

Living

A Special BOND

Local grandparents share why living close to their grandkids is so important to them.

Meet Marilyn Whitney
EDUCATION

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RECIPE




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- 5. Seat Belt Fit:** When transitioning to a seat belt, ensure that it fits properly. The lap belt should lie snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach, and the shoulder belt should cross the chest and shoulder, not the neck or face.
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WELCOME

A GRANDPA and his grandson

Jolene and I are new to this grandparenting thing. We are only weeks in, but, so far, so good. We had heard how wonderful the experience is from others, but, like most things in life, we didn't fully understand until we began to live it.

Our middle daughter, Samantha, got married a few years ago. She and her husband, Brady, then moved to Arizona. We missed them, and, thankfully, they missed us, too. As they began to talk about starting a family together, they came to the conclusion that they wanted to be close to family again and were moving back to the area.

We were able to see Samantha through the pregnancy process, and we were at the hospital shortly after their son was born. Holding Callahan in my arms for the first time was amazing, and doing so each time since has been as well. No phone call or video call could ever replace that.

I am greatly looking forward to the years ahead, too. Walking. Talking. Birthday parties. Ball games. And whatever he chooses to be involved in. But what I look forward to the most is the time we can spend together, just the two of us. Playing games at the kitchen table. Working on a project together in the garage. Going on boat rides. And just talking about whatever he wants to talk about.

My grandparents had all died by the time I was 5 years old, but I have a few wonderful memories of my Grandpa Lane. I can still envision him. In bib overalls. Sitting in his recliner. Looking at me and thinking how he could make me laugh. He would ask me if I wanted to see a monkey, and, of course, I always did. So I would jump up on his lap, and he would pull out his pocket watch and turn the shiny side over so I could see my reflection. And we both would giggle. I fell for that one repeatedly.

He also had dentures and would look out of the corner of his eyes to see the amazement on my face when I watched him take them out. He would tell me I could do it, too, if I tried. And then he would chuckle while watching me, his 18th and final grandchild, yank feverishly on my own teeth.

I was fortunate to be able to spend time with my grandpa, albeit not as much as I would have liked. I loved him dearly, and I want to do all I can to be sure my grandson and my future grandchildren will have those same opportunities with me.

This month, we share the stories of grandparents who live nearby their grandchildren and are able to create these types of cherished memories — and maybe see a few monkeys, too.

Thanks for reading. ■

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A Special BOND

Local grandparents share why living close to their grandkids is so important to them.

By Ashley Rullestad

These days, kids often grow up, move away and start family and careers far from where they grew up. Siblings are often scattered across the country and even the globe. Dinners with the extended family is now regulated to the holidays, when those who are able make the trip “back home.” But there is something about grandkids that brings about another family shift. Many young families decide their kids would benefit from having family close by, and many grandparents find retirement is the perfect time for making a move closer to family. Some of those grandparents who live close to their grandkids share what it means to them to form the special bonds that come from time spent together.

Mike and Kelly Brose (left), their daughter and son-in-law, Shelby and Jonathan Nelson (right), and grandsons, Grant, 7, and Owen, 3.

Staying close

Timothy and June Johnson have four grandchildren. Two live in Maryland, and two live close by in Ankeny.

“Fortunately, our son and daughter-in-law are very open to the kids visiting our home for sleepovers and other activities,” June says. “They are always asking, ‘When are we going to do a sleepover?’ Do we spoil them? Of course. That’s what we signed up for. What harm is a little extra maple syrup and whipped topping on their chocolate-chip pancakes?”

The Johnsons have a different sort of relationship than their kids had with their grandparents. Timothy and June moved around quite a bit for jobs, so they were only in the same town with June’s parents for a few years when the kids were little. Though they enjoyed their visits together when they happened, her parents often weren’t involved in babysitting or hosting the kids for overnight stays. They never lived in Omaha where Timothy’s family lives, so the kids did not see them on a regular basis.

As far as June and Timothy, both had close relationships with their grandparents and have fond memories of frequently spending time



Timothy and June Johnson enjoying time with grandkids Timothy, Gryffin, Lilyon and Isabella.

with them, either at weekly family dinners and other family celebrations, or just visiting with them in their home.

“Our grandkids also love coming over to our house and doing outings together,” June says. “We keep them busy, partly because it’s fun for us, too. We frequently visit the Johnston Library, and they always pick out more books than they can read.”

The playgrounds near the library or at Terra Park are a favorite in nicer weather, and sometimes the kids make a new friend. They also enjoy Jester Park Nature Center, especially the downstairs area where they can put on a puppet show for “Grama” and “Grampa.”

“In short, we feel very fortunate to be close to one set of grandkids, and we have as much fun as they do,” June says.

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Being a village

Susan and Pat Ward raised their three kids in the Johnston community, but their own parents weren't nearby. Their oldest son was diagnosed with a brain tumor when he was only a year old. The treatment needed to save his life worked, but he was left with lasting brain damage and passed away at age 21.

"They grew up with their brother, and I think how we took care of him and raised them definitely influenced them in a positive way, but it wasn't always easy," Susan says. "It was hard to not have family close. My husband and I both worked, and we juggled sick kids, doctor appointments and school activities. The kids didn't have grandparents at some school events or for birthdays, and among my husband's siblings, we were the only out-of-towners, and my kids knew that."

One of the benefits was that their family became resilient, self-reliant, and worked it out. Now, Susan and Pat enjoy being close to help their own children with their families. They have seven grandchildren: Sophie, 10; Brayden,



The Ward family in 2021. They now have even more grandchildren.

7; Xander, 5; Royalty, 6; Zaelyn, 1; Remi, 5; and Maisie, 2. The families live in Des Moines and Urbandale.

The Wards try to help, especially when the grandkids are sick, so their parents don't have to miss work, but, of course, that's not planned.

