

Living

MAGAZINE

Holiday recipes

Residents share how to
create the foods that
make their season bright.

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FEELING THANKFUL



By Ryan Ellis

I write this the day before Thanksgiving. It is a time to reflect on gratitude. I am thankful to live in this community. We are in the midst of holding our 14th annual hat/glove drive. Our open house will be December 12 from 5-8 p.m. It is truly an open house. Everyone from the community is invited.

Fifteen years ago, I purchased my first hats/gloves to donate to the Indianola Middle School. I felt compelled to do so because I drove by the middle school on a cold and blustery day. I saw many kids with no hat or gloves. Since that time, it evolved into a community event. We take donations from those within and outside of Indianola. I was recently sent a shipment of hats/gloves from a friend in Chicago.

We started with a small donation to the Indianola Middle School. We now donate to all schools in Warren County. Last year, we donated 2,000 items to keep children warm. Within the last 15 years, our office has been affected by the loss of Janine Jensen to cancer. Janine was very involved in our drive and she catered our events. Our office and our community have also been impacted by childhood cancer. This led to an expansion of our event. We now donate \$1 for each item collected to Unravel

Pediatric Cancer Iowa, a local non-profit group dedicated to bridge the gap in funding for pediatric cancer research. Yes. Ellis Law Offices, P.C. donated \$2,000 to Unravel last year. We hope we can write a bigger check this year.

The cause keeps growing. Roots of Indianola is a great place to shop in Indianola. They have joined the fight. We learned that Roots is also taking collections of hats/gloves and that they will also donate money to pediatric cancer research. This is just one thing I am thankful for. People are making donations, as we speak. Local businesses are joining. It occurs to me that this is how you make change. This is how you make a difference. It truly takes everyone.

While everyone fights his/her own battles, we have been able to rally a community to support our next generation.

I love this community. I love the support. I am truly grateful to live and work in Indianola.



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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 shipped a Spam coin bank to me. 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. ■

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Holiday recipes

Residents share how to
create the foods that
make their season bright.

By Becky Kolosik

Favorite dishes are often at the heart of holiday gatherings. Their aromas wafting through the house signal 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.

Nothing compares to the aroma and taste of homemade stollen, and even though it's a long and involved process, Tom Charlton says the end result is worth it.

Stollen: A German tradition

Tom Charlton's earliest memories of stollen — a sweet cake/bread made from a dough that is soft, buttery and filled with dried fruits and nuts — were smelling them baking at his grandmother's house in Queens, New York.

"It was a staple, along with sauerbraten, red cabbage and spaetzle," he says. "I recall her saying the stollen recipe was a family tradition going back to her grandparents in Germany."

Charlton's recipe is called "Granny's" because his mother continued the holiday tradition — making stollen to give to all her children and grandchildren at Christmas.

"It calls for a jar of candied fruit, but I remember my grandmother cutting up her own rinds of lemon, orange and grapefruit and mixing them with dark and yellow raisins," Charlton recalls.

It has similar ingredients to fruitcake, but the finished "cake" component is white versus dark brown and less dense.

GRANNY'S CHRISTMAS STOLLEN

- Mix 2 packages of yeast in half cup of warm water (set aside)
- Mix together in large bowl:
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup shortening
- 7 1/2 cups flour
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 cup golden raisins
- 1 pint of candied fruit
- Add 1 1/2 cups warm milk and the yeast/water mixture to the above ingredients. Knead on a floured board for 5 minutes. Let rise in a warm place for 1 1/2 hours.
- Punch down and let it rise again until doubled, approximately 30 minutes.
- Roll into four ovals and spread with melted butter. Fold long way and pinch sides together. Spread with more melted butter.
- Place on a greased baking sheet and let rise until doubled, approximately 20 minutes.
- Bake for 25 minutes at 350 degrees.
- Make a glaze of powdered sugar, milk and vanilla and drizzle over the top. Sprinkle with green and red sugar for color. Stollen loaves can be wrapped and frozen if desired.

"Another difference from fruitcake is that I've never seen one used as a doorstep or weapon," he says, laughing.

It is important to allot the time required for the dough to fully rise — twice — so it's not too dense. Charlton enjoys making stollen because it's delicious, and it also evokes many wonderful memories of time spent with family.

There are many variations: adding almonds or almond paste, butter, poppy seed, marzipan or even rum.

WALDORF RED CAKE

INGREDIENTS FOR CAKE

- 1/2 cup shortening
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 1/4 cups cake flour
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon cocoa
- 1 ounce red food coloring

DIRECTIONS

- Cream shortening, sugar, eggs. Make a paste of cocoa and coloring, add to first mixture. Add buttermilk, alternating with mixture of flour and salt. Add vanilla. Add soda to vinegar and add to the above mixture. Blend well. Pour into two greased and floured 9-inch round cake pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until cake springs back when touched.

INGREDIENTS FOR FROSTING

- 3 tablespoons of flour
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup softened butter (sweet cream salted)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup whole milk

DIRECTIONS FOR FROSTING

- Cook flour and milk over low heat until thickened. Cover and place in the refrigerator until cold. Beat sugar, vanilla and butter together. Add half of butter mixture to cooled flour mixture a little at a time, then add remaining butter mixture and beat until spreading consistency. Do not overbeat. Spread on top of cake.



Nancy McKasson enjoys celebrating her Christmas birthday and has wonderful memories of her mom making the day special with Waldorf Red Cake.

Christmas birthday cake

Some people might think that having a birthday on Christmas is a bad thing.

