

Living

MAGAZINE

Holiday

recipes

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

Meet Jamie Stefani

EDUCATION

Hot honey chicken and waffle

RECIPE

Sanford turns compassion into action

GOOD NEIGHBOR



Granma Norma's Fudge

3 cups Sugar 3/4 cup butter
 2 1/2 cups Evaporated Milk 12 oz chips
 7oz marshmallow cream 1 tsp vanilla

Mix butter, sugar & milk in pan. Bring to a boil for 5 min, stir constantly remove from heat and add chips; stir until chips are melted, then add cream and vanilla and put into greased cake pan.

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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 GREETINGS

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Holiday recipes

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

By Ashley Rullestad

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.



Grandma Norma's Fudge
3 cups Sugar 1/4 cup butter
1/2 cup Evaporated Milk 16 oz chips
7oz marshmallow cream 1 tsp vanilla

Mix butter, sugar & milk in pan.
Bring to a boil for 5 min. Stir constantly
remove from heat and add chips; stir
until chips are melted, then add cream
and vanilla and put into greased cake
pan.

Kristen McCaslin has carried on the tradition of making her grandmother's peanut butter fudge for the holidays. Photo by Todd Rullestad



Kristen McCaslin still makes and loves her Grandma Norma's fudge.

Grandma Norma's peanut butter fudge

"My Grandma Norma makes the best peanut butter fudge, and I am one of two of her grandkids that makes it still," Kristen McCaslin says. "The stirring takes a lot out of you. She was the glue that kept my maternal side of the family together. No matter what state we lived in or whether there was family feuding going on, the adults had to put that aside, and we all went to Grandma's house. Grandma Marilyn

GRANDMA NORMA'S PEANUT BUTTER FUDGE

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups sugar
- 3/4 cup butter
- 2/3 cup evaporated milk
- 12 ounces chips (chocolate or peanut butter)
- 7 ounces marshmallow cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

DIRECTIONS

- Mix butter, sugar and milk in a saucepan.
- Bring to a boil and boil 5 minutes, stirring constantly.
- Remove from heat and add chips.
- Stir until melted, then add cream and vanilla and pour into a greased cake pan.

always served this orange sherbet salad, as it's crisp and refreshing after a turkey and stuffing dinner. I've shared this dish with the many friendgivings I've been to since being on my own, and now I share it with my family."



Kristen McCaslin grew up eating her grandma Marilyn's orange sherbet salad.

MARILYN'S ORANGE SHERBET SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 2 packages orange Jello
- 1 1/2 cups boiling water
- 2 cans mandarin oranges (save juice)
- 3/4 cup juice from mandarin oranges
- 1 pint orange sherbet

DIRECTIONS

- Dissolve Jello in boiling water.
- Add juice.
- Cool slightly.
- Fold in oranges and sherbet.
- Chill completely.



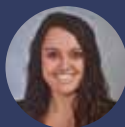
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Sweet rolls

"I make these sweet rolls and cinnamon rolls for our holiday family gatherings," Vickie Hutcheson Cook says. "I usually double the recipe so I can make rolls and cinnamon rolls. The other two are recipes my grandma used to make."



Vickie Cook (shown here with her family) enjoys cooking for holiday family gatherings.

SWEET ROLLS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup warm water
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 packages dry yeast
- 3 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups lukewarm milk
- 1/2 cup soft shortening or oil
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 7 to 8 cups flour

DIRECTIONS

- Dissolve yeast in warm water. Add milk, sugar, salt, eggs and oil. Mix well.
- Add half of flour and stir with spoon until smooth. Add remaining flour and knead until smooth. Place in greased bowl, turn dough in bowl until lightly covered. Cover bowl with cloth and let rise until double (2-3 hours). Punch dough down and

- let rise again until almost double (1 - 1 1/2 hours). Shape dough into rolls and place on lightly greased cookie sheet and let rise again (30 minutes).
- Bake at 400 for 15-20 minutes.
- **For cinnamon rolls:** Roll dough out. Spread with soft butter. Sprinkle with 1/2 cup sugar, 1/2 cup brown sugar, cinnamon and nuts. Roll and cut into 1-inch slices. In bottom of pan, combine 3/4 cup brown sugar and 1/4 cup melted butter. Place rolls on top of this mixture.
- Let rise until double (30-40 minutes or overnight). Bake at 375 for 35-40 minutes. When done, invert rolls onto another pan or foil.