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“I think the biggest benefit is being there as a support when needed — not just babysitting, but when the inevitable house problem happens, car repairs are needed, help with moving, going to grandkids’ school events, all of those things.”

— Susan Ward



Kelly Brose (left), daughter Shelby Nelson (right), and grandsons Grant, 7, and Owen, 3.

They are also blessed with grandparents nearby on both sides, so juggling holidays requires flexibility.

“I think the biggest benefit is being there as a support when needed — not just babysitting, but when the inevitable house problem happens, car repairs are needed, help with moving, going to grandkids’ school events, all of those things,” Susan says.

They also have a great understanding of the space their kids and grandkids need at times. They work to respect the kids’ parenting style when watching the grandchildren. They try to not be overbearing or intrusive; they see the kids frequently but not daily, and sometimes not weekly. The kids know they are around and available if needed.

“My husband is handy, so he may help with some household repairs or maintenance if needed,” Susan says. “It’s rare that we stop by unannounced. And we respect their parenting and only offer advice if asked. We are proud of the relationships we have.”

Johnston generations

Kelly Brose moved to Johnston when she was a freshman in high school. She then met her now husband, Mike, who has lived in Johnston since he was 4 years old. His mom still lives in the same house they did when he was young. In fact, his parents are long-time residents of Johnston; the Kinseys have been part of the town since the 1930s.

Kelly and her husband married after high school and moved to Boston where they lived for three years. Then Mike was promoted and transferred back to Des Moines. Kelly was nine months pregnant at the time. The couple looked in all the suburbs when buying their first home and decided to find a home within the Johnston Community School District. The kids graduated from Johnston schools, and, now, their oldest daughter, Shelby, lives less than a mile from them. Kelly has also worked in the district for 24 years.

When the Broses were raising their

kids, they had a close bond with their grandparents. Kelly wanted to have the same special relationship with her own grandkids. Kelly is from Omaha and had a close relationship with her grandparents while growing up.

“I feel very blessed to live close to my in-laws and my daughter, Shelby, and her family. We see our grandkids almost daily,” she says. “Grant is 7 and goes to Timber Ridge Elementary, and his little brother, Owen, is 3. I was close to my grandparents, and I wanted to give my children that same bond with their grandparents.”

Kelly even let her in-laws take the kids on a four-week road trip in their camper one summer when the children were young. To this day, they talk about all the fun things they saw and did on that trip.

“It really was a trip of a lifetime. As I get closer to retirement, I really hope I can take my grandkids on a trip like the special one they had with my in-laws,” Kelly says. ■

JOHNSTON Historical Society receives grant

Bravo Greater Des Moines, the regional arts council that provides funding and support to nonprofit cultural organizations and programs, has awarded a 2025 operating grant to the Johnston (Station) Historical Society.

Bravo gave operating grants to 89 nonprofit arts, culture and heritage organizations to support general operations. Funding for this grant programs comes from Bravo's partnerships with 17 local governments that contribute a percentage of their hotel/motel tax revenue each year. The partnering governments include the city of Johnston.

"This was a dynamic grant cycle, and it is exciting to support the breadth of arts, culture and heritage that's available across Greater Des Moines. Bravo is grateful to our local government partners who trust us to make these critical investments in our community," Sally Dix, president of Bravo Greater Des Moines, said in a prepared statement.

The Johnston (Station) Historical Society has no paid staff and relies on volunteer support. This allows all of the operating grant to go toward operating expenses like insurance, maintenance of its historic house museum and the operation of its website at www.johnstoniowahistorical.org.

The Johnston (Station) Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to discovering, preserving and presenting the history of the Johnston area. Founded in 1994, JHS maintains the 1902 Simpson House Museum at 6161 Northglenn Drive in Johnston. The museum is open for Johnston Commons community events and by appointment. You can support the society by becoming a member, a volunteer, a benefactor or donating Johnston-related historical items. ■

TERRA LAKE stocked with rainbow trout

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) released 3,700 rainbow trout Jan. 16 at Lake Petocka in Bondurant, Triumph Park West and East in Waukee, and Terra Lake in Johnston.

"We decided to stock trout earlier so anglers could take advantage of favorable ice conditions," said Ben Dodd, Iowa DNR fisheries biologist.

The winter community trout stockings at these Central Iowa community lakes were previously scheduled for Feb. 1 and Feb. 4.

Anglers 16 years and older must have a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. The daily limit is five trout per licensed angler with a possession limit of 10. Children age 15 or younger can fish for trout with a properly licensed adult, but, together, they can only keep one daily limit. Children can pay the trout fee, allowing them to keep their own daily limit. ■

MEET Marilyn Whitney

Kindergarten's "guiding light" retiring.

Since 1985, Marilyn Whitney has dedicated her life to shaping young minds, first in Norwalk for 16 years and then in Johnston at Horizon Elementary. After nearly four decades in the classroom, she will retire this year, leaving a legacy of dedication and countless "lightbulb moments."

Whitney joined Horizon Elementary when it opened in 2001. She was excited to teach closer to home and be more present for her four daughters, all Johnston graduates.

"I wanted to attend their activities and be on time," she recalls.

She has remained a key piece of Horizon Elementary ever since. Over her years in Johnston, she has exclusively taught kindergarten.

Teaching, for Whitney, was a dream she embraced at an early age. "When I was 5, I told my grandpa I'd grow up and be a teacher," she says. "I have not ever looked back from that. I'm just one of those who knew I'd be a teacher."

Whitney enjoys working with kids and has built a reputation as a teacher who sets clear expectations while nurturing her students' growth.

"I'm firm but kind," she says.

Whitney says she is direct, so her young students know what's expected of them. They seem to do a great job with directions.

Over the years, Whitney has witnessed significant changes in education but has held on to her core joy: the students.

Her classroom has become a hopeful space for many families in the community, some of whom have seen all their children go through her kindergarten class.

