

Living

Holiday recipes

Residents share the recipes that make the season bright.

Meet Amy Moore

EDUCATION

Holiday happenings abound

CALENDAR

Hot honey chicken and waffle

RECIPE

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WELCOME

PORK favor

We dedicated our cover story this month to holiday recipes, and why not? The Christmas season wouldn't be complete without the treasured family foods that pop up this time of year. From the elaborate five-course dinners to a simple cookie, most all of us have some connection with a family favorite.

Jolene's family introduced me to a family tradition they served each Christmas Eve. Her mother would make oyster soup and Spamwiches. Yes, Spamwiches — a holiday ritual for the Poraths. I would have preferred a ribeye, but nobody asked my opinion. So, I ate oyster soup and Spamwiches with Dean and Lois for a few years.

What exactly was this Spamwich, you ask? Well, to the best of my knowledge, it was chopped-up Spam, pickle relish and cheese toasted on half of a hamburger bun in the oven. At least that was the Porath version. I have to admit, it was delicious. The oyster soup? Not so much.

I recognize some of you may have never tried Spam, and for good reason. My friends who grew up on farms said, if they wanted meat, they got the real thing. For us city kids, though, canned meat was an alternative.

When Jolene and I started our own family, we continued the Spamwich tradition with our kids, and we still serve them each Christmas Eve. The oyster soup has been replaced with a choice of potato soup or broccoli cheese soup, thank goodness.

I wrote about this Spam tradition more than a decade ago in this column, and my email in-box was full the next day with favorite Spam recipes from readers. One person even mailed me a Spam coin bank. It was then when I began to understand the Spam-lovers cult. In a conversation with a local Hy-Vee manager about Spam, my eyes were opened even more. Just to put this in perspective, more than 44,000 cans of Spam are produced every hour. Hawaiians alone consume approximately 7 million cans of Spam per year. Barack Obama even admitted he likes it.

Truth be told, I won't be rushing to the grocery store to buy Spam anytime soon, but I will continue to enjoy our Spamwiches on Christmas Eve, and I hope you can enjoy a few of your family favorites, too.

Merry Christmas, and thanks for reading. ■



SHANE GOODMAN

President and Publisher
Big Green Umbrella Media
shane@dmcityview.com
515-953-4822, ext. 305

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Tammy Pearson
Editor
515-953-4822 ext. 302
tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com

Andrea Hodapp
Advertising Account Executive
515-883-0523
andrea@iowalivingmagazines.com



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HOLIDAY GREETINGS

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Holiday recipes

Residents share the recipes that make the season bright.

By Ashley Rullestad

Favorite dishes are often at the heart of holiday gatherings. Their aromas wafting through the house signal it's time to join family and friends in celebration, reminiscing and gratitude. Their tastes spark memories and conversation. For many, certain recipes are a holiday must. They are inextricably woven into the fabric of the season, and the festivities wouldn't feel complete without them.

Sara Hayden Parris likes that her recipe brings back happy holiday memories.



Though he is no longer with the family, Titus is remembered fondly for his sausage snatching.

Titus' sausage balls

“The tradition of having sausage balls at holiday meals was started by my mother-in-law, Ellen,” Sara Hayden Parris says. “One of my first Christmases with my husband’s family, we were at her house, and we were eating some snacks she had put out. Ellen was resting in a chair and had sat down with a sausage ball in her hand. As she was talking, she flung her hands down by her side... and my miniature poodle mix, Titus, came right up and took it out of her hand. He very much enjoyed his sausage ball, and we all

TITUS' SAUSAGE BALLS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound bulk hot sausage (cooked and cooled)
 - 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
 - 1 ¼ cups Bisquick
 - 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded*
- *For best results, buy a block of cheddar cheese and shred it yourself.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Mix all ingredients until well combined. You can use the dough hook on a stand mixer or mix by hand.
- Roll into 1-inch balls and place on a rimmed baking sheet.
- Bake for 18-22 minutes. Tops will be browned when done. Makes approximately 5 dozen 1-inch balls. Leftovers make a great breakfast.

had a good laugh.

“Titus is no longer with us, but every holiday we make the sausage balls and Ellen recounts the story, and Titus’ memory lives on,” she says.



Andrea Breckenridge has brought a taste of Iowa holidays to her southern in-laws.

Strawberry pretzel salad

“My mom has made this for as long as I can remember,” Andrea Breckenridge says. “One year, after my husband and I moved back from South Carolina, we hosted Thanksgiving in our new home. My mom brought her strawberry pretzel salad, and my in-laws fell in love with the Midwestern classic. Now, I have to make it for every Thanksgiving and Christmas with the in-laws.”

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**STRAWBERRY
PRETZEL SALAD**

INGREDIENTS

- 2 ½ cups crushed pretzels
- ¾ cup melted butter
- 3 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 8 ounces softened cream cheese
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 container whipped topping
- 2 3-ounce packages of strawberry Jello
- 2 cups boiling water
- 2 10-ounce packages of frozen strawberries, thawed

DIRECTIONS

- Mix pretzels, butter and powdered sugar and push into the bottom of a 9-inch by 13-inch pan.
- Bake 10 minutes at 375 degrees. Cool completely.
- Mix cream cheese, sugar and whipped topping. Spread over crust.
- Dissolve Jello in boiling water. Add strawberries. Allow to partially gel, then spread on top of cream cheese mixture. Refrigerate.

MOLASSES COOKIES

INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/4 cups of flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon allspice
- 3/4 teaspoon cloves
- 1/2 stick of butter (softened at room temp)
- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar
- 1/2 cup of white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/3 cup molasses
- 1/2 cup white sugar (for rolling)

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees. To a bowl, add the first seven ingredients listed and stir together. In a large mixing bowl, beat the butter until smooth and creamy. Add brown sugar and white sugar. Mix until incorporated.
- Then add the egg, vanilla and molasses and mix until just incorporated. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the butter mixture until just incorporated; do not over mix.
- Form into small balls, roll in sugar, and place on cookie sheet.
- Bake 11-13 minutes, let sit for three minutes, then transfer to cooling rack.

Molasses cookies

“Holiday baking is one of my favorite things to do this time of year,” Lisa Finch says. “It’s how I like to show people I care. My goodie tray is my way of saying ‘Happy holidays.’ We have a few favorites, like caramel corn,

scotcheroos, sugar cookies and truffles, but there is one that takes the cake and comes out on top. These cookies are a holiday favorite in our house because they are a sweet, chewy cookie that smells and tastes similar to gingerbread cookies. They are also fun to make, and the kids often join me



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Lisa Finch's kids enjoy eating their mom's holiday treats.

in rolling them into balls to bake. When they're in the oven, your house is filled with all the smells of the holiday. These cookies are my most requested among family, friends and neighbors, and I am thrilled to share it with you."



Julie Steenhoek, right, and her mom, Sharon, enjoy pumpkin ice cream pie every holiday season.

Pumpkin ice cream pie

"My mom, Sharon, got this recipe out of a magazine in the 1970s," Julie Steekhoek says. "Our family loved it, so it was always a dessert served during the holidays, and this year is no exception."

Mom's ham balls

"Here is a family recipe that we have been enjoying for many years," Jenny Lappin says. "It's super easy to make, and you can mix them up ahead of time and just pour the sauce over them right before baking. The recipe makes a lot of ham balls, so you can divide them and freeze some for later, too. In fact, last Christmas, we traveled to Colorado as a family, so I froze

PUMPKIN ICE CREAM PIE

CRUST INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups crushed graham crackers
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup melted butter

DIRECTIONS

- Press into 9-inch by 13-inch pan and freeze

FILLING INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 15 ounce canned pumpkin

DIRECTIONS

- Mix filling ingredients and fold into half gallon of softened vanilla ice cream. Pour on top of crust and freeze.

GRANDMA HELLER'S TURTLES

INGREDIENTS

- 14 ounce package of caramels
- 2 tablespoons of boiling water
- 4 cups of pecan halves
- 2 large, sweet Hershey bars
- 1 1/2 pieces of paraffin wax

DIRECTIONS

- Unwrap caramels and heat on low heat in a saucepan. Add boiling water then pecans, and stir well.
- Drop by spoon on wax paper. Let sit until good and cold (4-5 hours).
- Melt chocolate gently with paraffin on the stovetop. Lift each turtle with fork and dip into the chocolate.
- Cool on wax paper.

the ham balls ahead of time, brought them along in a cooler, and baked them up fresh for Christmas dinner. I like to serve them with cheesy hash brown casserole and a vegetable."