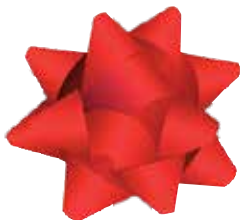
BURNT SUGAR CUSTARD

INGREDIENTS

- 2/3 cup sugar
- dash of nutmeg
- 1 quart milk
- pinch of salt
- 7 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

DIRECTIONS

- Slowly burn 2/3 cup sugar in baking dish.
- Combine remaining ingredients and heat well.
- Pour in sugar-coated dish.
- Bake 1 1/2 hours at 350 degrees.



ITALIAN COOKIES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup butter
- 1/2 cup anisette liquor
- 1 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon anise extract
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 5 eggs
- 7 cups flour
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 5 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground caraway or ground anise seeds
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 cup black walnuts



DIRECTIONS

- Mix butter, liquor, sugar, extracts and eggs.
- In another bowl, mix dry ingredients and add to butter mixture alternating with milk and ending with dry ingredients.
- Mix in walnuts.
- Roll out in strips.
- Place on a cookie sheet and bake at 375 for 12 minutes or until golden brown. While cookie is still hot, cut in about 1-inch pieces.

GERMAN PEPPERNUTS (PFEFFERNUSSE)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pint molasses
- 1 pound brown sugar
- 1 pound lard
- 1 package dry yeast
- 1/4 cup warm water
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup strong coffee
- 3 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ginger
- 3 drops anise oil

DIRECTIONS

- Heat molasses, brown sugar and lard in a pan until lard melts, then cool completely.
- Add yeast to warm water.
- Dissolve baking soda in coffee. Sift together the dry ingredients.
- Mix all ingredients together. Add additional flour if needed to make a stiff dough.
- Refrigerate overnight. The next day, shape into pencil size rolls and roll in sugar.
- Slice off half-inch pieces and place on cookie sheet.
- Bake at 325 degrees for 20 minutes.

German peppernuts (pfeffernusse)

"My mom, LaVonne Barkhoff, always made the peppernuts until the need for so many required me to make a batch, too," Gretchen Bonebrake says. "She was 93 when the photo was taken, and she made them until she passed at age 96. The recipe came over from Germany in the late 1800s. My husband is half Swedish, so the cookies are his favorite. And the last recipe I got from a library associate I worked with. They're great when you need a treat fast."



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FEATURE

SWEDISH COCONUT COOKIES

INGREDIENTS

- 3 1/2 cups flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups softened butter
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup flaked coconut

DIRECTIONS

- Beat all ingredients together except coconut, then add it.
- Divide dough in half and make two 12-inch by 2-inch logs.
- Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 2 hours.
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Slice 1/4-inch slices and bake 10-14 minutes until lightly browned.
- Can be sprinkled with colored sugar before baking.



Gretchen Bonebrake's mom, LaVonne, taught her how to make their favorite German holiday cookies, peppernuts.

GREEN HOLLY TREATS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 cup butter
- 30 large marshmallows
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon green food coloring
- 3 1/2 cups cornflakes
- Red hot candies (optional)



DIRECTIONS

- In a saucepan or in the microwave, melt butter and add marshmallows and stir until marshmallows are melted.
- Add vanilla, food coloring and corn flakes.
- Drop by large spoonfuls on waxed paper.
- Decorate with red hots if desired.

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From sparkling drive-thru displays to festive neighborhood light shows, here's your ultimate guide to the best Christmas lights in our local communities of Grimes, Urbandale, and Ankeny this year!



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A HIDDEN gem

Brenton Arboretum offers beauty and education.

Nestled just outside Dallas Center, the Brenton Arboretum offers a haven for nature lovers, families and those seeking a peaceful escape. It's a sanctuary for the soul and a year-round destination for outdoor exploration.

