

NORTH POLK

DECEMBER 2024

# Living

MAGAZINE

# Holiday

## recipes

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

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EDUCATION

**Kiwanis seniors of the month**

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**Hot honey chicken and waffle**

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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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**December 25: Christmas Day** 9am  
**December 31: Nativity of the Lord** 5pm  
**January 1: Solemnity of Mary Mother of God** 9am

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*1st Saturday of the Month morning Mass at 8am*  
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# Holiday recipes

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

By Lindsey Giardino

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.

For Ryan Giardino, chocolate pie has been a holiday tradition since his childhood, when his grandmother made it. He put a spin on the tradition for his kids by serving it Christmas morning.

## Grandma's chocolate sheet cake

Anna Davis cherishes a family recipe that carries not just the taste of tradition but also the memory of her grandmother, Sylvia Close.

To keep that memory alive, Davis has Close's chocolate sheet cake recipe framed on her wall. The framed version features her grandmother's handwriting, a deeply personal keepsake, while an easier-to-read, printed copy — prepared by Davis' aunt — helps ensure the precise steps are followed.

"The steps are very important, or it won't turn out right," Davis says.

Close was known for baking with love, especially during Thanksgiving and Christmas. Her kitchen would be filled with the aroma of pies and the signature chocolate sheet cake she'd make to share with family.

"She would bake her heart out," Davis says.

Now, Davis carries on the tradition,



Anna Davis, pictured with her grandma, Sylvia Close, has made her grandmother's chocolate sheet cake part of her family's holiday traditions.

ensuring that her grandmother's legacy remains a part of every holiday.

"I now make this fabulous cake to keep her memory alive in all our holiday traditions," Davis says.

Though it's more work than a simple box cake, she insists it's worth the effort.

"It tastes way better," Davis says.

## GRANDMA'S CHOCOLATE SHEET CAKE

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 sticks butter
- 1/4 cup cocoa
- 1 cup water
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 teaspoons baking soda

### DIRECTIONS

- Mix together sugar, flour and salt. Set aside.
- Melt butter, cocoa and water. Bring to rapid boil.
- Pour over flour mixture and mix well.
- Add eggs, buttermilk, vanilla and baking soda. Mix well.

- Pour into greased cookie sheet.
- Bake at 400 degrees for 20 minutes.

### INGREDIENTS FOR FROSTING

- 1 stick butter
- 1/4 cup evaporated milk
- 2 tablespoons cocoa
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 box powdered sugar
- Nuts (optional)

### DIRECTIONS FOR FROSTING

- Bring butter, milk and cocoa to a boil.
- Add powdered sugar and vanilla. Beat until smooth.
- Add nuts and spread on cake while hot.

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When Close passed away two years ago in October, Davis sought a meaningful way to honor her grandmother's legacy. She photocopied the treasured recipe, framed it for all her cousins, and ensured that Close's memory would live on for generations to come.

## CHOCOLATE PIE

### INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 1/2 squares baking chocolate (melted) (use semi-sweet)
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
- 2 eggs

### DIRECTIONS

- Cream butter and sugar together.
- Add melted chocolate (Tip: Melt chocolate in microwave for 2-3 minutes on 4 power) and vanilla.
- Add 1 egg to mixture, beat for 5 minutes, then add the other egg and beat for 5 minutes.
- Pour into baked pie crust and refrigerate overnight.

## Chocolate pie

For Ryan Giardino, chocolate pie isn't just a dessert; it's a slice of his childhood.

Growing up, Giardino looked forward to every family gathering on his mom's side, especially Christmas, knowing that his grandma's chocolate pie would take center stage on the table.

"The pie was amazing, but it was more than that," he says. "It was about the time spent with my grandma, who meant a lot to me."

Those gatherings became some of Giardino's most treasured memories. Though his grandma has passed, the tradition of chocolate pie lives on in his family. Today, it's Giardino's mother who creates the dessert for special occasions, ensuring her son still gets to enjoy the treat that defined so many of his childhood celebrations.

"She knows how much it means to me," Giardino says.

But the tradition doesn't stop there. Determined to embed the memory even deeper into his own family, Giardino created a fun new tradition: chocolate pie for breakfast on Christmas morning. It's a little unconventional,

but, for Giardino, it's perfect.

"It might seem funny, but I wanted my kids to grow up with their own special memories," he explains.

Each Christmas, Giardino and his wife, Lindsey (writer of this story), gather with their two young children, diving into slices of rich chocolate pie after opening presents.

"It reminds me of my grandma and is just a fun thing to do with my own kids," Giardino says. "I hope that, one day, they'll look back on these mornings and have good memories."

## Buttery peanut brittle

For more than 30 years, Gail Bauman has spread holiday cheer by sharing her Christmas staple: buttery peanut brittle, a treat beloved by her family and friends.

Every holiday season, she whips up anywhere from 10 to 15 pounds of the treat.

"A lot of people that I know and love look forward to it," she says.

Bauman first got the recipe from a friend and co-worker, and, over the years, it has become one of her most requested Christmas sweets.

