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Living

MAGAZINE

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WELCOME

MY BABY blue Mustang

It was a 1980 Ford Mustang. Baby blue in color. Hatchback. Four-cylinder engine. The car was nothing special, but it was my first car — and it was all mine.

I, of course, pulled the factory stereo out of it and installed a Pioneer cassette deck and Jensen speakers. A guy has to have priorities, after all.

My life savings went into the purchase of that vehicle. Insurance. Gas. Oil changes. All on my dime. I was OK with that, as it was part of my greater independence — and I was the only one with the keys.

The Mustang got me through my college years, despite one unfortunate incident. I am by no means a gearhead, but I had a cracked fuel line, and it seemed easy enough to replace. In the process, some gas leaked out of the old line onto the engine. No big deal, I thought.

I drove the Mustang to a local car wash, and my mother rode along with me. I put some coins in the machine and motioned Mom to drive the car into the wash bay. (I should note that this was the first — and only — time my mother drove any vehicle of mine.) Mom turned the ignition, and I immediately saw flames peeking out of every possible opening in the hood and below the car. I yelled to her to pop the hood. She turned the lights on, applied the parking brake and started the wipers, but the hood remained closed. As I frantically ran to the car, the paint on the hood started bubbling. I opened the driver-side door, popped the hood and put out the fire with the car wash wand I still had in my hand. What was left was a melted mess.

Dad had a friend who was a local mechanic and rewired everything and got my Mustang running again. The mechanic said he did his best on my limited budget, but he wasn't making any promises on how well it would run. And he was right to say that. The best gas mileage I got after the repairs was 4 mpg.

We all learned some lessons after the car fire incident, but my Dad's comments stuck with me the most. "If you ever have a car start on fire again, let it burn."

Thanks for reading. ■



SHANE GOODMAN

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The photo on page 5 of the November Ankeny Living magazine of the bicycle art piece at the northwestern trailhead off Northwest Irvinedale Drive should have been attributed to Kim Skaff. We apologize for the oversight.



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An Unforgettable *RIDE*

Residents share the joy of their first car

By Ashley Rullestad

What kids, strapped into the backseats of their parents' cars, gazing through the gaps between the front seats and watching the road ahead, don't think how great it will be when they are in the driver's seat? And not just any driver's seat, but the seat of their very own car. The power of the machine in their control. The freedom to choose the destination. The total control over the stereo. It's no wonder people's memories of their first auto stay vivid, and the stories remain a thrill to be told.

Todd Lincoln still has his first car, a 1978 Ford Thunderbird.



Rick Glynn's first car was a 1966 marine blue Chevelle Super Sport. Photo by Todd Rullestad

College car

Rick Glynn graduated from Dowling Catholic High School in 1965. He had dreams of going to Iowa State University to become a world-famous architect, but he knew he'd have to save for a year to afford the tuition.

"One of the people who lived across from us was a salesman for



Rick Glynn's mother had the sales receipt and photos of his first car framed. Photo by Todd Rullestad

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Todd Lincoln earned money for his first car, a 1978 Ford Thunderbird, doing farm work as a teen.

Chevy, and he knew I was trying to save money. But I ended up going down to the Howlett Chevrolet showroom, which was small, and there were these flood lights, and sitting there

was a 1966 marine blue Chevelle Super Sport.” Next thing Glynn knew, he was paying \$90 a month for the new ride. His mom saved the original sales receipt and some pictures and

had them framed. It became his mother’s daily driver when he was in the military, stationed at an Air Force base in Idaho. “She said someone would pass her on S.W.

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Ninth, and they'd think it was me, and they'd see if she wanted to race. There was a good spot on Valley Drive where you could drag race and on Army Post Road by Willow Creek Golf Course. In Des Moines, if you wanted to race someone, there was a drive-in restaurant on East University east of AE Dairy, and you'd pull in and honk your horn. You'd race for a tank of gas. I only lost once. That's when I was a crazy young man."

Glynn didn't have the Chevelle for too long. The week he was married in June 1968, he bought a brand-new SS 350 Camaro, which he only owned for about a year. One day, he and his first wife were driving around Idaho, and Glynn saw a Cougar XR7-G.

"They only made a few of those, and I had to have it. When I got discharged in 1970, I came back to Iowa and then got a Beetle in 1971 and let my hair grow out."

He moved to Omaha in 1992. In 2002, he started looking for an exact replica of his Chevelle. He found it in St. Louis, Missouri, bought it in 2003 and sold it in 2006.

"I liked the color, it came with the bright blue interior, and it was a 4-speed. In 1966 is when they really became popular."

Now he drives a new Ford Explorer, which he believes is new car number 38.

"I have kept a list of them all and have never had a used car," he says.

Feel the thunder

Todd Lincoln purchased his first car — a 1978 Ford Thunderbird — in 1994 while in high school. He had earned money working on farms and baling hay, and purchasing his own car meant independence. He liked being able to support himself and working on the car as a shade tree mechanic. He learned mechanical skills in the process and was proud of his car.

"I bought it from my father's friend, and I still have it," he says. "The main reason I still have it is because my father, as a Vietnam vet, while in service overseas, had a '67 Mustang. When he came home, he learned his parents sold the car, and that upset and surprised him. I didn't want to have the regret of letting it go."

It's also unique and fun to drive around town. Lincoln says he gets a lot of head turning, smiles, waves and thumbs ups.

One of the things that sold Lincoln originally was the car's low miles (86,000) and how long the car is. As a result, it floats like a boat cruising down the road, he says. He also likes other features that make this model unique: the flip-up headlight covers that are vacuum operated and the high beam switch on the floor. Now, his kids like the bucket seats, lap belts and window cranks. It also has a large upright hood ornament — not flat and glued on — which is rare to find now.

"My high school graduation tassel is still hanging on the rearview mirror with the old Zima fob dangling from the keychain," he says.

Lincoln and his high school friends have a lot of memories of road trips in the car; taking it to the high school football games, homecoming and prom dances; and driving it to the county fairs around the area.

"Since owning it and keeping it around as a secondary vehicle, I have been investing in it to make it mechanically sound and safe. I upgraded it with air-ride suspension, and the stereo is up to today's standards now, too. The one thing I do not like about it is it's not great for going out to grab a cup of coffee because it has three ashtrays but zero cupholders," he laughs.

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Muscle car gal

Melissa McNulty wanted a cute Volkswagen or a fun little car when she turned 16 in 1995. Instead, her dad was living his dream, and she ended up with a 1977 Chevy Nova.

“It was a tank, and it got like 8-9 miles per gallon,” she says. “Luckily gas was \$0.99 then. We’d go do donuts in the school parking lot on snow days. I hit a street sign once when it was icy and knocked it over, and my car didn’t have a scratch on it.”

She remembers once she was out driving around with six people in the front bench seat and got pulled over.

“I was driving with my head out the window because it was so crowded. When the trooper was asking everyone to get out, it was like a clown car; kids just kept getting out,” she jokes.

It might not have been her dream car, but McNulty and her friends made the most of it. For her senior pictures, the gang dressed up in 1970s clothes and posed like it was broken down, because it always was needing something. Luckily, her friend’s dad was a mechanic.

McNulty had the Nova for three years and



Melissa McNulty and her friends pose with her 1977 Chevy Nova for her senior pictures.

then sold it to a guy from high school.

“His wife messaged me a few years ago saying he was selling it, and did I want it back? I passed.”

She says she doesn’t drive anything interesting now, just a Volvo “mom car.” But now the family also has two teen drivers, and

both have cars.

