

# Living

MAGAZINE

St. Pius X

# RESIDENTS' CHOICE AWARDS



Johnston, Grimes, Dallas Center, Urbandale and Clive residents share their favorites

## Meet Leah Blake

EDUCATION

## Egg ravioli with sage and almonds

RECIPE

## Wheelers appreciate kindness of community

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WELCOME

# RESIDENTS choose again

Welcome to our annual compilation of residents' choices in the northwest metro area. We launched this poll to determine the top people, places and events in the area, and the results make for a fun and informative read each year.

We invite residents in the area to vote for their favorites by answering more than 60 questions with open-ended responses. Some other polls rig the results by "suggesting" choices of businesses or requiring them to pay to be on the ballot. That is unethical, in our eyes, as it doesn't give a true snapshot of what the locals really like. Rest assured, these results are 100% organic responses that we received from our online and mail-in ballots.

We have become quite good at polling our readers and sharing results. I have been gathering this type of information for CITYVIEW magazine for many years, and you are likely familiar with the Best Of Des Moines readers' poll and the certificates you see across central Iowa. That poll was the first of its kind in the metro area, and it continues to be the primary source of central Iowans' favorites. Now we know it not only works for Des Moines, but for the northwest metro area as well.

You will likely agree with many of the results, and you will likely disagree with some, too. Hopefully, you took the time to cast your vote. If not, be sure to do so next year. Look to the pages of this magazine for full details as the time draws nearer.

We published the top three vote-getters in each of the categories inside these pages. Be sure to congratulate all the people, places and events that were selected as winners and let them know how much you appreciate them being in the area.

As always, thank you for reading, and thank you for voting, too. ■



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Jordan Blackburn, assistant principal at St. Pius X Catholic School, residents' choice for favorite school.

# RESIDENTS' CHOICE AWARDS



Johnston, Grimes, Dallas Center, Urbandale and Clive residents share their favorites

By Tammy Pearson

August has rolled around again, which means it is time to recognize the Residents' Choice Award winners for the northwest metro area. This year, we asked residents of the area to choose their favorites from the Johnston, Grimes, Dallas Center, Urbandale and Clive area. We recognize that residents of these communities often are patrons of businesses throughout this area and enjoy the amenities and events from their own

and neighboring communities.

As we continue to improve our poll and respond to what readers say is important to them, we have added categories. This year, look for favorites you haven't seen before in the categories of Tree Service, Homebuilding/Remodeling Contractor and Exterior Contractor.

As always, remember that these favorites were chosen by residents. You are likely to agree with some choices and

disagree with others, but the results were determined by your area neighbors.

If you voted in this year's poll, thank you for participating. And, if you didn't, be sure to look for notices in this magazine for next year's poll opening and cast your vote. With some categories having only a few votes between the top vote-getter and the runners up, it's important to note that all those listed are winners, and we congratulate them all.



# FEATURE

## Johnston, Grimes, Dallas Center, Urbandale and Clive Residents' Choice for Favorite Northwest Metro ...

(Runners up in alphabetical order)

### Restaurant

#### The Urban Grill

**Runners up:** Destination Grille; Trostel's Greenbriar Restaurant and Bar

### Restaurant for Breakfast

#### Cozy Cafe

**Runners up:** 100th St. Corner Café; Perkins Restaurant and Bakery

### Restaurant for Lunch

#### Palmer's Deli

**Runners up:** El Mariachi; The Urban Grill

### Restaurant for Dinner

#### Trostel's Greenbriar Restaurant and Bar

**Runners up:** Destination Grille; The Urban Grill

### Restaurant for Dessert

#### Al's Dairy Freeze

**Runners up:** Van Dee's Ice Cream Shoppe; Trostel's Greenbriar Restaurant and Bar

### Place for Ice Cream

#### Van Dee's Ice Cream Shoppe

**Runners up:** Al's Dairy Freeze; Heavenly Delights

### Pizza Establishment

#### Pagliai's Pizza

**Runners up:** Casey's; Pepp's Pizzeria

### Bar

#### Stevie C's

**Runners up:** Blue Shark Ale House; Pour Choices Neighborhood Bar

### Coffee Shop

#### Starbucks

**Runners up:** Lightbrite Coffee Roasters; Scooter's Coffee

### Catering Company

#### HyVee

**Runners up:** Cyd's Catering; Destination Grille

### Server /Bartender

#### Heather Loops, Trostel's Greenbriar Restaurant and Bar

**Runners up:** Britt Richards, 1st Street Tavern; Eduardo Granillo, Destination Grille

### Auto Service

#### Iowa Auto Repair

**Runners up:** Finishline Auto Works; Shade Tree Auto

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# FEATURE

## Auto Body Shop

### Finishline Auto Works

**Runners up:** Graham Collision; Iowa Auto Repair

## Car Dealership

### Toyota of Des Moines

**Runners up:** Bob Brown; Willis Auto Campus

## Auto Parts Store

### O'Reilly Auto Parts

**Runners up:** AutoZone Auto Parts; NAPA Auto Parts

## Preschool/Daycare

### St. Pius X Catholic School

**Runners up:** Generation Next Child Development Center and Preschool; Kids Korner

## Nonprofit

### Urbandale Food Pantry

**Runners up:** Johnston Partnership; LifeServe Blood Center



The staff at Urbandale Eye Care, runners up for favorite place for vision care.

## School

### St. Pius X Catholic School

**Runners up:** Des Moines Christian School; Urbandale High School

## Park

### Walker Johnston Park

**Runners up:** Lions Park; Terra Park

## Community Festival or Event

### Urbandale 4th of July Celebration

**Runners up:** Grimes Governors Days; Johnston Green Days

## Church

### St. Pius X Catholic Church

**Runners up:** Lutheran Church of Hope; New Hope Assembly of God

# ELECT

# JOHN FORBES

## POLK COUNTY SUPERVISOR

### JOHN'S PRIORITIES

#### Keep Property Taxes in Check

Worked across the aisle to balance the state budget including a surplus and reserves

#### Mental Health

As a healthcare professional, John will bring his expertise to expand mental health services in Polk County

#### Clean Water and Climate

Local governments must lead in reducing reliance on fossil fuels and encouraging use of alternative energy

#### Infrastructure

John will work to provide residents high quality services, including well maintained county roads and facilities

## JOHN'S EXPERIENCE

- State Representative 2013-2024
- Urbandale pharmacy owner for 42 years
- Urbandale City Councilman 2005-2012
- Past President Urbandale Chamber of Commerce
- Urbandale Citizen of the Year
- Central Iowa Honor Flight Coordinator
- National Community Pharmacy Service Award
- Iowa Pharmacy Association President
- Polk County Pharmacists President



John with wife Cindy & Family

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

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For more information:





# FEATURE



The staff at Welgaard and Associates, CPA, residents' favorite accounting team.