"It's the only birthday I know," Nancy McKasson says. "My parents always made sure part of the day was centered on my birthday — including gifts wrapped in birthday paper, the traditional 'Happy Birthday' serenade, and cake."

The cake would become a Christmas birthday tradition. Known as Waldorf red cake, the recipe was handed down by Nancy's grandmother, who passed away when Nancy was 4.

"I can remember my mom, Nora Edgington, making the cake for me as far back as my fifth birthday," she recalls. "That continued every year until after my dad passed away in 1996."

The cake has several different names — Waldorf, Million Dollar or Red Velvet. Nancy has it as Waldorf in her recipe book, and she saves it for special occasions like weddings, showers or graduations. While most red velvet has cream cheese frosting, she sticks to her grandmother's frosting recipe, which she loves.

Nancy didn't start making the cake herself until her mom passed away, and it took several tries to figure out that it had to be whole milk and that the butter needed to be folded in just right.

"I took all of mom's recipes, some very hard to read the writing, and put them in a family cookbook for my siblings, children, nieces and nephews," she says. "I'll carry on that tradition for my grandchildren, too."

Oma's gingerbread cookies

Norma Lickiss was an amazing cook and baker, and she graciously shared her talents with family and friends who loved nothing more than eating her delicious meals and treats.

Nancy Lickiss says some of her fondest memories of her mother-in-law were of her making Christmas cookies.

"Norma's painted sugar cookies were not only delicious but beautiful," she says. "She was an artist, so just imagine beautifully 'painted' sugar cookies like poinsettias, Christmas trees, and other holiday themes."

However, Nancy's favorite cookies were Norma's gingerbread boys. They were a little spicier than other gingerbreads, with white powdered sugar frosting that hardened, and decorated with cinnamon candy eyes, nose and buttons.

When Norma started sharing her recipes, Nancy decided to try her hand at the gingerbread. Little did the family know that surgery complications would unexpectedly force Norma to live in a nursing home at age 57. She could no longer cook or bake, but Nancy wanted to keep the cookie tradition alive.

"I decided the only cookie I wanted to bake and share were Oma's gingerbread cookies," she says.

Nancy makes dozens of gingerbread cookies every



Oma's gingerbread cookies have been passed down, and Nancy Lickiss says the cookies are not only delicious but full of love and sweet memories of her mother-in-

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OMA'S GINGERBREAD COOKIES

INGREDIENTS FOR COOKIES

- 1 cup butter or Crisco (oleo)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- 1 cup molasses (sorghum)
- 2 tablespoon white vinegar
- 5 cups flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cloves

DIRECTIONS FOR COOKIES

- Combine butter, sugar, salt, egg, molasses and vinegar. Mix in dry ingredients and chill dough for 3 hours.
- Roll on floured surface and cut cookies 1/4-inch to 1/2-inch thick. Bake at 350 degrees for 7-9 minutes. Recipe makes two to three dozen.

INGREDIENTS FOR FROSTING (FOR TWO DOZEN)

- 1 beaten egg white
- 1 1/4 cups powdered sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla

DIRECTIONS FOR FROSTING

- Beat all ingredients together. Spread on cookies and decorate with colored round sprinkles for trees or red hots for gingerbread boys.
- Let frosting set before storing in air-tight container, using wax paper or parchment between layers to prevent cookies from sticking together.

Christmas to give as gifts to family and friends.

“The one change I made was switching to Christmas tree shapes because the boy shape didn’t pack and store as well without breaking,” she explains. “I still decorate with Norma’s frosting but sprinkle them with colored candied balls to look like ornaments.”

Nancy likes that Oma’s cookies are a little spicier, softer and thicker... and they can be stored in an air-tight container all season and still taste delicious. She also likes that the cookies represent such a wonderful woman (and Oma) who meant so much to so many people.



Many of the Hansen family recipes are not just “fluff” but rather reminders of childhood and the comforts of home.

Holiday “fluffy” fruit salad

Fluffy salads have been a church potluck staple for generations, and for Indianola resident Marcia Hansen, they remind her of the comforts of home. On a recent visit to see her 95-year-old mother, Marilyn, Marcia thought it would be fun to bring home a stack of her mom’s old recipe cards.

“Going through them brings back so many memories from childhood,” she says. “I can remember making many of the recipes alongside my mom. Those are the ones that stay close to my heart.”

While Marilyn doesn’t spend much time in the kitchen these days, her specialties were sweet breads, bars and cookies — especially around the holidays. Texas sheet cake and no-bake chocolate slices (a thin and delicious treat with a chocolate graham cracker/coconut crust topped with a sweet, creamy layer and a thin layer of melted semi-sweet chocolate) were two of Marcia’s favorites.

However, Marilyn was also known for her “fluffy” salads.

“There’s just something comforting about pudding and Cool Whip enveloping fruits like pineapple, oranges and strawberries,” Marcia says. “Mom has many variations, and each recipe has its own distinct flavors.”

Fluffy fruit salad has been a favorite for Hansen celebrations, and as grandchildren came along, they loved it, too. It doesn’t last long on the Christmas dinner table. But it’s also a great salad for any time of year and can be easily customized with seasonal decorations for other holidays like Memorial Day or Fourth of July.



HOLIDAY “FLUFFY” FRUIT SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1 3.4-ounce box instant vanilla pudding
- 1 16-ounce can of chunk pineapple, drained (save juice)
- 2 cups Cool Whip
- 1 11-ounce can of mandarin oranges, drained
- 1.5 cups fresh strawberries or raspberries
- 2 cups mini marshmallows

DIRECTIONS

- Mix the pineapple juice (about 1 cup) with pudding (don’t use recipe on box). Let stand for 3 minutes.
- Fold in 2 cups of Cool Whip, then fold in pineapple, oranges and strawberries or raspberries. Add marshmallows.
- Let it chill in the refrigerator. Recipe serves eight and can be made the night before.