“We just got something that was cheap and reliable for them. We did choose little SUVs with tires mounted on the back, because I feel like it gives them just a little extra bit of protection before they totally back into something. A teenage rite of passage,” she says. ■

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Spencer competes in the biggest marathon in the world.

Ankeny's Katie Spencer is a competitor. Has been her entire life. Whatever she takes on, she steps up to the starting line with the expectations of doing one thing: winning.

As a two-time Nebraska high school track and field state champion who went on to run for Oklahoma State University, Spencer knew what it's like to compete in big races when she began training for another — one that was another type of "big."

Capital "B" big. The New York City Marathon.

The 27-year-old Spencer joined more than 55,000

entrants who raced through the boroughs of the most populous city in the United States on Nov. 3, and once again succeeded, this time to the tune of a third-place finish among the thousands of non-professional women competitors.

"It was just incredible," Spencer says of the experience of being in — and seeing — New York City for the first time. "It was memorable to run over the bridge, seeing all the people on both sides, and even the bottom of it, and hearing Frank Sinatra's New York song. That's one of the things I'll remember most about it."

While there was an ever-so-slight temptation to sight-see, Spencer says she was able to stay focused on the task at hand throughout the 26.1-mile course, finishing with a personal record time of 2 hours, 39.18 seconds.

The starting line was a sea of bodies, beginning with the professional runners. Spencer and her group of runners were next. Spencer started strong, she said, her goal being to keep, as much as possible, an even pace throughout the race.

"I kind of petered out toward the end, but I was happy with it," she said. "I wanted to run a PR and did."

Getting to that point was no easy task in itself. Spencer pounded the pavement hard around Ankeny, usually putting in 75-80 miles per week, if not more. Once in awhile, she'd log a long, 24-miler, just to get herself prepared for what was ahead.

With the NYC Marathon now successfully under her belt, Spencer has her sights set on possibly running another marathon, this time in New Jersey in April of 2025.

"I haven't fully committed to it, but that's the plan right now," she says looking forward.

The race will be a prelude to another "big" event the following month that she has fully committed to — getting married.

If her track record is any indication, she'll succeed at that, too. ■



Ankeny's Katie Spencer competed in the New York City Marathon on Nov. 3, finishing third among all non-professional women runners.

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FROM California to Ankeny

Andrews find home in Uptown.

Sarah and Matt Andrews wanted something different. They'd been living in California but hoped to find somewhere more affordable and with a slower pace of life. Sarah's family had slowly migrated to Ankeny — her sister moved to town several years ago, followed by her parents — so the couple figured they'd check it out. They quickly decided the community provided what they were looking for.

In July 2022, the Andrews made the big move from California to Ankeny. They bought a house in Uptown after becoming enamored with not only the home itself, but its location.

"I love our proximity to so many amenities," Matt says. "The location is so convenient that we sold one of our cars before driving from California and have been able to survive with just one for the last few years. We are a stone's throw from the AMP and the High Trestle Trail, but aside from that, almost everything we need can be reached in a 10-minute walk or less."

Matt also likes the neighborhood because of its unique mix of older homes, as does Sarah.

"We have a lot of neighbors who either bought the homes originally or took over the homes from their parents, and it is fun to hear stories of how things have changed over the years in Ankeny from them," Sarah says. "We also have neighbors who have transplanted to Iowa from other states or other countries."

Matt especially appreciates the trees on their property, including two oaks, a maple and a locust.

"While they can be troublesome in certain seasons, they bring immense joy in other ways," Matt says. "It's one of the benefits of living in such an established neighborhood."

Sarah, too, likes their outdoor space, particularly the backyard.

"It's big, compared to California yards, and the yard is so much fun for the kids and for me," she says. "I am able to have a small garden and an area to feed the birds, as well as ample space for the kids to run around."

As for Ankeny in general, Matt likes the sense of community and how many events there are. He and Sarah's favorite is Beats and Eats, which has become a Thursday evening staple in the summer.

Matt has become active in the community as a soccer coach for the city league, while Sarah has joined the Uptown Ankeny Association, as her private therapy practice is located in Uptown Office Suites.

"It allows me to invest a little into the neighborhood to give back and to be involved in upcoming events," she says.



Sarah and Matt Andrews were looking to make a move from California, and, with relatives in Ankeny, they discovered the community was a good fit for them.

Since both her office and home are in Uptown, Sarah enjoys a significant advantage when it comes to her commute.

"Not only can I walk to my office, but being able to bike and walk the trails and get outside in nature so easily is a huge plus," she says.

For the Andrews family, the move from California to Ankeny has been nothing short of a great decision. ■

Rethinking your IRA

The evolution and tax strategies

IRAs play a key role in retirement planning for many Americans. According to the Investment Company Institute, 42% (or 55.5 million) of U.S. households reported owning an IRA in 2023.



that contributions may be fully or partially deductible (depending on filing status and income), and earnings and gains are not taxed until you take distributions.

They are a great way to save for retirement, especially as few employers offer pensions. However, a consequential factor that many overlook is the tax implications of withdrawing IRA funds in retirement. As the IRA grows, so does the tax bill. The tax-deferred nature of these accounts can essentially be viewed as a loan from the IRS. Essentially, your pre-tax IRA represents a debt to the IRS that you might have to repay at a less than convenient time — when you retire and perhaps desire financial simplicity more than ever.

This is where strategies like Roth conversions come into play. Converting a portion of your pre-tax IRA to a Roth IRA involves paying taxes on the converted amount at the time of the conversion. However, once the funds

are in the Roth IRA, they grow tax-free, and qualified distributions are also tax-free. For most, this can significantly reduce the overall tax burden throughout retirement.

The Roth conversion is not the only strategy to consider. Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) offer another powerful tool. A QCD is a tax-free transfer of funds from an IRA to a qualified charity. Once you reach 70 1/2, you can transfer funds directly from your IRA to a qualifying charity annually (the limit is \$108,000 for 2025). This transfer counts toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) requirements when those kick in at age 73 or 75, depending on when you were born. For those already inclined to charitable giving, this is a win-win scenario — supporting causes you care about and lowering your RMD and possibly your retirement tax bill. The key is to think ahead now about how the IRA that helped you get to retirement could become tax-efficient income in retirement.

Since its introduction in 1974, the Individual Retirement Account (IRA) has transformed from being solely offered by banks with limited investment choices to being available through various carriers that provide hundreds of investment options.

The contribution limit started at \$1,500 and was only increased once between 1974 and 2001. The 2025 limit is \$7,000 for those under age 50 and \$8,000 for those 50 and older.

One of the initial attractions of traditional IRAs is that they are tax-deferred. This means

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

Source: Investment Company Institute (2024, February 24) IRAs Play a Key Role in US Households' Retirement Planning [Press Release www.ici.org/files/2024/per30-01.pdf]



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LOOKING back to 2024

Now that 2024 is firmly in the rearview mirror, it is time to look back at the year and some of the great reads it provided us. An early contender for most popular book of the year was Kirstin Hannah's "The Women." The story, about 20-year-old nursing student Frances "Frankie" McGrath, sees her join the Vietnam War in 1965 by joining the Army Nurse Corps. But war is just the beginning for Frankie and her veteran friends. The real battle lies in coming home to a changed and divided America, to protesters, and to a country that wants to forget Vietnam. We had a difficult time keeping this one on our shelves; across all formats, it was checked out more than 950 times.