Executive Director Melissa Burdick shares that the Arboretum — a botanical garden specifically for trees — is home to more than 4,000 trees, showcasing an impressive variety of species across its sprawling landscape.

"There's a tremendous amount of diversity," Burdick says.

Unlike city or county parks, the Arboretum is a privately operated public charity, dedicated to conservation, education and public enjoyment. Admission is free, with a small fee for non-member visitors bringing their furry friends (\$5 per dog per visit).

Whether you're hosting a large family gathering this holiday season and need to get out of the house, or are seeking solitude just for yourself, the Arboretum is a worthwhile destination.

"Spend as much time as you want out here," Burdick says. "We have miles of trails to hike and explore. They're nice and easy to enjoy."

For younger visitors, the O'Brien Nature Play Area offers natural, engaging play spaces perfect for burning off energy. Meanwhile, solo visitors can find quiet moments of reflection in spots like the meditation labyrinth among the conifer collection.

"We're a great place to get a moment of peace and quiet," Burdick says.

She adds that a visit to the Arboretum is a helpful way to get a heavy dose of "Vitamin N" — Vitamin Nature.

While some may think of arboretums as a place to enjoy the outdoors during warm weather, winter at the Brenton Arboretum comes with its own set of benefits.

"Seeing our trees in the wintertime is a whole new perspective on their value in the landscape," Burdick says. "People think that trees in the winter are dead and lifeless, but really, they have amazing structure. The architecture of the branches, the twigs and the bark can be amazing and interesting, too."

People even visit the Brenton Arboretum after a fresh snowfall. Burdick often arrives to find snowmen dotting the landscape or evidence of cross-country skiing.

Winter programming keeps visitors engaged as well. Weekly meditation sessions and yoga classes are held every Wednesday, indoors or outdoors, depending on the weather. For children, the Kids Nature Club meets twice a month, featuring seasonal, nature-themed lessons like animal tracking or hibernation.

"There's all sorts of learning activities, but they're also just fun,"



The Brenton Arboretum in winter offers beautiful scenery that can be enjoyed on a stroll, snowshoeing or cross country skiing.

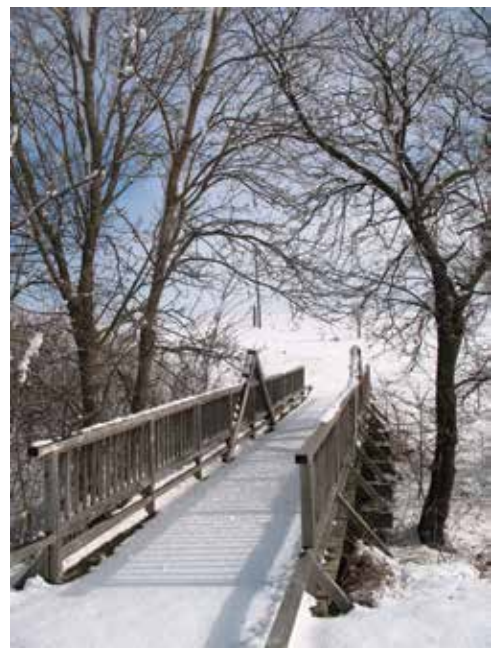
Burdick says.

As spring arrives, the Arboretum's calendar fills with more events. April marks the start of their busy programming season, beginning with an Earth Day celebration on April 27. Monthly events follow, including a homeschool field trip day in May, a June concert, and July's Wine on the Prairie fundraiser.

But if you're seeking a way to embrace nature and the beauty of winter right now, the Brenton Arboretum is ready to welcome you.

"Bundle up, wear some snowshoes if there's snow on the ground, and just be out there," Burdick says. "You'll be amazed at how wonderful and special this place is, and it's right here in our own backyard."

For more information, including event details and membership benefits, visit the Brenton Arboretum's website, thebrentonarboretum.org. ■



RECIPE

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.

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](https://www.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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SPINNING crafts and yarns

Knoll specializes in alpaca fibers.