Marcia hopes to eventually create a small book of her mom’s favorite recipes to one day pass down to the grandkids.

“It’s fun to look back at hand-written recipe cards because it adds a personal touch,” says Marcia. “While it’s just a list of ingredients, I hope that the generations to come will know how much love and care went into each and every recipe.” ■

TAX planning considerations for year-end: maximize your savings

As the year winds down, it's the perfect time to review your finances and take advantage of tax planning strategies. Proactive planning can help you minimize your tax liability and maximize savings. Here are some key areas to consider, including the updated 401(k) and IRA contribution limits for 2025.



For traditional IRAs, your contributions may be tax-deductible depending on your income and participation in a workplace retirement plan. Roth IRAs, on the other hand, offer tax-free withdrawals in retirement but have income limitations for contributions.

Harvest tax losses

If you've incurred investment losses this year, consider tax-loss harvesting. This involves selling investments at a loss to offset capital gains elsewhere in your portfolio. You can use up to \$3,000 of excess losses to reduce other taxable income.

Assess charitable giving

Charitable donations can provide a meaningful tax deduction. Consider making contributions to City State Bank's Charitable Foundation. Donating appreciated securities can also allow you to avoid capital gains taxes while supporting a cause you care about.

Utilize Roth conversions

If you are in a scenario where your taxable

income is down in comparison to other years, consider a Roth IRA Conversion. Converting assets from a Traditional IRA to a Roth IRA could potentially recognize the income at a lower tax rate. The converted assets will grow tax-free for you and your beneficiary's benefit.

Review your withholdings and estimated taxes

Ensure you've paid enough in taxes through withholdings or estimated payments to avoid penalties. Adjusting your withholding now can help you hit the target before the end of the year.

By reviewing your finances and taking these steps before Dec. 31, you can set yourself up for financial success in 2025 while keeping more of your hard-earned money. ■

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OPEN meetings and records law

Our nation and state were founded on the principle that it is the government that serves and reports to its citizens. In keeping with that principle, Iowa has laws mandating that governmental meetings and records be open to the public. The Open Meetings Act is found at Iowa Code Chapter 21, and the Open Records Act is found at Iowa Code Chapter 22.



Open Meetings Act

The intent of this act is to assure that the basis and rationale of governmental decisions are easily accessible to the people.

The act applies to governmental bodies, which are generally defined as a board, council, commission or other governing body of the state or political subdivisions. A meeting is defined as a gathering of a majority of the members of a governmental body where there is deliberation or action upon any matter within the scope of the body's policy-making duties.

The act requires public notice of each meeting and that it be held in open session. There are some exceptions which allow a body to go into closed session upon an affirmative public vote of two thirds of the members.

It is notable that the public may use cameras or recording devices at any open session.

Open Records Act

The Iowa Supreme Court has observed that the act is designed to open the doors of government to public scrutiny and to prevent government from secreting its decision-making activities from the public, on whose behalf it is its duty to act.

The act applies to governmental bodies, defined as the state as well as any county, city, township, school corporation, political subdivision, tax-supported district and some others.

The act provides that every person shall have the right to examine and copy a public record and to publish or otherwise disseminate its contents. The cost of copying records can be recovered by the governmental body.

Also, a government body shall not prevent the examination or copying of a public record by contracting with a nongovernment body to perform any of its duties or functions.

Of course, there are many exceptions to this. The act details a list of at least 75 types of "confidential records" (with subparts) which are not to be released absent a court order.

Iowa Public Information Board

Iowa Code Chapter 23 created a board to decide cases involving the Open Meetings Act and Open Records Act. As an agency, its decisions can be reviewed by the district court.

Transparent government is reflected by Iowa's open meetings and records laws. As is often the case, there are numerous exceptions to these laws, and a careful reading may be necessary in a given situation. ■

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DELIVERING a meal and a smile

Volunteers make a difference for Warren County seniors.



Rodney Prickett, Bob Burkhart, Carol and Darrel Rau, and Loren Meyer are just a few of the volunteers who deliver meals and a friendly greeting to homebound seniors throughout the week.

It's a Wednesday morning about 10:20 a.m. as Marty Davis opens the large dock door on the north side of the Warren County Justice Center. Waiting outside are volunteers Loren Meyer and Bob Burkhart, ready to load coolers packed with meals and milk for their weekly delivery routes.

Soon Rod Prickett, Darrel and Carol Rau pull in. It's easy to see from the smiles and laughter that delivering senior meals is more than just volunteering. It's also fun.

"The personal connection when we knock on the door is oftentimes just as important as the food," says Burkhart. "Some days, we might be the only connection these people have to the world outside their door."

The senior nutrition program has seen a lot of changes over the last few years. Davis, who is the director, says the biggest was in 2022 when the program moved from the Administration Building to a large, brand new kitchen space in the Justice Center.

Kitchen staff not only prepare meals for seniors, but also serve the three meals a day at the jail.

The move to the Justice Center closed the congregate site in Indianola, but home delivery is available, as well as in Norwalk and Carlisle. Volunteers also have country routes once a week to rural areas like Milo, New Virginia, Lacona and Hartford.

Davis says meal numbers fluctuate, but the program went from 45,000 to 50,000 meals in prior years to 68,000 meals in 2023.