Another notable title from the past year was "James," by Percival Everett. "James" is a reimagining of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" as seen from the point of view of the enslaved Jim. When he overhears that he is about to be sold to a man in New Orleans, he decides to hide on nearby Jackson Island until he can formulate a plan. Meanwhile, Huck Finn has faked his own death to escape his violent father, who recently returned to town. Thus begins the dangerous and transcendent journey by raft down the Mississippi River. "James" was a New York Times bestseller, a National Book Award Winner, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and was a Pulitzer Prize finalist.

Now, moving on to exciting news in 2025. The library is pleased to welcome Erin Coughlin as its circulation manager. Erin is a former high school and college English teacher turned librarian. She received her bachelor's degree in English education from Morningside College in 2006, master's in English from the University of Nebraska in 2011, and her master's in library information and science from the University of Iowa in 2022. She previously worked as the director of the Cambridge Memorial Library for one year and the Nevada Public Library for three years. She is currently a member of the Association of Rural and Small Libraries Leadership Institute and serves on the Continuing Education Committee for the ARSL. She's also on the Intellectual Freedom Committee for the Iowa Library Association. She lives in Ankeny with her husband, Patrick, and her rescue dogs, Fuji and Rosey. In her free time, Erin likes cheering for the Iowa State Cyclones, hiking, spending time with family, watching sports and, of course, reading. She's also an avid Chicago Cubs fan. Please stop by the library to welcome Erin. ■

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Once you retire, you'll likely need to draw on a variety of financial sources — and one of the most important ones may be your 401(k). And, for 2025, you can put even more money into your plan than ever.

You can invest in your 401(k) in one of two ways, depending on your employer's plan. With a traditional 401(k), you contribute pre-tax dollars, which can lower your taxable income, and your money can grow tax deferred. If you have a Roth 401(k) option, you can contribute after-tax dollars, which aren't deductible, but your eventual withdrawals will be tax-free if you've had your account at least five years and you're at least 59 1/2.

For either a traditional or Roth 401(k), as well as similar plans such as a 457(b) (for government employees) or a 403(b) (for educators and employees of some nonprofit groups), the contribution limit has increased by \$500 for 2025, to \$23,500. If you're 50 or older, you can contribute an additional \$7,500, for a total of \$31,000. And under the SECURE 2.0 legislation, if you are between 60 and 63, you have a higher catch-up contribution — \$11,250, instead of \$7,500, for a total of \$34,750.

If you can afford to contribute the full amount to your 401(k) or similar plan, consider doing so. Of course, not everyone is in that position. If you're a younger worker, you may well have other financial obligations, such as paying off student loans. And even if you've been in the workforce for a while, you may be putting away money for other things — such as your children's education — as well as your own retirement. But even if you can't "max out" on your 401(k), try to contribute at least enough to earn your employer's matching contribution, if one is offered.

Regardless of how much you contribute to your 401(k), consider these suggestions on managing the money within your plan:

- **Create a portfolio that fits your risk tolerance.** Most 401(k) plans offer up to a dozen investment options, while some plans offer many more. You obviously want to increase your 401(k) balance as much as possible, but that doesn't necessarily mean putting all your 401(k) dollars into the most aggressive funds available. Instead, consider spreading your 401(k) contributions among a range of investments, which can help you lower your risk level while still giving you opportunities for long-term growth. Everyone's risk tolerance is different, though, so you'll want to evaluate yours when constructing your 401(k) portfolio.

- **Adjust your portfolio as needed.** It's a good idea to review your 401(k)'s investment mix at least once a year to see if it's performing as you'd hoped. But be patient — one "down" year doesn't necessarily mean you must make changes. However, as you approach retirement, you may want to lower the risk level of your 401(k) by moving some of your dollars into more conservative vehicles. Still, even when you're retired and have started drawing money from your 401(k), you might want to keep some growth potential in it to help you stay ahead of inflation.

By contributing what you can afford to your 401(k), and by carefully managing the investments within your plan, you can help maximize the value of this powerful retirement savings vehicle — and give yourself a key asset to help you enjoy your retirement years. ■



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THE KINGDOM of/in Ankeny



Before our family moved to Ankeny in 2009, we had already been participating in Ankeny community life for a few years. We attended a church in Ankeny and made trips to the city multiple times a week for different activities. Ankeny was smaller back then. What makes me laugh thinking back on those days are the memories I have of people who would start conversations by telling me that Ankeny used to be “so much smaller” than it was in the early 2000s.

Fast forward 20 years. Ankeny has almost two times as many people, and the town seems to keep growing. As we enter 2025, the “talk of the town” is what new businesses are going up on the edges of town (Trader Joes?) and whether or not Ankeny expansion means that Ames will soon just be called “North Ankeny.” Hahaha!

It’s quite a kingdom you’ve built here, Ankeny. It really is a privilege to call Ankeny “home.” In fact, I would argue that it might just be the perfect spot... to pray that a different Kingdom would come.

Now, before I get my home bulldozed by city officials for such scandalous remarks, I’ve been thinking a lot about the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray. In the 11th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus’ disciples see him praying and ask Him to teach them how to pray. Early in the prayer, Jesus teaches. He instructs his friends to pray to God with words like these: “Your Kingdom come...”

As we embark on a new year in our community, I believe this is a powerful prayer we might embrace together. God, we want Your Kingdom to come... here in Ankeny. We would love for Your reign, rule, peace, power, love, mercy, justice and grace to be what provides the foundation for our community. Could we each be more confident in the love you have for us? Would you help us embrace the opportunity we have to live in peace under the banner of your love and your laws? God, we want Your Kingdom to come — here.

A new year brings with it themes and ideas like fresh starts, bold resolutions, and ambitious goals. Many of us will begin (again) striving toward improvements, balance and security. We are conditioned to understand that the new calendar year is the perfect time to (re)set expectations for what is possible or what can be grasped. My deep prayer for our little/big city is that we might join together in the desire for God’s kingdom to be seen in our midst. With God at the center, there is no end to the love, equity, grace and peace our community could know.

God, let Your Kingdom come; let it begin in me; let it be. Amen. ■

Information provided by John Wagner, campus pastor, Christian Life Center, Ankeny First United Methodist Church, john.wagner@ankenyfirst.org.



Ankeny First United Methodist Church



WORSHIP



CONNECT



RESPOND

we invite you to
COME WITH US
as we learn
about following
JESUS together!

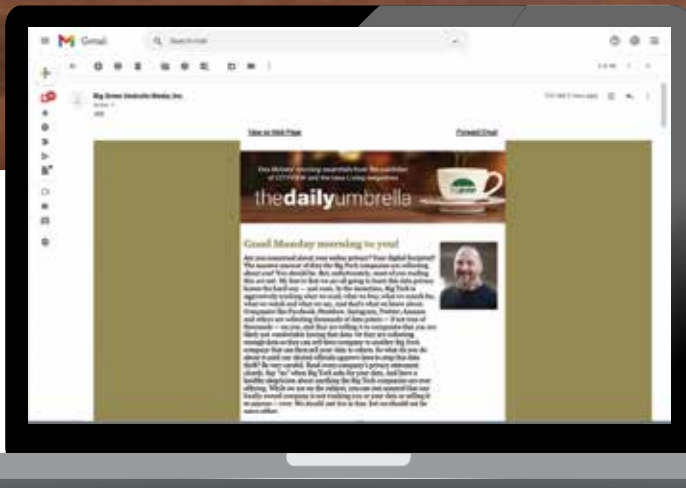
worship with us
ONLINE



For more information about our
multi-campus church, visit us at
www.ankenyfirst.org

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LETTER to the editor

In letters to the editor, Lyn (Dann) van De Pol stated that Wayne Begg was dual principal of the junior high and high school. This is incorrect. In 1958, Richard E. Holsteen was principal of the junior high, and Jorgensen was the superintendent of schools. Wayne Begg was principal of the high school.

