

NORTH POLK

MARCH 2025

Living

MAGAZINE

A wedding TO REMEMBER

**Couple shares how they
made their day special.**

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RECIPE

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Zoe Marquez, The Orbit editor and storyteller
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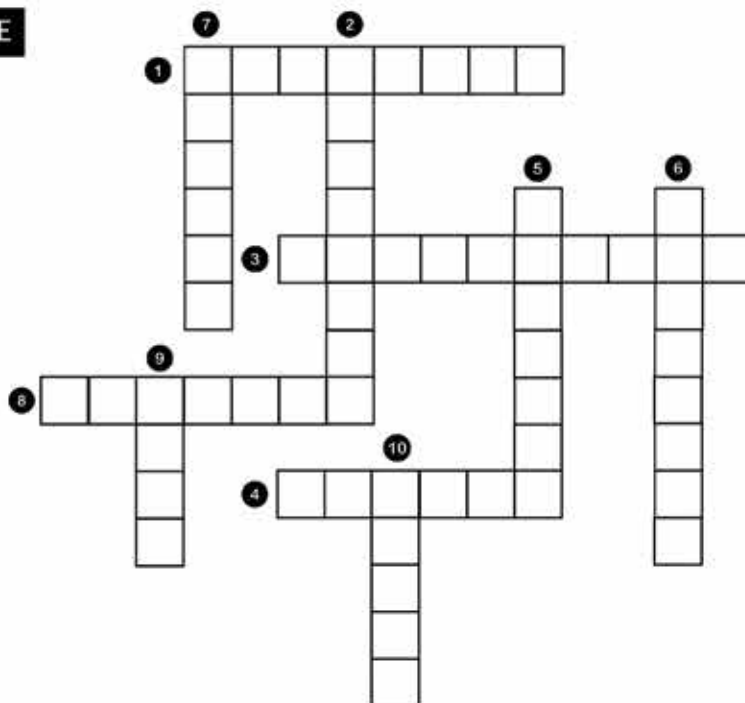
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Susie Sheldahl
REALTOR

MARCH BASKETBALL CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Please read the hints, write your answers and then head to my Facebook page to see if you got them right! @susiesheldahl

- 1 The reason we all suddenly become expert analysts in March
- 2 Repping the red and gold
- 3 The big event where Madness happens
- 4 When a lower seed surprises the top team
- 5 What makes March mad
- 6 A team surprising everyone
- 7 The sound before a game-winning shot
- 8 The stars who make the madness happen
- 9 Iowa State's standout player, ____ Cooks
- 10 Nothing but net!



WELCOME

AN OLD RV, a friendly farmer and a moose head

Jolene and I were married in Clive on Sept. 30, 1995. And, yes, this will be our 30-year anniversary.

Jolene's parents, Dean and Lois Porath, lived at Lake Panorama at the time, but we never even considered a lake wedding. I am not sure why. Maybe late September was pushing it for an outdoor wedding, but, more than likely, the decision had to do with our focus on being truly independent from our parents. Looking back, a lake wedding might have been the better option.

Our wedding ceremony was beautiful, and the church looked spectacular. From there, though, things got a little rocky. Rather than renting a limousine for the two of us, we thought it would be more fun to take the entire wedding party on a well-stocked cruise from the church to the reception hall. When a friend offered his RV for us to use, we thought we had the perfect plan. It was great fun — until the RV broke down on a rural road. We eventually found a friendly farmer who gave us a ride to the reception hall in his farm truck — complete in our wedding dress and tuxedo. He then gave the rest of the wedding party rides as well. Needless to say, the reception was delayed. Fortunately, or maybe unfortunately, the members of the wedding party were well-hydrated.

We had our wedding reception at the Jester Park Lodge, and not the new fancy one that is in the park today. We rented the old building with the giant moose head on the wall, which made for some entertaining photos. Not too many years later, that lodge burned to the ground, and that was probably a good thing.

Through it all, we sang, we danced, we toasted and we had one of the best nights of our lives. It certainly wasn't a storybook wedding, and after reading about the beautiful ceremony featured in this month's issue, it makes me wonder if we should have leaned on Dean and Lois to use their place instead. The scents of an approaching autumn. The sounds of nature. The love of my life. And a beautiful lake view.

Just no moose head or a broken-down RV. Aaaahhh, the memories. Happy 30th anniversary, Jolene! ■

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A wedding

TO REMEMBER

Couple shares how they made their day special.

By Lindsey Giardino

Few milestones are as momentous as a wedding. Family and friends often gather from near and far, the preparations may take months, and every detail is given thought. From the wedding attire to the decorations, music and venue, the couple makes countless decisions with one goal in mind: for theirs to be a wedding to remember. This month, one couple shares the scrupulous planning they did so their special day would be exactly as they envisioned. If a wedding is in your future, we hope you find inspiration from their story. Or, perhaps, their journey will spark memories of your own.