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For more than 30 years, Gail Bauman has spread holiday cheer by sharing her Christmas staple: buttery peanut brittle.

But peanut brittle is just the beginning. Bauman also makes sugar cookies, peanut butter buckeyes, Oreo truffles, crinkle cookies, peanut butter star cookies, peanut clusters, fudge and monster cookies every year. She arranges these homemade goodies on platters,

handing out 15 to 20 of them to friends and family.

Baking has become a special family tradition for Bauman. She and her daughter set aside a few days each holiday season to tackle all the Christmas treats together. Her two

young grandsons are beginning to join in on the fun, too.

“Holiday baking is a tradition I look forward to every year, and I’m happy to have recipes to pass down for generations to come,” Bauman says.

**BUTTERY PEANUT BRITTLE**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 cup salted butter (no corn oil)
- 3 cups raw peanuts
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

**DIRECTIONS**

- Add sugar, corn syrup and water in a sauce pan. Cook until all dissolves.
- When syrup mixture boils, blend in the

butter.

- Stir frequently after mixture reaches syrup stage (230 degrees).
- When temperature reaches crack stage (280 degrees), add nuts and stir constantly.
- At hard crack stage (305 degrees), remove from heat and quickly stir in baking soda, mix thoroughly.
- Pour onto cookie sheet. When cool, break into pieces. Makes 2 1/2 pounds.



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DUTCH LETTERS

INGREDIENTS FOR DOUGH

- 1 pound butter or margarine
- 4 cups flour
- 1 cup water

INGREDIENTS FOR FILLING

- 1 pound almond paste
- 3 eggs
- 2 cups sugar

DIRECTIONS

- Mix the dough ingredients, cover and chill overnight.
- Beat almond paste until smooth then add rest of filling ingredients. Mix well and chill.
- Divide dough into small amounts and roll like pie dough. If making straight strips, cut into 4-inch

- strips. If making specific letters, judge the length of the strip by the letter.
- Spread filling down the center of the dough strip, lap one side of dough over the filling then the other side and pinch the ends shut.
- Place on cookie sheet with seams on bottom. Form into desired letter shape. Freeze.
- When ready to use, place on greased cookie sheet. Brush tops with beaten egg whites and sprinkle sugar on top. Prick with fork every 2 inches for steam to escape.
- Bake at 400 for 20 to 30 minutes or until a light golden brown. Makes 14 4-inch strips.

Dutch letters

“We make homemade Dutch letters each year for Christmas,” says Emily Feldman. “As kids, my mom would bake them on Christmas morning, and my sisters and I would wake up to the smell of fresh Dutch letters baking.” ■



Emily Feldman’s nieces enjoy holiday baking.



Emily Feldman has carried on her mother’s tradition of making Dutch letters for Christmas.

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# POLK CITY Community Library news

See all events at [polkcitylibrary.org](http://polkcitylibrary.org). **Note:** The library will be closed for the holidays all day Dec. 24-25; close at 5 p.m. on Dec. 31; and be closed all day Jan. 1 and Jan. 20 (for staff training).

• **Library winter weather policy:** If school is delayed due to inclement weather, all morning programs will be canceled. If school is dismissed early due to inclement weather, all afternoon/evening programs will be canceled. If school is canceled due to inclement weather, a decision about opening the library will be made by 9 a.m. All programs will be canceled.

• **Babble and Brew, Thursday, Jan. 2, 10 a.m.** Don't let the cold weather get you down, come on into the library for some climate-controlled fun. We will have coffee for you and exciting, age-appropriate toys for the kiddos.

• **Adult Crafternoon: Busted Canvas, Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2 p.m.** This month we'll be making busted canvases. These viral photo displays are fun and easy to make. Ages 17 and older, registration required.

• **Coloring Night at Fenders Brewing, Wednesday, Jan. 8, 4-9 p.m.** Come for a night of relaxation and fun with friends at Fenders Brewing.

• **Friends of the Library Meeting, Wednesday, Jan. 8, 6:30 p.m.** The Friends of the Polk City Community Library have four scheduled meetings per year. All meetings are open to members and the public. Anyone interested in supporting the library is welcome and encouraged to attend.

• **Wiggles and Giggles: Music and Movement for Tots! Thursday, Jan. 9, 10 a.m.** A fun-filled, interactive class designed for toddlers and their caretakers to enjoy together. Through lively songs, playful rhythms and easy dances, you'll bond while helping your little one develop coordination, balance and creativity.

• **Game Night with The Dealt Hand, Friday, Jan. 10, 5:30-8:30 p.m.**, Polk City Community Room (new city hall). Drop in at any time for a fun evening playing games. Play one of your favorites or learn something new. You are welcome to bring your dinner and eat while playing. The Friends of the Library will provide popcorn and a hot cocoa bar. Any and all ages are welcome.

• **Puzzle Swap, Saturday, Jan. 11, 10 a.m. to noon.** Do you have extra puzzles sitting around that you are looking to rehome? Bring them to the library Jan. 2-9, and we will put them on our puzzle swap on Saturday, Jan. 11. You will receive one ticket for each puzzle you donate. Each ticket can be used to choose a new puzzle on Saturday.