— Edward Delin

CHARTER Bank hires Vahle for Ankeny post

Matt Morris, CEO of Charter Bank, announced the hiring of Brian Vahle as vice president Ankeny market manager.

“We are thrilled to add Brian to our Charter Bank team,” Morris said. “Brian has been actively involved in the communities we serve and is now excited to serve the Ankeny community, which he has lived in for years. Brian understands Charter Bank’s vision to create mutually beneficial long-term relationships, investing in the local businesses and citizens in the communities we serve and leading in our communities.”

Vahle has worked in the banking industry for more than 30 years since his graduation from Creighton University. Previous to joining Charter Bank, he worked senior roles and market president positions. He has been involved in the Johnston Economic Development Corporation for more than 10 years, previously serving as board president. Vahle resides in Ankeny with his wife and their six children.

Charter Bank is locally owned in the communities of Johnston, Grimes, Waukee and Ankeny with 26 employees who live and work in the communities they serve. ■

ISBA announces essay winners

The Iowa State Bar Association (ISBA) and the Iowa State Bar Foundation announce the winners of the Sesquicentennial Celebration Essay Contest. Held in honor of the ISBA’s 150th anniversary, this contest provided Iowa high school students with a unique platform to explore the impact of law on their lives, communities, and the history of the state of Iowa.

Sponsored by the Iowa State Bar Foundation, the essay contest invited students from all 14 judicial districts across the state to select and write about a law-related person, place, event or document connected to the ISBA’s century-and-a-half legacy. From profiling local attorneys and law firms to reflecting on landmark Iowa Supreme Court decisions, students delivered insightful and thought-provoking perspectives.

Iowa Judicial District 5 winners:

• **First Prize (\$1,000):** Haylie Zinkula; Teacher Sponsor Aaron Savage (Waukee Northwest High School), Natalia Zimmerman; Teacher Sponsor Mike Cormack (Southwest Valley High School), Edie Lang; **Teacher Sponsor Kathryn Cooper (Ankeny Centennial High School)**

• **Second Prize (\$500):** Pete Gunkel; Teacher Sponsor Luke Peterson (Waukee Timberline High School), Ella Waske; Teacher Sponsor Daniel Showalter (Mount Ayr Community Schools), Aravind Balaji; Teacher Sponsor Cheryl Smith (Johnston High School)

Each essay was evaluated by a panel of judges on criteria such as originality, mastery of the topic, quality of writing, and critical thinking. The blind judging process ensured impartiality and fairness, with students competing within their respective judicial districts.

For more information about the ISBA Sesquicentennial Celebration Essay Contest or to read excerpts from the winning essays, visit www.iowabar.org/essay. ■

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ANKENY
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CITYVIEW'S WINTER EVENT IS BACK!

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1-4 P.M.



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EDUCATION

By Ashley Rullestad

MEET Katie Black

Crocker teacher enjoys second grade.

Katie Black is currently in her 21st year of teaching — all but two of them in second grade.

“I love second grade. I think it is the perfect age where the students are gaining independence but still get excited about the little things and show excitement for learning something new. I chose teaching because I have always enjoyed working with people, especially kids. Several members of my family are in education, and it just always felt natural for me to become a teacher.”

Black, who graduated from Ankeny High in 2000, got her degree in elementary education with endorsements in reading and social studies from Iowa State, then went on to earn a master’s degree in elementary education from Viterbo University. She began her career in the Carlisle Community School District, teaching there for nine years. She returned to Ankeny as a teacher, and she currently teaches second grade at Crocker Elementary.

“Crocker is a fantastic building,” she says. “It is incredibly welcoming and feels a lot like a small-town school within a bigger district. Everyone knows each other, and it is just a friendly place to be. My colleagues are great to work with. There is a lot of positivity at Crocker, and I couldn’t ask for a better team to be a part of.”

Like many teachers, Black says her biggest challenge is time. There is so much they want to teach and share with students, and sometimes it is just hard to find the time to fit it all in.

The biggest rewards are the relationships she gets to build with students, families and colleagues. Teaching is all about building relationships.

“Some of my greatest friendships have been made through teaching, and some of my best moments have been watching students grow and learn. I truly love when a student has put great effort into learning something, the lightbulb goes on, and they realize they’ve got it. It is also wonderful when I hear from former students, some of whom have become teachers.”

Through the years, she has had some memorable moments — like the time she was setting up her classroom and encountered a bat.

“I am sure I screamed loud enough for anyone in the building to hear me. I will give the credit to the superhero custodian who saved the day and removed the bat from my room. But one of the funniest moments was when I was expecting my second child. My water broke right in front of my second-grade class. I am sure there were a lot of stories told about Mrs. Black at dinner that night.”

She also loved when a former second-grade student from Carlisle, McKenna Hasse, came to speak to one of her second-grade classes in Ankeny about her race car driving career. It was special to have a student from her first class come back to visit and speak about her success.

For Black, family is the most important thing. She and her husband, Greg, have three children: Kaelin (senior at AHS), Michael (sophomore at AHS), and McKenna (sixth grade at Parkview Middle School). They also have two spoiled Boston terrier dogs. ■



Katie Black (center) with her second grade team at Crocker Elementary.



 upside

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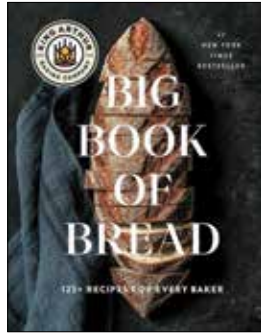
'The King Arthur Baking Company Big Book of Bread: 125+ Recipes for Every Baker'

I love a challenge, so it's not surprising that I joined with the many thousands who have tried to master bread baking over the last few years. It turns out, it's both more complicated and blissfully simple than I ever could have guessed. Baking the perfect loaf has not become an obsession, and I can't get enough.

Enter the makers of the best flour commercially available for at-home bakers. Already the authors of vital kitchen texts for cookies and cakes, here they tackle a mountain of bread-baking skills into a gorgeous, easy-to-follow book filled with recipes both common and unusual. With their characteristic style and simplicity, this book is a fantastic resource for bread bakers at every skill level. Everything from sourdoughs, to gluten-free options and dessert breads is covered in this massive book, and I have yet to find something I didn't want to try.

I've made several recipes so far, and I can't wait to try them all. I think this will be an indispensable guide for many years to come. Make some room on your shelf and dive into the best bread book out there. ■

— *Review by Julie Goodrich*



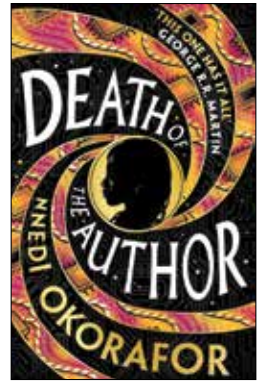
By King Arthur Baking Company
10/22/24
464 pages
\$45
Simon Element

'Death of the Author'

Meta-stories, or books written as a story within a story, often drop the ball on one or the other tale, and, by the end, I often feel cheated, as if I'm missing something. This book, however, takes that trope to a transcendent place, weaving the two stories so deftly I can't imagine one without the other. This kind of skill is breathtaking. I can't wait to read it over and over.

The frame story focuses on Zelu, a Nigerian-American author currently at a low point after losing her job and being unable to sell her novel. Then, inspiration strikes, and suddenly she has a bestselling science fiction book and she has to navigate a new existence in the public eye and within her family. Nestled into Zelu's "real life" story is the actual book she wrote, "Rusted Robots." The interplay between the two stories is pitch-perfect. They contrast and collide so well, I can't imagine one without the other.