"It's wonderful," Whitney says. "I've had some great families."

Watching her students learn and grow has been the highlight of her career. Seeing a child catch on to an idea — that lightbulb moment where they get it — is so meaningful for Whitney.

"It's fun to see them learn, especially in kindergarten, learning to read and being able to sound out words," she says. "That's the fun part of teaching."

Whitney describes kindergarteners as "still very sweet" and full of excitement for school, which makes her job all the more rewarding.

As she approaches retirement, she looks forward to being with her loved ones more, including her 12 grandchildren.

"When I think of retirement, I think of family and friends and spending time with them," she shares.

She also plans to stay busy through volunteering.

"People think you'll be bored, but I don't think that will be the situation for me," she says. "I'll have lots to do." ■



After nearly 40 years of teaching, Marilyn Whitney will be retiring from her duties at Horizon Elementary.

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RECIPE

TACKLE wellness goals by adding a touch of green

Better-for-you recipes inspired by savory salad kits

(Family Features) Around the start of a new year, many people are setting their wellness intentions, from incorporating a variety of greens into meals to boosting daily step goals, drinking more water and practicing gratitude.

As part of the journey, it's important to rethink nutrition and your recipe repertoire to include better-for-you meals. For example, you can satisfy seafood cravings while getting your protein fix with Italian Crusted Salmon with Creamy Truffle Caesar Salad. This one-pan solution is paired with a Fresh Express Twisted Creamy Truffle Caesar Chopped Salad Kit, inspired by high-end dining experiences with flavors that transport you to the finest restaurants around the world.

The kit allows you to indulge in crunchy garlic brioche croutons paired with garden fresh crispy romaine lettuce, delicate sprinkles of truffle Parmesan cheese shreds and creamy dressing, transforming every bite into a sensation to be savored.

Visit freshexpress.com to discover more than 380 fresh recipes and find a store near you. ■

Italian crusted salmon with creamy truffle Caesar salad

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Servings: 2

- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons chopped, fresh rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon honey
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons panko breadcrumbs
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped walnuts
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 2 salmon fillets
- nonstick cooking spray
- 1 bag (9.3 ounces) Fresh Express Twisted Caesar Creamy Truffle Caesar Chopped Kit Salad
- 2 lemon wedges (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- Heat oven to 425 F. Line sheet pan with parchment paper.
- In small bowl, combine garlic, lemon juice, rosemary, honey and salt. In another small bowl, combine breadcrumbs, walnuts and olive oil.



- Place salmon on prepared sheet pan. Spread mustard mixture over fish; sprinkle with panko mixture, pressing to adhere. Lightly coat with nonstick cooking spray.
- Bake 12-15 minutes, or until fish flakes easily with fork.
- Place greens from salad kit in large bowl. Drizzle with dressing; mix well.
- Evenly divide salad among two plates. Top with salmon. Serve each with lemon wedge, if desired.

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ISU STUDENTS create new IPA for brewery



Winning team members Trenton Major, Steven Ragan, Grant Miller, David Nelson and Connor Hollarbush gather at their brewing station in the ISU brewing science lab. Photo by Lisa Schmitz

The scent of malted grains, hops and yeast fills the air inside the Iowa State University brewing science laboratory — along with a hint of friendly competition.

Students enrolled in The Science and Practice of Brewing, a three-credit course offered by the ISU brewing science program, are learning the foundational elements of brewing science and technology this semester while also working to develop an India pale ale (IPA) for commercial production, thanks to a new collaboration with Backpocket Brewing.

“Instructors are always looking for ways to show students the utility of what they are learning, but, despite our best efforts, students are sometimes not fully convinced,” said Robert C. Brown, who leads the ISU brewing science program and is co-director of Iowa State’s Bioeconomy Institute, an Anson Marston Distinguished Professor in Engineering and the Gary and Donna Hoover Chair in Mechanical Engineering.

“This semester, Backpocket Brewing challenged our students to apply what they are learning about brewing to develop a new IPA for commercial production, and the competitive opportunity has taken student enthusiasm and learning to a whole new level,” Brown said.

Best brew wins

Backpocket Brewing, which is based in Coralville and has additional taprooms in Dubuque and Johnston, specifically asked students to create a beer representative of the “new American IPA” style, which is a combination of the well-known hazy IPA and West Coast IPA styles.

“For us, the new American IPA takes more flavorful hops from the hazy IPA style, showcasing flavors such as citrus, passion fruit or mango, and combines it with the slightly higher bitterness and drinkability of a West Coast IPA,” said Luke Jipp, head brewer at Backpocket Brewing. “The result is an easy-drinking, balanced IPA with an approachable, fruitier hop profile.”

Students worked together in four teams of five to develop brews for consideration, utilizing the traditional ingredients in beer — hops, grain, water and yeast — while experimenting with a variety of brewing techniques inside the state-of-the-art brewing science lab. The 2,800-square-foot lab is located in the Food Sciences Building on campus and houses multiple brewhouses and fermenters designed to produce beer at various scales, as well as advanced brewing equipment and technology.

By early November, the students were ready

to put their best brews forward for sampling and evaluation by a panel of judges, including Jipp and ISU faculty and staff members.

“It was exciting to find out what the students created; each team started from scratch, developed a recipe and brewed it in the ISU lab,” Jipp said. “This partnership has been a wonderful opportunity for our Backpocket Brewing team to support brewing education and help students take what they’ve learned in class and in the lab and apply it to a professional situation.”

Ready to launch

And the best brew goes to ...

With a name inspired by its Galaxy variety hops, Team 3’s “Alien Juice Party” IPA was selected as the challenge winner when the judges’ final votes were tallied. Team members were Connor Hollarbush, senior mechanical engineering major from Aurora, Illinois; Trenton Major, senior agricultural business major from Pleasantville; Grant Miller, senior chemical engineering major from Ankeny; David Nelson, senior chemical engineering major from Westmont, Illinois.; and Steven Ragan, senior cyber security engineering major from Des Moines.