• **Lego Club, Tuesday, Jan. 14, 3:45 p.m. K-2nd; 4:45 p.m. Grades 3 and up.** For ages, 8-16. Registration is required. Register online at [polkcitylibrary.org](http://polkcitylibrary.org).

• **All-Abilities Club (for adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities), Wednesday, Jan. 15, 11 a.m.** In this story and craft hour for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families and caregivers, we'll read stories, make crafts and play games together. For a list of activities, reach out to the library ahead of the program. Register online at [polkcitylibrary.org](http://polkcitylibrary.org).

## Polk City Community Library

1500 W. Broadway St., Polk City  
515-984-6119  
[www.polkcitylibrary.org](http://www.polkcitylibrary.org)  
Monday - Wednesday: 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
Thursday: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.  
Friday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Saturday: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Sunday: closed

• **Messy Munchkins, Thursday, Jan. 16, 10-11 a.m.** This fun-filled program invites little ones to dive into sensory play with squishy, splattery activities. Dress them in old clothes and watch as they explore, create, and get delightfully messy in a safe environment.

• **Cookbook Club, Thursday, Jan. 16, 6 p.m.** Gather around for a fun potluck social hour. This session's theme will be soup. Bring a pot of your favorite soup to share and bring along a written copy of the recipe as well. Registration recommended but not required.

• **Build-a-Bear Storytime Registration Opens Tuesday, Jan. 21, 10 a.m.** The ever-so-popular Build-a-Bear Storytime is back on Feb. 15. The Friends of the Library are once again sponsoring this fun activity. You will need to register for a specific time slot. This program fills quickly, so mark your calendars for registration day.

• **Comets Kids Club, Tuesday, Jan. 21, 4-4:45 p.m.** Kids will create their own craft to take home. Registration required. Register online at [polkcitylibrary.org](http://polkcitylibrary.org).

• **Adult Coloring, Tuesday, Jan. 21, 5-7 p.m.** Join us for a relaxing evening of coloring. Colored pencils and gel pens will be provided. You are also welcome to bring your own. Ages 17 and older.

• **Adult Evening DIY: Hobbit Doors, Thursday, Jan. 23, 6 p.m.** We'll be making mini-wreaths based on everyone's favorite hobbit's front door. Perfect for welcoming local hobbits, gnomes or fairies. Ages 17 and older, registration required.

• **Adult DIY Card Crafting, Monday, Jan. 27, 6 p.m.** Join Jane and Kim in making handmade cards that are fun to create and treasured by the recipients. Make two cards each of four different designs using numerous techniques. There will be a \$5 material fee payable that night. Beginners are welcome. Feel free to bring scissors and adhesive if you have them, and prepare to have a good time. 17 and older. Register by clicking on the calendar event on our website one month in advance of the program.

• **Chair Yoga, Mondays, 9 a.m.** Stay tuned for our January schedule. This chair yoga practice will include breath work, mindfulness and simple, easy movements to release tension, reduce pain and restore your body to optimum movement. Props needed are an armless chair, like a kitchen chair, and a small hand towel or kitchen dish towel. This class will be broadcast on the big screen in the library, or join the Zoom meeting from your home via our website. No chair yoga Dec. 23 or Dec. 30. ■

we wish you a *Merry Christmas* & Happy New Year!



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<b>Sunday: 9:00 am</b>	

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3<sup>rd</sup> St south to 52<sup>nd</sup> Ave, then east to the church

# 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](http://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.



*Make a Difference This Holiday Season*

# BE A BLOOD DONOR



In the season of giving, there are many ways to make a difference—donating time, services, or gifts. But have you ever thought about giving the most precious gift of all—the gift of life? Every day, patients in Des Moines area hospitals rely on LifeServe Blood Center for essential blood products. Blood cannot be manufactured; it can only come from generous donors like you.

This holiday season, you have the power to make a difference beyond measure. By rolling up your sleeve and donating blood, you can give a gift that truly embodies the spirit of the season—hope, life, and love.

Let this be the year you start a new holiday tradition—a family tradition. Invite your loved ones to join you in giving the gift that truly matters, and together, you can help save lives. Because there's no greater gift than the one that allows someone else to enjoy another holiday with those they love.

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



[lifeserve.info/tradition](http://lifeserve.info/tradition)

## 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](http://wesleylife.org/wellahead).

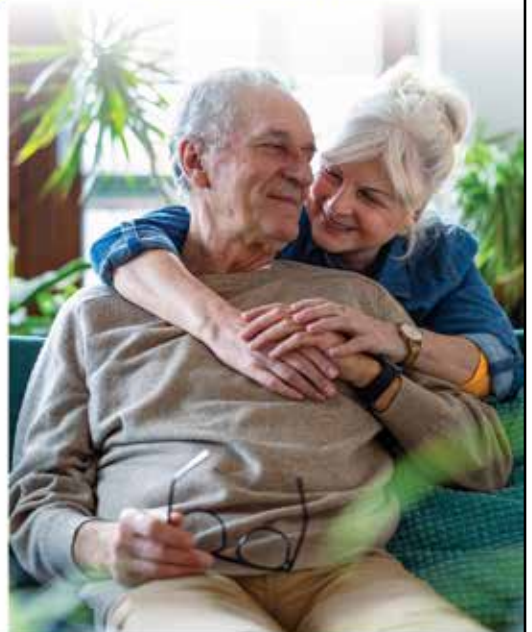
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## INSURANCE By Corey Hoodjer

### LIFE insurance mistakes to avoid

When you purchase life insurance, you're getting important protection and peace of mind. You'll want to make sure you make the right choice so you have the coverage you need. Here are some common mistakes to avoid when you're shopping for life insurance.