Paige Snaadt and her husband, Ryan, planned a 2020 April wedding. When COVID hit, all their plans had to be re-thought and rescheduled for September. Photo by The Farmhouse Studios

FEATURE

A dream shifted

Paige Snaadt and her husband, Ryan's, love story began in high school when they were 16 and 17. By the time they became engaged, they had been together for seven years and were more than ready to take the next step. However, they knew they wanted a big wedding, and with the expenses that come with it, the timing had to be just right.

In 2018, the couple, who live in Polk City, became engaged and immediately started planning. They focused on some of the big-ticket items first — photographer, videographer and the venue. This process was unique for them because they weren't just a bride and groom; they were also vendors in the wedding industry. As a hairstylist specializing in bridal hair and a groom who worked in videography, they had high standards for quality vendors.

Ryan had previously worked with photographer Jenni Machir, who owns The Farmhouse Studios, during a styled shoot and knew Paige would appreciate her light, bright and airy style. That connection made their photography choice an easy one.

Then for another big decision: the date.



With its spacious layout, Emerald Hills provided the couple with ample space for their wedding party to spread out — and for scenic photos. Photo by The Farmhouse Studios

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The perfect date — or so they thought

Paige, a numbers person, was drawn to the year 2020. The couple planned to have their ceremony in Florida, so she thought April would be an ideal time — not too hot, not too cold. They set their wedding date for April 16, 2020, appreciating the symmetry of 4/16/20 ($4 + 16 = 20$).

“So, everything was making sense for 2020, not knowing what that year was going to be,” Paige reflects.

For their reception, they chose Emerald Hills in Promise City, a new venue south of Des Moines. They were the sixth couple to book it, which meant they were able to secure some discounts.

Finding the right vendors

With her husband’s experience in videography, he was particular about finding the perfect wedding videographer. After searching extensively and finding no one local that met their expectations, they discovered Brandon Rice Films from Tennessee.

“That was kind of random, too, but he was

really, really good,” Paige says.

The original plan was for Rice to fly to Florida for the ceremony while a friend of Ryan’s would film the reception in Iowa and send the footage to Rice for editing.

Videographer, check.

Paige then picked out the colors — purples and blues — and found her wedding dress at Pure Bridal in Ames, a shop she liked because they carried multiple sizes in each dress and had everything organized by price.

Things were coming together nicely.

Then, March 2020 happened

Three to four weeks before their wedding, Paige and Ryan had to cancel everything due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“That was extremely devastating,” Paige says. “It was probably the most depressed I’ve ever been. I went through all the stages of grief.”

Having dreamed of her wedding since she was a young girl, she struggled to process the loss of the day she had planned so carefully. Fortunately, most of their Florida vendors were understanding of having to cancel, as the

state had closed to outside visitors.

With wedding planning at a standstill and her hairstyling work paused due to the pandemic, she needed a distraction.

“In my depressed stupor, I’m actually very handy, so I decided to build a porch on our house,” Paige says.

She was grateful to have found something to take her mind off things as she and Ryan thought about what to do next.

A change of plans

The couple knew they didn’t want to wait indefinitely, so they reworked their wedding plans. They decided to forgo Florida but kept their Emerald Hills reception, postponing it to September 2020, assuming the pandemic would be over by then.

“That was a funny joke,” Paige says.

Luckily, with its spacious layout, Emerald Hills allowed for proper distancing, and their guest list wasn’t too large.

On their original April date, Paige and Ryan still were legally married, holding a small ceremony in southeast Iowa on a family friend’s farm with a pond — close enough to an ocean

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FEATURE

for them.

“But instead of white sand, we had white snow,” Paige says, recalling how winter held its grip on them that day.

Despite her dislike for winter, the soft snow made for some beautiful photos taken by family members. They didn’t wear their full wedding outfits, but the moment was special nonetheless. A childhood friend officiated the intimate ceremony with only immediate family in attendance.

A September celebration

When September arrived, they were finally able to celebrate with family and friends. Their original photographer, Jenni, was still available — though extremely pregnant at the time — and their videographer, Brandon, made the drive from Nashville.

Paige designed her own bouquet and arch flowers, while she handmade the bridesmaids’ bouquets. Originally, she had planned to do this for the Florida wedding, knowing that artificial flowers would travel better.

For catering, they went with an unexpected but practical choice: Olive Garden.



Paige and Ryan were married in a small ceremony while the big wedding they had planned was postponed to September due to COVID.

“Everyone does chicken or BBQ or plated meals. We wanted little things here and there to be different,” Paige says.

They found Olive Garden to be affordable and flexible with their guest count changes due to the pandemic.

For dessert, they chose Glorious Cakes, opting for a traditional sheet cake with three different flavors. Their DJ, Sound Doctor, kept

the party going all night.

Paige, who owns Lux Salon Studio, did her bridesmaids’ hair, while her coworker, also a bridesmaid, handled makeup and styled her hair.