"There are so many more we could serve that don't know about the program or think it's income based," says Davis. "Anyone over 60 or disabled is eligible."

Funding, continually rising food costs and finding volunteers are challenges. A licensed dietician from Aging Resources prepares the menu, and then Davis and her staff tweak it based on availability of food items and how it will work for home delivery. Each meal

includes protein, starch, vegetables, fruit and, sometimes, dessert.

The program couldn't function without committed volunteer drivers. Loren Meyer has been delivering meals for almost two years.

"If you have the time and the physical ability, it's a wonderful way to serve others," he says. "It takes an hour or two out of your week and can be flexible. It's fulfilling to bring a smile, and, hopefully, a bit of joy, to someone that may not have many outside contacts throughout the day."

Davis enjoys her job and says it's like one big family — and that includes her staff, clients and volunteers.

"Many of our clients and drivers have been part of this for more than 20 years," she says. "It truly is a mission to serve."

Davis is always looking for volunteer drivers — whether for weekly routes or for her sub list. Call 515-961-1155 for more information. ■

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HOME HEALTH

By Aaron Wheeler

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. 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.





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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 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.

Whether you're shaking up your breakfast routine or enjoying a fun and easy dinner, it can be taken to new heights with the combination of honey and a sprinkle of powdered sugar for delicious decadence.

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.



Buffalo cauliflower casserole

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 30 minutes

Servings: 6

- 2 cups Minute Jasmine Rice
- 1 package (8 ounces) plain cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup Buffalo hot sauce
- 4 cups frozen cauliflower florets, blanched and cooled
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/3 cup finely crumbled blue cheese
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 400 F. Prepare rice according to package directions. Transfer to greased 8-by-8-inch baking dish.
- In medium bowl, stir cream cheese and hot sauce. Add cauliflower, cheddar cheese, salt and pepper; toss to combine. Spoon over rice. Sprinkle with blue cheese.
- Bake 25-30 minutes until golden brown and bubbly. Sprinkle with green onions.
- Tips: Substitute goat cheese or feta for blue cheese, if desired. Meat lovers can serve as a side dish to seared chicken or beef.





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Upcoming in Indianola 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. 17 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. 17 to be included in the February issue.

Hy-Vee Special Friends Fall Holiday Dance

Friday, Dec. 13, 6-7:30 p.m.
Buxton Room, 2204 W. Second Ave., Indianola

All individuals with special needs and their families, chaperones, respite providers and SCL workers are invited to attend this free drop-in event with dancing, fun and pizza provided by Indianola Hy-Vee.

Jingle in the Junction

Dec. 12, Dec. 19, 5-8 p.m.
Valley Junction

The holiday season is in Valley Junction as many businesses extend their hours on Thursday nights to give you more time to find the perfect holiday gift, enjoy dinner, and enjoy three blocks of free entertainment on 5th Street under the glow of more than 100,000 holiday lights. Enjoy free horse-drawn trolley rides, ice carvings, photo op, a Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony at 6 p.m. in front of the West Des Moines Fire Administration Headquarters at 318 Fifth St., rotating entertainers, live reindeer, carolers, and Santa and Mrs. Claus at the Historic Valley Junction Foundation office from 6-8 p.m.

Creating and expanding your small food processing business

Thursday, Jan. 30

Two Iowa State University Extension experts will present topics important to small Iowa food processors. Presentation information will include:

1. Starting a small food processing business in your home/farm. Learn about Iowa's cottage/home-based food law and how it supports building small businesses from your home.
2. When creating processed foods to sell to the public, what is essential to have on your food label to meet the current Iowa law.
3. Food safety discussion covering topics such as the importance of food safety; proper food handling practices; cleanliness and sanitation; pest control measures; and common food safety hazards and prevention.

In addition to this program, from 5:30-6 p.m., 4- to 15-minute slots will be open to meet with our experts. Penny Brown Huber is the Iowa food business specialist, and her role is to work entirely with small Iowa food processors, assisting them in building their businesses. Daniela Lopez is a food safety specialist working for Iowa State University Human Sciences. Register online at <https://form.jotform.com/243124744804050>.



Pop n' Jolly: A Holiday Show for All Generations

Monday, Dec. 23, 6:30 p.m.
Temple Theater, 1011 Locust St., Des Moines

Join Wagner Summer Theater for its first annual holiday family-friendly event, Pop n' Jolly. Come enjoy fun and laughs with some of the area's top musicians. Grab the crew and take fun photos with Santa and partake in a holiday singalong. The evening will include holiday classics by Dave Wagner and his special guests including two-time Cloris Award winner Julie Larson and national opera vocalist Craig Irvin. Also featured will be a selection of everyone's favorite holiday songs performed by the Wagner Summer Theater Youth Vocal Group. Signature cocktails, mocktails and hot cocoa will be available for purchase. Tickets are available through Des Moines Performing Arts, www.desmoinesperformingarts.org. For more information, visit www.wagnersummertheater.com.

Indianola Community Contra Dances

Third Saturdays of the month starting in January, 9-10 p.m.
First United Methodist Church, 307 W. Ashland Ave., Indianola

Indianola Community Contra Dances will be held Jan. 18, Feb. 15, March 15, April 19 and May 17.