To learn more about the ISU program, visit extension.iastate.edu/wine/brewing-science-program. ■

PLAN AHEAD

By Kathy Dunbar

PLANNING a trip?

Do you travel out of state or out of the country, whether to visit family, to go on a vacation or to escape the Iowa winters?

Being a funeral home, we know there are times when a death occurs away from home. It happens more often than people would probably expect.

What people do not always realize is that it can be difficult to get a person transported back home — and there can be unexpected expenses.

While the funeral home does everything it can to make these situations as seamless as possible and to keep extra expenses at a minimum, there can still be some challenges.

Fortunately, there is an affordable solution that can provide a tremendous amount of peace of mind to those who frequently travel.

Travel plans offered through a funeral home can be very affordable (usually a modest one-time payment), and they can help ensure that, if the inevitable happens away from home, everything will be covered to bring the loved one back home to where services will be provided.

If you are a traveler — or plan to become one in your retirement years — then visit with your funeral provider of choice and ask if they offer a travel plan.

As we often like to say, you will be glad you did. ■

Information provided by Kathy Dunbar, Advanced Planning Counselor, Hamilton's on Westown Parkway, 3601 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-697-3681



LIBRARY

FIND your heart's desire at the library



Whether you're looking for the perfect book, movie, craft or game, you can find it at JPL this month. JPL is also hosting an "Our Stories" series celebrating Black history and culture expressed through personal experiences and community traditions. Read on for further details.

Johnston Public Library

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Monday - Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Friday - Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, 1-5 p.m.

Calling all young crafters. Kids in fourth and fifth grade who would like to make a homemade Valentine's Day gift for a loved one (or for themselves) can learn how to sculpt wool into **Needle-Felted Heart Keychains** on Feb. 13 from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Registration is required.

Prefer slimes over hearts? Crafty gamers in grades 3-5 who love Minecraft can construct their own hostile mobs at **Slimecraft**. Registration is required for this slimy after-school program from 4:30-5 p.m. on Feb. 27.

Teens in grades 6-12 who have a passion for fashion and solving mysteries can register for the **Masquerade Murder Mystery: Dress to Impress party** on Tuesday, Feb. 25 from 5:30-7 p.m. Partygoers should dress their best and come ready to play a role or just attend as an investigator. Masks and pizza will be provided at this heart-pumping murder mystery.

Learn more about the richness and diversity of the Black experience in Iowa on Thursday, Feb. 6 at 6:30 p.m., CultureALL Ambassador Josie Shaw will be at JPL to talk about the intricate art of beading and the meaning behind the beads at a free workshop called **Beading, a Kenyan Tradition**. Then reserve a seat to take part in **Open Book Discussion** featuring Abena Sankofa Imhotep and Tone the MoveMaker on Thursday, Feb. 13 from 6:30-7:30 p.m., where the presenters will share their defining moments and facilitate a group discussion about personal storytelling. Finally, at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 20, you can learn an Afro-Brazilian art form at **Intro to Capoeira**. Capoeira is a blend of martial arts, music, dance and cultural expression. Registration is required for all CultureALL events.

More information about all events and resources at Johnston Public Library can be found online at www.johnstonlibrary.com or by calling the library at 515-278-5233. ■

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WHAT TO KNOW before 'reversing' your retirement

After working for decades, you may have been looking forward to retiring. But what if you decide to "reverse" your retirement?

You could rejoin the workforce for any number of reasons. You might need the added income to help pay for your living expenses, but you also might miss the social interactions with co-workers or simply desire more purpose or stimulation in your life.

And, if you do un-retire, you'll have plenty of company. More than 13% of previously retired baby boomers returned to the workforce in 2023, the highest level in five years, according to data from LinkedIn, the online career networking platform.

When pondering the decision to go back to work, you'll want to evaluate the advantages and the possible drawbacks.

First, let's look at the benefits of rejoining the workforce. By improving your cash flow, you may be able to do more of the things you enjoy, such as traveling. And you might also be able to reduce your debt load, which can free up even more cash. You might also use the extra money for other purposes, such as contributing to a tax-advantaged 529 education savings plan for your grandchildren.

Furthermore, depending on where you're returning to work, and whether you go back full or part-time, you might gain access to your employer's benefits programs. If you aren't already enrolled in Medicare, you could find it financially advantageous to sign up for your employer-sponsored group medical plan. And, you may also be able to contribute to your employer's 401(k) or similar plan. Even if you're not eligible for an employer-sponsored retirement plan, you can contribute to an IRA if you have any earned income.

And here's something else to think about: By bringing in income from employment, you may be able to take less out each year from your existing 401(k) and IRA, giving them a chance to potentially grow more. (Once you turn 73, or 75 if you were born in 1960 or later, you'll have to start taking withdrawals from your traditional IRA and 401(k). With a Roth IRA and 401(k), you're not required to take withdrawals at any age.)

Now, let's consider some potential areas of concern about returning to the workforce. If you've been taking Social Security, your 2025 benefits will be reduced by \$1 for every \$2 earned above \$23,400 if you haven't reached your full retirement age, which is likely between 66 and 67. In the year in which you do reach your full retirement age, your benefits will be reduced by \$1 for every \$3 earned above \$62,160. Starting in the month in which you reach your full retirement age, you can earn as much as you want without losing benefits. (Also, Social Security will then recalculate your payments to give you credit for the months in which your benefits were reduced due to your earned income.)

Another area of concern might be your Medicare premiums. Because these premiums are based on your income, they could rise if you start earning more money. Also, if your income increases enough, you might be pushed into a higher tax bracket.