## Pastor

**Daniel Adjei, St. Pius X Catholic Church**

**Runners up:** Jeremy Carr, NorthPoint Church; Mike Housholder, Lutheran Church of Hope

## Chamber of Commerce

**Urbandale Chamber of Commerce**

**Runners up:** Grimes Chamber and Economic Development; Johnston Chamber of Commerce

## Grocery Store

**Fareway**

**Runners up:** Aldi; Hy-Vee

## Boutique

**Purple Poppy Boutique**

**Runners up:** Simply Stella Rose; Styled. by JJ

## Retail Store

**Target**

**Runners up:** Purple Poppy Boutique; Kohls

## Thrift Store

**Many Hands Thrift Market**

**Runners up:** Every Step Giving Tree; Goodwill of Central Iowa





# FEATURE

## Home Improvement Retail Store

### The Home Depot

Runners up: Johnston Ace Hardware; Menards

## Liquor Store

### Hy-Vee Wine and Spirits

Runners up: Spirits Liquor; Urbandale Liquor

## Nursery or Garden Center

### Earl May Nursery and Garden Center

Runners up: Canoyer Garden Center; Piney Ridge Greenhouse

## Place to Purchase a Gift for a Man

### Menards

Runners up: Johnston Ace Hardware; The Home Depot

## Place to Purchase a Gift for a Woman

### Purple Poppy Boutique

Runners up: Studio IV; Target

## Dad/Child Date Spot

### Backpocket Pin and Pixel

Runners up: Emerge Academy; Jester Park

## Mom/Child Date Spot

### Backpocket Pin and Pixel

Runners up: Emerge Academy; Sky Zone Trampoline Park

## Place to Take Your Mom and Dad

### Trostel's Greenbriar Restaurant and Bar

Runners up: Destination Grille; The Machine Shed

## Place to Take Your Kids or Grandkids

### Sky Zone Trampoline Park

Runners up: Emerge Academy; Backpocket Pin and Pixel

## Place for Children's Birthday Parties

### Sky Zone Trampoline Park

Runners up: Emerge Academy; Get Air Trampoline Park

## Golf Course

### Jester Park Golf Course

Runners up: Beaver Creek Golf Club; Hyperion Field Club

## Hair Salon

### Art of Life Salon & Spa

Runners up: Great Clips; Talking Heads Salon

## Health Clinic

### MercyOne

Runners up: The Iowa Clinic; UnityPoint

## Dental Office

### Grove and Platt Dental Associates

Runners up: Johnston Dental; The Dental Studio of Iowa

## Orthodontist Office

### Mann Orthodontics

Runners up: Iowa Orthodontic Solutions; Stork Orthodontics

## Mental Health Services

### Pink Couch Wellness

Runners up: Compass Clinical Associates; RedCouch Counseling

## Chiropractic Office

### Thrive Chiropractic

Runners up: Active Wellness; Herrmann Family Chiropractic

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# FEATURE

## Vision Care

### Lifetime Vision

Runners up: Urbandale Eye Care; Vision Park Family Eye Care

## Health Club or Gym

### CrossFit 8035 West

Runners up: Life Time; Planet Fitness

## Pharmacy

### Hy-Vee Pharmacy

Runners up: Medicap Pharmacy; Walgreens Pharmacy

## Cosmetic Services

### Central Iowa Dermatology

Runners up: Studio IV; Ulta Beauty

## Physical Therapy

### Elevate Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine

Runners up: Athletico Physical Therapy; Rock Valley Physical Therapy

## Dance Studio

### Inspiring Dance

Runners up: Dance Vision; Eshanjali Dance Academy

## Gymnastics Studio

### Emerage Academy

Runners up: Mid Iowa Gymnastics; Sapphire Gymnastics Academy

## Tumbling Studio

### Emerage Academy

Runners up: Mid Iowa Gymnastics; Tribe Athletics

## Financial Planner

### Loren Merkle, Merkle Retirement Planning

Runners up: Tim Short, Edward Jones; Sharon Vickery, Edward Jones

## Law Firm

### Letsch Law Firm

Runners up: Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm; Brown, Fagen and Rouse

## Accounting Firm

### Welgaard CPAs and Advisors

Runners up: Ann M Hartz, CPA and Associates; ThornTree CPA services

## Veterinarian

### Prairie View Animal Hospital

Runners up: Grimes Plaza Veterinary Clinic; Value Vet

## Dog Groomer

### Clean and Breezy

Runners up: Bark Shop; Stylin Paws

## Pet Care

### Dogwoods Lodge

Runners up: Dog Days and Cat Naps; Prairie View Animal Hospital

  
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# FEATURE

## Lawn Care Business

### Ultimate Lawn Services

**Runners up:** Colby's Lawn and Landscape; Finer Cuts Lawn Care

## Landscaping Company

### Miller Nursery

**Runners up:** CLK Lawn Care; Ever Greene Sodding and Landscaping

## Heating and Cooling Business

### Schaal Plumbing, Heating and Cooling

**Runners up:** Golden Rule Plumbing, Heating, Cooling, Electrical; Greens Appliance, Heating and Cooling

## Electrical Business

### Deaver Electric

**Runners up:** All Things Electric; ARC Electric

## Plumbing Company

### Golden Rule Plumbing, Heating, Cooling, Electrical

**Runners up:** Herr Plumbing; Roto-Rooter

## Senior Living Establishment

### Kennybrook Village

**Runners up:** Bishop Drumm Retirement Center; Deerfield Retirement Community

## Insurance Company

### Andrea Sabus, State Farm

**Runners up:** Buenzow Insurance Group; City State Bank Insurance

## Realtor

### Kristin Coffelt Real Estate

**Runners up:** Joleen Roskamp, RE/MAX Precision; Casee Woodley, RE/MAX Precision

## Bank/Credit Union

### Veridian Credit Union

**Runners up:** Charter Bank; Wells Fargo

## Photographer

### Carlye Bishop Photography

**Runners up:** Jenna McEntee Photography; Laura Wills Photography

## Place for Guests to Stay

### Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center

**Runners up:** Hilton Garden Inn; Hotel Renovo

## Home Building/Remodeling Contractor

### FIRSTCALL

**Runners up:** Buresh Home Solutions; Renov8 IA

## Exterior Contractor (siding, roofing, windows, doors)

### Sonntag Roofing

**Runners up:** Haggerty Windows and Siding; Midwest Construction

## Pest Control

### Preferred Pest Control

**Runners up:** Des Moines Pest Control – Urbandale; Miller Pest and Termite

## Tree Service

### MJ's Tree Service

**Runners up:** Trinity Tree Care; West Central Tree Service ■



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Brad Zaun is focused on defending innocent life and standing up for victims. In the Senate, he has been a voice for human trafficking victims and those suffering from mental illness.

**STRONG SCHOOLS**  
Brad Zaun knows that our local schools are pillars of the community. In the Senate, he has delivered consistent funding increases and this year voted for the largest increase in teacher pay in Iowa history.

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# THEY ELIMINATED the stretch and other reasons to revisit your legacy plan

Recent law changes, including changes to IRAs, gift tax laws and trust rules, may have made legacy plans outdated.



You used to be able to leave your IRA to your children or grandchildren to use when they needed to help their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren pay for college tuition or purchase their first home. Recent legislation eliminated your ability to “stretch” IRA distributions across multiple generations (your children’s or grandchildren’s lifetimes).

Now, your family is forced to liquidate (and pay taxes on) your IRA much sooner, even though sudden extra income could impact their taxes. This massive change, included in the 2019 SECURE Act, killed the stretch and put in place the 10-year rule, meaning, generally, that if you leave your IRA to someone other than your

spouse, they have to withdraw (and pay taxes on) the full value of an inherited IRA or 401(k) within 10 years of inheritance.

Pass-through or conduit trusts were common ways to protect assets while allowing heirs to enjoy the benefits of an inherited IRA. However, recent laws removed many benefits of making trusts beneficiaries of IRAs.

Current laws have nearly doubled the estate and gift tax exemption through the end of 2025 (it’s \$13.61 million per person or \$27.22 million per couple in 2024). Plans may include formulas based on old federal estate-tax exemption amounts, which were as low as \$675,000 in 2001.

Many Tax Cuts and Jobs Act provisions are set to expire at the end of 2025. However, for some, there are actions they may want before then regarding gifts and the type of assets that are best for gifting.