**1. Getting the wrong type:** As you figure out how to shop for life insurance, you'll quickly realize there are many different types of policies. The two main types are: term, typically less expensive and covers a set period of time; and whole, typically more expensive, but covers you for life and builds cash value. The type that's right for you will depend on your circumstance.

**2. Waiting too long:** If you're young and single, buying life insurance might not be a priority. But if you plan to have a family or purchase a home, you may want to look into life insurance sooner.

**3. Relying on group life insurance:** You might have group life insurance through your job or other organization. Group life insurance is nice to have, but it typically doesn't move with you when you leave a job.

**4. Focusing only on premium:** Getting the most value for your money doesn't mean buying the cheapest policy. Many factors play into how much life insurance costs.

**5. Being underinsured:** When you buy life insurance, you'll probably be looking at some big numbers. Make sure you have enough coverage. ■

Information provided by Corey Hoodjer, Farm Bureau Financial Services, 101 E. Bridge Road, Suite D, Polk City, 515-420-6160. The guarantees expressed are based on the claims-paying ability of the life insurance company. Neither the Company nor its agents give tax, accounting or legal advice. Consult your professional advisers in these areas. Registered Representative/Securities & services offered through FBL Marketing Services, LLC, + 5400 University Ave., West Des Moines, IA 50266, 877/860-2904, Member SIPC. Farm Bureau Property & Casualty Insurance Company, +\* Western Agricultural Insurance Company, +\* Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company +\*/West Des Moines, IA. +Affiliates. \*Company providers of Farm Bureau Financial Services.

## INVESTMENT By Kyle Matzen

### YEAR-END financial moves

Once again, it's the busy holiday season. Still, try to take the time to consider some financial moves before we turn the calendar to 2025.

First, review your investment portfolio to ensure it is performing as expected and still fits your goals, risk tolerance and time horizon.

Next, if you can afford it, consider adding to your 401(k) and health savings account. And if you have a flexible spending account, you'll want to spend any unused funds before the year ends, or else risk losing them.

If you have children, consider opening a 529 education savings plan, which allows for tax-free withdrawals for qualified education expenses.

Here's another suggestion: Contribute to an emergency fund to help cover six months of living expenses or unexpected costs such as a major home or car repair.

And if you're 73 or older, make sure you take the required withdrawals from your traditional IRA so you can avoid penalties.

Finally, review your estate plans, especially if you've recently experienced changes in your family situation such as marriage, remarriage or the birth of a child.

These moves may prove helpful — not only for 2024 but in the years to come. ■



This content was provided by Edward Jones for use by Kyle Matzen, your Edward Jones financial advisor at 407 W. Bridge Road, Suite 7, Polk City. Member SIPC

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## Merry Christmas

Wishing you and your family a safe and festive Christmas!.



**Kyle Matzen, AAMS™**  
Financial Advisor  
407 W Bridge Rd Ste 7  
Polk City, IA 50226  
515-984-6073

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# THE MINI Moo Crew

The Moret family loves its miniature Scottish Highland herd.

For the past nine years, Jamie Moret and her family have called Elkhart home.

In that time, her husband, Mike, and their two children, Tyce and Reece, have embraced a simple life in the community.

“Although it took us years to find the right acreage, we are so happy we get to call this place home,” Moret shares. “Our acreage gives us the space to enjoy our farm animals while still being only five minutes from Costco — giving us the perfect blend of country life and convenience.”

Jamie and Mike both have demanding careers — Mike in banking and information security and Jamie in user experience design and artificial intelligence in the insurance industry. Yet farm life is a family tradition, so they are committed to making time for it.

“My dad is a farmer who also raises cattle, so our kids have been exposed to farm life from the time they were born,” Jamie explains.

This connection to agriculture inspired the Moret family to dive into their own venture: raising miniature Scottish Highland cattle.

“As a family, we decided that, if we were going to raise cattle, they had to be something special,” Jamie says.

Her one requirement? They had to be cute.

“We soon fell in love with mini Scottish Highland cattle, and the demand for these adorable cows has only grown,” she says.

Their affectionately dubbed “Mini Moo Crew” has grown into more than just a farm project.



Jamie and Mike Moret and their children, Tyce and Reece, make up the “Mini Moo Crew.” They raise miniature Scottish Highland cattle.