Ultimately, you'll want to weigh the pros and cons of returning to work. If it seems the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, you may well enjoy embarking on your "second act" in the working world. ■

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PO Box 410
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sreddy@cityofjohnston.com

JOHNSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Emergency: 9-1-1

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(515) 278-0822
FAX: (515) 727-8092

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(515) 251-3707

Presidents' Day closures in Johnston

The Johnston city offices, including the library, will be closed on Monday, February 17, in observance of Presidents Day. However, trash and recycling pickup days will remain unchanged. The Johnston City Council's work session and meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 18, at 6:00 p.m.



Apply now for Special Census jobs in Johnston

The U.S. Census Bureau is hiring for various positions in preparation for the upcoming Special Census in the City of Johnston. Fieldwork for the Special Census is scheduled for the spring of 2025. Available positions include Field Representatives and Field Supervisors. Pay begins at \$25.50 per hour for Field Representatives and \$29.50 per hour for Field Supervisors. The hours are flexible, and training is also paid.

To learn more about these positions and to apply online, please visit www.cityofjohnston.com/census. The application deadline is Friday, February 14.

Obtaining an updated official population count for Johnston will significantly impact our community, particularly in terms of funding for road maintenance and repairs. We will share the new population count once the U.S. Census Bureau completes its analysis!



Give back to your community – serve on a board or commission

It's a new year and a great opportunity to serve your community. The city offers several positions on boards and commissions, with several terms set to expire on June 30. Consider this your chance to make a difference and have a voice in important decisions.

Here are the available openings:

- **Board of Adjustment:** One opening
- **Park Advisory Board:** Four openings
- **Planning & Zoning Commission:** One opening
- **Senior Advisory Board:** Six openings
- **Tree Board:** Three openings



Get involved...
**Join a City
Board/Commission**

Take this opportunity to get involved! Visit www.cityofjohnston.com/boardsandcommissions to apply today.



CITY NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2025

Submit your concern online

The City of Johnston has simplified the process for reporting concerns online, allowing city staff to promptly identify and resolve issues. You can submit reports about code enforcement, playground problems, or potholes by visiting www.cityofjohnston.com/concerncenter.

Upcoming community events to take part in

The City of Johnston and the Johnston Town Center are hosting family-friendly events throughout the year. We recommend marking your calendars to ensure you don't miss out on these exciting events. For more information about the City of Johnston events, please visit www.cityofjohnston.com and view the calendar. For information about the events at Johnston Town Center, please visit johnstontowncenter.com.

Saturday, April 5

Electronics Recycling Day
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Minor cost to recycle CRTs, TVs and some batteries.

Tuesday, April 8

Annual Tree Sale
Online only beginning at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, April 12

Kite Building Workshop
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, April 10 - Saturday, April 12

Tree branch and tire drop off.
Times vary based upon the day.

Monday, April 7 - Thursday, April 10

Spring Cleanup in Johnston
West of NW 86th Street is Monday, April 7 and Tuesday, April 8 and East of NW 86th Street is Wednesday, April 9 and Thursday, April 10

Thursday, April 10 - Saturday, April 12

Tree branch and tire drop off
Times vary based upon the day.

Saturday, May 3

Kites on the Green
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Tuesdays, June 3 - September 30

Farmers Market
4:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 7

Family Fest at the Town Center
11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Mark Your Calendar!



Senior (55+) activities to enjoy

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

- **Thursday, February 13:** Join us for BINGO. The menu features pulled pork, potato salad, baked beans, mixed fruit, and sweet rolls.
- **Thursday, March 13:** Come for more cards and board games. The menu includes fried chicken, white cheddar mac & cheese, green beans almandine, and cookies.



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

Stay connected and updated with news

As a resident, we want you to stay informed about community events. Sign up for Ready Johnston www.cityofjohnston.com/ReadyJohnston to receive emergency press release notifications and Johnston Loop www.cityofjohnston.com/JohnstonLoop for updates on events and meetings.

For more information about the city, please call 515.278.2344

NO BETTER Valentine gift than well-being at home

Stephanie, 70, has lived in her townhome in Urbandale for nearly 30 years and hopes to remain there, but her two sons are worried. Stephanie is healthy, but if she were to need assistance at some point,



her sons can't always provide immediate help, as one lives out of state and the other travels for work.

Stephanie's sons' concerns are reasonable; staying in our homes independently as we age is not always possible. Health challenges can make living independently ill-advised, and full-time assistance at home is 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 health or independence issues, what can

I do?"

Consider a continuing care at home (CC@H) membership. 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 planning for potential services and care down the road.

If you're interested in looking into such a program, make sure to ask specifically what it 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?** Studies show people who embark on a life-enriching program or activity will be more likely to succeed with encouragement from a trusted adviser, advocate, or coach.

• **Does it include care costs?** A solid program will help pay for your care, if it's needed, whether through home healthcare or services in a community later on.

• **How long has the organization that's backing the program been in business, and what's its reputation?** 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 continuing care at home programs are created equal! If a specific one appeals to you, make sure it meets both your current and future needs and provides you with peace of mind. ■

Aaron Wheeler is Vice President of Home and Community-Based Services for WesleyLife, which provides health and well-being services, including WellAhead — A WesleyLife Well-Being Experience, a CC@H offering. To learn more, visit wesleylife.org/wellahead.

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- Plan for future health needs

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ESTATE planning for a child with disabilities

Parents with a child with special needs face extraordinary challenges. In addition to the unique issues associated with raising a child with disabilities, traditional estate planning techniques



fly out the window. One concern is how to include the child in your will or trust. Children with special needs often receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid (Title XIX), which limit the amount of money the recipient can receive.

Previously, parents had two estate planning choices. First, they could include a disabled child in the will or trust. If the value inherited exceeded the applicable resource limit, the child would be ineligible for SSI and Medicaid. Alternatively, the parents could exclude the

child from their estate plan entirely. This option denies the child protection against unforeseen events, such as program cutbacks or insolvency. It also is emotionally difficult for a parent to disinherit a child.