It can be challenging to keep up with the changes and understand how they impact you,

but working with someone who does is essential. After the SECURE Act passed, we contacted several families and individuals we serve to discuss their IRAs, the end of the stretch and other options, including an IRA relocation strategy for helping them achieve their legacy ambitions.

Sometimes, people think legacy planning strategies are only for the super wealthy, but minor changes to retirement savings of all sizes can significantly impact how much you can leave to your loved ones and charities.

There are some strategies that you may want to take advantage of now before the rules change again. You might be surprised to see how much more you can leave to your loved ones and save on taxes just by making a few small changes to your legacy plan. ■

Information provided by Loren Merkle CFP®, RICP®, Certified Financial Fiduciary®, Merkle Retirement Planning, 1860 S.E. Princeton Drive, Grimes, 515-278-1006.

## UNKNOWINGLY DISINHERIT YOUR SPOUSE?

Learn more reasons you should revisit your legacy plan. Scan the QR code to read about it right now.



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# HAVE the conversation about estate planning

Sometimes it is difficult to have a conversation with your friends, family and loved ones about your estate planning. Even if you have a will, trust or powers of attorney in place, that may not be enough. Having the documents is the first step; having a conversation about the documents is important, too. Do your loved ones know what to do when you become ill or when you die? Do they know who to contact when something happens?



Make sure that the executor named in your will, the trustee of your living trust, and the agents in your powers of attorney have the information to be able to assist you and carry out your wishes. You may want to share copies of your estate planning documents so that your agents know and understand the role. Explain why you made certain choices in distributing assets.

Consider drafting and regularly updating a letter of instruction to your children and fiduciaries (the executor, trustee and agents). Give them information about your assets' important contacts. Your children may not know your investment advisor, tax professional or attorney. A list of names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of your estate

planning team can save your family from headaches down the road.

Complete asset information is vital. Our firm has seen many cases where the family couldn't identify all of the assets owned by a deceased family member. Think about not only your bank account and investments, but your retirement benefits, inherited assets and unusual holdings. Oil and gas leases or partial interests in inherited farmland can be easily overlooked.

In addition to information about your assets, be sure to give your fiduciaries the appropriate power to manage those assets. Your financial power of attorney should be up to date and give the agents the authority to act on your behalf if something befalls you.

It is important to talk with the next generation and share information about your situation, your goals and your needs. Many estate plans no longer meet their original intent because they are outdated. But even some well-drafted estate plans fail because the people in charge — your fiduciaries — don't know what to do.

Your plan should evolve as your circumstances do. Contact an experienced estate planning attorney today to start the conversation. ■

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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**HOME** By Karen Kolbe

## QUARTZ vs. granite

Choosing the perfect countertop for your home

When it comes to choosing countertops for your kitchen or bathroom, quartz and granite are two of the most popular options, each offering unique benefits and aesthetic appeal.

Granite is a natural stone, formed over millions of years, which gives it a unique and luxurious appearance. Each slab is one of a kind, featuring distinct patterns and colors that can enhance the beauty of any space. Granite is highly durable, resistant to scratches and heat, making it an excellent choice for busy kitchens. However, it does require periodic sealing to prevent stains and maintain its luster.

On the other hand, quartz is an engineered stone, composed of about 90-95% crushed natural quartz crystals mixed with resins and pigments. This manufacturing process allows for a wider variety of colors and patterns, including options that mimic the look of natural stone. Quartz countertops are non-porous, which means they don't require sealing and are more resistant to stains and bacteria, making them a hygienic choice for food preparation areas.

Ultimately, both materials offer durability and beauty, making them excellent investments for your home. ■



Information provided by Karen 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).

**PLAN AHEAD** By Scott Eriksen

## VISIT with loved ones about final arrangements

As we anticipate the approaching holidays, I am sure many of us are looking forward to special time with family. This can be a perfect time to visit about your own final arrangements with those closest to you.

Folks whom we meet with often share they would like to discuss their final arrangements with their children before finalizing their plans. However, it can sometimes be a challenge to find the best time to do this. Holidays bring families together and can provide that perfect opportunity to discuss these important matters.

This conversation does not need to be difficult. It can be a time to share your preferences and find out what will be important to those whom you love. Ultimately, it will provide the opportunity to avoid surprises when the day comes that funeral services are needed... and the reassurance that this is what mom or dad wanted.

Don't shy away from having this conversation. Take this opportunity to have this discussion. You will be glad you did. ■



Information provided by Scott Eriksen, Director of Hamilton's Advanced Planning, Hamilton's Funeral Home, 605 Lyon St., Des Moines, 515-697-3670, [www.HamiltonsFuneralHome.com](http://www.HamiltonsFuneralHome.com).

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# RULERS, neighbors and politics

*“The world should know that the power of kings is vain and trivial, and that none is worthy of the name of king but He whose command the heaven, earth and sea obey by eternal laws.”* Legend attributes this quote to King Canute, 11th century ruler of three European kingdoms, answering those who thought he could control nature — as they stood ankle deep in the rising tide.



### The power of kings

Presidents have power, but they’re not divine and do well to recognize that God is in charge. Candidates offer themselves as the solution to the world’s problems, but not all problems are political and require political solutions, as Jacques Ellul’s “political illusion” suggests. The world’s biggest problem is the sinful human heart, requiring a spiritual solution.

Our hope and salvation will never arrive on Air Force One but has already arrived in the person of Jesus Christ, who came to offer Himself as the solution to mankind’s sin by His own death and resurrection. At the time, Israel was expecting the Messiah to be a political savior, but God had something bigger in mind.

Commander-in-chief is a high office, but the God who appoints authorities (Romans 13) is infinitely higher. He is where my faith ultimately rests. Passionate online discourse about political figures often reveals misplaced expectations that earthly leaders will save us.

### Politically speaking

This election season, I pledge two things:

**Composure:** While “the nations rage” (Psalm 2), and though I have my convictions, I won’t lose my mind in outrage over the faults of our leaders, nor will you see me in over-the-top praise and adulation of them. When David had an opportunity to eliminate rogue king Saul, he didn’t because Saul was still “the Lord’s anointed” (1 Sam. 24:5-6). May we model the same restraint in our words that David asked for: “Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.” (Psalm 141:3). On social media, it’s easy to let that door (via our keyboard) swing wide open.

**Community:** I also pledge not to let political differences divide my relationships, at least as far as it depends on me. Justice Scalia once gave political rival Justice Ginsburg two dozen roses for her birthday because, in Scalia’s words, “Some things are more important than votes.” For Christians, “He Himself (Jesus) is our peace, who has made the two groups (Jews and Gentiles) one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:14). Because Christ is the true King, even political polarities can be unified in what is most important. Let’s “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

Maybe make an extra effort this election season.

Jesus is our sovereign King, and your neighbor is God’s image-bearer. These truths should inform our politics and how Christians speak about it in front of a watching (and voting) world. ■

Information provided by Mike Johnson, Creekside Church, 2743 82nd Place, Urbandale, 515-279-3919.



# SPLISH, no splash

Urbandale mother/daughter team creates bath-time invention



Sandy and Nadia Trimnell have invented the Little Splasher PlayPad with SplashGuard.

Parents with young children who have a penchant for bathing and turning the bathroom into a small lake, pay attention. This may be for you.

The mother/daughter team of Sandy and Nadia Trimnell of Urbandale have invented a possible solution to your wet woes: the Little Splasher PlayPad with SplashGuard.

The device, a small, L-shaped “wall” made of silicone that suction cups the top edge of a bathtub, prevents water from going out onto the floor and serves as a play space to put toys if needed.

The seed for the idea for the splash guard was planted when Sandy’s young granddaughter was taking a bath, splashing and playing with toys that poured water all over the floor and made an overall mess — basically doing what little kids do in the bathtub, much to the chagrin of parents.

