our volunteers,” Sammler says. “It’s fun for me. I’ve learned exactly what our customers like. I know what goes fast — rice and beans and things like that.”

For Sammler, the best part of the experience is interacting with the recipients and the other volunteers.

“It’s fun to be around the people that are there,” she says. “We have a blast. It has made going in every Monday a treat for me.”



Daniel Timmons, of Edward Jones, presents Pat Sammler with the Neighbor Spotlight certificate.

Another rewarding part of Sammler’s experience at the pantry is when her daughter, Kirsten, and grandsons, Kevin and Owen, help out. For Sammler, having three generations working together is especially sweet.

But the pantry isn’t the only volunteering that Sammler does on a regular basis.

“I also volunteer at the VetCenter, which is kind of an outreach of the VA hospital. We are a community-based counseling service. My husband was a Vietnam veteran. He had a lot of exposure to Agent Orange, and he passed away from complications related to that,” Sammler says. “He had gotten counseling at the VetCenter, so about a year after he passed away, I contacted his counselor and asked if they needed any help. So, now I volunteer a couple of mornings a week there.”

Sammler recalls being initially unsure if helping at the VetCenter would be something she would continue long term.

“At first, I wasn’t sure if that was going to be a good match for me. But the very first day that I volunteered was their summer cookout, when they invite all the veterans in. We had an elderly gentleman who came — he was a World War II vet — and the day of the cookout was his 100th birthday,” Sammler says. “The VetCenter has music therapy, so those people came out and played and sang ‘Happy Birthday,’ and all the other vets lined up to meet him. At that point, I knew this was a good place. That was incredible. I’d never experienced anything quite like that.”

Sammler encourages everyone to look around for ways to help others and to find a type of volunteering that is personally meaningful. She has found volunteerism to be both fun and rewarding.

“For me, being around people that are wonderful makes everything better,” she says. “I was really lucky. I found a couple of places that I really love being at.” ■

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## GRIEF 101: Writing as a tool

Even though grief is the natural and normal reaction to loss, it can feel everything but that. Grief is not only experienced emotionally, but also physically, psychologically, behaviorally and spiritually. It's important to find ways to process what you are going through.



One way to help process is to write it down. It can help to provide clarity to what you have been experiencing and can help to release a little from your overworking brain.

Not sure where to start? Try some of these prompts...

What has been the most difficult part of this grief for you?

What is it that no one else understands?

What do you miss the most about the person who died?

What is helping you to settle into this new life after the death?

Journaling can also help as time passes for you to be able to look back and see how your grief has changed. Whether it is in small or big ways, change in grief shows us that we are integrating the loss into our lives and adjusting to life after the death of our person. The gauge in grief isn't necessarily about "feeling better" or forgetting our person or "moving on," but rather adjusting to life without your person's physical presence and carrying the love you have for them forward with you. ■

Information provided by Buffy Peters, Director of Hamilton's Academy of Grief & Loss, 3601 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-697-3666.



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There is very little that can take away the pain when someone we love dies. However, the emotional stress that often accompanies a death can be lessened by Advanced Planning before the need arises.

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## FLU vaccine: when, why and who

Now is the time to get your flu vaccine. Flu season typically runs from October to May and causes symptoms of fever, chills, cough, body aches and headaches. Every flu season is different, and we know flu vaccines can vary in how well they work. However, receiving a flu vaccine every year offers the best available protection and has been shown to reduce school absences, missed work, hospitalizations and deaths from the flu.



The CDC recommends everyone 6 months of age and older receive a flu vaccine every year, ideally by the end of October. Flu vaccination is especially important for people who are at high risk of developing serious complications from the flu including:

- Children younger than 5 years of age. About 80% of reported child deaths occur in children who have not been fully vaccinated. A flu vaccine can be lifesaving for children.
- Pregnant women. Flu vaccine during pregnancy helps protect the mother from the flu and protects the baby for several months after birth.
- Adults 65 and older. Most influenza-related hospitalizations and deaths occur in this age group.
- People with chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes and asthma.

Call today to schedule your flu vaccine. Remember, it not only protects you, but can help protect those around you. ■

Information provided by Dr. Amy Petersen, Cornerstone Pediatrics & Family Allergy, 6800 Lake Drive, Suite 260, West Des Moines, www.cornerstonepfa.com.

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# HOW YOUR credit score impacts a mortgage

Eligibility for many financial products is largely determined by your credit score, especially when buying a home. For example, your mortgage interest rate can be heavily impacted by your credit score. A high credit score will likely qualify you for a lower interest rate and help you to save money on your mortgage.

**Why do lenders care about your credit scores?**

Credit scores help lenders assess risk fairly. The scores are consistent and objective and are reflective of your likelihood to repay debt responsibly. While your credit score isn't the only factor your lender will use to evaluate your homebuying eligibility, it's one of the most important.

**How are credit scores calculated?**

Credit scoring models like FICO use your credit report from the three main credit bureaus, Equifax, Experian and TransUnion, to come up with a scoring range of 300-850. FICO is most used by the mortgage industry.

Your FICO credit score is calculated based on five major components: payment history, amount owed, length of credit history, new credit and credit mix.

**What elements impact your credit score the most?**

About 35% of your credit score is based on whether you pay your



bills on time, making it the most important factor. Another 30% of your credit score is based on how much debt you owe, which is why it's important to consider paying down some debt before purchasing a home.

**What steps should you take when contemplating a home mortgage?**

Pull a free credit report online at [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com) to check it for errors. This will assure the reported information under your name and social security number is accurate. Correcting any errors you find may also raise your scores, so it is a good idea to do so before applying for a mortgage.