“We now work with people all over the United States to help them find the perfect mini Highland for their homes,” Jamie says.

Beyond raising the cattle, the Morets cherish the relationships they’ve built through their venture.

“Raising these ‘mini moos’ has been a fun adventure for our family, and we’re thrilled to share that passion with others,” Jamie says. “The Mini Moo Crew has become more than just a family project — it’s a way to spread joy, one cute cow at a time.”

Elkhart’s close-knit atmosphere has been a significant part of the Morets’ journey. Their children’s involvement in local programs like Elkhart Clover Kids and Elkhart Rising Suns 4-H not only nurtured their love for agriculture but also connected the family to a supportive community.

“It’s a journey that started with our kids’ interest in farm life and continues to expand, thanks to our wonderful community and the strong relationships we’ve built,” Jamie says.

The Morets like sharing the joy of their farm and invite anyone interested in the Mini Moo Crew to visit.

“If you’re ever curious about meeting the Mini Moo Crew in person, we would love to have you,” Jamie says.

Their friendly herd enjoys attention, and the family is happy to share their passion. For updates and plenty of adorable cow photos, you can follow the Mini Moo Crew on Facebook. ■






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# HOME STATE BANK

## Happenings

### WISHING YOU A JOYOUS & WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON

We are so thankful for the warm welcome into your community this past year. As we've now been able to celebrate each season here, we are excited to continue growing our relationships and offer the best customer service and services for your financial goals.

May your holidays be filled with warmth and cheer and we look forward to continuing to serve you, your dreams, and our community in the new year! Stop by and pick up a Home State Bank 2025 Calendar!

From Your Home  
State Bank Team

HAPPY  
*Holidays!*

### WELCOME NEW TEAM MEMBERS!



We're excited to welcome two new members to our growing team.

Anthony Beyerink joins our team as a Credit Analyst. Tamra Wayman joins us as a Universal Banker.



Welcome to the Home State Bank team, Anthony and Tamra!

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Polk City Foundation - Winter  
Wonderland Gala



### CLOSURES

**Closing at Noon:** December 24 and December 31

**Closed:** December 25 for Christmas Day and January 1 for  
New Years Day

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## FINANCE

By Tiff McClain

# ENHANCE your banking with technology tools

When it comes to banking and managing your finances, the basics haven't changed much. You still need to deposit money, check balances, and maybe even open new accounts. But what has changed dramatically since the advancement of technology is how we bank.



Technology has allowed us to bank faster and with more convenience. Whether through specific apps or services and products provided by your financial institution, the technological tools available shouldn't be overlooked.

**Online banking:** As the internet boomed, so did the ability to bank online. For many people, online banking became the time-saver no one knew they needed. No more running to the bank to make deposits or calling to check balances. All your day-to-day personal or business financial needs could be done from the comfort of your home or office.

Most financial institutions' basic online banking services include mobile deposits, transfers, e-statements and bill pay.

**Fraud detection:** One of the more well-known services that has been appreciated with the advancement of technology is fraud detection. Not only setting up alerts but also reporting fraudulent or suspicious activity to your financial institution has given many people peace of mind. In addition to consumers being able to manage fraud detection from their home or phone, banks have also increased their prevention and detection through technology and analysis.

**Card Management:** The ability to manage your cards has come a long way. Instead of calling your financial institution, card management tools include a wide variety of services from setting travel alerts, turning your cards on or off as needed, setting up digital wallets, and even setting budget limits at specific merchants or locations on multiple cards. Even better, you can make these changes 24/7. No worrying about waiting until Monday when your bank is open. You have more control in your hands.

**Financial literacy:** Depending on your financial institution, they may offer financial literacy services and products for their customers. While there are many financial literacy apps available, you should check with your financial institution, as some banks partner with the developers to provide free access for their customers.

While technology can at times feel overwhelming, when it comes to managing your finances, there are a lot of advantages to using the available technology and tools available through your financial institution. Many also offer free educational resources on using these online tools.

To learn more about how to best manage your banking needs, contact your bank. ■

Information provided by Tiff McClain, cash management specialist, Home State Bank, 101 E. Bridge Road, Polk City, 515-329-8801.



# MEET Wendy Ipsen

Special education teacher

Wendy Ipsen and her family were looking for a “small-town feel” in both the school district and community, and Polk City fit the bill when they decided where to live.

Ipsen, who has been in education for 14 years, was hired in the 2024 school year as a special education teacher at Central Elementary.

“I have been impressed over and over with the things we have seen and been involved in with the North Polk School District community,” she says. “That, and wanting to be a part of the community where my kids are, is what led me to start looking for a job with North Polk.”

Her own children attend West Elementary, so she isn’t at the same school as her kids.

“They were a little disappointed when they found out we wouldn’t be at the same school, but both love it there and are doing great there.”

Ipsen previously taught at Urbandale School district. She’s worked in various positions, including a before and after school program and a preschool program. She worked as a para-associate and a long-term substitute teacher before she became a special education teacher.

After working at a daycare, she knew she wanted to become a teacher.

“I really enjoyed teaching the kids and making learning fun. I had great experiences all through school and loved going. I want to help all children have that same feeling.”