In 1945, a small guild, the Des Moines Weavers, was formed with members from around the Des Moines area. For a time, it met in members' homes. Later, the guild met in the basement of the Des Moines Art Center. When Shari Janssen became the president of the guild around June 2019, the group made a move to a more permanent home in Franklin Junior High in Des Moines. Today, the group is known as the Des Moines Weavers and Spinners Guild.

Karolyn Knoll, a guild member for four years, joined because Shari Janssen reached out and invited her. She has taken classes that the guild offers, including spinning, knitting, yarn dyeing and weaving. Though she considers each of them fun, her passion lies in alpaca fibers and spinning.

"I don't have alpacas, but I raised sheep for about eight years, so I have some knowledge of those kinds of fibers. I wanted to learn to knit, which led me to attend the Winterset Fiber Palooza. My passion grew from there. I drove past Rust Star Alpacas on my travels and stopped for a first-time visit. I learned that there are better quality yarns than what you can procure in retail stores. I began working on my certification to become an alpaca fleece judge with the Alpaca Owners Association, Inc.," she explains. "Now, I am working on my 'sort, grade, and classing' certification, which is beneficial to processing fibers for best results in finished products."

Knoll has joined the ranks of the members who share their crafts and specialties through classes and lectures. Most recently, she has given an educational talk and participated in the Fiber Festival in Perry, "Fleece to Fashion:



Karolyn Knoll has been a Des Moines Weavers and Spinners Guild member for four years.

Understanding Your Alpaca Yarns." Knoll says that the multitude of classes offered are outstanding, offered via volunteer time by the guild members or invited Fiber Artists to share their knowledge.

"The most unique class I have taken was from Chiaki O'Brien, a Bengala mud dyeing course" she recalls. "Bengala mud dye is made from natural and sustainable minerals from the soil only found in Japan. There are a couple of people here that sell Bengala dyes, but, for the most part, you have to go to Japan to get them."

Each year, Knoll hosts the Threads and Fibers festival in November, and the guild hosts Fiberfest in the spring. The next Fiberfest will

be April 26.

"FiberFest kicked off for the first time in 2020," Knoll shares. "The fees for FiberFest help us cover our rent at Franklin Junior High."

Knoll says there is typically a good turnout for the festivals, but the guild would like to see it grow. The guild has a variety of classes throughout the year, following the school calendars from September to May, and then they take the summer months off except for their participation in the State Fair each year. They meet one time per month on Saturdays and have other specialty groups meeting at different times. For more information, visit the guild's website or their pages on Instagram and Facebook. ■

NEWS BRIEF

FORMER DMACC student honored

Eight former Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) students were recently recognized in a special dinner and ceremony hosted by the DMACC Alumni Association at the DMACC Ankeny Campus.

Recipients included Clint Dudley, DMACC Ankeny Campus, AAS in Auto Mechanics Technology, 1999; owner of Shade Tree Auto. Dudley lives in West Des Moines. ■



Clint Dudley

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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.

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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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.



Max out your retirement contributions

Retirement savings accounts like 401(k)s and IRAs not only help you prepare for the future but also offer tax benefits. For 2025, the IRS has increased contribution limits:

- 401(k) contributions: The maximum contribution limit for 2025 is \$23,000, up from \$22,500 in 2024. If you're age 50 or older, you can contribute an additional \$7,500 as a catch-up contribution.

- Traditional and Roth IRA contributions: The limit remains at \$7,000 for individuals under 50 and \$8,000 for those 50 and older.

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. ■

For more information, please contact Bryce Block or Wade Lawrence with City State Bank Trust & Investments at 515-986-2265. Not FDIC insured. Not deposits or other obligations of the bank and are not guaranteed by the bank. Are subject to investment risk, including possible loss of principal. City State Bank does not provide tax or legal advice. Each taxpayer should seek independent advice from a tax professional. These materials are based upon publicly available information that may change at any time without notice.

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LAW enforcement and the holidays

Increased auto break-ins, alcohol-related donnybrooks, driving under the influence of holiday spirits, and declining road conditions — welcome to the holiday season. (That's sarcasm. I adore the holiday season.) Law enforcement is on higher alert, increasing your likelihood of interacting with them.