**What actions can improve your credit score?**

It's important to note repairing bad credit can take time. Beware of any "quick fix" solutions offered. The following tips can help:

- Check your credit report
- Set up payment reminders and/or pay off collection accounts
- Reduce the amount of debt you owe

When considering a home mortgage, pay attention to your credit habits and understand how your credit score can impact the homebuying process. By taking active steps to better your credit or keep your credit score high, you'll soon be well on your way to homeownership. ■

Information provided by Cassandra Haller, VP, Mortgage Loan Originator, NMLS #681625, 11111 University Ave., Clive, Desk: 515-222-2001, Cell: 515-707-6461; and Olga Dobbins Oliver, NMLS ID#: 571175, Office: 515-222-2009, [odobbins@bankerstrust.com](mailto:odobbins@bankerstrust.com), West Des Moines Branch, 620 S. 60th St., West Des Moines, IA 50266.

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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](http://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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## WHY consider LVP flooring?

When it comes to flooring options for your home, the choices can seem endless. From classic hardwood to sleek tile, there are pros and cons to each material. One flooring type that has gained significant popularity in recent years is luxury vinyl plank (LVP) flooring. But what exactly is LVP, and how does it stack up against traditional wood floors?

LVP is a multi-layer flooring product designed to mimic the look and feel of real hardwood but with added benefits. The core of an LVP plank is rigid vinyl, topped with a photographic layer that looks like wood. A clear, protective wear layer resists scratches, dents and fading.

It is 100% waterproof, making it an ideal choice for bathrooms, laundry rooms, and kitchens where wood can become damaged by moisture. LVP is also more scratch and dent resistant, and it won't expand or contract with changes in temperature and humidity like wood can. This makes installation and maintenance much easier.

Another key benefit of LVP is its affordability. Quality LVP planks can cost a fraction of the price of real hardwood, without sacrificing the beautiful wood-inspired appearance. LVP is also quicker and simpler to install, often using a click-lock system that doesn't require adhesive or nails.

For homeowners looking to achieve the look of hardwood floors with added durability and cost savings, LVP is an excellent option to consider. ■

Information provided by Todd Kolbe, Avid Kitchen and Bath, 2020 Grand Ave., Suite 1300, West Des Moines, 515-410-1968, [www.Avid-KB.com](http://www.Avid-KB.com).



## MEET Keri Lindstrom

### Impacting the wellbeing of her students

Did your childhood dream career come true in adulthood? It certainly did for Keri Lindstrom.

"When I was in elementary school, I knew I wanted to be an educator in some sense," she says. "I loved interacting with people."

Her mom worked in education then went into social work, and Keri observed the impact that a person can have on students in those roles.

After high school, Keri played softball in college and earned her degree in education. Now living her childhood dream and enjoying her 13th year as an educator, she looks back on her career so far with satisfaction.

"I began as a second-grade teacher at Whittier Elementary School in Indianola," she shares. "I taught second grade there for seven years. I then moved to teaching third grade at Shuler Elementary School here in Clive. After that first year teaching third grade, I switched to counseling and have been in this role ever since. I loved the idea of being there for every kid in the school, and, as a counselor, I get to do just that."

Her biggest motivator to switch to counseling was the opportunity to focus on the overall wellbeing of students and to go deeper in practical care for them in ways that simply weren't possible as a teacher.

Keri is one of two counselors at Shuler Elementary School. In her counseling role, she can engage the teacher in herself by teaching guidance classes to every grade level in the school.

"This job is super special to me," she says. "I believe the most valuable part of my job is fostering face-to-face connections with kids who live in a society that is technology driven. Learning how to connect with others helps them with skills like greeting people, treating people with kindness, and interacting with others. I also value getting to show the students that they are valued and supported."

Many aspects of being an educator bring Keri joy, and one of those is watching the students she's taught and interacted with grow up.

"This past summer, one of the second graders that I taught 11 years ago gave my own kid swimming lessons," she shares. "In addition to teaching and counseling, I have also had the opportunity to coach, and I've watched those student-athletes grow up as well."

She has also had the opportunity to bring her 7-year-old certified therapy dog to the schools to work with the students.

"She has visited my previous school and this one," Keri says. "Having a therapy pet was one of the factors in my wanting to do counseling."

Keri says she believes parents and families can best support the educators in their students' lives by developing good relationships with them beyond just what is coming up in a child's schedule.

"Creating those relationships helps present a team effort where everyone is on the same page working together for the good of the children," she says. ■



Keri Lindstrom is one of two counselors at Shuler Elementary School.

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# GOLF Outing

The West Metro Chamber Golf Outing was held on Aug. 22 at Beaver Creek Golf Course.



Michelle Bowden and Dave Massey



Avery Terwilliger and Natalie Rigatuso



Evan Sprung and Nick Webber



Nikki Jarchow and Michele Starkenburg



H.A. Gross and Cindy Gross



Meredith Murphy and Tom Florian



Matt Janssen and Ben Chambers



Rich Green and Kevin Lawire



# OUT & ABOUT



Jeff and Molly Rachels



Jami Weems, Jaime Miller and Megan Tjernagel



Eric Eigenfeld, Hayley Vanderpool, Ben Proffitt and Adam Lenze



Stephanie Gott, Chris Wood and Bradd Westemeyer



Jane Carberry, Peg Lund, Brenda Plantz and Jill Bouslog



David Roesesch and Alex VanDorpe



Kara Matheson and Anna Eichinger



Megan Farley and Kirsten Ingersoll



Abby Chavez and Will Kehlenbeck



Austin Narber and Travis Ziemke



Tyler Gosnell and Thanasy Telios

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