Because of her position, she teaches students consecutive years, with many students up to six years.

“The best part of my teaching career has been the relationships I get to build with my students,” she explains. “I have been blessed to be able to keep students from one year to the next, and that allows a deep relationship to be built between my students and I.”

All students are unique, and she likes to watch kids evolve over the years.

“It’s amazing to see the growth the students make in that amount of time,” Ipsen says.

The best part of being a teacher is seeing the student’s excitement that comes with learning, she says, adding she feels honored when her students feel a sense of accomplishment.

“I hope my students always look forward to coming to my class, not just for learning, but as a place they feel welcome and safe to be themselves.” ■



Wendy Ipsen likes that she can teach the same students for consecutive years and build relationships with them.

# WHAT IS meibomian gland dysfunction?

Meibomian gland dysfunction (MGD) is a common cause of dry eye disease, occurring when the meibomian glands, located in the eyelids, become obstructed or dysfunctional. These glands are responsible for producing the oily layer of the tear film, which helps prevent the evaporation of tears and keeps the eyes lubricated. When the glands fail to function properly, the tear film becomes unstable, leading to dryness. Meibomian gland dysfunction can be caused by various factors, including aging, hormonal changes, certain medications, systemic conditions and environmental factors such as prolonged screen use or dry air. The condition is often characterized by symptoms such as burning, itching, a gritty sensation and blurry vision. Over time, untreated MGD can contribute to chronic dry eye disease and even damage the surface of the eye. One of the emerging treatments for MGD is intense pulsed light (IPL) therapy. IPL has been used primarily for skin conditions like acne and rosacea, but recent studies have shown its effectiveness in treating MGD. Research has shown that IPL therapy can significantly improve symptoms of MGD, including reducing eye dryness and enhancing the function of the meibomian glands. IPL works by delivering bursts of light energy to the skin around the eyes. This treatment helps to reduce gland obstruction by promoting the secretion of oils from the glands and reducing inflammation in the eyelid tissue. Other treatments options for MGD include warm compresses, omega-3 supplements and prescription medications to reduce inflammation. ■



Information provided by Dr. Todd Pietig, Ankeny Family Vision Center, 311 N. Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny, 515-964-1671.

Merry Christmas!

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# POLK COUNTY

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Serving a diverse Central Iowa community, Polk County is among the nation's most innovative public institutions. We bring together creative leaders, collaborative organizations and key resources to empower our communities and make life better for all people in Polk County.



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POLK COUNTY

# HIGHLIGHTS



Polk County  
**Life Services**  
Center

#### Contact Information

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

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



Polk County Sponsors On With Life 'Extreme Build'

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



Polk County Helps Fund New Youth Mentoring Center

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



Iowa Events Center Naming Rights



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

# NOW HIRING!

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## EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations.

### Upcoming in North Polk 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](mailto: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](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com) by Jan. 24 to be included in the February issue.

### CITYVIEW's Fire and Ice

Saturday, Jan. 18, 1-4 p.m.  
Historic Valley Junction  
Foundation, 137 Fifth St.,  
West Des Moines



Join CITYVIEW's Fire and Ice, an interactive winter pub crawl in Historic Valley Junction. Fire and Ice is a hockey-themed liquor sampling event that will be sure to warm up your winter blues. With your event ticket, you will receive 10 individual drink tickets to sample some of the best winter cocktails from establishments in the Valley Junction area. Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$35 at the door. For tickets, visit <https://fire-and-ice.dmcityview.com/>.

### Sponsors and donations sought for gala

The Polk City Community Foundation is planning its annual Winter Wonderland Gala, which will be held on Saturday, Jan. 11 at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny. The gala will include a program, dinner and live auction. Proceeds will benefit Polk City and the foundation's nonprofit partnerships in the area.

Polk City Community Foundation (PCCF) was formed in 2008 as an affiliate of the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines. The Foundation was formed to assist in improving the quality of life in Polk City and surrounding communities through philanthropy. PCCF provides an opportunity for donors to direct their donations to the projects that are important to them. They do this by raising money through donations, planned giving, grants and fundraising. This year, the Foundation has a big goal — to raise \$150,000.

The foundation encourages the public to support the event as an attendee, sponsor or donor. Donations can be made by credit card online at <http://getregistered.com/PCCFWinterGala> or by check mailed to Polk City Community Foundation, P.O. Box 52, Polk City, IA 50226.

### Galentine's Trivia

Thursday, Feb. 13, 7 p.m.  
Polk City Legion Post, 114 W. Broadway St., Polk City

The annual Galentine's Trivia event, hosted by Polk City Friends of the Parks with help and support from the Polk City Women, is coming up. Trivia will be 1990s themed. Cost is \$100 per table of up to five people or \$25 per individual wishing to be placed with others to create a team. Bring your own food. Drinks will be available for purchase, cash only. Everyone will go home with a prize. Doors open at 6 p.m., and trivia will start at 7 p.m. Funds raised at this event will support Polk City parks, trails and green spaces. This event is LGBTQ friendly. Register at <https://donorbox.org/90s-trivia> ■



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# WHY YOU should join Go Polk City



Polk City is growing, and there's never been a better time to get involved. Whether you're a resident or a business owner, joining Go Polk City Chamber and Economic Development can open up opportunities for you and our community.