Many new law enforcement officers (LEOs) are eager to prove themselves and of the mindset that the law is the law. If you are speeding, you will get a ticket. If you are in a fight, you are probably headed for the gated community. In contrast, a well-seasoned LEO has come to realize that the priority is to ensure a safe and peaceful environment for all, including the LEO. Therefore, as long as everyone treats the LEO with respect and no one is hurt, the likelihood of a ticket or trip is less. The Des Moines Police officer I interviewed claims there are no ticket or arrest quotas, nor are the numbers or lack of numbers used in any way to reward or penalize an officer.

Lesson one: Treat all LEOs with respect, even if you think you are in the right. It is their job to figure out what is happening. They cannot do that without some form of cooperation. I am not advising that you simply admit wrongdoing. You do have a right to avoid self-incrimination.

Lesson two: If your interaction with the LEO is during the late shift, understand that you may be dealing with a less experienced person. The more seniority, the better the opportunity to choose the preferred shift. LEOs are people, like the rest of us, who generally prefer to work during the day. A less experienced LEO may be quicker to respond to aggression with increased aggression. There is no substitute for experience.

How do I know if I am under arrest? Ask. You can ask, at any time, even if you are sitting in the back of the LEO vehicle, "Am I free to go?" If the answer is "yes," and you want to leave, then say so. If the answer is "no," stop talking except to give your name and ask for a lawyer. If the answer is: "You can answer questions here, or you can answer them in jail," it does not mean that, if you answer questions now, you will not go to jail. In fact, you probably will. Happy holidays. ■

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



EVENTS IN THE AREA

To submit calendar items for consideration, send to tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.

Be sure to check for cancellations.

Upcoming in Grimes/ Dallas Center 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. 25 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. 24 to be included in the February issue.

Growing the Good Life / Check Out What's Cooking

Saturday, Dec. 21, 11 a.m. to noon
Grimes Public Library,
200 N.E. Beaverbrooke Blvd.

This ongoing series provides opportunities to learn about crafts, food and gardening while also allowing for hands-on practice. In this session, we will mix up a delicious blend that can be used to spice up your holiday hot drinks. Keep the mix for yourself or great for gift giving. Register online at <https://grimes.librarycalendar.com/event/growing-good-life-2658>.

Family Night: Jingle Bell Storytime

Monday, Dec. 30, 6-6:30 p.m.
Grimes Public Library,
200 N.E. Beaverbrooke Blvd.

Songs, rhymes, books and activities designed to be developmentally appropriate for ages 2-5, but any age is welcome to attend.

Jan. 6: Soap Making
Jan. 13: Guacamole

Candlelight Christmas Eve service

Christmas Eve, 7 p.m.

Grimes First Presbyterian Church,
410 S.E. Third

All are welcome to the Grimes First Presbyterian Church Candlelight Christmas Eve service.



Grimes Chamber Annual Dinner

Thursday, Jan. 16, 5-8 p.m.

Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center,
5291 Stoney Creek Court, Johnston

This annual event celebrates recent accomplishments and sets the stage for the goals of the coming year. At this event, the chamber recognizes Business of the Year, Citizen of the Year, Educator of the Year and the Ambassador of the Year, as well as the incoming board of directors and outgoing directors. The event is an exciting evening that allows the community to celebrate its many successes. It includes a silent auction, food, beverages, networking and an opportunity to celebrate Grimes. Table of eight is \$525. Individual ticket is \$75. The theme is superheroes and dressing for the theme is encouraged. For reservations, contact the chamber, 515-986-5770.

Who's Got Game: Saturday Edition

Saturday, Jan. 18, 10 a.m. to noon

Grimes Public Library, 200 N.E. Beaverbrooke Blvd.

Come and learn how to play a board or card game from our collection or join in with a tabletop role-playing game. Sessions will vary between learning new games and participating in an ongoing game series. Each program will be a little different depending on the library staff running the program and the chosen game. Check out our calendar to stay up to date with each program's focus. Please arrive close to 10 a.m. so everyone can learn the rules and play together. Open to ages 16 and older, younger if accompanied by a parent. ■



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FITNESS

By Haley Powers-Risdal

Q: Should being sick stop you from going to the gym?