There is now a third option. Changes to Medicaid allow for the creation of a third-party special needs trust. A special needs trust is a discretionary spendthrift trust designed to preserve government benefits for a disabled beneficiary.

If properly drafted, the trust holds assets for the benefit of the disabled child, but that money won't be counted as a resource. Because the money never belongs to the child, it won't interfere with benefits. Parents, relatives, or friends can contribute to a third-party special-needs trust.

Distributions from the trust are intended to supplement public benefits, not replace them. It allows the parents' assets to continue to be used

to enhance the child's quality of life. The trust can cover "extra" needs, such as personal care, therapy or travel.

If the child personally comes into money from inheritance or insurance, that money can be placed in a "self-funded" special-needs trust. The child continues on Medicaid or SSI, and the money in the trust can be used for uncovered expenses related to the disability. When the beneficiary dies, the government takes any money left in the trust. That is why no one should leave money directly to a child with special needs.

It is critical that the trust be drawn by a lawyer who understands the disability rules. The special needs trust allows parents to provide for their children without endangering the child's SSI or Medicaid benefits. ■

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

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THINKING globally, acting locally

Johnston Climate Change Committee makes impact

Inspiring a community to take action begins with a single spark, and, in Johnston, that spark was Lillian Hill. In sixth grade, she emailed her local council members about the issue of climate change. Her passion planted the seeds for what would become the Johnston Climate Change Committee.



A clean-up event at Beaver Creek is one of the projects organized by the Johnston Climate Change Committee.

One council member, Scott Syroka, was inspired to take action and helped Hill get the committee started. He mentioned it to fellow councilmember Rhonda Martin, who was also interested in joining. The ball kept rolling from there, with members like Rod Stevens, Emma Hanigan, Madelyn Schmidt and Ginger Monson hopping on board.

The committee operates under the mission “Think globally, act locally.” This philosophy shapes its work, from educational events to hands-on projects. With a focus on local engagement, the group provides a space for people to come together, learn and take meaningful steps to combat climate change.

“Climate change can be something that feels so big and at such a large scale that it’s nice to have the reminder that our actions make a difference, and we can do something in our own community,” Hanigan says.

In 2024, the Johnston Climate Change Committee hosted several events to educate and empower residents. On Jan. 26, the group presented ADAPT DSM, a local climate action initiative, at the Johnston Public Library. On May 4, the Tiny Tree Giveaway at Kites on the Green distributed 100 seedlings and flower packets. Then, on May 18, a guided tour of Camp Dodge showcased sustainable farming practices, wetland restoration and the importance of preserving biodiversity.

These efforts complement the committee’s ongoing projects, such as Earth Day cleanups, tree plantings, invasive species removal and educational sessions on renewable energy.

The group’s planned events for this year include another Camp Dodge sustainability tour, the annual Tiny Tree Giveaway and a Beaver Creek cleanup. Future aspirations include working with the city on a greenhouse gas emissions study, developing a climate action plan and incorporating sustainability into local planning.

Martin shares how the committee advocates for local policies, like tree preservation ordinances. She finds joy in seeing young people join cleanups at Beaver Creek, where they often see mussels, fish and even snakes.

“I grew up on a farm, so I saw that stuff all the time,” she says. “But a lot of kids don’t have that same experience getting out into nature and walking through a creek bed.”

With a current email list of 30 and a dedicated base of 10 active participants, the group is eager to expand. For more information, follow the Johnston Climate Change Committee on Facebook or email johnstonclimate@gmail.com to get involved. ■



HPV can cause 6 types of cancers

Getting the HPV vaccine is one of the best ways to prevent these cancers.

The CDC recommends the HPV vaccine for children as young as 9 and for people up to age 26 if not vaccinated when younger.

Ask your healthcare provider about the HPV vaccine



Source: National Cancer Institute cancer.gov

INTERNATIONAL travel medical insurance: a vital protection for travelers

International travel medical insurance is a crucial safety net for anyone traveling abroad, providing coverage for unexpected medical emergencies while away from home. Health care systems differ significantly from country to country, and international travel medical insurance offers peace of mind in case of illness, injury or accidents that might occur during your trip.



One of the primary reasons to purchase international travel medical insurance is to ensure access to medical care when abroad. Health insurance plans in your home country may not cover medical expenses in other countries, or they may only offer limited coverage for emergencies.

Travel medical insurance typically covers emergency medical care, hospital stays, surgeries, doctor's visits and prescriptions. It also includes medical evacuation, which is essential if you need to be transported to a better-equipped medical facility or returned to your home country for treatment. Without this type of coverage, the costs of such services can be astronomical.

While the specifics of policies can vary, international travel medical insurance generally covers several key areas:

- **Emergency medical care:** Covers doctor visits, hospitalization, surgeries and medical treatments required due to accidents or illnesses.
- **Medical evacuation:** Provides coverage for transportation to the nearest facility capable of treating a serious medical condition or emergency. This is particularly important in remote areas or countries with limited medical infrastructure.
- **Repatriation of remains:** In the unfortunate event of a traveler's death, this covers the cost of returning the deceased's body home.
- **Trip interruption or cancellation:** Some policies offer coverage for trip interruptions due to medical emergencies, including the cost of returning home early or canceling a trip altogether.
- **Lost or stolen baggage:** Coverage can also extend to personal belongings, offering financial compensation for lost or stolen luggage during travel.

While some countries, like those in the European Union, may offer reciprocal health coverage to travelers through agreements like the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), many countries do not have such arrangements. Even if medical care is available in your destination country, it can be prohibitively expensive without insurance. The cost of emergency services and hospitalization can add up quickly, making medical travel insurance a wise and cost-effective investment.