And an invention was born.

“I came up with the idea, and my daughter, who is a brand manager and a marketer, has been successful at this type of thing, so she would be perfect for this,” Sandy says.

The two got together to discuss the project. Nadia had contacts from a previous job and called that company. Eventually, after submitting photos and input as to the design, engineers became involved, and the first prototype mold was created.

The initial run of 400, which consisted of four different colors, was close to being sold out after having been available for just a month, Sandy says. A fifth color was planned.

The learning curve through this initial stage of invention has been a steep one, she admits, including the impact it would have on their wallets.

“I had no idea it was going to cost this much money,” Sandy laughs.

The duo hasn’t approached many stores about trying to get shelf space yet, she says, instead focusing their marketing on advertisements on Instagram and Facebook, as well as Amazon. Nadia, who lives in Florida, has done a couple of pop-up shops as well.

“It’s a lot of work to try to get it in stores,” Sandy says. “You can’t just be in Target. We want to, but not yet.”

“I work full-time, but every day my husband asks me what I’m doing,” she says. “I tell him I’m working on Little Splasher. My sister,



every day, she calls and asks what I’m doing. Same answer. I had no idea it would be so time consuming.”

Even having the product on Amazon is no walk in the park.

“You’d think, after you get your product up on Amazon, it’s a done deal. No. There’s so much to learn, and, on top of that, their customer service isn’t the best,” Sandy says. “If you have any little problem, it will take weeks.”

But despite a couple of hiccups here and there, these Urbandale inventors are proving that, where there’s risk, there’s also reward. So much so that another yet-to-be-identified product is in the works.

“Hopefully, if this works out, we can start adding on to it,” she says.

More information on the Little Splasher PlayPad with SplashGuard can be found at [www.littlesplasher.com](http://www.littlesplasher.com). ■

# KEEP THE KIDS BUSY THIS FALL!

Registration is open for Urbandale's fall classes and programs! Look at our listing of Youth Programs, Adult Programs, Adaptive Programs, and Senior Programs online at [www.Urbandale.org/programs](http://www.Urbandale.org/programs). Each activity has a link under the description so you can easily register with our online registration system. Classes, events, and programs are available both virtually and in-person.

## **COOKING CLUB** Ages 7-12 \$230

Join us for weekly hands-on cooking classes! We work as a group to make 2-3 recipes each class period and eat our creations at the end of class. Learn about different ingredients and new techniques to develop confidence in the kitchen! Recipes will be provided.

## **GRANDMASTERS OF CHESS 1.1** Ages 5-10 \$123

Learn, Practice and Play chess each class. Our method keeps students on track with new chess lessons and puzzles each week as well as guided games and in-class tournaments.



## **BEGINNING GUITAR** Ages 9-13 \$143

Join this dynamic course to learn a dynamite instrument! Players will learn the basics of music including reading music, rhythm, melody and meter. Remind your child to bring guitar to each class. Students who bring electric guitars should also bring their own amplifier.

## **COOKING CLUB - PARENT/CHILD CLASS** Ages 7-12 \$345

Join us for weekly hands-on cooking classes! We work as a group to make 2-3 recipes each class period and eat our creations at the end of class. Learn about different ingredients and new techniques to develop confidence in the kitchen! Recipes will be provided.



## **ALL-NATURAL SOAP MAKING** Ages 16+ \$60

Explore the art and science of making handcrafted, all natural soap using the cold process method. Select from a variety of plant based oils, all natural essential oils and dried botanicals to decorate your soap!

## **ART FACTORY CLASSES** Ages 6-12 \$50

Explore your imagination and develop your artistic skills! Whether it's painting, crafting, or seasonal projects, these camps offer something for every young artist. All materials will be provided, so just send your kids ready to get messy and have fun!



## **ARROW ACADEMY - MINI MUSIC MAKERS** Ages 5-7 \$89

A creative introduction to piano to explore your child's love of music! Parents attend class with their child, so you and your student will both enjoy exciting activities including singing, listening, movement, rhythm, sound and beginning activities at the keyboard.



# EXPLORE URBANDALE!





# WHEELERS appreciate kindness of community

## Pools, parks and getting involved

Iowa summers are undeniably hot and steamy.

Lucky for the Wheeler family, they have a pool in their backyard so they can cool off without needing to leave home.

“We absolutely love it,” Katie Wheeler says. “It makes our summers so enjoyable.”

Their Urbandale home has many other features as well, including a playroom for their children, which helps keep the toy clutter out of their other living areas.

Wheeler also likes that their neighborhood is close to the trail system and has easy access to the interstate with the new Meredith onramp.

“We liked that our neighborhood had homes that had differing character, not all ‘cookie cutter houses’ that looked the same,” she adds.

Perhaps more importantly, the Wheelers’ neighborhood has many other children close in age to their own children.

“We spend a lot of time outdoors playing with neighbors,” Wheeler says. “I love the kindness of our neighborhood. If a neighbor is in need of something, you can almost guarantee that someone is there to offer help.”

The Wheelers chose to move to Urbandale in spring 2011 in part because of the city’s reasonable property taxes compared to some other metro suburbs.

“Thanks to our well run/fiscally responsible city officials, the property taxes for our home in Urbandale were considerably lower than an almost identical floor plan in a neighboring suburb,” Wheeler shares.

She appreciates the work of the city government still today.

“I love that our city officials run a well-balanced budget that is fiscally responsible, yet we are still able to enjoy so many amenities such as our parks and trails system,” Wheeler says. “We also love that Urbandale citizens have access to such wonderful public schools.”

Wheeler says Urbandale strives to honor the principles of Character Counts, too.

“I love that we are a close-knit community who is always willing to lend a helping hand to a neighbor in need,” she says.

For Wheeler, the belief that you can make a meaningful impact on a local level has led her to be involved in the community, including as chair for the city of Urbandale Board of Adjusters and a board member for the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce.

“I believe it’s important to give back to the community in which I live,” she says. ■



Katie Wheeler says her family enjoys the features of their home, including a pool, as well as its location.





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# MEET Jenn Montemurro

The joy of being part of students' growth

As a young child growing up in Johnston, Jenn Montemurro had fantastic experiences in school.

"I had great role models in my teachers," she shares. "They helped me learn and grow. I was a shy kid that didn't like to speak in front of others. My teachers helped me grow in that regard, and, from early on, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to help others like they helped me."

As she matured, she found a passion for working with children. She took on nanny jobs, was a babysitter, and enjoyed time as a camp counselor. These jobs helped to fulfill and engage her joy for helping kids and seeing them thrive and grow.

While going to school for an education degree, she zeroed in on teaching lower grade levels.

"I've always wanted to work with the younger kids," Montemurro explains. "They seem to be more engaging and excited to learn."

When she found a position open for a kindergarten teacher at Rolling Green Elementary School, she was ecstatic.

"It seemed like a dream come true, and I was very lucky to get my dream grade level right away," she says.

Later, Rolling Green Elementary School consolidated with Karen Acres Elementary School, where she currently teaches.

Now in her fifth year of teaching, Montemurro shares that her favorite aspect of teaching is seeing students grow.

"I love seeing every child grow from the start of the year to the end of it," she says. "They are totally different people academically from when they began the year, and they also experience lots of growth as human beings over the course of the school year. It's so great to see the lightbulbs go on when students finally 'get' something we are learning."

For example, Montemurro shares that a student last year came into the school year not knowing any English.

"It was a challenging year, but, at the end, it was so great to see him able to speak English and be able to read it."

As far as challenges are concerned, Montemurro says that hers are the ones she has no control over.