Holiday Hullabaloo

Through Dec. 29
Horizon Events Center, 10320 Hickman Road, Clive

The 2024 Holiday Hullabaloo is an immersive, family-friendly holiday experience that will surprise and delight guests this holiday season. Enjoy a variety of activities, entertainment and festivities that will allow you to create some fun holiday hullabaloo and memories. www.holidayhullabaloo.com



Holiday Promenade

Fridays through Dec. 20
Historic East Village

The Greater Des Moines Partnership and the Historic East Village Neighborhood Association will spread holiday cheer during the Holiday Promenade, an exciting, free celebration full of holiday-themed activities, entertainment, shopping and family-friendly fun. A number of activities will be scheduled including tree lighting, a scavenger hunt, ice skating and more. During the Holiday Promenade dates, Historic East Village retailers are encouraged to remain open until 8 p.m. while restaurants and attractions are open later. ■

GIFT ideas for the gardener

The holidays are upon us, and we have our lists of gifts for family and friends. But, what to get that gardener on that list? Here a few ideas that will make you the star gift giver this season.

Christmas cactus and amaryllis bulbs are popular gifts that will remind the recipient of you every time they bloom in years to come. There are Christmas cactus that have passed through three or more generations within families. Amaryllis bulbs can be planted in the garden next summer, where they will bloom again, before being brought back in to bloom again next Christmas. Getting a poinsettia as a gift (or for yourself)? Be sure to let the recipient know to keep it in bright indirect light, not allow it to sit in water (draining it after watering) and keep it out of drafts or where temps will get below 50 degrees.

Consider a membership to a local botanical center, arboretum or garden society for your gardener. These memberships often come with discounts for the member on programs and merchandise that they can use. Some garden societies have member-only plant sales, giving the gardener a chance to have plants no one else has in their garden. You are also helping these organizations so they can continue to provide services and programs for everyone to enjoy.

Similarly, consider a subscription to a gardening magazine. Many now have internet options for delivery of the magazine content so a physical magazine doesn't come in the mail. There are many good resources out there for the gardener through these publications.

Tools are also a great gift, whether it be a stainless steel trowel, pruners or shovel. Consider going to a local nursery, greenhouse or garden center for these items. Talk with the owner or staff and find out what they use personally. This will give you an idea what the best products are to buy. While you are there, check out seed packets for stocking stuffers or to slip into a card for something special for those on your Christmas card list. Garden markers, unique copper watering cans, unusual ceramic pots, and garden gloves make great gifts that will remind the recipient of you when they use them throughout the year.

Can't decide what to get? Consider a gift card or certificate from that local business. Your gardener will be able to then choose that tool, perennial, or tree that they want in the garden. You are supporting a local business with your purchase and strengthening your community. This is also great for friends and family living elsewhere. Locate a local garden center or nursery and contact them (internet searches help here) for the gift card or certificate.

Have a great holiday with family and friends, and we will see you next year with more gardening tips. And thank you for supporting your local nurseries and garden centers. ■

Information provided by Barry Laws, co-owner, Quilted Gardens Nursery and Landscaping, 19635 130th Ave., Indianola, 515-720-3089, www.quiltedgardens.com.




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7 TIPS for holiday socializing with hearing loss

Here comes the holiday season, along with all the fun of reconnecting with your family and friends at special get-togethers. But if you have hearing loss, participating in conversations at noisy events can pose a challenge — even when wearing your hearing aids.

However, staying present in every special moment may be easier than you think. Follow these helpful tips to make your holidays a little more engaging this season.

- **Schedule a clean-and-check.** Ensure your hearing devices function their best by scheduling a clean-and-check before the party date.
- **Wear your hearing devices with confidence.** The stigma surrounding hearing devices is long gone. It's better to wear them and have a good time instead of straining to hear what others say and possibly misunderstanding key information.
- **Provide communication tips.** Your family and friends will appreciate the opportunity to make it easier for you to follow along. You might want to mention maintaining eye contact, speaking clearly



and not talking while chewing during the meal. That last one applies to everybody regardless of their hearing ability.

- **Ask to move the conversation to a quieter spot.** If you're having trouble conversing in a crowded room, ask to move away from the hustle and bustle of the kitchen or the noisy TV in the family room.

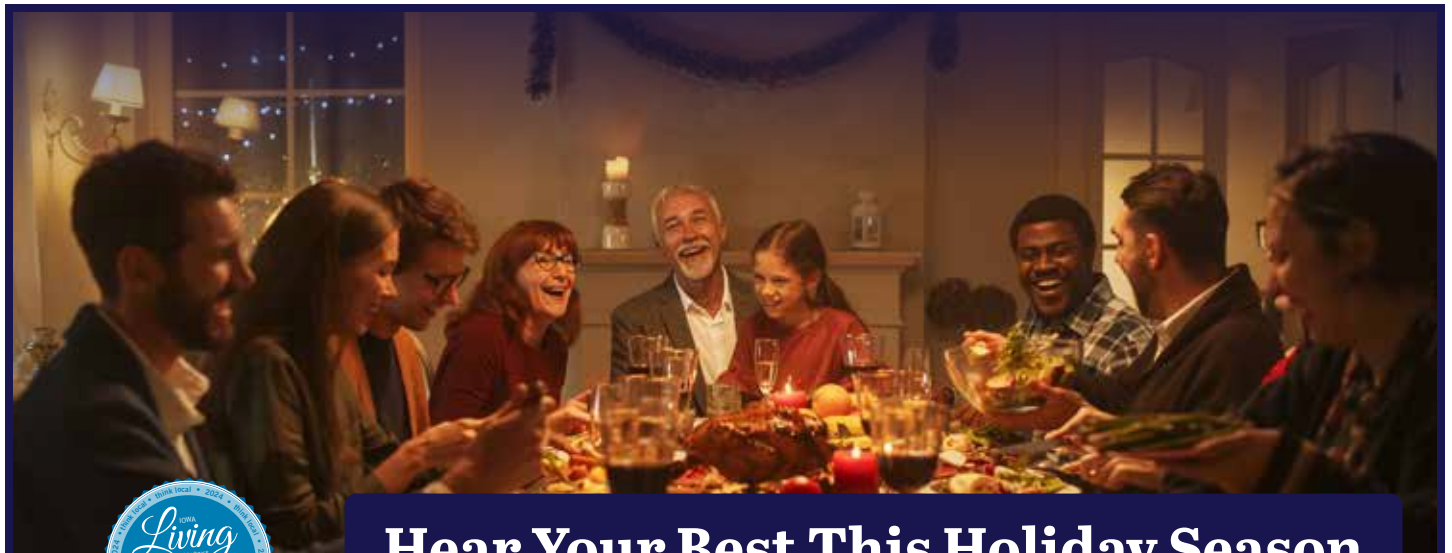
- **Politely request that music be turned down or off during mealtimes.** You can focus more easily on enjoying the conversation without the additional background noise.