Gingersnap cookies

"These are a family favorite, and multiple batches are made during the holiday season," Karen Henderson says. "These cookies are boxed up for cookie exchanges and also made

MOM'S HAM BALLS

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds of ground ham loaf
- 1 pound ground pork
- 1 pound extra lean ground beef
- 2 cups fine graham cracker crumbs
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups milk

SAUCE INGREDIENTS

- 1 can tomato soup
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 1 tablespoon dry mustard

DIRECTIONS

- Mix meats, graham cracker crumbs, eggs and milk.
- Shape into meatballs and place in two greased 9-inch by 13-inch pans.
- In a separate bowl, mix remaining ingredients. Pour over ham balls.
- Cover and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.



One of Andrea Hodapp's favorite treats is her Grandma Julia Heller's turtles. She is pictured with her older sister Nicole at Grandma's home, Christmas 1975.

to have on hand to enjoy. Every year, holiday baking at our house consists of a day set aside for baking and decorating cookies. All generations of my family come together to enjoy the fun of making multiple kinds of cookies, and gingersnaps are a favorite."



Karen Henderson's kids and their cousins enjoy holiday baking.



Jenny Lappin's extended family gathers for easy-to-prepare holiday dishes that feed a crowd.

GINGERSNAP COOKIES

INGREDIENTS

- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup sugar plus ¼ cup sugar for dipping
- ¾ cup shortening
- ¼ cup molasses
- 1 egg, beaten

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease or line baking sheets with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, sift flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger and salt. Set aside.
- In a large mixing bowl, combine sugar, shortening and molasses. Beat until light and fluffy. Add egg and mix well. Gradually add flour mixture and mix well.
- Roll dough into walnut-sized balls. Dip one side of each ball in sugar and place sugar side up about 2 inches apart on baking sheet.
- Bake 13-15 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Let cool 5 minutes, then transfer to cooling rack. Makes 3 dozen cookies.

ROD'S FAMOUS SWEET POTATO PIE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups mashed sweet potatoes
- 1 cup brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 3 eggs
- ¼ cup milk
- Juice of ½ of an orange
- Zest of ¼ orange (about 1 teaspoon)

DIRECTIONS

- Mix all ingredients and pour into a prepared pie crust (Rod uses shortbread) and bake at 350 degrees for 30-40 minutes or until a knife inserted into the pie comes out clean.

and we share them with our extended family at Christmas time every year. I plan to carry on that tradition for my grandchildren someday.”

Rod's famous sweet potato pie

“Rod was in southern Iowa and passed a Civil War reenactment, and he decided to stop by,” Chantelle Smith, Rod's partner, says. “They served this pie that was a 19th century recipe from a former slave named Abby Fisher, so he decided to make it as a Thanksgiving surprise since it was so good. Then he started making his own changes to it, since the original was pretty basic. Now, every time he makes it, there is much stress and consternation. He stands there and watches it bake. It's actually kind of funny given his typical stoic approach to things.”

SUGAR COOKIES

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup butter
- 3 eggs
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 6-8 cups flour
- 8 ounces sour cream

DIRECTIONS

- Cream sugar, butter and eggs. Combine dry ingredients, then alternate them with sour cream into the creamed ingredients until incorporated. As dough is forming, add the end of the flour slowly until dough comes together and isn't sticky or too dry. Roll out dough on a floured surface and cut out. Bake at 350 degrees for 7-8 minutes.

Sugar cookies

“I got this recipe from my husband's sister-in-law,” Mary Lou Wildrick says. “She's very German, and she told me it was an old German recipe. We started making the cookies 60-some years ago, and we made them together. As we had more children, it became harder to get together, so I changed a few things from the original as I started making them on my own. I use sour cream instead of the original milk, and everyone seemed to like that better. You can also frost them using your favorite recipe. They're something everyone seems to ask for, and they must be good because one year I gained 10 pounds eating my own cookies.” ■

Grandma Heller's turtles

“As a child, and still to this day, my two favorite holiday sweets were Grandma Heller's turtles and my mom's lemon bars,” Andrea Hodapp says. “Grandma's recipe is from 1968. My husband, Troy, now makes grandma's turtles,

NAVIGATING retirement: strategies for tackling inflation

Inflation erodes the purchasing power of your hard-earned savings during retirement, making it a significant concern for nearly every pre-retiree we encounter. It's crucial not to overlook this factor when planning for a retirement that may last 20 to 30 years. Developing a robust strategy to address inflation is essential to maintain the lifestyle you desire.



Inflation plays a major role in the everyday expenses retirees face, whether at the grocery store, gas station or during leisure activities. Many families are surprised to see how much their costs can rise over a 25-year period. For instance, if a family plans to spend \$7,500 a month in retirement, they will need about \$12,300 per month in 25 years to sustain the same lifestyle, assuming a modest 2% inflation rate. This highlights the critical importance of factoring in inflation when developing your

retirement income strategy.

Maximizing guaranteed income sources, such as Social Security and pensions, can significantly aid in planning for inflation. A reliable income stream provides retirees with a sense of security and allows for confident spending. If you don't have a pension, you're not alone, but creating a personal pension or maximizing Social Security benefits through strategic planning can make a world of difference.

Inflation impacts your retirement savings. \$500,000 saved today, will only be worth about \$300,000 in 25 years, using 2% inflation. It's crucial to balance the need for growth with the need to preserve capital. As you transition into retirement, your investment strategy will likely need to change. The market risks you took when building your retirement savings may not be appropriate for managing those savings through retirement. This security allows you to withstand market downturns without impacting your day-to-day living expenses.

Having a forward-thinking strategy is

another important way to combat inflation. Understanding how taxable, tax-deferred and tax-free income sources will impact your overall tax burden can create significant advantages. One strategy to consider is a Roth conversion, which involves converting pre-tax money from a traditional IRA or 401(k) to a Roth IRA. This offers tax-free growth and qualified distributions. While the converted amount is taxed as ordinary income in the year of conversion, a Roth IRA is not subject to Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs), providing flexibility that can reduce your retirement tax bill.

Taking proactive steps now can help you create a secure and enjoyable retirement. This approach will allow you to focus on living out your retirement vision without the worry that inflation could force you to change your lifestyle. ■

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



Learn how to combat inflation for a secure retirement lifestyle in this episode of *Retiring Today with Loren Merkle*. Scan the QR code to watch now.



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QUICK, comforting ways to warm up winter in minutes

(Family Features) After a day battling the cold and fighting the wind, a comforting meal made at home is often just what you crave. Turn those blustery winter conditions into warm, cozy evenings with favorite recipes that offer not only convenience but provide a little kick of spice.

For a quick and delightful meal that's equal parts comforting and unique, try this hot honey chicken and waffle that's sure to please with a crispy rice waffle loaded with sweet and spicy flavor, topped with chicken and drizzled with honey. It's a treat that truly satisfies from the inside out in just seven minutes.

The crispness of the gluten-free rice waffle is made possible by Minute Rice's Hot Honey Chicken Seasoned Rice Cup that entices taste buds with a sweet and mildly spicy contrast and playful presentation. Ready in as little as 60 seconds, the rice cup ensures convenience and distinct seasoning, making each waffle perfectly flavored and offering a satisfying crunch with every bite.

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Visit MinuteRice.com to find more family-friendly ways to warm up mealtimes all winter long. ■

Hot honey chicken and waffle

Prep time: 2 minutes

Cook time: 5 minutes

Servings: 1

- 1 Minute Hot Honey Chicken Seasoned Rice Cup
- 1 egg
- nonstick cooking spray
- 2 chicken tenders, cooked
- 2 tablespoons honey, for garnish
- 1 tablespoon powdered sugar, for garnish

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat mini waffle maker. Heat rice according to package directions.
- In medium mixing bowl, combine rice and egg. Mix well.
- Spoon rice mixture into waffle maker. Cook until light goes off.
- Place waffle on plate with cooked chicken tenders on top.
- Drizzle with honey, sprinkle powdered sugar on top and serve.