"Every day is different, and, as a teacher, I want to be there for every child," she says. "It's hard to see kids leave the classroom every day and for me to know that I can't control things outside of school. I just want every child to be safe and to do well."

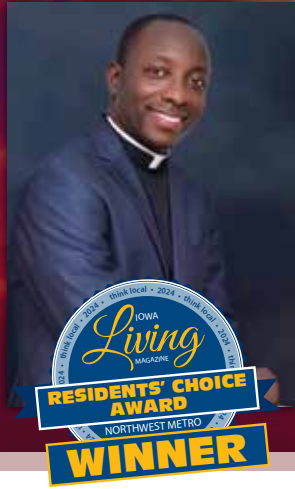
Jenn says that anyone considering a career in education, especially teaching, should be aware that teaching is both challenging and rewarding. Her opinion is that the reward of seeing her students learn and grow outweighs the challenge.

"I'm very happy right now with where I am and with my teaching position," says Jenn. "It's a role I can enjoy being a part of. I see myself in this place for the foreseeable future. I want to stay in this school's environment." ■



Jenn Montemurro says she was happy to have gotten a job teaching kindergarten at the beginning of her career.

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# RESTORING native habitat

Plan to map out control of invasive species in Urbandale.

After an EF1 tornado tore through Urbandale last July, the city was forced to deal with the aftermath. The Parks Department soon discovered the storm had toppled or severely damaged 60 well-established trees in city parks. According to Scott Hock, assistant director of Urbandale Parks and Recreation, the city was committed to replacing those trees.

“Trees provide oxygen, absorb greenhouse gases, provide animal habitat and have a positive psychological impact on visitors,” says Hock.

Urbandale is not facing this challenge alone. With support from Urbandale Friends of the Park, the city plans to begin replacing those trees this fall, planting two trees for every one fallen. So far, the organization has raised \$12,000 to supplement the city’s investment in the project.

Uplift Urbandale, a coalition of Urbandale businesses, will provide more help. On Oct. 24, hundreds of its employees will join city staff to work on various community projects, including planting the first 45 trees.

The city is focused not only on immediate recovery but also on the long-term sustainability of its parks. In 2023, Lael Neal, a natural resource specialist from Urbandale, raised concerns with the city about an invasion of non-native plant species in Urbandale parks.

According to Neal, “Any landscape in Iowa that isn’t receiving active



Urbandale parks received extensive storm damage in July 2024. Photo by Scott Hock and courtesy of the City of Urbandale

land management is probably suffocated with invasive species.”

In response, the city recruited Tom Rosburg, professor of biology/ecology at Drake University, to conduct a multi-year study of the health of three Urbandale parks. Rosburg says, before the 1800s, bison, elk

# HONOR OUR VETERANS

Iowa Living magazines will be saluting veterans in November issues. If you are a veteran who would like to be included, please send a photo (military or current) and the following information:

- NAME:
- TOWN YOU CURRENTLY LIVE IN:
- MILITARY BRANCH:
- RANK AT DISCHARGE:
- DEPLOYMENTS:
- QUOTE: Please answer the question, **“How can the public best honor veterans?”**

Family members submitting on behalf of veterans should include the veteran’s answer to the above question.

Email to [tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com) or mail to: Big Green Umbrella Media, 8101 Birchwood Court Suite D, Johnston, IA 50131

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IOWA  
*Living*  
MAGAZINES

## COMMUNITY

and other large mammals managed Iowa's habitat by grazing and spreading seeds of native plants. Native Americans also knew the importance of burning unwanted vegetation, which increased plant diversity, improved wildlife habitat, and returned nutrients to the soil.

"With the onset of colonization, we started to see the spread of non-native species of plants and animals," Rosburg says.

As the Midwest became settled, native habitats began to suffer. When non-native plants pushed out native plants, said Rosburg, biodiversity declined. For instance, in the 1880s, tens of thousands of prairie chickens roamed Iowa grasslands. But, by 1930, they were nearly wiped out due to habitat loss and overhunting. Conservation groups are slowly bringing the prairie chicken back to Iowa.

Rosburg plans to provide a detailed map of the current trees within the parks, review the prevalence of invasive species, and present to the city a plan to remove the invasive species before replanting native species. Actions may include controlled burns, physically removing non-native plants or chemically treating them.

For more information on Iowa's most invasive species, visit [www.inhf.org/blog/blog/5-of-iowas-most-invasive-species-and-how-to-get-rid-of-them](http://www.inhf.org/blog/blog/5-of-iowas-most-invasive-species-and-how-to-get-rid-of-them).

To donate to the Urbandale Tree Reforestation Fund, visit [www.urbandale.org/1267/Help-Reforest-Urbandales-Parks](http://www.urbandale.org/1267/Help-Reforest-Urbandales-Parks). ■

*Wayne Bruns is an Urbandale resident and member of the Urbandale Climate and Social Justice group. For more information, find them on Facebook.*



Dr. Thomas Rosburg of Drake University surveys plant life at Walnut Creek Recreation Center. Photo by Wayne Bruns

# Trick or Treat with Us at Learning Post & Toys!

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# URBANDALE Public Library news

## Trunk or Treat Dance Party

Join us at the library on Thursday, Oct. 24 from 6-7:30 p.m. for a rockin' dance party and photo ops. Once you've trick-or-treated your way through the Urbandale Police Department parking lot, you can extend the fun at the library, getting photos in your costume and dancing off some energy in our meeting room. The UPD Trunk or Treat will start at 5:30 p.m., and the library will kick off the festivities at 6 p.m. to allow us time to set up for the event once early voting has concluded.

## Cemetery Iconography: How to "Read a Cemetery"

Have you ever been in a cemetery and wondered about some of the people or symbols you've come across? Join us on Tuesday, Oct. 29 at 6:30 p.m. for an engaging presentation with Librarian Jen Ozourk on cemetery iconography, exploring the history and significance behind symbols and structures found in cemeteries.

## Journaling

Join us for a journaling workshop with Billie Wade, creator and owner of Journaling to Heal. Billie will share how journaling can help you on your life journey for all levels and experiences. Notebooks will be provided, but you are welcome to bring your own. Billie has a bachelor's degree in psychology/human services, master's degree in rehabilitation administration, and is a former advanced certified alcohol and drug counselor (ACADC).

## Social Security and Medicare Basics

In partnership with the Society for Financial Awareness, the library is offering two presentations covering what you need to know to plan for retirement. These seminars will cover the basics, including filing strategies, creating the proper income plan with social security and retirement assets, understanding the different parts and costs of Medicare, and learning how taxes affect investments, income

## Urbandale Public Library

3520 86th St., Urbandale  
515-278-3945  
www.urbandalelibrary.org  
Monday – Thursday: 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
Friday – Saturday: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Sunday: noon to 6 p.m.

and other areas of retirement. Register to attend the afternoon session on Wednesday, Nov. 6 at 1 p.m. or the evening session on Wednesday, Nov. 13 at 6:30 p.m.

## Library closings

The library will be closed in observance of Veterans Day on Monday, Nov. 11. The library will close at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 27 and is closed on Thursday, Nov. 28, and Friday, Nov. 29, for the Thanksgiving holiday. The library's online resources and card catalog are available 24/7. ■

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# URBANDALE COUNCIL RECAP



This October, Camlin Fine Sciences (CFS) officially opened their expanded North American headquarters in Urbandale. CEO Nirmal Momaya and CFS North America President Jennifer Igou led the ribbon-cutting ceremony, joined by Governor Kim Reynolds and Mayor Bob Andeweg.