- **Select a seat at the table where you can see the other guests' faces.** Reading lips will help when it's harder to hear, such as when several conversations happen simultaneously.

- **Ask your audiologist about hearing accessories for noisy environments.** Improve your conversational skills by using technology designed to help hearing aid users in difficult listening environments.

Do you plan on attending a holiday event and think you may have hearing loss? Address your concerns before the holiday celebrations are underway to ensure you don't miss a moment of the fun — schedule a comprehensive hearing evaluation with your audiologist today. ■

Information provided by Dr. Kelly Cook, audiologist, Iowa Hearing Center, 1228 Sunset Drive, Suite B, Norwalk, 515-416-5990.



Hear Your Best This Holiday Season

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ACUPUNCTURE and the immune system

Acupuncture, an ancient practice that is rooted in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), has gained worldwide recognition for its holistic approach to health and wellbeing. One of the fascinating areas of modern acupuncture research is its impact on the immune system. This article explores how acupuncture influences immune function, enhances the body's defenses and contributes to overall health.



neutralizing foreign invaders. Studies have demonstrated that acupuncture can increase the activity and efficiency of WBCs, thereby bolstering the body's ability to fight infections.

- **Reducing inflammation:** Chronic inflammation is linked to various health issues, including autoimmune diseases and infections. Acupuncture has been found to reduce levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines — proteins that mediate and regulate inflammation. By reducing inflammation, acupuncture helps maintain immune system balance.

- **Balancing immune responses:** Acupuncture is known to regulate the activity of T-cells, a type of white blood cell critical for immune function. It can help shift the immune response from a hyperactive state (as seen in allergies and autoimmune diseases) to a more balanced, controlled state.

- **Enhancing stress resilience:** Stress is a well-known suppressor of the immune system. Acupuncture has been shown to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation and reducing stress hormones like cortisol. This, in turn, enhances immune function and resilience.

Clinical implications

Acupuncture's ability to modulate the immune system has significant clinical implications. It can be used as a complementary therapy for autoimmune diseases, chronic infections and other immune-related conditions. For instance, patients with rheumatoid arthritis or systemic lupus erythematosus may benefit from acupuncture to manage symptoms and improve immune function.

Conclusion

Acupuncture's influence on the immune system is a testament to its holistic approach to health. By enhancing white blood cell activity, reducing inflammation, balancing immune responses, and promoting stress resilience, acupuncture supports the body's natural defense mechanisms. As research continues to unravel the complexities of acupuncture and immunity, this ancient practice may find even broader applications in modern healthcare. ■

Information provided by Dr. Renee Dalrymple, LAc, SEED Meditation Instructor, Soaring Crane Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, 14849 130th Ave., Indianola, 515-808-1548, call or text.

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IT'S PEEL season

VI Peel is a highly effective chemical peel treatment designed to improve skin tone, texture and overall appearance. This advanced peel combines a blend of powerful ingredients, including trichloroacetic acid (TCA), salicylic acid, phenol and retinoic acid, to exfoliate the skin, remove dead cells and promote skin renewal. VI Peel is known for its ability to treat a variety of skin concerns such as acne, hyperpigmentation, sun damage, fine lines and uneven skin texture. Its gentle yet effective formulation works on all skin types and tones, providing visible results with minimal downtime — typically four to seven days of peeling.

One of the key benefits of the VI Peel is its ability to target acne and scarring by clearing pores, reducing inflammation and stimulating collagen production. Additionally, it helps brighten dark spots, improve skin elasticity and reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, revealing smoother, more radiant skin.

Now is an ideal time to get a VI Peel. As we move into the colder months, sun exposure is reduced, allowing the skin to heal more easily and minimizing the risk of post-treatment hyperpigmentation. With less UV exposure and more time indoors, the winter months offer the perfect environment for achieving optimal results from your VI Peel treatment. Plus, post-peel care is easier when you're not constantly battling the sun, helping your skin recover fully for long-lasting, glowing results. Schedule your VI Peel today. ■

Information provided by Chelsea Taggart, L.E, Vivid Life Spa, 1016 Main St., Norwalk, 515-850-7848, living-vivid.com/life-spa.



MEET Tara Paul

Superintendent is leading ICSD into the future.

Change is never easy, but Tara Paul, Indianola Community School District's new superintendent, is settling into her role and is ready to make a meaningful impact.