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ROOTED in community

Hamata helps beautify Green Meadows West



Jason Hamata and his family find much to enjoy about life in Johnston, and he enjoys doing beautification projects around his neighborhood.

Since moving to Johnston from Nebraska in 2019, Jason Hamata and his family have embraced their new hometown with open arms.

“We looked at all the suburbs in Des Moines and decided Johnston was best for us,” Hamata explains. “We thought Johnston had the best layout for a town, best parks and bike trails, and best school system.”

After exploring neighborhoods throughout Johnston, they found their perfect fit in Green Meadows West — an area that suits Hamata’s love for nature and community projects.

“I thought Green Meadows West had endless possibilities for horticulture projects, and I got started on them right away when we moved here,” Hamata shares. “We chose our house because it has a 20-acre prairie behind it and is part of about 91 total acres maintained by the HOA.”

The house offers enough space for their four young children, a private backyard, and the tranquility of a quiet street — features that have made it an ideal family home.

An active member of the Green Meadows

West HOA board, Hamata dedicates countless hours to improving the neighborhood.

“I love the 20 acres of prairie, the bike trails that wind through the neighborhood, and the two parks we maintain,” he says. “We also have creeks and waterways that move through our neighborhood, and it’s a nice feature to see moving water. We’re getting started on restoring the forested areas along our bike trails.”

The board planted 300 trees and shrubs in 2021 along 86th Street. Taking care of them is no small task.

“Myself and two other board members have watered them for the last three years, and we’ve kept them all alive,” Hamata shares.

He also maintains flower pots at the neighborhood’s five entrances and finds joy in daily landscaping and prairie restoration work.

Beyond Green Meadows West, Hamata and his family enjoy the wider Johnston community.

“We love the parks, the library, and the small-town feeling,” he says. “We think the



government is very transparent and efficient, and they keep things looking nice. I love the layout of the schools and not having to drive down a highway to get to school or travel to another town to go to school.”

When he’s not busy volunteering in his neighborhood, Hamata also gives his time at Timber Ridge Elementary, where two of his children are students.

With endless opportunities for environmental projects, Johnston and Green Meadows West provide the perfect canvas for Hamata’s dedication and creativity.

“It will keep me busy for a lifetime,” he says of his work in the neighborhood. “That’s the case in Johnston, also. If people are interested in beautification and horticulture, the sky is the limit here.” ■

HOLIDAY happenings at the library

'Tis the season to celebrate at the library. Drop by to see our book tree and stay for our programs, resources and holiday cheer. This month, patrons can ride the Polar Express; warm up with cocoa, Shrinky Dinks and a movie; listen to a musical rendition of "A Charlie Brown Christmas"; go on a New Year's Eve scavenger hunt; and get into the spirit of the holidays by volunteering. Read on for further details.

Johnston Public Library
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 www.johnstonlibrary.com
 Monday - Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.
 Friday - Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
 Sunday, 1-5 p.m.

All aboard! Children of all ages can hop on a train to the North Pole at the **"Interactive Movie: The Polar Express"** event. The magical journey will take place on Monday, Dec. 9 from 1-3 p.m. The movie is open to everyone, but those who want to participate in the interactive elements (sound effects, bubbles, cocoa, etc.) must register in advance.

School's Out! On Dec. 9, 23, 30 and 31, JPL's Teen Space will have extended hours so kids in grades 6 and up can hang out at the library. On Dec. 9, teens can participate in the "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" interactive movie beginning at 1 p.m. On Dec. 23 and 30, a Shrinky Dinky, Cocoa Drinky Movie Jamboree will be held from 1-3 p.m. Teens can ring in New Year's Eve at the Pokemon Club: Legendary New Year's Eve Party at 1 p.m. on Dec. 31.

Do you have a teen in grades 8-12 looking to make a difference in the community? If so, the new **VolunTEEN program** at JPL may be the perfect opportunity to do so. On the second and third Saturdays of each month, from 2-5 p.m., teens can help prepare materials for youth activities and complete other needed tasks in the library. Interested teens can register to receive email reminders about upcoming volunteer times and opportunities at the library, or they can just drop in on a VolunTEEN Saturday and volunteer.

Get ready to hear some holiday tunes at the library. **The Peter Roberts Band** is coming to JPL to perform a musical rendition of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" on Saturday, Dec. 14 at 4 p.m. Come hear the memorable music and discover why the predicted flop has aired every year since its premiere in 1965.

To get your New Year's celebration started, bring your family to the library for a **techy scavenger hunt** on Tuesday, Dec. 31 anytime during open hours (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). The QR Code Quest: New Year's Eve Edition will lead explorers to clues throughout the library. Those who complete the quest will receive a prize. No registration is required. The library is also happy to be able to provide the gift of language this holiday season. **Everyday English**, held on Thursday evenings from 6:30-7:45 p.m., is an ongoing program designed for English language learning adults. Led by a professional ESOL teacher and trained volunteers, lessons focus on functional English as well as life in the United States. **Let's Talk: ESL Conversation Group** is a casual program designed for non-native English speakers to practice their English conversation skills with a native English speaker. This program is on Mondays from 6:30-7:45 p.m. in-person and online via Zoom. Email library staff at esol@johnstonlibrary.org for sign-in information. Both programs are free, and registration isn't required but is appreciated.

More information can be found online at www.johnstonlibrary.com or by calling the library at 515-278-5233. ■

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 515-953-4822 ext. 319
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INVESTMENT

By Tim Hanstad

FAQs about RMDs

You may spend many decades contributing to your IRA and 401(k), but eventually you will likely need to take the money out — in fact, you must take the money out or face penalties. What should you know about these mandatory withdrawals?



Here are some of the basics:

- **What are they called?** Mandatory withdrawals are technically called required minimum distributions, or RMDs.
 - **When must I take RMDs?** If you were born before 1951, you've probably already begun taking RMDs. If you were born between 1951 and 1959, your RMD age is 73. And if you were born in 1960 or later, your RMD age is 75. You can postpone accepting your first RMD until April 1 of the year after you reach your RMD age, but this will result in two RMDs for the year. After you take your first RMD, you must take subsequent ones by Dec. 31 of each year.
 - **What penalties will be assessed if I don't take all my RMDs?** For every dollar not withdrawn, the IRS will charge a 25% penalty, but this can drop to 10% if you subsequently withdraw the correct amount within two years.
 - **Which accounts have RMDs?** RMDs apply to traditional IRAs, as well as other types of IRAs, including SIMPLE and SEP IRAs. RMDs don't apply to Roth IRAs. RMDs also apply to traditional 401(k)s, but not Roth 401(k)s.
 - **Can I withdraw more than the RMD for any given year?** Yes, you are free to take out as much as you want. However, if you take out more than the RMD for one year, you can't apply the excess to the RMD for the next year.
 - **How are RMDs calculated?** Typically, your RMDs are determined by dividing your account balance from the prior December 31 by a life expectancy factor published by the IRS. Your financial professional should be able to perform this calculation for you.
 - **If I have multiple accounts, do I have to take an RMD from each one?** If you are taking RMDs from a traditional IRA, you must calculate each RMD individually, but you can take the total amount from one or more IRAs. If you're taking RMDs from a 401(k) or similar plan, you must take the RMD from each of your accounts.
 - **How are RMDs taxed?** You are typically taxed at your income tax rate on the amount of the withdrawn RMD. You may be able to avoid taxes in a particular year if you transfer your RMDs to a qualified charity in what's known as a qualified charitable distribution.
 - **If I inherit an IRA or 401(k), am I subject to RMDs?** Yes. When you take RMDs from an inherited account, you generally must withdraw all the funds within 10 years, as opposed to over your lifetime, which is the RMD window that applies to your own accounts. The rules are somewhat different if you inherit an IRA or 401(k) from your spouse. In any case, though, you'll want to consult with your tax advisor about how to take RMDs from an inherited account.
- If you're already subject to RMDs, be sure you've taken them before the year ends. And if you haven't yet started taking RMDs, learn as much as you can about them — because the more you know, the more likely you'll make the right moves at the right time. ■

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by Tim Hanstad, your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones. Member SIPC. Edward Jones, its employees and financial advisors are not estate planners and cannot provide tax or legal advice. You should consult your estate-planning attorney or qualified tax advisor regarding your situation.