## October 1, 2024 - Council Meeting

The Mayor and City Council met on Tuesday, October 1, and the meeting began with a proclamation recognizing National Disability Employment Awareness Month, reaffirming the city's commitment to inclusion and support for individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

One of the first items on the agenda was the initial reading of an ordinance to amend Chapter 90 of the Municipal Code, requiring that animals not on their owner's property must be restrained by a leash no longer than six feet.

The City Council approved a \$275,000 five-year lease agreement for the purchase of 70 body-worn cameras, a video management system,

cloud storage, and accompanying equipment for the Urbandale Police Department. The agreement, which replaces an informal billing arrangement, includes regular camera upgrades and equipment replacement over the lease period. The meeting concluded in a closed session to discuss strategy related to collective bargaining, as permitted under Iowa Code.

## September 17, 2024 - Council Meeting

The Mayor and City Council met on Tuesday, September 17. The meeting began with a presentation on the Sustainable Urbandale Action Plan, a project led by Iowa State University students to promote environmental sustainability initiatives within the city.

The City Council approved supporting a referendum to increase the membership of the Dallas County Board of Supervisors. The Board currently consists of three elected members. Dallas County is the fastest growing county in the State of Iowa and one of the fastest growing in the United States. Following the receipt of a petition of over 5,000 signatures from Dallas County residents, the County has placed a referendum vote on the Tuesday, November 5, 2024, ballot to increase the membership of the Dallas County Board of Supervisors to five elected members.

## Dallas County Board Expansion Ballot Measure

Iowa residents living in Dallas County will have the opportunity to vote on a proposed measure in the November 2024 election that would expand the Dallas County Board of Supervisors from three to five members. The Dallas County Board meets regularly to consider and act upon official business for Dallas County. It sets rules and policy for the county, such as what the county's portion of property tax revenue is spent on. The proposed expansion

comes as the county's population continues to grow, which has raised questions about whether additional board members could help improve representation. If the measure passes, the county would establish a process to elect the two new members. If the measure does not pass, the board will remain at three members. Only residents that live in Dallas County Iowa will be able to vote on this ballot measure. **Learn more:** [www.urbandale.org/dallas](http://www.urbandale.org/dallas)

*This is a custom publication from the City of Urbandale. The Council Recap is not the official minutes of the Council meeting, it's an easy-to-read and easy-to-understand digest of the Council Meetings specifically designed for residents.*

*You can watch all the City Council meetings on YouTube and download Council agendas on the City's website.*

**Urbandale City Hall | 3600 86th Street, Urbandale, IA 50322 | 515-278-3900 | [www.urbandale.org](http://www.urbandale.org)**



# INNOVATIVE programs help you plan for health needs as you age

Iris, 76, has lived in her home for 40 years and has no plans to leave. She has developed some concerns, though, as she recently experienced some health issues and is afraid her adult children will try to persuade her to move.



serve older adults have introduced Continuing Care at Home (CC@H) membership initiatives designed to help people proactively focus on their health at home while enabling them to financially plan for potential services and care down the road.

If you're interested in looking into CC@H programs, the questions below can help you make sure the program is the most sensible and affordable one for you.

- **What does the program include?** A good CC@H program not only will offer services to enhance your well-being so you can remain independent longer; it will also help fund future long-term care needs.

- **Does it include personal support, such as wellness coaching?** Studies show people who embark on any kind of life-enriching program or activity will be more likely to succeed with encouragement from a trusted adviser or advocate.

- **Does it include care costs and options?**

A solid program will help fund your care, if it's needed, whether through home healthcare or services in a senior living community later on. If the program you're considering does offer both, make sure you're comfortable with the services and care provided by the organization's home healthcare team as well as in its communities. A reputable provider will have longevity and solid outcomes behind it.

Whatever the CC@H program, make sure it meets your needs, now and in the future — and provides you with peace of mind. Your well-being and your checkbook will thank you for it! ■

Aaron Wheeler is Vice President of Home and Community-Based Services for WesleyLife, which provides health and well-being services, including WellAhead — A WesleyLife Well-Being Experience, a CC@H offering designed for people who never want to move to a senior living community. To learn more, visit [wesleylife.org/wellahead](http://wesleylife.org/wellahead).

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**Sign up today for your tour! We look forward to seeing you.**

# MEET Cassie Mayrose

School gardens are a passion of hers.



Jessy Sadler works with a student at the Rolling Green garden.

Cassie Mayrose became interested in school gardens during her first year with the nutrition department. Although a garden had already been built at Webster Elementary School by an Eagle Scout, it was not being used. With the help of staff and students, Webster Elementary was able to get the garden up and running. The following year, the then Rolling Green Elementary School created a week-long intercession project. This project included building a garden, taste testing foods that would grow in the garden, hosting a garden scavenger hunt, and building bug hotels while exploring the benefits of insects in the garden.

“School gardens are absolutely a passion project of mine. My initial end goal was to get students interested in their food, where it comes from, and willing to try new things. Kids are far more likely to try a fruit or veggie they had a hand in growing than something offered on their tray at school or their plate at home,” Mayrose says.

Now, Mayrose is working to rebuild the garden at Karen Acres by next spring. When that happens, Webster Elementary will have a six-plot garden and Karen Acres will have a five-plot garden.

Because produce from the gardens is used in both the summer food program and school meals, Mayrose carefully plans what to plant at each location. At Webster Elementary, the garden primarily focuses on the bulk production of crops such as onions and potatoes. This ensures that every building in the district gets to enjoy some of the locally



Cassie Mayrose works in the garden with a student at Webster.

grown produce.

At Karen Acres Elementary, the focus is more on warm season plants, such as tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and other kid-friendly vegetables that can be eaten raw, so that students can enjoy freshly harvested produce.

Neither garden uses pesticides or herbicides. Instead, companion planting or other strategies are used to encourage the creation of a small ecosystem complete with various insects and animals. The gardens have also provided students real world experience with units of measure. Students work to measure out the distance between plants and seed depths. Some of the students have even become quite meticulous when measuring exactly half an inch to ensure their seeds are planted perfectly.

“There is a huge opportunity for learning in the garden. Students can learn about soil composition, plant life cycles and structures, ecosystems and more, all within one garden space,” Mayrose says.

Mayrose says she is looking forward to incorporating more ways students can get involved in the space, not only as an outdoor learning area, but also as a way to support their overall health and wellness. Potential new additions include a dedicated area for flowers



A student helps plant potatoes at Webster.

to attract pollinators, a path for visitors to enjoy, and a space for students to add art such as painted rocks. She is also looking forward to working with students who have expressed interest in helping with the garden after school.

“I know the kids at Karen Acres will make this garden their own, and I look forward to seeing how they do so,” Mayrose says. ■



# EVENTS IN THE AREA

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

Check for cancellations

## Upcoming in Urbandale Living magazine

**Veterans Salute:** Help us honor veterans. Email your information (name, town you reside in, military branch, rank, year enlisted and discharged/retired) and photo to [tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com).

**Landmarks:** What do you think are the most notable landmarks in your community? Send a note to [tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com). Note what community you live in.



### Early voting

The Urbandale Public Library will be an early voting location for the general election. Meeting rooms A/B will be open for voting from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 22 - Saturday, Oct. 26.

### Fall program registration

Parks and Recreation fall program registration is open. Classes are offered for kids, adults, seniors and more. Register now to secure a spot. For information, visit [https://urbandale.activityreg.com/selectactivity\\_t2.wcs](https://urbandale.activityreg.com/selectactivity_t2.wcs).



### Trunk or Treat

Thursday, Oct. 24, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Urbandale Police Department parking lot

Enjoy candy and decorated vehicles. Stop by with your friends, family, kids or by yourself.



**Recipes:** Do you have a holiday recipe that has special meaning to you? Will you share it with our readers? Email [tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com) to have it included in our December issue. In your email, mention the community where you live.