A: It is that time of year, the flu and head colds are hitting us hard. No matter if you have had either one this year or not, we all know what it feels like to be sick. There is so much stress placed on your body when you are ill that you feel exhausted, achy, and all you want to do is stay home. So, when do you decide to call it and not go into the gym? Here is the complete, honest truth. When you are sick, do not come into the gym. Your body is telling you that it needs to rest. As mentioned, your body already has a lot of stress put on it to get over the cold. Why would you want to put it through even more stress going through an intense workout? Not only are you going to exhaust your body even further and make your sickness even worse, you are also going to increase everyone else's chances of getting what you have. They say a cough and a sneeze can travel up to 6 to 8 feet and remain in the air for a while. Taking one day off isn't going to stop your progress, but not taking a day off could not only affect you, but all those around you. So, remember to rest up. Your body will thank you later. ■



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

WELLNESS

By Vanessa Andersen

SET HEALTHY boundaries

There is social pressure to spend time with close and extended family during the holiday season, and this can bring stress and anxiety to those who have challenging relationships within their family systems. Relationships can be challenging, especially if there is a history of conflict or hurt.



Boundaries are a form of self-compassion and values-based decision making that allows you to create the experiences you want for yourself. Knowing how to set boundaries is a healthy way to navigate holiday gatherings and leave with your emotional wellbeing intact.

Brené Brown, a guilt and shame researcher, offers these guideposts for boundary setting:

- Boundaries: Make clear what is OK and not OK and why.
- Reliability: Do what you say you will do. Don't overpromise. Balance competing priorities.
- Accountability: Own your mistakes. Apologize. Make amends.
- Vault: Share only your information. Keep confidential what is shared.
- Integrity: Choose what is right over what is fun, fast or easy.
- Nonjudgement: Ask for what you need. Talk about how you feel without judgement.
- Generosity: Extend the most gracious interpretations to intentions, words and actions of others.

By setting healthy boundaries, you can approach holiday time with family more positively, with greater confidence and peace of mind. ■

Information provided by Vanessa Andersen, LISW, Licensed Mental Health Therapist, Pink Couch Wellness, 1220 N.E. Station Crossing, Suite 204, Grimes, www.pinkcouchwellness.com. Recommended resources: "Dare to Lead" by Brené Brown and "Boundaries" by Cloud and Townsend

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MEET Jamie Stefani

Third grade teacher enjoys her gig.

Jamie Stefani didn't know right away that she wanted to be a teacher, but she knew she enjoyed working with kids.

"I knew I wanted to do something important that would leave an impact on other people," she says. "My past teachers also played an important role in my life. They always believed in me and helped shape me into the person I am today. I wanted to be that person for others."



Jamie Stefani teaches third grade at South Prairie Elementary school.

She attended Iowa State University for her undergraduate degree, and she is almost finished with her master's degree through Buena Vista University. Currently in her sixth year of teaching, Stefani began her career in her hometown of Fort Dodge before coming to DCG three years ago. She now teaches third grade at South Prairie.

Described as "sunshine personified" by one of her current students' moms, Stefani says third grade is the best place to be. For her, it's her dream grade. Her happiness in her position is clear to the students and families she works with. They say her joy is contagious.

Stefani also likes South Prairie because of its family feel.

"Everyone is willing to do what is best for every student, and building relationships is highly valued. It's always a goal of mine to create a space where students know they can come and feel seen and loved."

Teachers do face challenges every day, and, for Stefani, one of the biggest is meeting the wide range of needs within her classroom. However, that can also be the rewarding part.

"When we are able to help students maximize their full potential and see them shine, it is really special. Even if we don't see the immediate outcome, it's important to remember that the work we are doing does make a difference."

One of Stefani's favorite things to do is have lunch with students in her classroom. She says it is hilarious to see what topics get brought up when they aren't learning. She enjoys being able to talk and share about things that are just for fun.

When she's not at school, you'll find Stefani reading and watching football, especially the Cyclones and the Packers. She enjoys spending time with her husband, Kyle, and their goldenoodle, Indy. They like to be outside, go on walks, and play pickleball. ■



Jennifer Grove, D.D.S., P.C. • Matthew Platt, D.D.S., P.C.
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Sanford turns compassion into action.