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Merry Christmas

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NEW OPTION for remaining independent at home as you age

Everett, 72, has lived in his home in Urbandale for 40 years. He and his late wife raised their children there; he knows his neighbors, and he's involved with the greater community.



Everett plans to remain in his home forever. But his daughters are concerned. Everett is healthy, but neither of them lives in town, and they're concerned about what will happen as their father grows older. If he needs help remaining independent in his house, they won't be able to provide that assistance, and they want to hope for the best, but plan for possible scenarios.

Everett's daughters' concerns are spot-on; staying in our homes independently as we age is not always possible. Chronic health challenges can make living independently ill-advised, and full-time care at home can be expensive.

So, you may be asking yourself, on your

own behalf or on behalf of someone you love: "If moving into a community is not a desired option and there are concerns about potential health issues later on, what can I do?"

One potential solution may lie in a Continuing Care at Home (CC@H) membership initiative, a program usually administered by an organization that serves older adults. CC@H programs are 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 a CC@H program, make sure to ask specifically what the program includes. A reputable 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.

Here are some questions you'll want to consider asking:

- **Does the program feature personal support, such as wellness coaching?** Studies show people who embark on a 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.

- **How long has the organization that's backing the program been in business, and what's its reputation in the senior-living industry?** Even if the program itself does offer all the services you're looking for, make sure you're comfortable with the organization itself. A reputable provider will have longevity and solid outcomes behind it.

Not all CC@H programs are created equal. If a program appeals to you, make sure it meets both your current and future needs and provides you with peace of mind. ■

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. To learn more, visit wesleylife.org/wellahead.





Are you one of the **93%** of people who want to remain in your home as you age?

Introducing WellAhead — a unique program designed for those who plan to stay at home as they age, enhancing well-being while ensuring any necessary future long-term care costs are 100% covered from Day One. As a member, you benefit from a variety of services to empower and enthusiastically enable your choice to live safely, healthfully, and independently in your own home.

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Paula Dierenfeld
(515) 490-8023
PaulaSDierenfeld@gmail.com

CITY COUNCIL
Bryan Burkhardt
(515) 554-9095
bburkhardt@cityofjohnston.com
Tom Cope
(515) 975-4590
tomwcope@msn.com

Jim Evans
jim4johnston@gmail.com
Rhonda Martin
(515) 326-2675
rhondamartin@iowanative@gmail.com
Suresh Reddy
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Holidays at the Town Center on December 7

Join us for the Holidays at the Town Center on Saturday, December 7, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. This annual event will feature free ice skating, carriage rides, a live ice sculptor, a visit with Santa and his reindeer, crafts and games from local businesses, and a community tree lighting!

Schedule of events

- 4:00 p.m. – Santa arrives in a police car
- 5:00 p.m. – Tree lighting
- 4:30 to 4:45 p.m. - Dancer's Theatre performance
- 5:30 to 5:50 p.m. – Unaccompanied Minors performance

For a list of activities and businesses participating, please visit <https://towncenterholidays.my.canva.site>.



Coffee with a Cop and Breakfast with Santa on December 14 at Hy-Vee

Join the Johnston Police Department on Saturday, December 14, from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. at Johnston Hy-Vee for an engaging event: Coffee with a Cop + Breakfast with Santa. This is a unique opportunity for the community to connect with Johnston police officers in a casual and friendly setting. And the kids can meet Santa, share their holiday wishes, and enjoy a delightful breakfast.



Ice rink at the Johnston Town Center

The ice rink at the Johnston Town Center offers skate rental from Friday to Sunday. If you own your own skates, you can skate for free seven days a week. Rental is \$5 during the designated hours. Skate rental hours (times/days shown below are weather-dependent):

- Friday: 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.
- Saturday: 12:00 to 8:00 p.m.
- Sunday: 12:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Enjoy the rink during the holidays from December 7 through February 28. The skate rental and concession stand for the season are managed by The Cork 50131.

City offices and library closed for the holidays

City Hall and the library will be closed on December 24, 25, and January 1 for Christmas and New Year's holidays. Trash and recycling pickup days will not be delayed.



CITY NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2024

Senior (55+) activities to enjoy

Join us for the **Cookies and Cocoa Game Day** at Johnston City Hall on **Friday, December 20, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.** This event will feature an afternoon of enjoying cookies, hot chocolate, and games, all while spreading some holiday cheer and friendly competition. Registration is not required.

We also invite seniors, 55+, to participate in **fun competition nights from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the Saylorville Training Room at City Hall.** For more information on fun nights, visit www.cityofjohnston.com/402.

- **Thursday, January 16:** Enjoy cards and board games. The menu includes Chinese-Mongolian beef, sesame chicken, fried rice, egg rolls, crab rangoon, and fortune cookies.
- **Thursday, February 13:** Join us for BINGO. The menu features pulled pork, potato salad, baked beans, mixed fruit, and sweet rolls.
- **Thursday, March 13:** Come for more cards and board games. The menu includes fried chicken, white cheddar mac & cheese, green beans almandine, and cookies.

The cost to attend the fun nights is \$5. Registration is required, and payment can be dropped off at Johnston City Hall, Attn: Molly Moore. Registration is required at least one week in advance, and payment can be dropped off at Johnston City Hall.

Holiday tree and yard waste collection

For a limited two-week period, from December 30-31 and January 6-7, we are offering curbside pickup for your holiday tree and extra yard waste. To take advantage of this service, simply attach a Compost It! sticker, and we will handle the rest.

Please remember that your Compost It! sticker is the only decoration your tree should have. Be sure to remove all other decorations, lights, and wires. Note that wreaths and garlands will not be collected.



Mayor's annual run for food

Mayor Paula Dierenfeld is once again lacing up her running shoes for a remarkable cause in the Annual Food Run. This year, she is challenging the Johnston community to support her in covering an impressive 2,500 miles, all for the sake of giving back.

From December 1 through December 30, Mayor Dierenfeld is inviting the community to contribute to this effort. For every \$10 donation or each bag of food received, she pledges to run one mile. Donations can be made at Johnston City Hall or the Johnston Partnership.

How You Can Contribute:

- **Traditional Giving:** You can send or drop off your monetary or food donations to the Johnston Partnership at the following address: Attn: Mayor's Run for Food, 5870 Merle Hay Road, Suite C, Johnston, IA 50131
- **Online Contribution:** Embrace the convenience of online giving by donating through the Partnership's website at <https://johnstonpartnership.org/donate>. Be sure to add "Mayor's Run" for a note on where the funds should go.



For more information about the city, please call 515.278.2344

PLAN for the future

2024 is coming to a close. The end of the year is a good time to take stock of your personal situation and proactively plan for the future.



Update your estate plan

Putting your legal affairs in order is important. It reduces the burden on loved ones in the event of poor health or death. It can save time and expense. And it allows you to have control over how your assets pass. Every person should have three basic estate planning documents: a last will and testament, a durable financial power of attorney, and a living will / health care power of attorney.

A will directs the distribution of your

assets upon your death. Through the power of attorney, you give another person the ability to make financial decisions for you should you become incapacitated. If you're too ill to speak for yourself, you can express your wishes and have your voice heard through a living will. This advance directive lets you detail your preferences for your medical care.

Make a list of key contacts

When you update your estate planning documents, you should also make a master list of important information. If you die or become incapacitated, your family will spend time figuring out what you own and whom they should contact. List your investment advisor, insurance agent, tax professional, banker and attorney. Make sure you have the correct contact information for each professional listed.

Review the title to your home

You should review how you hold title to your

home. When you purchased your house, the seller executed a deed. The deed contained important vesting information — the names on the title and the legal relationship between those titleholders.

If you are married, you probably want to ensure that both spouses are on title to the house. This may not be the case if the parties were married after one bought the house or if it is a second marriage. You also probably want to ensure that, if one titleholder were to die, the house would pass to the survivor. A simple review of who holds title and how title is held can prevent expensive problems later.