If this book gets the attention it deserves, everyone will be reading and talking about it. Nnedi Okorafor is so extraordinary, I wouldn't be surprised to find her work as required reading someday soon. Treat yourself and pick it up this winter. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



By Nnedi Okorafor
01/16/25
448 pages
\$30
William Morrow

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Check for cancellations



Upcoming in Ankeny Living magazine:

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.

“Harvey”

Feb. 7-16: Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Ankeny Community Theatre, 1932 S.W. Third St.

Elwood P. Dowd insists on including his friend Harvey in all of his sister Veta’s social gatherings. The trouble is, Harvey is an imaginary six-and-a-half-foot-tall rabbit. To avoid future embarrassment for her family — especially for her daughter, Veta decides to have Elwood committed to a sanitarium. However, not everything is as it seems, and Elwood and his invisible companion have had a strange influence on those they encounter. Winner of the 1945 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Tickets available online at <https://ankenycommunitytheatre.com/harvey>.

Workshops and classes

The Ankeny Art Center, 1520 S.W. Ordinance Road

Adult classes: Adult Classes, Beginner: Acrylic Basics (sold out), Watercolor Basics (sold out), Pottery Basics (sells out quickly); Intermediate/Advanced Classes: Drawing II, Watercolor II (sold out) and III, Pottery II (sold out), Pottery III (new), Pottery Studio. Register at www.ankenycartcenter.org.



Youth classes: Saturdays, Jan. 4-25, K - Fourth Grade Pottery Sculpture (sold out), K - Fourth Grade Art Exploration, Fifth - Eighth Grade Pottery Wheel (sold out), Fifth - Eighth Grade Drawing. Register at www.ankenycartcenter.org.

Square Dance Lessons

Sunday nights starting Jan. 19, 6:30 p.m.
Douglas Avenue Presbyterian Church, 4601 Douglas Ave., Des Moines

Ankeny Square Dance Club is sponsoring Square Dance Lessons. Cost is \$20 per person for the entire session accepted at the third lesson. Attend with or without a dance partner. You’ll learn the calls, one at a time, taught by a caller (instructor) and volunteers. For more information, call Sandy Townsend, 515-294-2624, or visit www.ankenysquares.com.

Legislative Update

Fridays, Feb. 7 and March 7, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library, 1210 N.W. Prairie Ridge Drive

The Legislative Update is sponsored by the Ankeny Chamber. Chamber members and the community are invited to join the Iowa state senator, Iowa House representatives, and Polk County supervisor in timely updates. There is no registration required for this event.

Vendor Markets

Jan. 18, Feb. 15, March 15, April 19, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Outlets of Des Moines, 801 Bass Pro Drive N.W., Suite 315, Altoona

Each show has a variety of vendors from Avon, Living Oils, Small Town Laser, Unicorn Clouds, MJ’s Hometown Honey, 3D by LouAnn, Tupperware, Tastefully Simple, Good Vibrations Gems & Crystals, plus others. Come check out the vendors and buy local. If interested in being a vendor, email k2marketplacemagic@gmail.com for information.

Playhouse classes offered

Various dates
The Des Moines Playhouse, 831 42nd St. Des Moines

The Des Moines Playhouse offers classes year-round for ages 4 through adult. New this winter is an audition workshop for teens and adults. Registration is now open for spring break and spring classes and summer camps. Scholarships are available through the Jeanne Hopson Angel Fund. For class descriptions, registrations and more information, visit dmplayhouse.com/education/classes-and-camps.

The Audition Workshop Series for ages 14 through adult will be led by Playhouse Artistic Director Katy Merriman. Held each Saturday in February, sessions will focus on song selection, cold reads, dance auditions with “Waitress” choreographer Kent Zimmerman, and a master class with area directors. Students can sign up for one, two, three or all four sessions.

Spring classes, starting March 2, are focused on musical theatre for pre-K through grade 7.

Spring break finds students in grades 5-8 learning “Seussical Kids,” a 35-minute version of the popular Broadway musical, with performances at the end of the week. Students in grades 3-4 will rehearse and perform a play while younger students will use favorite books to create scenes to share.

For more information on Playhouse educational offerings, contact Robin Spahr, Playhouse education director, at rspahr@dmplayhouse.com, 515-974-5365.

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Sign up for one community or all 14 to stay up-to-date on local news.

Check for cancellations

Polk County Heritage Gallery exhibit

Until Jan. 24
Polk County Administration Building, 111 Court Ave., Des Moines
polkcountyheritagegallery.org

DSM Exhibited 2024 - Annual Juried Show is on display.

SPORTS

Iowa Wolves home games

Wells Fargo Arena, 233 Center St., Des Moines
iowa.gleague.nba.com

- Jan. 23 at 6:30 p.m. vs. Valley Suns (Phoenix Suns)
- Jan. 24 at 6:30 p.m. vs. Valley Suns

Iowa Wild home games

Wells Fargo Arena, 233 Center St., Des Moines
iowawild.com

- Jan. 17 at 7 p.m. vs. Rockford Icehogs
- Jan. 18 at 6 p.m. vs. Rockford Icehogs
- Jan. 22 at 7 p.m. vs. Charlotte Checkers
- Jan. 25 at 6 p.m. vs. Texas Stars
- Jan. 26 at 3 p.m. vs. Texas Stars
- Jan. 28 at 7 p.m. vs. Charlotte Checkers
- Jan. 31 at 7 p.m. vs. Springfield Thunderbirds

Drake Basketball home games

Knapp Center, 2601 Forest Ave., Des Moines
Men's home games

- Jan. 22 at 6:30 p.m. vs. Valparaiso
- Jan. 29 at 6 p.m. vs. UNI

Women's home game

- Jan. 16 at 6 p.m. vs. Belmont

Des Moines Buccaneers home game

The MidAmerican Energy Company RecPlex 6500 Grand Ave., West Des Moines
bucshockey.com

- Jan. 24 at 7 p.m. vs. Lincoln Stars

Des Moines Community Orchestra concerts

The Des Moines Community Orchestra has announced its concert dates for the 2024/2025 concert season. Admission is free. Concerts start at 2 p.m. with pre-concert talks at 1 p.m. For more information, visit desmoinescommunityorchestra.org. Concerts are:

- **Sunday, Feb. 23**, Winter Concert and Past Audience Favorites, Sheslow Auditorium.
- **Sunday, May 11**, Spring Concert, Carl's Favorite Finales, Sheslow Auditorium.

THEATRE

Actors, Inc. - Ames Community Theater

120 Abraham Drive, Ames
actorsinc.org

- Jan. 23-25, 31, Feb. 1-2: "Angel Street"

Des Moines Performing Arts

Des Moines Civic Center, Cowles Commons, Stoner Theater, Temple Theatre, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines
desmoinesperformingarts.org

- Jan. 25: "A Night of Magic and Comedy"
- Jan. 28 to Feb. 2: "Shucked"

Tallgrass Theatre Company

2019 Grand Ave., Suite 100, West Des Moines
tallgrasstheatre.org

- Jan. 31 to Feb. 16: "Ripcord"

Stephens Auditorium

1900 Center Drive, Ames
center.iastate.edu/events

- Jan. 24: "Matt Mathews: Boujee On A Budget"



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>.



LIVE MUSIC

Wooly's

504 E. Locust St., Des Moines
firstfleetconcerts.com/first-fleet-venues/woolys

- Jan. 18: The Prince Experience at 8:30 p.m.
- Jan. 24: Smells Like Nirvana: A Tribute to Nirvana at 8 p.m.
- Jan. 26: Beach Bunny at 8 p.m.
- Jan. 30: Aaron Watson at 8 p.m.