Additionally, health care providers in some countries may require payment upfront before providing medical care, and, without insurance, travelers might face delays or even denial of treatment.

Whether traveling for business, leisure or study, having proper coverage ensures that travelers can receive timely and adequate medical care without the financial burden of unexpected health emergencies. It's a small price to pay for the protection and peace of mind it offers while travelling internationally. If you have questions about international travel medical and trip insurance, contact your health insurance advisor. ■

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

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Upcoming in the April issue of Johnston Living magazine:

Foreign Exchange Students: Have you hosted a foreign exchange student in the past or are hosting one this year? Tell us about sharing your home and culture with a student from abroad and what you learned from the experience. Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com to be included in the April issue.

DSF spring auction

March 2-8

The Dragon Scholarship Fund (DSF) hosts an annual spring auction with the primary objective of raising funds to grant scholarships to Johnston High School graduating seniors. Established in 1987, DSF is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that has disbursed more than \$2.2 million in scholarships to JHS graduating seniors.

The organization's goal is to give every JHS graduating senior a chance to earn a scholarship to help continue their education beyond high school. This program is unique in that the fund awards scholarships based on personal character and responsibility regardless of financial need, class rank, gender, race, creed or ability. The Dragon Scholarship Fund awarded more than \$99,000 in scholarship funds to 228 Class of 2024 graduates.

So far, more than \$20,000 in community donations have been received. The auction will include items and experiences from dining, entertainment, concerts, theater, sports, memorabilia, activities, health and beauty. Register now to be a bidder. For more information, visit www.dragonsf.org.

Axe Throwing events

Ironside Axe Club, 2700 University Ave., Suite 100, West Des Moines

- **Feb. 13: A Galentines Ladies Night Out, 6-9 p.m.** Celebrate with your girlfriends with axe throwing, a drink ticket, mead/wine tasting, chocolate and snacks, \$40.
- **Feb 21: Dark Roast Happy Hour Business Networking event, 5-7 p.m.** Enjoy axe throwing, networking and beer. Free event, but donations are encouraged to help fund the events.
- **March 22: Pirate Take Over and Sea Shanty Sing Along** featuring the Orkes and Trolls. \$1 off drinks for all pirates. \$10 axe throwing from 6-10 p.m. Sing-a-long from 7-9 p.m.

Upcoming public meetings

- Monday, Feb. 10: Planning and Zoning Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Monday, Feb. 17: City Office Buildings and Library closed for Presidents' Day
- Tuesday, Feb. 18: City Council Work Session, 6 p.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 18: City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 19: Senior Advisory Board Meeting, 5 p.m.
- Thursday, Feb. 20: Library Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Feb. 20: Board of Adjustment Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Polk County Conservation events

Visit www.polkcountyiowa.gov/conservation/events for information about upcoming programs offered by Polk County Conservation and for registration links.

- **Story Tellebration, Wednesdays at 10 a.m.,** Feb. 19, Owl Moon; March 19, Spring is Sprung; April 23, It's Raining. Join volunteer storyteller Carmen Epstein for a fun, interactive tale tailored toward children ages 2 to 6 that explores the wonders of the outdoors. During each program, participants enjoy interactive stories and an activity. No registration required for this free event.

Iowa Beef Expo 2025

Feb. 8-16

Iowa State Fairgrounds, 3000 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines
iowabeefexpo.com

There is a long list of highlights happening at the Iowa Beef Expo this year. Look for sales, tradeshow, banquets, contests (including an auctioneering contest), parades for each breed, and so much more. The junior shows highlight on Feb. 15 and 16.

Valentines for pups

Celebrate Valentine's Day with your pup, and the adoptable dogs from Hope Animal Rescue of Iowa will receive your love as well. The entire month of February you can purchase a Valentine for your dog from Woof Pack Resort & Spa in Johnston, and the proceeds will go to Hope Animal Rescue of Iowa. The Valentine includes home-made Valentine treat from Em's Homemade Dog Treats, Valentine tennis ball and Valentine bandana. Price is \$10. Support this local rescue by purchasing your pup a special Valentine. Contact 515-416-4255 or info@woofpackresort.com.



Des Moines Performing Arts shows

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

- Feb. 13: Capital City Pride Presents: Tee Franklin
- Feb. 17-19: "The Giver"
- Feb. 21 to March 2: "Mary Poppins Jr."
- Feb. 25 to March 2: "Life of Pi"

CITYVIEW'S Chocolate Walk

West Glen Town Center, 5465 Mills Civic Parkway, West Des Moines
chocolatewalk.dmcityview.com
Feb. 21

CITYVIEW and West Glen Town Center once again bring the Chocolate Walk to West Glen Town Center on Friday, Feb. 21 from 5-9 p.m. For a ticket price of \$25 (\$35 at the door), attendees will receive 10 drink tickets that can be redeemed for sample cocktails at participating venues. Participating establishments are Wellman's, Anna Dolce, Shotgun Betty's, Grimaldi's, The Irish, Tonic, El Fogon, The Breakfast Club, Coach's Pizza and Hurts Donut. ■



ROTARIANS volunteer at Ronald McDonald House

Members of the Johnston Rotary Club recently volunteered to prepare meals for the families staying at the Ronald McDonald House in Des Moines.

“Even on the very last day of the year, our members demonstrated the true spirit of Rotary by coming together to serve others in need,” Rotarian Mike Pogge-Weaver said.

The group prepared dinner for approximately 70 people, including families facing challenging times as their children navigate medical emergencies. The meal consisted of chicken Parmesan with pasta, tossed salad, green beans, and freshly baked chocolate chip cookies.

“It was a heartwarming way to provide comfort and nourishment to these families and a meaningful way to finish 2024,” Pogge-Weaver said in thanking those who volunteered. “The holiday season is a time for giving, and your contributions remind us all the importance of helping others — especially families in need. Your support and hard work exemplify the values that make Rotary so special.” ■



Johnston Rotarians prepared a meal for about 70 people at the Ronald McDonald House in Des Moines.