These are three simple yet very effective steps that can save time and expense in the future. Contact an experienced attorney to help you get 2025 off to a good start. ■

Information provided Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm, 2560 73rd St., Urbandale, 515-278-0623, www.ARPCLaw.com.

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RIDGEDALE Court

Where did that street name come from?

The names of many Johnston streets originate in local history. This series is continued with the history of the Ridgedale Court street name. Ridgedale Court is near the intersection of Merle Hay Road and 70th Street in the Rittgers Oaks subdivision.

Ridgedale was located on N.W. Beaver Drive, across from what is now the Hyperion Field Club, on the ridge that includes the highest spot in Polk County. The area was also known as Beaver Creek Settlement and as Huntsville after its 1846 founder, Ezekial Hunt. Ezekial, along with his wife, Mary, and 12 children, came to that area in 1846, after the removal of the Sauk and Fox/Meskewaki tribe in June of 1845 and allowing the first settlers of European descent to cross the Des Moines River on Oct. 11, 1845.

Ezekiel Hunt was a farmer, ran a sawmill and was engaged in fence rail making there. Ridgedale also had a blacksmith shop run by Ezekial and Mary's son, Jeremiah Hunt, and

a grocery store run by their grandson, Clyde Hunt. The Hunt family donated land where a Methodist Episcopal church was started, along with a cemetery. They also helped build the Ridgedale one-room school there.

On June 17, 1858, a U.S. Post Office was established at Ridgedale. John McClain, the first postmaster, was succeeded by Jake Randolph in 1888. He ran the store at that location. That post office was closed in 1902 when it was replaced by rural free delivery by horse and buggy operating out of Grimes.

The Johnston school system was originally started by closing the Valley, Friar, Ridgedale and Rider one-room schools in 1914, when the second consolidated school district in Polk County was formed including those school attendance areas. That new school district was called The Independent Consolidated School District of Webster and Jefferson Townships of Polk County and is now the Johnston

Consolidated School District.

The town of Ridgedale was never platted or incorporated. Today, only the cemetery from the church remains. Ezekiel and Mary Hunt, and many of their descendants, are buried there.

This information is taken from one of the many family history notebooks at the Johnston Historical Society 1902 Simpson House Museum. A list of those family histories is on the Society website, www.johnstoniowahistorical.org. The Johnston Historical Society is a 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to discovering, preserving and presenting the history of the Johnston area. Founded in 1994, JHS maintains the 1902 Simpson House Museum at 6161 Northglenn Drive in Johnston. That museum is open for selected community events and by appointment. Please consider supporting the society by becoming a member, a volunteer, a benefactor or making a donation of historical items. ■

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VARSITY BOYS BASKETBALL

| DATE | TIME | OPPONENT | LOCATION |
|--------|--------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Dec 3 | 7:45PM | Southeast Polk | Johnston High School |
| Dec 6 | 7:45PM | Waukee | Waukee High School |
| Dec 10 | 7:45PM | Ankeny High School | Ankeny High School |
| Dec 13 | 7:45PM | Waukee Northwest | Johnston High School |
| Dec 14 | 6:00PM | Dallas Center-Grimes | DCG-Meadows Gym |
| Dec 17 | 7:45PM | Dowling Catholic | Johnston High School |
| Dec 20 | 7:45PM | Urbandale | Urbandale High School |
| Jan 3 | 7:45PM | Ankeny Centennial | Ankeny Centennial |
| Jan 4 | 9:00AM | TBA | Alliant Energy Powerhouse |
| Jan 7 | 7:45PM | Waukee | Johnston High School |
| Jan 10 | 7:45PM | Southeast Polk | Southeast Polk High School |
| Jan 14 | 7:45PM | Waukee Northwest | Waukee Northwest High School |
| Jan 17 | 7:45PM | Ankeny High School | Johnston High School |
| Jan 21 | 7:45PM | Urbandale | Johnston High School |
| Jan 24 | 7:45PM | Dowling Catholic | Dowling Catholic High School |
| Jan 31 | 7:45PM | WDM Valley | Johnston High School |
| Feb 4 | 7:45PM | Ankeny Centennial | Johnston High School |
| Feb 8 | 1:00PM | Valley | Valley High School |
| Feb 11 | 7:45PM | WDM Valley | Valley High School |
| Feb 14 | 7:00PM | Council Bluffs | Thomas Jefferson High School |
| Feb 18 | 7:30PM | Waterloo East | Johnston High School |

VARSITY GIRLS BASKETBALL

| DATE | TIME | OPPONENT | LOCATION |
|--------|--------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Nov 26 | 6:30PM | Cedar Falls | Cedar Falls High School |
| Dec 3 | 6:15PM | Southeast Polk | Johnston High School |
| Dec 6 | 6:15PM | Waukee | Waukee High School |
| Dec 10 | 6:15PM | Ankeny High School | Ankeny High School |
| Dec 13 | 6:15PM | Waukee Northwest | Johnston High School |
| Dec 17 | 6:15PM | Dowling Catholic | Johnston High School |
| Dec 20 | 6:15PM | Urbandale | Urbandale High School |
| Dec 21 | 1:50PM | Davenport North | Johnston High School |
| Jan 3 | 6:15PM | Ankeny Centennial | Ankeny Centennial |
| Jan 7 | 6:15PM | Waukee | Johnston High School |
| Jan 10 | 6:15PM | Southeast Polk | Southeast Polk High School |
| Jan 14 | 6:15PM | Waukee Northwest | Waukee Northwest High School |
| Jan 17 | 6:15PM | Ankeny High School | Johnston High School |
| Jan 21 | 6:15PM | Urbandale | Johnston High School |
| Jan 24 | 6:15PM | Dowling Catholic | Dowling Catholic High School |
| Jan 31 | 6:15PM | WDM Valley | Johnston High School |
| Feb 4 | 6:15PM | Ankeny Centennial | Johnston High School |
| Feb 6 | 5:30PM | Central DeWitt | Central DeWitt High School |
| Feb 11 | 6:15PM | WDM Valley | Valley High School |
| Feb 13 | 5:00PM | Prairie | Johnston High School |
| Feb 17 | 6:00PM | North Polk | North Polk High School |



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AGGONTS

VARSITY BOYS WRESTLING

| DATE | TIME | OPPONENT | LOCATION |
|--------|--------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Dec 5 | 7:30PM | Southeast Polk | Johnston High School |
| Dec 12 | 7:30PM | Waukee | Waukee High School |
| Dec 19 | 7:30PM | Waukee Northwest | Johnston High School |
| Jan 2 | 7:30PM | Ankeny High School | Ankeny High School |
| Jan 9 | 6:30PM | Dowling Catholic | Dowling Catholic High School |
| Jan 16 | 7:30PM | WDM Valley | Johnston High School |
| Jan 23 | 7:30PM | Ankeny Centennial | Ankeny Centennial High School |
| Jan 28 | 7:30PM | Urbandale | Johnston High School |

VARSITY B/G BOWLING

| DATE | TIME | OPPONENT | LOCATION |
|--------|--------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Dec 9 | 3:00PM | Des Moines Lincoln | Game Day Lanes |
| Dec 12 | 3:00PM | WDM Valley | Game Day Lanes |
| Jan 7 | 3:00PM | Davis County | TBA |
| Jan 9 | 3:45PM | Southeast Polk | Great Escape |
| Jan 10 | 3:00PM | Ankeny Boys Bowling | Game Day Lanes |
| Jan 16 | 3:00PM | Dowling Catholic | Game Day Lanes |
| Jan 20 | 3:00PM | Clarke | Game Day Lanes |
| Jan 23 | 3:30PM | Waukee/NW Bowling | Warrior Lanes |
| Jan 27 | 3:00PM | Des Moines East | Game Day Lanes |
| Jan 30 | 3:45PM | Urbandale | Merle Hay Lanes |

VARSITY GIRLS WRESTLING

| DATE | TIME | OPPONENT | LOCATION |
|--------|--------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Dec 10 | 5:00PM | Multiple Schools | Urbandale High School |
| Jan 2 | 5:00PM | Multiple Schools | Southeast Polk High School |
| Jan 9 | 6:00PM | Urbandale | Johnston High School |
| Jan 14 | 6:00PM | WDM Valley | Johnston High School |

VARSITY B/G BOWLING

| DATE | TIME | OPPONENT | LOCATION |
|--------|--------|------------------|------------------------------|
| Dec 12 | 5:30PM | Waukee Northwest | Summit Middle School |
| Dec 19 | 5:30PM | Waukee | Waukee Natatorium |
| Jan 2 | 5:30PM | Ankeny | Summit Middle School |
| Jan 7 | 5:30PM | WDM Valley | Valley High School |
| Jan 9 | 5:30PM | Dowling Catholic | Dowling Catholic High School |
| Jan 16 | 5:30PM | Southeast Polk | Summit Middle School |



Photos by Johnston High School Yearbook Staff



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10 PM **Candlelight Mass** (Church)

Christmas Day: Wednesday, December 25

9AM **Mass** (Church)

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INSURANCE

By Janis Van Ahn

UNDERSTANDING pet insurance

A comprehensive overview

Pet insurance is a financial product designed to help pet owners manage the often unpredictable and high costs of veterinary care. Just like health insurance for humans, pet insurance policies provide coverage for a variety of medical expenses, offering peace of mind and financial stability when caring for beloved animal companions.