Des Moines Civic Center

221 Walnut St., Des Moines
www.desmoinesperformingarts.org

- Jan. 31: Judy Carmichael

Des Moines Symphony

Des Moines Civic Center, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines
dmsymphony.org

- Feb. 8-9: Chen conducts Rachmaninoff
- Feb. 12: Youth Jazz Orchestra Winter Concert
- Feb. 24: Youth Orchestras Winter Concert
- Feb. 14-15: Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince in Concert

Hoyt Sherman Place

1501 Woodland Ave., Des Moines
hoytsherman.org

- Feb. 4: Guster at 8 p.m.
- Feb. 7: Folsom Prison Experience at 8 p.m.
- Feb. 19: The Black Jacket Symphony Presents The Beatles' "Abbey Road" at 8 p.m.
- Feb. 22: The Salvation Army: Unmasking The Singer at 6 p.m. ■

The **ONLY** poll mailed to residential households. **VOTE NOW!**



IT'S BACK!

Who will be voted favorite in Ankeny and Northern Polk County?

We all have our favorite local people, places and things. And now it's time to share your choices and honor those who deserve the recognition.

Make your voice be heard and cast your votes in the 2025 Ankeny and Northern Polk County Residents' Choice Poll. This contest is being hosted by Iowa Living magazines, and the results will publish April issues of Ankeny and North Polk magazines. You can vote in one or every category, or anywhere in between.

HURRY! POLL CLOSES MARCH 1, 2025.

See rules and vote at www.iowalivingmagazines.com/residentspoll. One vote per resident, please.

SCAN HERE TO VOTE TODAY!



FOOD AND DRINK

- Restaurant
- Restaurant for Breakfast
- Restaurant for Lunch
- Restaurant for Dinner
- Restaurant for Dessert
- Place for Ice Cream
- Pizza Establishment
- Bar
- Coffee Shop
- Server/Bartender

AUTOMOTIVE

- Auto Service
- Auto Body Shop
- Car Dealership

COMMUNITY

- Preschool/Daycare
- Nonprofit
- School (name of building)
- Park
- Community Festival or Event
- Church
- Pastor
- Chamber of Commerce
- Library
- Camping Spot
- Coach
- Teacher

SHOPPING

- Grocery Store
- Boutique
- Retail Store
- Thrift Store
- Home Improvement Retail Store
- Nursery or Garden Center
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Man
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Woman
- Florist

ENTERTAINMENT

- Dad/Child Date Spot
- Mom/Child Date Spot
- Place to Take Your Mom and Dad
- Place to Take Your Kids or Grandkids
- Place for Child's Birthday Party
- Golf Course

HEALTH/BEAUTY

- Hair Salon
- Physicians Clinic
- Dental Office
- Orthodontist Office
- Chiropractic Office
- Vision Care
- Health Club or Gym
- Pharmacy
- Cosmetic Service
- Physical Therapy

HEALTH/BEAUTY

- Alternative Health Care
- Weight Loss Clinic
- Medical Spa
- Dance Studio
- Gymnastics and/or Tumbling Studio
- CBD Store

OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- Financial Planner
- Law Firm
- Veterinarian
- Lawn Care Business
- Landscaping Company
- Heating and Cooling Business
- Plumbing Company
- Senior Living Establishment
- Insurance Agency
- Realtor
- Bank/Credit Union
- Place for Guests to Stay
- Contractor/Construction Services/Remodeling
- Cleaning Company
- Painting Company
- Home Builder

BENEFITS of being financially fit

Is financial fitness on your list of priorities this year? If not, you should consider it. Just like physical health, your financial wellness plays a big role in your overall well-being. Managing your finances can help you achieve balance, freedom and peace of mind.



Below are a few benefits of being financially fit, as well as steps you can take today to improve your financial fitness.

Why financial fitness is beneficial for everyone

• **Increased freedom:** Financial fitness can help you make the most with what you have and open the door to greater opportunities. Not only does it provide the flexibility to be creative with your investments, but it also offers greater freedom and security as you plan for retirement. It can empower you to support causes that matter to you and even provide for loved ones in

meaningful ways. Additionally, you can make more financial choices that align with your personal values and goals, whether it's traveling, changing careers or pursuing lifelong passions.

• **Preparedness for emergencies:** Financial fitness can give you the confidence and stability to handle unexpected expenses without going into debt. You'll have the resources and ability to cover unexpected costs and navigate the unknown with less stress.

• **Reduced stress:** Being financially fit can significantly reduce the daily stressors that often weigh on individuals and bleed into their work and relationships. By reducing stress, you can create peace of mind and stability that benefits you and those around you.

Steps to take to improve your financial fitness

- Create an annual budget and find areas to cut overspending.
 - Prioritize regular maintenance on your home and vehicles along with preventative healthcare to reduce potential future costs.
 - Start building an emergency fund to save

for unexpected costs and understand when it's appropriate to spend it.

- Review your retirement plans with a financial professional or advisor to find out if you're on track to meet your goals. If you're not on track, discuss steps you can take to do so.
- Consider ways to earn extra income, such as a weekend job or turning a hobby into a small business.
- If you're able, consider investing any discretionary funds.
- Maintain a strong credit score by making regular payments, only taking on debt you can afford, and keeping your balances low.
- Reduce your debt, especially high-interest debt.

No matter where you are on your financial fitness journey, taking small steps today can help ensure greater financial freedom and security tomorrow. ■

Information provided by Darci Vasiljevic, VP, Bankers Trust, Ankeny Branch Manager, DVasiljevic@BankersTrust.com, 515-245-2934, 1925 N. Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny.



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Darci Vasiljevic
VP, Ankeny Branch Manager



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DVasiljevic@BankersTrust.com 1925 N Ankeny Blvd.
(515) 245-2934 Ankeny, IA 50023

REQUIREMENTS of a will

When creating your last will and testament, nothing is more important than making sure it is legally binding. Failing to meet the legal requirements can invalidate your will. If your will is invalidated,



your property will pass through the laws of intestate succession, which can produce serious consequences for your heirs and beneficiaries.

Your last will must meet five legal requirements:

- Testamentary capacity
 - Testamentary intent
 - In writing
 - Signed
 - Witnessed
- To create a will, you must have

testamentary capacity when you sign your will. It is important that you are of “sound mind,” or understand and are aware of your actions. You also must understand the nature of the property you own and to whom you are leaving your property. For example, it is important to identify all of your potential heirs, even if you will leave one or more of them out of the will. This prevents a challenge later.

You must also have testamentary intent to create a valid will. To put it simply, you must clearly express your intention to make a particular document function as your will.

For your will to be valid, your will must be in writing. Iowa requires a will to be written or printed on physical paper. Additionally, your will must be signed by you. If your will is not signed, it will be nullified.

Finally, your will must have two disinterested witnesses sign the will. These witnesses are attesting to the fact that this

document is meant to be your will and that you were of sound mind when you signed your will. Witnesses are disinterested only if they are not beneficiaries, so, in general, a spouse or children cannot be a witness to your will.

There are other essentials to a will, such as the self-proving affidavit, remote-contingency clauses, in terrorem provisions, and a uniform simultaneous death preference. Wills can also nominate a guardian for a minor child or establish a trust for the benefit of an heir.