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REAL ESTATE By Jenna Borcharding

PREPARING your home to sell

What are the best ways to prepare your home to sell? Simplify, neutralize and update. There is absolutely nothing wrong with your home style. However, you might need to change your staging style to sell. When listing a home, it's important to intentionally stage it to fit a broad range of styles.



Simplify

Remove photos of your family from the house. When buyers walk through listed homes, they are trying to imagine themselves living there. It's difficult to do that seeing your family around the home. Clear the counter tops off. Our homes absolutely should look lived in — because we live in them. We all have clutter piles, kids' drawings, a knick knack that you just can't part with. But when it's time to sell, pack it up. Move everything off the floors of the closets. Every closet in the house should look like it holds ample storage. Make sure items on hangers can move freely and there's room for "finger spacing" between items. We want the entire home to look spacious and roomy.

Neutralize

Touch up your paint. It's very normal to be hard on our surroundings, especially if there are kids living in the home. There's going to be scuffs and scratches on the walls and trim. Touching these up may seem silly because they're not always noticeable, but it's a simple task to really make your home feel new. Be sure you're using the same paint finish so the touch ups don't stick out. Paint over those bright accent walls. A wonderful way we express ourselves in our home is by adding splashes of color. However, it's best to neutralize the home with light or trending colors. White is always a safe option.

Update

I almost always suggest updating a few things in my sellers' homes before listing. There are a few simple items to update that can make a world of a difference with the overall look of your home: light fixtures, door/cabinet handles and curtains. When you buy new fixtures/handles, get the same metal color for all of them. This helps the home feel cohesive. Switch old ceiling fans for new ones, get a modern dining room chandelier and kitchen pendants, and pick out updated cabinet pulls. Swap out any old and dusty curtains for new, neutral panels. Change out stained carpet that has stretched for a fresh new feel.

These three key steps will elevate your home and help get it sold. Get in the head space that you are moving. Start packing up your things and get them ready for your next home. ■

Information provided by Jenna Borcharding, RE/MAX Precision, 8705 Chambery Blvd., Suite 100, Johnston, 641-430-9092, Jenna@JBHomeandDesign. Licensed Realtor in the state of Iowa.



Quick!

Come tour and choose!



Brio's brand-new Neighborhood 19 townhomes are nearly all reserved with residents moving in. Choose from the remaining two floor plans and you can look forward to a beautiful Brio future. Both floor plans offer you:

- Zero-step owner's entry from the garage, featuring countertop, cabinets and a beverage fridge
- Flex room for a personal office with built-in desktop and upper cabinets
- Kitchen island with chair-height seating
- Plentiful windows, including transom, plus, 9-ft ceilings throughout, 11-ft ceiling in family room, and 8-ft-tall doors
- Covered patio
- Tiled walk-in shower in owner's suite
- Main-level laundry
- Walk-in closet with wooden shelving in owner's suite
- Gas fireplace
- 1,500-sq-ft. finished basement area with a rec room, wet bar, mini fridge, additional bedroom, large windows and egress wells — plus, unfinished storage space
- Dedicated HVAC and black-out shades in owner's suite
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To schedule your personal tour of the two remaining floor plans, call Maria at (515) 252-5380.

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SENIOR Night

Johnston High School's Wrestling Senior Night was Jan. 16.



Robert Roethler, Mason Roethler, Nicol Roethler and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg



Batina Sehic, Sandy Sehic and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg



Coach Joe Gibbons, Jashua Anglo, Coach Jeff Helgeson and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg



Joe Gibbons, Kolby Gibbons, Pam Gibbons and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg



Doug Darling, Nick Darling, Arla Darling and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg



Adam Hass, Caleb Hass, Erin McWilliams and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg



Tory Frisk, Owen Frisk, Shannon Frisk and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg



Jeff Helgeson, Jacob Helgeson, Caryn Helgeson and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg



Irfan Beganovic, Nyle Beganovic, Nermina Beganovic and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg



Coach Joe Huebbe, Azriel Cortez, Jahir Gutierrez and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg



Brad Leonard, Caden Leonard, Jodi Leonard and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg

OUT & ABOUT



Damon Staker, Carson Staker, Tara Staker and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg at Johnston High School's Wrestling Senior Night on Jan. 16.



Matt Kauffman, Xander Kauffman, Nikki Kauffman and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg at Johnston High School's Wrestling Senior Night on Jan. 16.



Tay Thompson, Johnny Thompson, Shandrel Thompson, Lysie Thompson and Coach Aaron Tecklenburg at Johnston High School's Wrestling Senior Night on Jan. 16.



Jenni Buchanan, Paula Bierle and Julia Bradshaw at the Johnston Chamber After Hours at WineStyles, sponsored by ET Capital Partners on Jan. 8.



Annie Mielke and Jared Shields at the Johnston Chamber After Hours at WineStyles, sponsored by ET Capital Partners on Jan. 8.



Allan and Gina Graham at the Johnston Chamber After Hours at WineStyles, sponsored by ET Capital Partners on Jan. 8.



Samantha Winebrenner and Justin Russell at the Johnston Chamber After Hours at WineStyles, sponsored by ET Capital Partners on Jan. 8.



Holly Sealine and Beth Schaefer at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart Jan. 16 at the Johnston Public Library.



Derek Trobaugh and Chris Jones at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart Jan. 16 at the Johnston Public Library.



Jenni Buchanan and Brenda Ballard at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart Jan. 16 at the Johnston Public Library.



Dan Fitzgerald and Pete Jones at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart Jan. 16 at the Johnston Public Library.



Julia Bradshaw and Jamie Lewton at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart Jan. 16 at the Johnston Public Library.

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Congrats to last month's winner, Sue!
January Answer: 9/18/69



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