When Jody Sanford moved to Grimes in May 2019, she likely had no idea the impact she would soon make on her new community and beyond.



Over the past five years, Sanford has immersed herself in meaningful volunteer work, dedicating her time and energy to helping those in need.

Sanford's volunteer journey began in April 2020 at the Bond of Unity Food Pantry, which is an equal opportunity provider to those with food insecurities in the area. The organization provides families with food such as staple pantry items, meat, bread and dairy products when available.

In addition to her work at the food pantry, Sanford lends her time to Street Kings Ministries, which is part of the Bond of Unity and focuses more on providing for the needs of the homeless population in and around Des Moines. The group delivers hot meals and food boxes, clothes and personal hygiene products, as well as warm clothing and protective items during the winter months to homeless camps around the metro.

For Sanford, this work is more than just distributing goods.

"Through these items, we are able to show people the love of Jesus



Tim Short, Edward Jones, presents the Good Neighbor certificate to Jody Sanford.

Christ and remind them that, in Him, there is hope even in their darkest circumstances," she says.

Sanford's motivation to volunteer stems from her desire to connect with others.

"I think the biggest thing for me is to let people know that they are cared for, that they are seen and heard," she says. "Everyone has their own situations and battles that they face in life. Knowing you are not alone, and that people truly care, can make all the difference in the world to someone in a dark moment."

This belief drives her work, and it's evident in the heartfelt moments she's experienced. Her absolute favorite ones are when she gets to witness the reconciliation of family members. About a year ago, with Street Kings Ministries, Sanford was present when a father saw his daughter for the first time in many years and met his grandchildren for the first time.

Sanford encourages others to volunteer, noting that the joy of offering help in times of need is an incredibly rewarding experience.

"I think most, if not all, of us, have been in a situation where we needed a little extra help from someone," she says. "Seeing the look of hope and relief on someone's face who was just praying for something, and we show up with that item, is one of the greatest feelings that I can imagine."

Her passion for making a difference extends beyond tangible goods, too.

"When you can offer a kind word or smile to someone, along with a hot meal, you can almost physically see the weight lift off of their shoulders," she says.

For her, that makes all her efforts worth it. ■

Edward Jones > edwardjones.com | Member SIPC

Merry Christmas

Enjoy the holiday season with friends and family!

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December 24: Christmas Eve 4pm & 6pm
December 25: Christmas Day 9am
December 31: Nativity of the Lord 5pm
January 1: Solemnity of Mary Mother of God 9am

Rosary

Every Tuesday evening at 8:30pm

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Join us Tuesday, Wednesday, & Fridays
8:30am-11am \$2 each day to play

Indoor Walking (gym)

Monday 9am-noon and Friday noon-2pm

K of C/Social Justice

Tamanique Breakfast
January 12 - 10am-11am (gym)

Adoration/Benediction

3rd Tuesday of the month
12/17, 1/21, 2/18, 3/18

Chili Cook-off (registration online)

January 18 - 6-9pm (gym)

Adult Faith Study Group on Acts

January 6-March 24 (2nd Session)

Next Baptismal Prep Class

Sunday, January 19 at 1pm
register with Brenda at the Parish Office

Assumption Appreciation Dinner

January 25 after 6pm Mass

Trivia Night (registration online)

February 22, 2025 after 6pm Mass

Blest Art (olive wood art from Bethlehem)

March 1 & 2nd, after all Masses

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CHAMBER

By Brian W. Buehne

REFLECTING on Grimes

A season of gratitude and growth



As we close out another year, and Thanksgiving fades into the rearview mirror, it's the perfect time to reflect on how fortunate we are to be part of a thriving community like Grimes. Our community has grown tremendously, bringing opportunities, new neighbors and exciting changes. Yet, with growth comes a natural tension — some wish things could stay just as they were when they first arrived. While change can be challenging, it also brings vitality, new amenities and fresh energy to our community. We believe the future of Grimes is bright, and, together, we're building something extraordinary.