When done correctly, wills can be a good tool in making sure that your assets are distributed the way you would like them to be after you die. Be sure to consult with an experienced attorney when choosing a will for your estate planning to make sure it meets the legal requirements. ■

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

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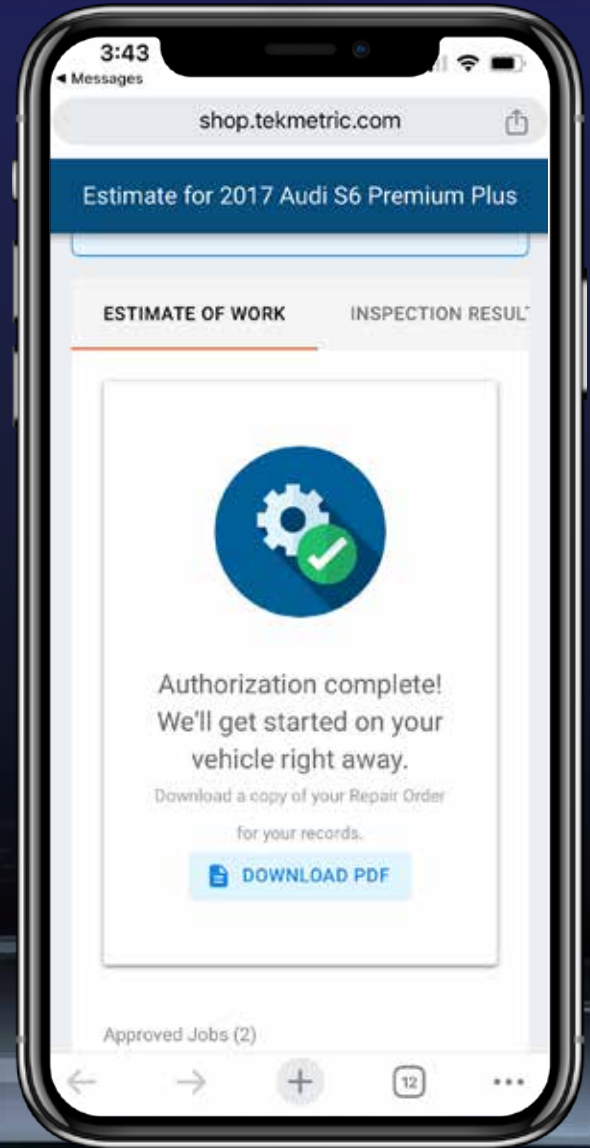
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COZY, comforting recipes to take on the cold

(Family Features) If blustery conditions are giving you the blues, come inside from the cold for a winter warmup in the comfort of your own kitchen. Cold-weather favorites that are baked, roasted or slow cooked are usually equal parts easy, delicious and filling, making them perfect solutions for chilly, snowy days.

Add a bit of comfort to your weeknight menu with this Loaded Chicken Bake that's ready in about half an hour. A short list of ingredients and allowing your oven to do most of the work for you mean it's ideal for saving time (and money at the grocery store) while still satisfying winter appetites.

Serving as the hearty base is READ German Potato Salad, made with thinly sliced potatoes and bacon in a traditional sweet-piquant dressing. While it's delicious when served chilled, heated or at room temperature on its own, it can also be the star of the show in family meals.

Find more favorite wintertime recipes by visiting READSalads.com and AuntNellies.com. ■

Loaded chicken bake

Recipe courtesy of Hungry In LA

Prep time: 20 minutes | **Cook time:** 15 minutes

Servings: 8

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 2 cans (15 ounces each) READ German Potato Salad
- 4 cups shredded rotisserie chicken or other cooked chicken
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon finely ground black pepper
- 3/4 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup crumbled, cooked bacon
- French fried onions (optional), plus additional for serving (optional), divided

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 375 F.
- Lightly coat 9-by-13-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.
- Spread German potato salad evenly in dish. Top evenly with chicken.
- In small bowl, stir heavy cream, salt and pepper. Pour mixture over chicken.
- Sprinkle with cheese, bacon and onions, if desired.
- Bake 15 minutes, or until casserole is bubbly. Let stand 10 minutes.
- Top with additional onions, if desired.



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NEW YEAR, new plan

Staying independent at home as you age

Chris, 72, has lived in her home in West Des Moines for nearly 50 years and plans to remain there forever, but her son and daughter-in-law are concerned. Chris is healthy, but if she needs assistance at some point, her family won't be able to help, as they live abroad.

Chris's family members' concerns are reasonable; 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 for older adults is not a desired option and there are concerns about potential health issues later on, what can I do?"

Consider a Continuing Care at Home (CC@H) membership initiative. Usually administered by an organization that serves older adults, a CC@H program is 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 before you join a program:

- **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.



Protect Your Loved Ones from RSV

RSV is a common respiratory virus, which peaks in the winter months.

RSV can be dangerous for infants and older adults. These age groups are more likely to be hospitalized from RSV.

Talk to your family's healthcare providers about RSV prevention.



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WELLNESS

By Teresa Sieck

HEALTHY weight-loss journey

GLP-1 medications for weight loss

GLP-1 is a naturally occurring hormone in the body that plays an important role in metabolism. GLP-1 medications, such as Semaglutide and Tirzepatide, mimic the effects of naturally occurring GLP-1.

How GLP-1 medications aid weight loss

- GLP-1 agonists reduce hunger by acting on the brain's appetite regulation.
- These medications slow down the rate at which the stomach empties food into the intestines, which helps people feel full for longer periods.
- GLP-1 helps regulate blood sugar levels, which can have indirect benefits on weight management.
- Helps prevent the liver from producing too much glucose.
- GLP-1 medications are most effective when used with a healthy diet and regular physical activity.
- Clinical trials have shown that GLP-1 medications can lead to substantial weight loss. In the case of Semaglutide, patients have experienced an average weight loss of 15%-20% of their body weight over the course of 6-12 months.

When considering GLP-1 medication for weight loss, be sure to talk to your healthcare provider to understand the benefits and risks. ■

Information provided by Teresa Sieck MPAS, PA-C, PhD, Luxe Medical Spa and Aesthetics, 88 Paine Circle S.E., Suite 7, Bondurant, 515-630-8637, www.luxemedicalspa.net.



HEALTH

By Dr. Todd Pietig

NEW treatment for dry eyes

Having dry eyes sounds like such a trivial problem, but those who suffer from it know it can be a serious burden. Approximately 16 million Americans suffer from dry eye disease, and it's a growing problem due to increased screen time. The symptoms include stinging, burning, a gritty sensation, red eyes, fluctuating vision and, in some cases, watery eyes.

I still remember going to the eye doctor when I was in college to seek some help for my dry eyes, and all I got was a sample of some lubricating drops which did little to ease my suffering. Thankfully, dry eye management is now one of the most rapidly growing areas of eye care. There are a variety of new treatment options such as prescription medications, oral supplements, eyelid cleaners, improved artificial tears, and light therapy. Intense pulsed light, also known as IPL, is a machine that delivers controlled pulses of red and infrared light to the face and eyelids. IPL has been used for more than two decades in dermatology, but recently it has become popular in eye care due to the realization that it helps people with dry eyes. Treatment with IPL has been shown to improve oil gland function, decrease ocular inflammation, destroy vessels associated with rosacea, reduce the population of bacteria on the eyelids, and increase tone of eyelid skin, which may improve blinking.