What does pet insurance cover?

The scope of coverage depends on the plan and provider, but policies typically fall into three main categories: accident-only, accident and illness, and comprehensive plans. Accident-only plans cover costs resulting from injuries, such as fractures or ingestion of foreign objects. Accident and illness plans include coverage for illnesses such as cancer, infections and hereditary conditions. Comprehensive plans may extend to wellness care, vaccinations, dental procedures and preventive treatments.

Some providers offer customizable plans, allowing pet owners to select coverage options that suit their pet's specific needs. However, most policies exclude pre-existing conditions, and coverage limits, deductibles and reimbursement rates vary widely between insurers.

Why consider pet insurance?

Veterinary costs can add up quickly, especially in emergencies or for chronic illnesses. Pet insurance can offset these expenses, ensuring that financial constraints do not limit the quality of care a pet receives. For instance, advanced treatments such as surgeries or chemotherapy can cost thousands of dollars, but insurance can significantly reduce out-of-pocket expenses.

Pet insurance is especially beneficial for pets prone to certain health issues due to breed or age. Additionally, it provides peace of mind, allowing pet owners to focus on their pet's wellbeing rather than worrying about financial strain.

Factors to consider when choosing a policy

When selecting pet insurance, pet owners should evaluate several factors:

- **Cost:** Monthly premiums can range from \$10 to more than \$100, depending on the pet's age, breed and location, as well as the coverage selected.
- **Deductibles and reimbursement:** Policies may require annual or per-incident deductibles, with reimbursement rates typically ranging from 70% to 90% of eligible costs.
- **Exclusions and waiting periods:** It's crucial to understand what isn't covered and how long the waiting periods are for certain conditions.
- **Provider reputation:** Research customer reviews and ratings to assess the reliability of the insurer.

Is pet insurance worth it?

Whether pet insurance is worth the cost depends on individual circumstances. For some, the security of knowing they can afford necessary treatments makes it invaluable. For others with healthy pets and fewer risk factors, setting aside savings for potential expenses might be a better choice.

Ultimately, pet insurance serves as a safety net, helping pet owners navigate the financial responsibilities of pet care while ensuring their furry friends receive the attention and treatment they deserve. ■

Information provided by Janis Van Ahn, Health Insurance Advisor LLC, 5870 Merle Hay Road, Suite A, Johnston, 515-225-9994, jvanahn@health-insadvisor.com.

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Join Us for an afternoon of carols and a sing along, followed by a cookie fellowship!

Christmas Eve Service

DECEMBER 24, 6PM



First Baptist Church of Greater Des Moines
8250 NW 62nd Ave • (515) 243-8161

Sunday Service: 10 – 11 am
Watch services live at fbcdsm.org
Small Groups available Sunday & Thursday.

WEDNESDAYS
Dinner: 6-6:30 p.m. (*Free dinner, reservations required.*)
Children & Adult Programs: 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.



IS NOW is a good time to buy or sell your Johnston home?

Deciding whether to buy and/or sell a home depends on several factors, including your personal financial situation, market conditions and long-term goals. Here are some key points to consider based on current information:



- **Housing market trends:** The Johnston housing market is somewhat competitive. The median sale price of a home in Johnston has slightly risen from the previous year. Homes are selling after an average of 69 days on the market. It is important to note that properly priced and marketed homes are selling much more quickly than 69 days.

- **Affordability:** Johnston offers a lower cost of living compared to many other U.S. cities. The median listing home price in Johnston was \$429.9K in October 2024, with homes selling for about 1% below the asking price on average. Expect prices to continue rising, although the rate of increase is expected to be much slower compared to the past few years.

- **Community and amenities:** Smart buyers know that Johnston is well known for its welcoming community, recreational facilities, and the availability of outdoor activities. It's a great place for families, with a variety of parks, trails and a highly rated school system.

- **Personal factors to consider:** Do you have immediate needs? Is work relocating you? Has your family expanded, or are you becoming an empty nester? These factors can significantly impact your decision to buy or sell in the near future. You should also consider your financial readiness and long-term plans when deciding whether to buy or sell a home.

If you are wondering if winter is a good time to sell your home, here are some of the advantages:

- **Less competition:** Typically, fewer homes are on the market during the winter months, which means less competition for your home. Your home can stand out as a preferred available home.

- **Serious buyers:** Buyers searching during this time of year are typically more serious and motivated to make a purchase quickly. Relocations occur year-round, with many out-of-area families constantly moving to the metro. Various factors drive people to relocate, such as career moves, having children, retirements, etc. Having your home on the market when serious buyers are looking can lead to a quicker sale at a higher price.

Ultimately, the decision to buy a house should be based on a combination of several factors, including market conditions and your personal circumstances. If you're financially and mentally prepared to make a move, winter could be an excellent time to start your journey. If you have any specific questions or need further advice, feel free to contact a Realtor. ■

Information provided by Jon Kilpatrick, RE/MAX Precision, 8705 Chambery Blvd., Johnston, 515-418-1896, licensed Realtor in the state of Iowa.

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ASSESSOR
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ELECTION OFFICE
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515-286-3247

GENERAL ASSISTANCE
515-286-3434

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COMMUNITY BETTERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT GRANTS
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EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND WELLNESS
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VETERAN AFFAIRS
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POLK COUNTY

HIGHLIGHTS



Polk County
Life Services
Center

Contact Information

BMC Behavioral Health Urgent Care (BHUC) - 515.282.5742
BMC Crisis Observation Center (COC) - 515.282.5742
SVdP Sobering Center - 515.259.6262

The Polk County Board of Supervisors formally inaugurated the Life Services Center with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting event. This new facility represents an innovative approach to addressing the challenges faced by individuals facing addiction and mental health crisis. The establishment of the Life Services Center is a collaborative effort involving Polk County, the City of Des Moines, Broadlawns Medical Center, and St. Vincent de Paul. The Life Services Center will function as a secure environment where individuals in need of treatment can receive necessary care. The Life Services Center, located at 1914 Carpenter Ave. in Des Moines, is housed in a completely renovated building owned by Polk County. The City of Des Moines will split the operational costs of the facility 50/50 with Polk County. St. Vincent De Paul will provide case management personnel, while Broadlawns Medical Center will offer treatment services for individuals with addiction and mental health issues.



Polk County Sponsors On With Life 'Extreme Build'

Polk County was proud to participate in the construction of the On With Life two new family homes in Ankeny! These beautiful residences, part of Hubbell Realty Company 'Extreme Build' Homes of Hope initiative, were partially funded by a Polk County community development grant. These new homes will offer families a safe and peaceful retreat while supporting their loved ones receiving care at the On With Life campus. Together, we're building a brighter future for our community!



Polk County Helps Fund New Youth Mentoring Center

Polk County helped fund the renovation of a new Youth Mentoring Center for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Iowa. Spanning an impressive 10,500 square feet, the building will feature dedicated mentoring and community spaces, as well as serve as the new headquarters for staff. This state-of-the-art facility will empower the organization to meet the growing demand for mentorship, providing both "Bigs" and "Littles" a vibrant environment to cultivate meaningful mentoring relationships. Additionally, this space will enable corporate volunteer groups to witness firsthand the profound impact that Big Brothers Big Sisters has on our community, fostering stronger partnerships and engagement.