"I enjoyed 13 years at Estherville Lincoln Central, but when the opportunity at Indianola came about, I was excited to take a closer look at the community and district," she explains. "Several of my colleagues thought my experience would be a good match, and, as the pieces fell into place, my husband and I also believed Indianola was a good fit for our family, too."

Even though she started college at Minnesota State University Moorhead on the pre-med path, Paul quickly learned that her passion was education. Once she earned her degree, she taught sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade social studies and ELA in Wilton.

Her journey into administration started early. After finishing her sixth year of teaching, Paul became curriculum director at Columbus Junction, where she worked closely with students and staff.

"My superintendent at the time encouraged me to continue with my education and to get my superintendent degree while I was still young," she explains. "With his encouragement, I earned my master's in school administration from the University of Iowa followed by my specialist degree from the University of Northern Iowa."

As a teacher, Paul lived by the philosophy that she was there for the students, staff and community. What she did in her classroom, as well as how she treated her students and their parents, was important and set the stage for future interactions. Paul made sure her students knew they were valued as people and that she always had time for them.

That philosophy translates to her role as superintendent.

"As a leader, it's imperative to know who I am representing and leading," she says. "To that end, I make time to interact, listen and learn, so I can determine the best way to serve."

Paul says the support she has received has been incredible. Her family feels welcomed, and she's appreciative of the connections she has started to build — both within the school and in the greater community.

Paul is excited about the future of ICSD and the potential for growth and innovation — specifically with projects like the high school replace in place and planning for additional partnerships with post-secondary academic centers and businesses.

As for specific goals, she hopes to not only cultivate programs and services that cater to student needs and interests, but also to foster strong community partnerships that enhance the educational experience.

Paul's free time is devoted to following her three daughters and their activities and spending time with family as much as possible.

"Family is the foundation I have built my life's work on, and that's what keeps me focused and grounded," she says. ■



ICSD Superintendent Tara Paul is honored to be part of a new, exciting journey and to collaborate with others to make a positive impact on students, staff and the community.

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THE SMILE of God

Most of our worship services here at Mt. Calvary end with the words of Numbers 6:24-26: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” It’s a great reminder of how God loves us.



The words are straight-forward: blessing, keeping, shining, gracious. These we can understand. But what does, “The Lord lift up his countenance upon you” mean?

Well, someone’s “countenance” is his or her face and, more specifically, the expression on their face. When someone would become sad, we used to say that “his countenance fell.” The expressions on his face would move downward... into a frown. A fallen countenance was a sign of sadness. But a raised countenance is when all the parts of a person’s face go up. The brow unfurrows, the corners of his face curl up, forming a smile.

So, this phrase, “The Lord lift up his countenance upon you,” is a reminder that God smiles on us. We see this smile so clearly on Christmas, when God takes on human flesh and, like all babies, learns to smile at those around Him.

This Christmas season, remember that God is smiling on you through Jesus. ■

Article provided by Pastor Tom Vanderbilt, Mount Calvary Church, Indianola.

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For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. - Ephesians 2:10

FARM insurance basics

(Part 1) A farm insurance policy includes some or all of the following four categories of coverage: 1) dwelling, 2) liability, 3) farm personal property, and 4) outbuilding. This month and next month, we’ll look at each of these four categories.



- **Dwelling coverage covers any dwellings on the farm premises.** A farm dwelling may be owned or rented. If you own the dwelling, then the policy covers both the building and your personal property (your belongings that you keep in the home). If you rent the dwelling, then only your personal property is covered; the building is covered by your landlord’s separate policy. The dwelling section of a farm policy may also cover a structure such as a detached garage, if is considered related to the dwelling rather than a farm outbuilding. For a farm with no dwelling on the premises, the farm policy will not include this category of coverage.

- **Liability coverage protects you in case someone suffers bodily injury or property damage in an accident on your farm,** or as a result of your farming operations, for example, if one of your animals injures someone or damages their car. Additional types of liability coverages may be available, for example, employment practices liability insurance (EPLI) if you employ farm workers or chemical overspray liability insurance if you spray your crops.

Next month I will talk about farm personal property coverage and outbuilding coverage. For help with your specific farm insurance needs, talk to your insurance agent. ■

Information provided by Mike Richey Agency Inc., American Family Insurance, 204 E. Detroit Ave., Indianola, 515-961-8889, mrichey@amfam.com.

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MORE than just cookies

Girl Scouts give back to the community.



Local Girl Scouts take some time out to have fun at their service unit overnight at Wesley Woods, where they hiked and had a glow dance party.

It's hard not to look forward to Girl Scout cookie time. The yearly girl-led entrepreneurial program offers important skills and lessons they will take with them into adulthood. And while we reap the benefits of delicious cookies, the girls reap the rewards, too.

But Girl Scouts is about more than just cookies. The organization's mission is to help young girls grow into civic-minded, strong, courageous and confident leaders.

Rusti Wood leads two troops and has also served as the unit manager for the last nine years. The local troop numbers fluctuate each year, but typically 90-125 girls participate in the service unit, which includes most grades from K-12. Registration is ongoing, so new members can join year-round.

Most troops meet twice monthly and have one larger service unit event per month.

"We have at least one field trip or interactive meeting a month, which may include a guest speaker, a trip to an animal shelter or community service project," says Wood. "The

other meeting focuses more on classroom-style or craft-style work. Our unit couldn't do what we do without the fantastic team of adult leaders that work together."

Girls earn badges for categories as varied as the outdoors, art, STEM, animals and women's health.