### Dunlap Park and Arboretum Fall Clean Up

Tuesday, Oct. 22, 5 p.m.

Dunlap Park and Arboretum, 3020 Sherry Lane

Join Urbandale Parks and Recreation for this annual fall clean up. The group will be raking and picking up branches at the city's beautiful 12-acre park that features a 4-acre arboretum. Light refreshments will be provided. Bring a pair of gloves and a rake if you have them.

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# EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations



## Trick-or-Treat at The Learning Post & Toys

Oct. 31, 4-7 p.m.  
The Learning Post & Toys, 2761  
100th St., Urbandale

The public is invited to a free Trick-or-Treat event at the store. Wear your costume, get your photo taken with Dino-Mite, the giant T-Rex, grab a treat and enter to win a grand prize.



## Christmas Open House

Sundays, Dec. 1 and Dec. 8, 2-4 p.m.  
Olmsted-Urban House, 4010 70th St.

Enjoy a Christmas Open House at the Urbandale Historical Society's Olmsted/ Urban House. A variety of activities will be held at the decorated house both Sundays.

## Iowa Wind Ensemble, A Sousa Spectacular

Sunday, Oct. 27, 3 p.m.  
Franklin Jr. High Events Center, Small Auditorium

Get ready to march to the beat of American history as the Central Iowa Wind Ensemble presents A Sousa Spectacular, an exciting tribute to the timeless legacy of John Philip Sousa, the "March King," and the golden age of American marches. This dynamic concert will transport audiences to a patriotic realm filled with grandeur, pride and musical excellence. For tickets, visit [www.ciwe.org/sousa](http://www.ciwe.org/sousa).

## Join the Boosters

The 2024-25 Urbandale Booster Club Fund Drive is now available. Donations directly support and impact current and future Urbandale students in athletics and performing arts. To become a member, visit <https://tinyurl.com/U2024Membership> to view options and mail in form; call Adam Fraher at 515-457-6945 to purchase over-the-phone; or purchase online at [www.j-hawkshop.com/product/membership](http://www.j-hawkshop.com/product/membership). Interested in becoming a business partner or sponsor? Contact Adam Fraher at 515-457-6945 or [adam.fraher@j-hawks.com](mailto:adam.fraher@j-hawks.com).

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## Joint Legislative Lunch

Wednesday, Nov. 20, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Holiday Inn & Suites DM Northwest, 4800 Merle  
Hay Road, Urbandale

The Grimes, Johnston, Ankeny, Polk City and Urbandale Chamber of Commerce invite the public to attend their Joint Legislative Luncheon to hear from area state representatives, state senators and county supervisors ahead of the 2025 Legislative Session. All elected officials representing Ankeny, Johnston, Grimes and Urbandale have been invited to participate. Cost is \$29 for members and \$30 for non-members. Register through the Urbandale Chamber website, <https://uniquelyurbandale.com>, under events.

## Urbandale Historical Society event

Sunday, Nov. 10, 2-4 p.m.  
Urbandale Public Library, 3520 86th St.

The Urbandale Historical Society will feature history programs at the Urbandale Public Library. Collecting and Preserving Family History will be presented by Archie Cook of the Iowa Genealogical Society. ■



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# MEET Leah Blake

## Settling in with a smile

Last year, Leah Blake began her journey as an educator in the Urbandale School District at Olmsted Elementary School, and she quite enjoyed getting her feet wet as a teacher.

“I chose to go into education because I had a third-grade teacher, Mrs. Green, that had a huge impact on my life,” Blake shares. “She especially had an impact on me when I was going through a difficult time that year, and I was anxious a lot. She’d let me stay and eat lunch with her. I knew I wanted to be like her when I grew up.”

Now in her second year as a teacher, she looks forward to a fantastic year with her students and colleagues.

When Blake was searching for a school and district that would be the best fit for her, Urbandale rose to the top of the list.

“I interviewed at a couple of other places, but when I left my interview at Olmsted Elementary, I felt it was the right place,” she explains. “I really liked the people. It’s a good community to be a part of, and I love it.”

Blake says she is still getting to know the community, but, as she gets into the swing of the year, she feels confident that she’ll make great strides toward that goal.

Of the many subjects she gets to teach to her fifth graders, she enjoys math the most.

“Math is my personal favorite subject in general and to teach. I like to make it fun. Many kids see math as hard, not fun, and feel bad at it. I try to come up with games and activities to do in small groups that will make math as enjoyable as possible. A multiplication game the kids liked last year was called Around the World. It’s a great one to practice math facts,” she shares.

Math isn’t the only subject that brings Blake joy.

“Some of my favorite memories from last year include going outside for our science experiments. For example, we traced our shadows with chalk on the sidewalks in the morning and, several hours later, went to see where our shadows had moved. Also, last year, there was a building where kids get to do assigned jobs such as creating slogans, trying to sell something, etc. That was really fun to do with my students as well.”

This school year, Blake says some of the challenges she expects to tackle include staying on top of tasks.

“It’s easy to fall behind because of all the tasks we teachers must do,” she states. “This year, I’ll have a better grasp on how and when to get things done and a better understanding of how to tackle various things and circumstances that arise.”

She is also a newlywed learning a new work-life balance.

“I’m newly married, so I’ll be learning how to make sure I work with my husband to have consistent communication and learn how to best help one another.” ■



Leah Blake was inspired by her third-grade teacher to become an educator.



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# EGG ravioli with sage and almonds

Recipe courtesy of the American Heart Association

Servings: 4

- 8 cups water
- 1/2 cup fat-free ricotta cheese
- 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 1/2 teaspoons fresh, chopped thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon grated orange zest
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 8 gyoza wrappers, shumai wrappers or wonton wrappers
- 4 large egg yolks, unbroken
- 1 large egg white, lightly beaten
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/4 cup sliced almonds, chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped, fresh sage
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped red bell pepper (optional)

## DIRECTIONS

- Fill large pot with water. Bring water to gentle boil over medium-high heat.
- In medium bowl, stir ricotta cheese, Parmesan cheese, thyme, orange zest and pepper.

- Place four wrappers flour sides down on cutting board. Spoon 1 1/2 tablespoons cheese mixture onto center of each wrapper. Using back of spoon, press down on cheese mixture to create well about 1 1/2 inches across (width of large egg yolk), leaving at least 1/2 inch space around edges of wrapper. Without breaking it, carefully place one egg yolk in center of each well.
- Using pastry brush, brush edges of wrappers with egg white. Place one top wrapper with flour side up on each bottom wrapper. Using thumbs and forefingers, firmly press edges together to tightly seal each ravioli. Set aside.
- Using slotted spoon or spatula, carefully drop each ravioli into boiling water. Cook 2 1/2-3 minutes, or until wrappers are al dente (cooked not too soft but not overdone). Using slotted spoon, gently remove raviolis from pot, draining well. Transfer to plates. Drizzle with oil. Sprinkle with almonds, sage and bell pepper, if desired.
- Tips: Gyoza wrappers (or shumai wrappers) are preferred because they're thinner than wonton wraps. Look for gyoza wrappers in the dairy aisle, deli department or freezer



section.