Iowa Events Center Naming Rights



Two esteemed local companies are set to elevate a cherished downtown destination. Polk County's Iowa Events Center will soon feature new names for two of its key facilities within the entertainment complex. The Wells Fargo Arena will be rebranded as the Casey's Center, while Hy-Vee Hall will transform into the EMC Expo Center. Both naming rights partnerships will commence in 2025, marking the beginning of a decade-long collaboration between Polk County and Oak View Group, the operators of the Iowa Events Center and these two new corporate partners. Polk County is thrilled that these respected local brands will contribute to the ongoing success and vibrant future of the Iowa Events Center.

Be sure to check for cancellations

Upcoming in Johnston Living magazine:



First cars: Do you remember your first car? Do you have a photo of yourself with it? Or maybe you still own it? We want to hear your stories. Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com by Dec. 10 to be included in the January issue.

Grandparents who enjoy living near their grandchildren: Share why you enjoy living near your grandchildren and how you spend time together. Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com by Jan. 10 to be included in the February issue.



Coffee with a Cop and Breakfast with Santa

Saturday, Dec. 7 from 8-10 a.m.
Johnston Hy-Vee, 5750 Merle Hay Road

Join the Johnston Police Department for Breakfast with Santa and Coffee with a Cop. Officers will have donuts, coffee and juice available. If you'd rather have a warm breakfast, you can purchase it from the Hy-Vee cafe. Visit www.cityofjohnston.com/calendar.aspx?EID=3810 for more information.

Blue Dragon Shopping Event

Wednesday, Dec. 11, 4-7 p.m.
The Johnston Police Officers will help create unforgettable experiences while shopping for holiday gifts with less fortunate children or those who have experienced tragic incidents. This heartwarming annual initiative pairs Johnston Police Officers with children. Together, they go on a special shopping spree for gifts at the Grimes Walmart.

45th Annual Madrigal

Dec. 4 and 5, 7 p.m.
Johnston High School Auditorium

The Johnston High School Choral Department will present the 45th annual Madrigal: "The Tragedy of Orpheus: A Comedy." Enjoy an evening of festivities and feasting to kick off the 2024 holiday season. Tickets are on sale at www.gobound.com/ia/schools/johnston/tickets.



Arts and Crafts with Santa

Saturday, Dec. 7 from 9-11 a.m.

Fire Station 39, 6373 Merle Hay Road
Join Local 4835 Firefighters for a morning of Christmas-themed arts and crafts. Consider bringing an unwrapped toy for the Toys for Tots drive to fill the back of Santa's sleigh. Visit www.cityofjohnston.com/calendar.aspx?EID=3811 for more information.

Historical Society open house

Dec. 14 from 10 a.m. to noon
Johnston Station Historical Society, 6161 Northglenn Drive

Johnston Station Historical Society will hold its annual holiday open house. The museum, which is located in a turn-of-the-century farmhouse, will be decorated for the holidays. Guests can enjoy guided tours, along with coffee, cocoa and cookies. Visit www.cityofjohnston.com/calendar.aspx?EID=3856 for more information.

Giving Tree Through December

Woof Pack Resort and Spa is sponsoring a Giving Tree to benefit Hope Animal Rescue of Iowa the entire month of December. Stop by the resort to grab an ornament to donate to Hope or give us a call to donate. The resort address is 5700 West Parkway in Johnston. For information, contact 515-416-4255 or info@woofpackresort.com.

Holidays at the Town Center

Saturday, Dec. 7, 4-7 p.m.
Johnston Town Center

The annual Holidays at the Town Center will feature free ice skating, a visit with Santa and his reindeer, samples from local businesses and a community tree lighting. Santa arrives at 4 p.m. with the tree lighting at 5 p.m. Dancer's Theatre performance is 4:30-4:45. Unaccompanied Minors perform 5:30-5:50 p.m. Food trucks onsite will be Flame and General Lee's Smoke Shack. Free carriage rides from TAGA Shires will be offered around the Town Center with a bag of non-perishable food donations for the food pantry and Mayor's Run for Food. Visit with reindeer, enjoy a children's craft with the Johnston Public Library, join free cookie decorating with Northpoint Church, participate in a children's activity with Raising Cane's and view live ice sculpting. First Baptist Church of Greater Des Moines will provide a children's game and hand out candy and miniature flashlights.

Backpocket offers events

The public is invited to a variety of events coming up at Backpocket, 6205 Merle Hay Road, Johnston.

- Hot cocoa bar, pictures with Santa and cookie decorating, Monday, Dec. 16.
- Elf and Friends Guided Paint Night, Dec. 17, 6 p.m., \$55. www.makeitartfull.com/event-details/elf-and-friends-guided-painting-trio. Get in the holiday spirit and create you own home decor inspired by a classic Christmas movie.
- Family Fun New Year's Eve is Dec. 31, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and features face-painting, a photo booth with props, a DIY party hat making station, a balloon drop and sparkling cider toast at 2 p.m., food and drink specials, and more.

Pet Photos with Grinch

Dec. 8 from 1-4 p.m.
Woof Pack Resort and Spa, 5700 West Parkway, Johnston

Would you like to get your pet's picture taken with the Grinch? Come to Woof Pack Resort and Spa for a photoshoot with the Grinch. The price is \$15 and all proceeds benefit Hope Animal Rescue of Iowa. There will also be adoptable dogs from Hope present. For more information, contact 515-416-4255 or info@woofpackresort.com.



EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations

Breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus

Dec. 8, 8 a.m. to noon

West Des Moines Elks Lodge, 2060 N.W. 94th St., Clive

The Elks breakfast is always the second Sunday of the month. This month, special guests Santa and Mrs. Claus will be giving out goody bags, talking with children and providing photo opportunities. The breakfast buffet includes biscuits and gravy, french toast, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage patties, cheesy potatoes, all you can eat pancakes (including blueberry and chocolate chip pancakes), orange juice, milk and coffee. Enjoy a bloody mary or mimosa for \$3.50. Cost is \$11 for adults and \$5 for children 10 and younger. There will also be a Christmas bake sale. Proceeds support the Hoop Shoot Program, other youth activities, veterans and community charities.



Holiday Ho Ho Home Tour

Dec. 7, 5:30-9:30 p.m. • Around Ankeny

Tour several Ankeny homes decked out for the holidays. Each features its own unique decorations, style and appetizers. All donations benefit the Wiedenman Family Foundation, which was formed to undertake projects that will enhance Ankeny and the surrounding community. Tickets are \$25. For tickets, visit www.hohohometour.org/event-details/tickets. ■

NEWS BRIEF

JOHNSTON ECONOMIC Development Corporation moves to dissolve

The Johnston Economic Development Corporation (JEDCO) board of directors voted unanimously on Tuesday, Nov. 19, 2024, to cease operations and legally dissolve the organization. The decision follows a JEDCO member survey in which 76% of the respondents supported a decision to discontinue the organization.

“Our JEDCO membership has existed to partner with the City of Johnston to strengthen our local economy and retain and attract business. As economic development evolves in central Iowa, Johnston must adapt to remain competitive,” said Grant Taylor, JEDCO board president.

The City has expressed an interest in exploring an alternate forum to stay connected to business leaders and developers with a vested interest in Johnston. Discussions about continuing JEDCO’s two main annual events are ongoing, including the Development Forum and the Economic Development Bus Tour.

“While many details are yet to be determined, the first order of business is ceasing operations as an investor-based entity,” said Taylor.

For additional information, contact Grant Taylor at GrantT@hansencompany.com. ■

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EDUCATION

By Lindsey Giardino

MEET Amy Moore

Passionate educator readies for retirement.

Amy Moore's journey as an educator spans more than four decades and is defined by her deep concern for children and her unwavering positivity.

Moore's path to teaching was shaped by her upbringing. Growing up with several siblings in a close-knit family, she quickly learned the importance of love and helping others.

"My mom had a smile that would calm a storm," Moore says. "Her cancer storm made my dad and siblings work together. I have to admit, I am the youngest, and my siblings were the ones who gave me direction in life. Feeling their love made me want to guide others."