All of those benefits can ease the discomfort and pain from dry eyes. Patients have had great success with IPL, and we are committed to helping patients get relief from their dry eye symptoms. ■

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



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ANATOMICAL short leg leads to back pain

Often times in my office, I will examine a patient who presents with low-back pain that has eluded multiple specialists. This patient has typically undergone pain medications, muscle relaxants, anti-inflammatories, physical therapy and epidural steroid injections, yet still has not obtained any significant relief. Diagnostic imaging such as MRI will usually show single-level degenerative disc disease and herniation, often at the lower lumbar spine, without any known injury. The typical scenario is of a patient aged 25 to 50 who seems healthy in all aspects, except for constant nagging low-back and sometimes leg pain that worsens the longer he is standing.

When I see this situation, my first inclination is to rule out an anatomical leg-length inequality, caused by an anatomically short bone in the leg. It should be noted that anatomical (structural) leg-length inequality is entirely different from, and should not be confused with, physiological (functional) leg-length inequality. Physiological leg-length inequality is due to muscular imbalances, not bone length. So why does anatomical leg-length inequality leading to back pain often get overlooked? It's very simple: every diagnostic test such as X-ray, CT scan, and MRI performed in a medical and hospital setting prior to my consultation has had the patient lying on his back. One can not evaluate the effects of gravity on the spine, hips, knees and ankles with the patient lying on his back. The patient must be standing when the X-ray is taken to make accurate leg-length measurements. Also, if you have ever experienced severe back pain, lying on your back is about the only comfortable position you will find. Taking an X-ray with the patient lying comfortably on his back when the patient has pain while standing, is like performing a cardiac stress test on a patient while he is sleeping. It makes no sense.

A majority of people have a measurable anatomical leg-length difference of ¼ inch or more, although most people adapt to the difference with no apparent ill effects. Unfortunately, some do not. The ill effects range from low-back or sacroiliac pain to hip, knee or foot problems.

A number of causes can contribute to leg-length discrepancy, including the following:

- Any previously broken leg bone, particularly during growth years.
- Congenital differences or uneven growth.
- Disease-caused shortening of the muscles and connective tissue, a common after-effect of polio.
- Surgically induced differences, especially common after hip- or knee-replacement surgery.
- Compensation for problems elsewhere in the body, such as pelvic or spinal scoliosis.

These biomechanical adaptations and compensations for even a slightly short leg can have long-term side effects, manifesting as low-back pain, hip and knee pain, uneven gait, and various foot and lower-leg problems. These problems are often related to the bodily adaptations that occur due to continuous unbalanced movement and can be aggravated by the stresses of sports activities such as running.

The diagnosis and treatment of such leg-length differences and their effects is the subject of volumes of medical history and research. Our office uses a specific protocol to diagnose and correct this condition without the use of drugs or surgery.

If you or someone you know is suffering from back pain and have not found the relief for which you are looking, please consider chiropractic. They may be able to help. ■

Information provided by Christopher M. Renze, D.C., D.I.B.C.N., of Renze Chiropractic Clinic, P.C. For more information, visit www.renzechiro.com or call the office at 965-3844.



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A LITTLE perspective to end the year



2024 is in the rearview mirror, and 2025 is here. As one year ends and a new one begins, I have a lot of questions, as I am sure we all do. But one thing that I took away from this year was to “be thankful for the gift of an ordinary day.”

Sometimes, we don’t know what that means. We also don’t know what others may be going through or the challenges they are facing, so a word of advice: Just be kind.

Also, a small circle is OK. To the ones who took time out of your day to repeatedly check in on my family and show up or help out, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Last year was one of challenges, new experiences, growth, self-reflection, patience, love... but, most of all, gratitude.

I have shared this before, but a couple of years ago, I read an article about the best question to ask yourself: not what do I want, but rather, what am I willing to struggle for? The main point is, we all want many things in and for our lives, but most of us are not willing to do the work and struggle to attain those things.

We wait for a “new year” to make resolutions that make us feel better about the year behind us, but most never follow through with any of them.

Each day is a new day, a new chance to change your path, your direction and your mentality about anything in your life. You don’t need a new year to make those decisions. You just need to take action.

I am grateful for amazing friends and family, near or far, who love unconditionally. Grateful for the struggle and lessons learned this year but also for the new things I tried that made me uncomfortable. Grateful that I am married to an amazing woman, mother and wife, Kristin Mills, to help with the journey ahead, no matter what this world throws at us — and it’s thrown us a lot. We always got this.

Set goals for your life, not resolutions, and work to achieve them every day. Don’t point fingers until you know the work that was done for someone to get where they are. You get one ride, one chance, one opportunity — what are you going to do with it?

But most of all, have fun, laugh a lot along the way, and take time for those who matter. And, in the words of someone a lot smarter than I am, #DFIU!

2025 will have a lot of opportunities to support this amazing community and the chamber. We hope to see you there to grow with us. Thanks. ■

Information provided by Tony Mills, 2025 Chairman of the Board for the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce, and owner of Apex Sway.



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BUSINESS

after hours

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OUT & ABOUT



Kathryn Bisbey at the ribbon cutting for Gladdies Bake Shop on Dec. 19.



A ribbon cutting was held for Gladdies Bake Shop, 301 S.W. Walnut St., on Dec. 19.



Alexa Middleton and Barb Wiedenman at the ribbon cutting for Gladdies Bake Shop on Dec. 19.



Tim Ure and Roman at the ribbon cutting for Gladdies Bake Shop on Dec. 19.



Mindy Carratt, Kathryn Bisbey, Cindy Gordon, Gillian Overturf and Barb Wiedenman at the ribbon cutting for Gladdies Bake Shop on Dec. 19.



Janna Finch at the ribbon cutting for Gladdies Bake Shop on Dec. 19.



Jim Wiedenman and Joel Cox at the ribbon cutting for Gladdies Bake Shop on Dec. 19.



Jordan Weber and Amy Pittman at the Ankeny Chamber's Lattes & Leads at NET PAR, indoor golf simulator experience, Nov. 26.



Stacey Shaffer, Erin Crone and Reyna Immerfall at the Ankeny Chamber's Lattes & Leads at NET PAR, indoor golf simulator experience, Nov. 26.



Tim Ure and Diane Weber at the Ankeny Chamber's Lattes & Leads at NET PAR, indoor golf simulator experience, Nov. 26.



Samantha McNeeley and Karen Roa at the Ankeny Chamber's Lattes & Leads at NET PAR, indoor golf simulator experience, Nov. 26.

LATTES

& Leads

Lattes & Leads was held at Purple Poppy Boutique, 1615 S.W. Main St.



Anastasia Peterson and Lea Fagervik



Sharlyn Estrem and Nina Punelli



Michele Cheek and Mary Draayer



Diane Weber and Sara Wilson



Bettina Hewitt



Brandon Converse



Tony Mills and Chris Cullen



Carolyn Ritsema and Julie Hammerly



Beth Barclay and Owen Dominguez



Lea Fagervik and Paula Bierle



Joe Herst and Mackenzie Cowden

BUSINESS After Hours

Business After Hours was held at Foot & Ankle Center of Iowa Dec. 12.



Julie Mangels, Patti Hood, Abi Ram, Heather Lilienthal and Michele Starkenburg



Mindi Dayton and Kayla Deighan



Carly Sorgenfrey and Amber Milliken



Foot & Ankle Center of Iowa staff



Jordan Niewoehner, Stockton Harter and Jamie Dobson



Jenna Enderton and Mary Draayer



Nikki Miller, Jeffrey Olson and Ben Duhn



Paul and Mindi Dayton



Heather Lilienthal and Sue Hudson



Joy and Bobby Johnson

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Mary R. in Des Moines says, "I'm 77 and planning for my future. I want quality time with my family, not difficult decisions during difficult times. WellAhead offers me a holistic approach and a leading-edge philosophy towards aging, with benefits for the future and for today."

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