**For community members:** If you're a resident looking to connect more with Polk City, becoming a member of Go Polk City is a great way to start. It's not just about networking — it's about being part of something bigger. You'll meet neighbors who care about making Polk City a fantastic place to live. From community events to volunteer projects, many ways exist to get involved and make a real difference. Plus, your membership helps support initiatives that improve our city, from parks and recreation to local schools and safety.

**For business owners:** Running a business in Polk City? The chamber is your go-to resource for growth and success. As a member, you can access valuable tools and support designed to help your business thrive. Attend networking events to meet other local entrepreneurs, participate in workshops that sharpen your skills, and take advantage of marketing opportunities that can boost your visibility. The chamber also advocates for businesses, ensuring your voice is heard on important issues affecting our local economy.

**Membership benefits for everyone:** Go Polk City offers membership options tailored for community members and business owners so everyone can find something valuable. Here's what you can expect:

- **Networking opportunities:** Connect with other members, local leaders and potential partners.
- **Business resources:** Access tools and information to streamline your operations and improve your business performance.
- **Advocacy and representation:** Ensure your voice is heard on key local issues impacting your business and community.
- **Marketing and visibility:** Increase your presence through Chamber-sponsored events, directories and promotional opportunities.
- **Educational programs:** Learn and grow with workshops, seminars and training sessions designed to enhance your skills and knowledge.

For a complete list of membership benefits, visit the Go Polk City website and explore the membership section.

**Join us today:** Joining Go Polk City Chamber and Economic Development means becoming part of a supportive and active community dedicated to making Polk City the best it can be. Whether you want to connect with your neighbors or take your business to the next level, the chamber has the resources and community you need to succeed.

Don't miss the chance to be part of Polk City's growth and success. Visit [www.gopolkcit.com](http://www.gopolkcit.com) to learn more about membership options and sign up today.

Become a member today and help shape the future of Polk City. Let's work together to create a thriving, connected, and prosperous community for everyone. ■

Information provided by Staci Allen, Executive Director, Go Polk City Chamber, P.O. Box 226, Polk City IA 50226, 515-984-3098, [admin@polkcitcitychamber.com](mailto:admin@polkcitcitychamber.com).

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CHAMBER + ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Join the Chamber!

**Join Now**

# KIWANIS honors Seniors of the Month

The Polk City Kiwanis Club named five Seniors of the Month for November.

## Ali Lundgren

"I enjoy taking journalism classes, reading, baking and playing tennis and pickleball with friends and family," Lundgren says. "I love to travel. One place I definitely plan on going to is Ireland. I enjoy going to church, and I love Jesus. My future plans are to build a career that is centered around helping others."

Lundgren's parents are Jake and Tara Lundgren of Polk City, and her sibling is Coby. Her favorite school subjects are broadcasting/journalism and English. She is involved in Key Club, Principal's Council and tennis. She is a member of the National Art Honor Society. She volunteers at her church, attends youth group, participates in Key Club and works at Jester Park Nature Center. She plans to attend the University of Northern Iowa.



## Logan Bakken

"A summary of who I am is a student who is trying to achieve high standards, especially within topics of STEM," Bakken says. "I participate within co-curricular activities such as multiple optional bands and robotics club, in which I spend most of my time working. Within robotics, I attempt to make the team and robot the best they can be, and it can be through my work in software. I plan on working in software engineering upon entering college at Iowa State. I have made steps to get there through participating in technology competitions and robotics competitions. I overall wish to make an impact through working with software."

His parents are Michelle Bakken and Michael Bakken, and his siblings are Lucas and Evan.

His honors include three consecutive second placements at robotics regionals, Innovation in Software for robotics, and two Purple Ribbon Awards for the ITEC Tech Fair.



## Lucas Bakken

"My name is Lucas Bakken. I am 18 years old. I am a student at North Polk High School and an employee at the Polk City Community Library. My two core passions are writing and acting. Ever since my freshman year, I have been involved with both the broadcasting class and speech teams respectively. I hope to pursue my passions by getting a degree at the University of Iowa, which is known for having the best journalism and film programs in the state. I feel it is important to mention that I am also an animal lover with a plethora of different pets. In my free time, I like to work on scripts and short stories and relax by playing some video games with my friends."

Lucas' parents are Michelle and Michael Bakken and his siblings are Logan and Evan. Honors include Speech All-State Nominee for Improv. Lucas has also participated in ACTORS (Ames Community Theatre).



## Olivia Madison

"I am a senior at North Polk High School and am highly involved in the band program, which includes the marching band, concert band, pep band, jazz band, show band and musical pit band. In addition to the band program, I am also a member of my school's National Honor Society and Math Honor Society. Outside of School, I enjoy hanging out with friends, working a part-time job and volunteering within my community. I plan to continue my musical career through music education or performance in college."