- Use these guidelines to determine how you want eggs cooked: At 2 1/2 minutes, eggs are yellow and slightly thickened but not set around edges, similar to sunny-side up. At 3 minutes, eggs are deeper orange and slightly set around edges, similar to over-easy. ■



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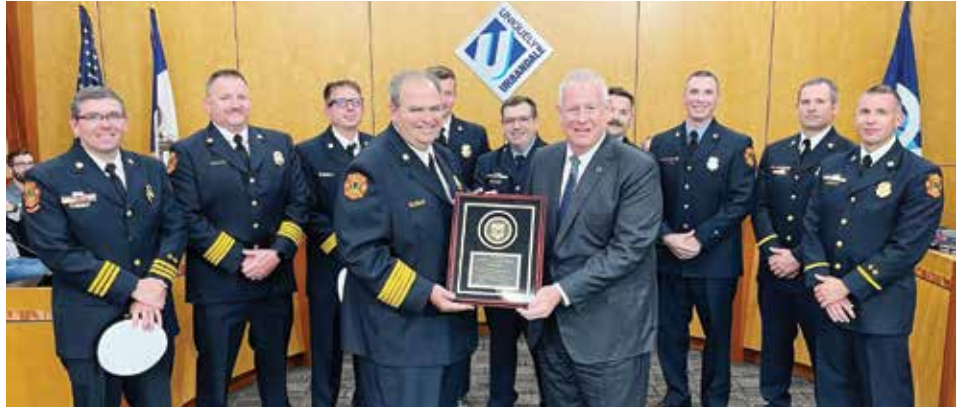
# FIRE Department achieves CFAI accreditation

The Urbandale Fire Department has achieved Accredited Agency status with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI), joining the ranks of only seven fire departments in the state of Iowa to earn this recognition. Urbandale now stands alongside Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Dubuque, Iowa City, Sioux City and West Des Moines fire departments in exceeding more than 250 national standards and best practices in fire service.

The path to accreditation involves a comprehensive evaluation of the department's operations, from emergency response times to community risk reduction programs.

"The Fire Department's accreditation is a proud moment for Urbandale," said Mayor Bob Andeweg. "Our residents are receiving top-tier emergency services, making Urbandale a safer place to live and work."

The Urbandale Fire Department has not only met the CFAI's stringent criteria but has also implemented processes to continuously measure and improve its performance. Seven years ago, emergency response times in western Urbandale



Fire Chief Mike Cardwell and other members of the Urbandale Fire Department with Mayor Bob Andeweg upon the announcement that the department received Accredited Agency status with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

were more than 10 minutes. By strategically placing Station 43 at 152nd Street and Meredith Drive in 2020, Urbandale reduced that time to 7 minutes and 36 seconds. The city has also refined its community risk reduction programs, now better targeting at-risk populations to enhance safety across the community.

"This accreditation is a reflection of the hard work, dedication and professionalism of our entire city," said Mike Cardwell, fire chief/emergency preparedness director. "It reflects our commitment to continuous improvement and ensures that we are delivering the highest quality service to our community." ■

# GROUND broken for Urbandale Food Pantry

A groundbreaking was held Sept. 27 for the Urbandale Food Pantry's new facility, which will be located at 7901 Douglas Ave. in Urbandale. It will provide much-needed space and resources to expand operations and partner with other community organizations. In addition to increased food storage capacity and a more comfortable client experience, the space will serve as a hub for additional services related to the city of Urbandale and its future plans for health and human services in the community.

"We're breaking ground as we're breaking records," said Patty Sneddon-Kisting, executive director of the Urbandale Food Pantry. "The demand for food assistance has reached unprecedented levels, and this expansion is critical to meeting the needs of our community."

She added that the Urbandale Food Pantry's board of directors has been progressive and forward-thinking when it comes to the design and operation of the new space.

"This new, larger facility will not only help us serve more people, but also allow us to expand partnerships and provide wraparound services to help families thrive."

Wraparound services are comprehensive, holistic support systems designed to meet the complex needs of individuals or families, typically by coordinating various community resources.

Founded in 2008, the Urbandale Food Pantry has served the Urbandale and surrounding communities by providing access to food and other resources in times of need. The Pantry operates with the mission of "Giving food with dignity and compassion," and this new facility will ensure that they can continue this important work as demand grows.

# NEW DART shelters feature art

The City of Urbandale, Urbandale Public Art Committee and the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) have completed the installation of two new DART art shelters in Urbandale.

The Urbandale art shelters are part of a larger effort by DART to improve transit accessibility and enhance the rider experience by incorporating public art into bus shelters throughout its service area. Art shelters have already been installed in the cities of Ankeny, Johnston and Windsor Heights, as well as the Sixth Avenue Corridor, Drake neighborhood, Roosevelt Cultural District, and along Ingersoll Avenue in Des Moines. The Urbandale shelters are located at 3310 86th St. (next to City Hall) and 8301 N.W. Aurora Ave. (next to Gloria Dei Church).

"DART is excited to bring its art shelter program to Urbandale to enhance transit accessibility and celebrate the unique identity of this community," said Matthew Harris, DART's business and community partnerships manager.

The Urbandale Public Art Committee commissioned Iowa artist Maddy Fusco and Portland, Oregon, artist Tyler Boeyink to create artwork for the two art shelters. Both artists incorporated recognizable landmarks and amenities from Urbandale and Iowa into their designs in their own distinct and creative way.

"These artists have each brought a whimsical piece of new public art to Urbandale. They encompass what is unique about Urbandale and Iowa all at once. Every time I look at them, I see something new. I'm hopeful it will bring joy and draw a smile on the faces of those who see it up close," said Urbandale Public Art Committee Chair Rob Hilbert.

More information on public art at DART is available at [ridedart.com/publicart](http://ridedart.com/publicart). For information about DART services, schedules, route changes, or directions to the nearest DART stop, visit the website at [ridedart.com](http://ridedart.com) or call 515-283-8100. ■

# OUT & ABOUT



Chad Ellsworth and Brad Zaun at Sample Urbandale, A Celebration of Business hosted by the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce at Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites DM Northwest on Sept. 12.



Mike and Melissa Coburn at Sample Urbandale, A Celebration of Business hosted by the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce at Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites DM Northwest on Sept. 12.



Susan Bonnicksen and Shaun Goldsworth at Sample Urbandale, A Celebration of Business hosted by the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce at Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites DM Northwest on Sept. 12.



Aaron Anderson and Becca Tunink at Sample Urbandale, A Celebration of Business hosted by the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce at Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites DM Northwest on Sept. 12.



Shane and Kristin Hoffman at Sample Urbandale, A Celebration of Business hosted by the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce at Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites DM Northwest on Sept. 12.



Taylor Carey and Ben Buenzow of Buenzow Insurance Group accept the Residents' Choice certificate for runner up for favorite insurance company.



Tim Manning of Bob Brown accepts the Residents' Choice certificate for runner-up for favorite car dealership.



Rick Morr and Logan Mueller with Hy-Vee's Residents' Choice awards.



Gavin Rogers, Bryce McColloch, Nic Culp and Chris Good accept Iowa Auto Repair's Residents Choice certificates.



Daniel Haggerty of Haggerty Windows & Siding accepts the Residents' Choice certificate for runner up for favorite exterior contractor.



Andy Smith of Preferred Pest Control accepts the Residents' Choice certificate for favorite pest control service.



Jaymee Engelhardt and Caroline Hughes of Bark Shop accept the Residents' Choice certificate for runner-up for favorite dog groomer.



# SAMPLE Urbandale

Sample Urbandale, A Celebration of Business was hosted by the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce at Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites DM Northwest on Sept. 12.



Jane and Jeff Collins



Sandra Rodriguez and Carolina Vallacello



Andrew and Jean Thompson



Janice and Tim Coble



Ken Fox and Manny Molina



Karla Rangel and Sarah Henry



Kate Thomas and Melissa Kyler



Kourtney Perry and Madison Sconiers



Jane Nady and Kimberley Jackman



Linzi Winton, Patty Sneddon Kisting, Jen Stanley and Carrie Stephens



Randi Gustason, Lars Warth and Tim Gootee



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