As for community project awards, the Bronze award is available in fourth and fifth grade, the Silver award during middle school and the Gold award as an individual award in high school. Each are tailored based on age, with Bronze requiring 20 hours towards the project; Silver, 50 hours; and Gold, 100. While Bronze and Silver can be completed as a group, the Gold project is individual. The awards require the girls to research a community need or project, find a solution, work on fundraising towards a budgeted amount, implement the project and provide something that is sustainable to the community.

The service unit recently held a bingo fundraiser for Kiya Koda. Currently, they are

making fleece blankets and scarves to donate, adopting families for the holidays and hosting a diaper drive for the Diaper Bank. Some troops have also made Blue Star military packages, birthday blessing bag donations, and Christmas ornaments for local care facilities.

Troops will also host the annual Pinewood Derby in January with the goal of collecting donations for Sleep in Heavenly Peace. Community members are encouraged to reach out, and leaders would be happy to accept donations for this organization or any other planned fundraisers.

"While many organizations get support around the holidays, it's just as important to support nonprofits year-round," explains Wood. "We would love to have new members join Girl Scouts, as our official year just started in October, and there is still plenty of fun to be had."

If you would like to donate items such as fleece, diapers, or bedding for Sleep in Heavenly Peace or make monetary donations, contact Rusti Wood at rusti.wood@gmail.com. ■

MUSIC Bingo

Music Bingo was held at West Hill Brewing Company on Nov. 22.



Korey, Quinten and Erica McKasson



Cortney and Matt Banse



Nancy McKasson and Jim Ytzen



Vicki Drake and Ronda Nicholson



Joe Keller and David Buss



Katie and William Buss



Rob and Julie Miller



Paige, Meadows, Rogen and Lucy Keller



Ellen and Frank Galsgow



Rachel and Mike Hall



Greg Parrish and Jane Anne Parrish

MUSIC Bingo

Music Bingo was held at West Hill Brewing Company on Nov. 22.



Sandra Bell and Vonnie Peters



Debbie and Andrew Steenhoek



Kelly Lewis and Eric Van Ellen



Nick and Amanda Reinert



Anna Herring and Molly Gute



Ed and Christine Solheim



David Dryer and Kim Cross



Sandra Bell and Jackie Brittingham



Nick and Maxton Merfeld



Lucas and Zach Gute



Megan and Brent Gute

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IMPACT Celebration notes award recipients

The Warren County Economic Impact Celebration was held Tuesday, Dec. 3, at Principal Black Box Theatre at Simpson College. The event reflected on a year of economic growth across Warren County and honored the award recipients.

- Warren County Business of the Year: Wyckoff Heating & Cooling
- Top business in a community under 3,000: Wilson's Farm
- Manufacturer/Producer of the Year: Indianola Precast
- Innovation of the Year: Gregg Young Sports Campus
- New Business of the Year: The Goode Place
- Woman-owned Business of the Year: Pageturners Bookstore
- Warren County Developer of the Year: Diligent Development ■

DISTRICT breaks ground on high school project

The Indianola Community School District held a groundbreaking for the first phase of its high school building project on Nov. 11.

The district will complete the high school renovation in two phases, using a “replace in place” plan. This involves a comprehensive modernization of the facility, replacing older sections of the building and incorporating existing sections that require less updating.

“It is thrilling to see work begin on this project, which is the result of several years of collaboration and planning among the district, board of education and community,” said Superintendent Tara Paul. “We greatly appreciate the individuals who have contributed to the success of this project from the very beginning. I look forward to continuing the first phase of this exciting project and watching the physical improvements of our schools for our students, staff and community.”

Phase I of the project includes constructing a new two-story academic wing, community commons, kitchen, administration suite and main entrance. It will also involve demolishing the existing one-story southern academic wing as well as reconfiguring parking and drop-off areas. ■

Suggest a teacher
for an Iowa Living education column!

Send an email to
tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com

UNDERSTANDING the story

Sometimes things are so familiar to us that we stop seeing them. We’ve heard the story below many times because it is recited each December. Even those of us who consider ourselves to be “not religious” or “never big on church” will still likely think something here sounds “sort of familiar.” No doubt it does. But do you fully understand the story?



Let me set the scene. Two thousand years ago in fulfillment of prophecies made over many centuries, Jesus is born in Bethlehem, a small city in Israel. Within hours, the announcement of his birth is supernaturally made in this widely familiar story told in the Gospel of Luke. But first, some highlights:

- Don’t be afraid — Angels must certainly be fearsome when encountered in person because they almost always have to tell people not to be afraid. In the midst of our fear, God sends the good news of the gospel.
- A Savior, who is Messiah the Lord — In this short phrase, we learn so much. Jesus saves people, which underscores that we are indeed a people in need of being saved from sin. As Messiah, Jesus is sent from God to us for this very purpose. And, as the Lord, Jesus is God who comes to us in human form, even as a helpless baby.
- The sign for you — God wants these things known. Through the angels, God tells the shepherds exactly where to find Jesus and how they’ll know it’s him. God still reveals Jesus plainly to people.
- Glory to God — These events should cause people to praise God, the gospel being that wonderful.
- Peace on earth — Truth be told, this is maybe the most misunderstood phrase in the story. The angels aren’t referring to people getting along with each other on earth. Instead, they mean the peace between God and people who will have faith in this Messiah just born.

With these things in mind, read the familiar story once again.

Luke 2:8-14

In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David. This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough.”

Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors. ■

Information provided by Kevin Mayer, New Heights Church, 200 E. First Ave., Indianola, 515-442-5111.

Happy Holidays!

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