Olivia's parents are Holly Madison and Jason Madison of Polk City, and siblings are Sydney and Harper. Honors include Karl King Band Award and High Letter Points Award for Band.



## Stockton Huether

"I am Stockton Huether, a senior at North Polk High School. I am involved in many school activities including cross country, marching band and speech. Outside of school, I enjoy fishing, gardening and watching movies. After high school, I will attend Iowa State University and study mechanical engineering."

Stockton's parents are Scott and Elizabeth Huether of Ankeny, and sibling is Frankie Huether. Stockton also participates in jazz band, tennis, school play and Environmental Club. He is a 2025 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalist, 2024 AP Scholar with Honor and on the 2024 Gold Honor Roll. He is involved with Polk County Conservation. ■



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# SMALLER Business Saturday

Polk City Smaller Business Saturday was held Nov. 30.



Rene Locker



Nina Gotta



Robert Kerr



Angie Brackett



Tory Loney



Elie Crawford and Annaliese Kamps



Dana Havlik and Ashley Schrage



Soraya Cardenas and Maria Lauer



Blair Lakis



Sa Dudley



Mary Lewellin



Sharon Peterson



Only Santa and  
North Polk Living magazine  
make it to every household!

Merry Christmas from  
*Living*  
NORTH POLK  
MAGAZINE



# OUT & ABOUT



Susie Sheldahl, Katryn Halterman and Ryan Tonei at the Polk City Chamber lunch at Luana Savings Bank Nov. 20.



Colby and Rob Cupp at the Polk City Chamber lunch at Luana Savings Bank Nov. 20.



Ringo Kienitz, Taylor Maiefski and Shawn Comer at the Polk City Chamber lunch at Luana Savings Bank Nov. 20.



Larry Cupp and Ben Gipple at the Polk City Chamber lunch at Luana Savings Bank Nov. 20.



Eric Hockenberry, Seth Bonifas and Clayton Harrel at the Polk City Chamber lunch at Luana Savings Bank Nov. 20.



Brittani Bowman, Wendy Musgrave and Claire Smith at the Polk City Chamber lunch at Luana Savings Bank Nov. 20.



Wanita Corn and Brandon Converse at the Polk City Chamber lunch at Luana Savings Bank Nov. 20.



Amy and Brylee DeVries at Polk City Smaller Business Saturday on Nov. 30.



Brecken Schlichte and Oliver Swenson at Polk City Smaller Business Saturday on Nov. 30.



Hayden Rose and Diana Mandernach at Polk City Smaller Business Saturday on Nov. 30.



Jasie McRobie at Polk City Smaller Business Saturday on Nov. 30.



Martha Sheldahl at Polk City Smaller Business Saturday on Nov. 30.



# THE COMETS CORNER

NEWS FROM NORTH POLK CSD

DECEMBER 2024



## North Polk Football makes history with first-ever STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

In November, North Polk Football made history, capturing the school's first-ever state championship with a **24-14 win over Pella** in the Class 4A title game at the UNI-Dome.

As they had all season, the Comets' dynamic rushing attack was the difference maker. Behind dominant play from the offensive line, the Comets controlled the line of scrimmage and set the tempo for all four quarters.

The offense rushed for over 300 yards, with running back **BJ Tate** carrying the ball 31 times for 152 yards, and quarterback **Nathan Feldmann** rushing 21 times for 117 yards. Feldmann accounted for all three of North Polk's touchdowns.

The Comets sealed the victory with a clutch 21-yard field goal from **Liam Triplett**, putting North Polk up by 10 points and securing the school's first-ever state football title.

To commemorate this historic victory and celebrate the undefeated season, a community-wide celebration was held on Monday, November 25. The event included reflections from players and coaches on the championship win and the unforgettable season.

The victory capped off a historic, undefeated season for North Polk. **Congratulations to the Comet Football Team players, coaches, and staff for making history and bringing home the Class 4A State Football Championship!**

## CENTRAL ELEMENTARY HOSTS ANNUAL THANKFULNESS BREAKFAST

*Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!*

This monthly edition allows us to convey and promote the happenings throughout the district each month, however, this edition, we want to use this space to reiterate our gratitude to all the members of our community and district.



It's hard to put into words how grateful we are for the incredible support of the North Polk Community. Community involvement and participation are key factors in making our school district so successful, and our community truly is second to none. Without your ongoing support, North Polk wouldn't be the district it is today—and for that, we say thank you!

Before Thanksgiving, Central Elementary hosted its annual Thankfulness Breakfast, and we were thrilled to welcome over 700 students and families—the largest turnout we've ever had—to share in this special event. Students and families were invited to enjoy a free breakfast before the school day began, served by the dedicated staff at Central Elementary.

A huge thank you to everyone who joined us, and for your continued partnership and support of our teachers, staff, and the entire North Polk Community School District. We are also incredibly grateful to our generous sponsors, whose support made this event possible. Your commitment to our students and our district truly makes a difference.

This event was a wonderful way to cap off a fantastic month for both the district and the community as a whole.

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