This season also reminds us of the importance of gratitude. At Grimes Chamber & Economic Development, we are deeply grateful for the business community that forms the backbone of our local economy. It's a privilege to work with the entrepreneurs, employees and community leaders who make Grimes special. Our businesses don't just provide goods and services — they support schools, sponsor events, and foster connections that make Grimes a place where people feel at home.

The holidays are also an important time to think about the impact of where we spend our money. When you choose to shop, dine or hire services locally, your dollars do more than complete a transaction — they contribute directly to the wellbeing of our neighbors and the strength of our community. Local businesses are the heart of Grimes, helping to create jobs, fuel growth, and support programs that improve our quality of life.

We're proud to see how far our community has come, and we know the best is yet to come. Growth means opportunity and, with that, comes responsibility. As we move into a new year, let's continue working together to ensure Grimes remains a vibrant place for families, businesses and dreams to grow.

On behalf of the staff and leadership of Grimes Chamber & Economic Development, we wish you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season and a prosperous New Year. ■

Information provided by Brian W. Buehne,
President | CEO, www.GrimesIowa.com

HAPPY HOLIDAYS GRIMES!

*Thank you for
supporting local
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GRIMES
CHAMBER & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OUT & ABOUT



A ribbon cutting was held for River Hills Surgical Center, 3201 S.E. 37th St., Grimes, on Nov. 4.



A ribbon cutting was held for Dosaage Vineyard and Winery, 8606 N.W. 121st St., Grimes, on Nov. 8.



Rob Paulus and Tom Harmsen at the Dallas Center Betterment Group Social at Raccoon Valley Bank on Nov. 7.



Shane Goodman and Tim Short at the Dallas Center Betterment Group Social at Raccoon Valley Bank on Nov. 7.



Darla MacConnell and Maureen Cahill at the Dallas Center Betterment Group Social at Raccoon Valley Bank on Nov. 7.



John Cook and Karwyn Gibson at the Dallas Center Betterment Group Social at Raccoon Valley Bank on Nov. 7.



Amy Studer and Nancy Roll at the Dallas Center Betterment Group Social at Raccoon Valley Bank on Nov. 7.



Jill Alltringer and Brian Buethe at the Joint Legislative Luncheon Nov. 20.



John Palmer, Katie Wold and Clint Dudley at the Joint Legislative Luncheon Nov. 20.



The Legislative Panel at the Joint Legislative Luncheon Nov. 20: Larry McBurney, Dan Gehlbach, Eddie Andrews, Jill Altringer, Ryan Weldon and Heather Matson.

OUT & ABOUT



Tim Short and Jacob Whitman at the Grimes Chamber Lunch and Learn held at DCG High School on Dec. 11.



Jacque Butzke and Alex Cordes at the Grimes Chamber Lunch and Learn held at DCG High School on Dec. 11.



Mallori Phillips, Chad Allison and Julie Quandt at the Grimes Chamber Lunch and Learn held at DCG High School on Dec. 11.



Halsey Scales and Chris Watkins at the Grimes Chamber Lunch and Learn held at DCG High School on Dec. 11.



Joan Warren and Sandi Ellis at the Grimes Chamber Lunch and Learn held at DCG High School on Dec. 11.



Members of the DCG Singers performed at the Grimes Chamber Lunch and Learn on Dec. 11.



The DCG High School Jazz Band performed at the Grimes Chamber Lunch and Learn on Dec. 11.



Bob Fitch and Scott Blum at the Grimes Chamber Lunch and Learn held at DCG High School on Dec. 11.



Donna Sevenich and Jozsef Grull at the Grimes Chamber Lunch and Learn held at DCG High School on Dec. 11.



Matthew Platt, Jennifer Grove, Shana Howard and Austin Tyskling accept the Residents Choice certificate on behalf of Grove & Platt Dental Associates.



Brandon and Steve Cavanaugh accept the Residents Choice certificate on behalf of Stevie C's.



Kim Shabino and Kennedy Dalby at the Grimes Chamber Lunch and Learn held at DCG High School on Dec. 11.



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Wishing you a joyful holiday season and a happy, healthy New Year!

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