After graduating from the University of Tennessee, Moore began her teaching career in Memphis before moving to North Carolina and eventually landing at Lawson Elementary in Johnston in 1994. Her love for adventure, both in and out of the classroom, led her to embrace new opportunities and challenges with enthusiasm.

When Horizon Elementary opened its doors, Moore, a first-grade teacher, knew she was ready for yet another teaching experience.

"I wanted to be at Horizon because of the amazing staff," she says.

Over the years, she has become a cornerstone of the school, known for her contagious energy (a fellow teacher recalled a time when she cartwheeled into the story circle time) and heartfelt dedication to her students. Indeed, Moore's joy in teaching goes beyond the curriculum.

"People will say, 'I love children,' and yes, that is true, but I also like children," she says. "I love to hear the laughter of a child. I love to see a child skip or dance down the hall."

For Moore, challenges in teaching are opportunities for growth.

"Sometimes we can't look at the challenges as hardships but as opportunities to understand from a different lens," she says.

This mindset has enabled her to approach her work with resilience and optimism, seeking to learn and grow alongside her students.

One of Moore's most cherished memories is tied to the Horizon Song, first introduced after 9/11.

"The staff at Horizon circled around in the gym and held hands," she recalls. "I love the song so much that I had it sung at my wedding. To be honest, I will also have it sung at my funeral. Words are powerful."

As Moore prepares to retire at the end of this school year, she reflects on her career with gratitude and pride.

"I started at 22 and will end this ride at 62," she says. "It has been a great ride."

In retirement, Moore plans to embrace her adventurous spirit, exploring trails and camping with her husband, Jerry. Whether on a bike or a hike, she's ready for whatever adventure comes next. And while she may be stepping away from the classroom, her legacy will live on in the countless lives she has touched through her teaching. ■



Longtime educator Amy Moore will retire at the end of the school year.

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SPOTLIGHT: Artfull

Each month, we profile a Johnston Chamber member business, highlighting what owners love about our local community. Artfull is an art and craft studio featuring clay molding, wheel throwing, painting, workshops and party rooms. The studio is located at 8805 Chambery Blvd. Suite 150. We caught up with studio owner Stacey Schuurmann.

What is your favorite part of being a chamber member? “My favorite part has been all the opportunities to participate in activities around the community. The events have really helped us connect with other businesses in Johnston and feel like this is a city we can grow in.”

Why did you choose to locate your business in Johnston? “I actually live in Johnston. So, we looked for a new studio space close to home. We got lucky and were able to create a great space right off 86th Street.”

What do you love about the Johnston community? “I love the collaboration we have received from other small businesses and the continued support we get from the chamber. I also love the small-town feel we get from repeat customers who stop in.”

Any upcoming events you want to highlight? “We have a new selection of Iowa-made goods that are perfect for giving and receiving. We are excited to highlight the amazing artisans in and around our community by offering a place in our studio to purchase their items right here in Johnston. Check our calendar for upcoming workshops on pottery, painting, blankets and more.” ■

Information provided by Samantha Winebrenner, Johnston Chamber executive director, samantha@johnstonchamber.com, 515-276-9064.

WHERE has the year gone?

I started the year by encouraging you with, “Don’t put it off another year.” So, my question to you now is, “Is it still on your to-do list?”

It may be getting that will in place, or cleaning out that closet, or perhaps it is getting your funeral prearrangements in place so that your final arrangements will not be a burden to your family and loved ones at a time that will be very emotional and stressful.

We hear it all the time: “I am so glad to have this taken care of.”

Planning your final arrangements begins with a simple conversation and can be a pleasant process. Planning ahead allows you time to give the thoughtful consideration that these important decisions deserve, and it allows time to visit with other family members to find out what will be important to them.

There are many options to think about when addressing your final arrangements, and there are even prepayment options available to those who wish to have their final financial obligations handled in advance.

An advanced planning consultant can walk you through these choices and options.

End the year by crossing one more item off your “to-do” list. Reach out to your funeral home of choice and schedule a meeting to start the conversation. You will be glad you did. ■

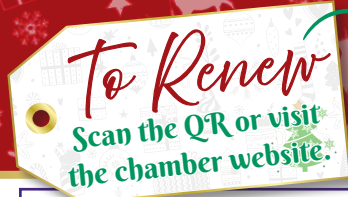


Information provided by Scott Eriksen, Director of Hamilton’s Advanced Planning, Hamilton’s Funeral Home, 605 Lyon St., Des Moines, 515-697-3670, www.HamiltonsFuneralHome.com.

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6 Area Locations



Johnston Chamber held a ribbon cutting for the new location of The Flooring Guys, 4925 N.W. Johnston Drive, Johnston, on Nov. 12.



Front: Maddox and Graham Thompson; back: Dan Fitzgerald, Sean Thompson and Michelle Thompson at the Johnston Chamber ribbon cutting for The Flooring Guys.



Ashley Schoonover, Cassey Davisson and Delany Stillman at the Johnston Chamber ribbon cutting for The Flooring Guys.



Andrea and Steven Pavletich at the Johnston Chamber ribbon cutting for The Flooring Guys.



Logan Crannell, Mike Straub and Brien Scandridge at the Johnston Chamber ribbon cutting for The Flooring Guys.



Local business owners presented a \$1,700 check to the Johnston Partnership from ticket purchases and donations from their J-Town Jolly Jingle event held on Nov. 10. Pictured are Andrea Cook, Carissa Silva, Nancy Brown, Karen Olejniczak, Paula Bierle, Julia Bradshaw and Jerusha Thomas.



Legislative panel: Larry McBurney, Dan Gehlbach, Eddie Andrews, Jill Altringer, Ryan Weldon and Heather Matson at the Joint Legislative Luncheon at Holiday Inn Northwest on Nov. 20.



Rose Schroder and Mike Pogge-Weaver at the Joint Legislative Luncheon at Holiday Inn Northwest on Nov. 20.



Samantha Winebrenner and Josh Laraby at the Joint Legislative Luncheon at Holiday Inn Northwest on Nov. 20.



Eddie Andrews and Brenda Ballard at the Joint Legislative Luncheon at Holiday Inn Northwest on Nov. 20.

OUT & ABOUT



Pagliai's Pizza was the Residents' Choice winner of Favorite Pizza Establishment. Pictured: Bobby Betts and Owner Travis VanderWeerd



Johnston Chamber held a ribbon cutting for GameOn DSM on Nov. 19.



Hy-Vee was a Residents' Choice runner up for Favorite Grocery Store. Pictured: Store Director Kevin Barry



Joleen Roskamp with RE/MAX Precision was a Residents' Choice runner-up for Favorite Realtor.



Kristin Coffelt with Boutique Real Estate was the Residents' Choice winner of Favorite Realtor.



Styled. by JJ was a Residents' Choice runner-up for Favorite Boutique. Pictured: Owner Julia Bradshaw



Hy-Vee Wine and Spirits was the Residents' Choice winner for Favorite Liquor Store. Pictured: Felicia Baltzley and Mike Nelson



Johnston Ace Hardware was a Residents' Choice runner-up for Favorite Home Improvement Retail Store and Favorite Place to Purchase a Gift for a Man. Pictured: Todd Pierce, Zach Frey, Charlie Norelius, Mager Miller, Glenn Moses and Caesar Cano



Eshanjali Dance Academy was a Residents' Choice runner-up for Favorite Dance Studio. Pictured: Owner Pragnya Bidarkere Prakash



Fareway was the Residents' Choice winner for Favorite Grocery Store. Pictured: Grocery Manager Paul Vogtlin and Meat Market Manager Matt Hickey



Lifetime Vision was the Residents' Choice winner for Favorite Vision Care. Pictured: Owner Dr. Erin Wilkens



Purple Poppy Boutique was the Residents' Choice winner of Favorite Boutique and Favorite Place to Purchase a Gift for a Woman. Pictured: Owner Paula Bierle

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WATER DAMAGE CLEANUP & RESTORATION: A small amount of water can lead to major damage in your home. Our trusted professionals do complete repairs to protect your family and your home's value! Call 24/7: 1-888-750-5574. Have zip code of service location ready when you call! (mcn)

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Make this holiday season a time for life, love, and lifesaving generosity. Be a blood donor.

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