“If I could have done my own hair, I probably would have,” Paige says. “But I figured I shouldn’t put that stressor on myself.”



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The bride found her wedding dress at Pure Bridal in Ames. Photo by The Farmhouse Studio

A love that endured

Through all the unexpected twists and disappointments, her husband was her rock, Paige says.

“Having each other was a huge thing,” Paige says. “We’d been together for nine years at that point. It’s not like we weren’t getting married.”

For her, the hardest part was not being able to control and plan everything.

“I’m a Type A planner, so it killed me not to have my dream,” she says. “But what stood out was really our love for each other, as cheesy as that sounds.”

On that September day in 2020, while it

wasn’t what they could have ever expected, they celebrated with 130 guests. Despite all the challenges, people still talk about how much fun their reception was.

A wedding that wasn’t quite what they originally envisioned turned into a day — and a journey — they’ll never forget. ■



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BENEFITS of an assisted living community

Assisted living communities offer numerous benefits that enhance the quality of life for seniors who need some assistance while maintaining independence. One of the primary advantages is personalized care, where trained staff help residents with daily activities such as bathing, dressing, medication management and mobility, ensuring they receive the support they need while preserving their autonomy. Safety and security are also major benefits, as these communities provide 24/7 staff availability, emergency call systems and secure environments to prevent falls, medical emergencies and other risks.



Social engagement is another key aspect, helping seniors avoid loneliness and isolation through organized group activities, fitness programs, arts and crafts and social events that encourage meaningful connections. Additionally, nutritious meals tailored to dietary needs are provided, eliminating the stress of cooking while ensuring residents receive well-balanced, healthy food in a restaurant-style setting.

Assisted living also removes the burden of household chores, as housekeeping and maintenance services take care of cleaning, laundry

and home upkeep, allowing residents to focus on enjoyment and relaxation. Access to healthcare services is another important advantage, as many facilities offer on-site medical care, routine check-ups, therapy options, and medication management, ensuring residents receive prompt attention without frequent trips to the doctor.

These services provide peace of mind not only for the seniors but also for their families, who can rest assured knowing their loved ones are in a safe, supportive environment. Family members can focus on spending quality time with their loved ones rather than worrying about their well-being or day-to-day needs. Assisted living communities create an ideal balance between independence and assistance, allowing seniors to live comfortably while receiving the necessary care and support. By fostering an engaging and secure environment, these communities help residents thrive in their golden years, making life more enjoyable and fulfilling.

For those considering assisted living, exploring different options can open the door to a worry-free and enriching lifestyle that prioritizes health, happiness and social connection. ■

Information provided by Dylan Dyer, Executive Director, CopperWood at Prairie Trail Senior Living, 2855 S.W. Vintage Parkway, Ankeny, 515-415-4401, copperwoodseniorliving.com.

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RECIPE

SAVORY pork chili fresh from the slow cooker

(Family Features) If you're hunting for a cool-weather warmup or just need a break from the kitchen, the slow cooker is a perfect tool to make dinner a breeze. This Barbecue Chili recipe from "Cookin' Savvy" offers a hearty meal that serves a crowd. Visit Culinary.net to find more family-friendly dinner inspiration and step-by-step recipe videos. ■

Barbecue chili

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"
Servings: 8-10

- 1 pork loin (2-3 pounds)
- 1 can (10 ounces) diced tomatoes and green chilies
- 2 cups barbecue sauce, divided
- 1 cup water
- 1 can (29 ounces) tomato sauce
- 2 cans (27 ounces each) chili beans
- 1 package chili seasoning
- 1 tablespoon barbecue seasoning
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- sour cream, for serving
- shredded cheddar cheese, for serving
- corn chips, for serving

Directions

- Place pork loin in slow cooker. Cover with diced tomatoes and green chilies, 1 cup barbecue sauce and water; cook on low 4-6 hours.
- Cut up cooked meat and place in Dutch oven along with juices from slow cooker. Add remaining barbecue sauce, tomato sauce, chili beans, chili seasoning, barbecue seasoning, onion powder and garlic powder. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.
- Cook over medium heat 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Serve with sour cream, shredded cheese and corn chips.
- Tip: Add can of beans if serving bigger crowd.



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Beth Ades



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PALLIATIVE care: An option for someone you love?

Q. My husband's doctor suggested we look into palliative care. This is not a term that's familiar to me. My husband lives with a chronic health condition. Thankfully, the illness is not immediately life-threatening, but my husband's quality of life isn't what we'd like it to be. What can palliative care do for him?

A. I'm sorry to hear about your spouse's health condition, but it's great that you're exploring palliative care — a specialized form of care focused on providing relief from the symptoms, pain and stress of a serious illness, rather than trying to cure the illness itself. It's aimed at improving the quality of life for both the person living with illness and their family.

Here's what you should know about palliative care.

- **It's available to anyone with a serious or chronic health condition, regardless of their prognosis.** The goal is to alleviate suffering and improve comfort by managing physical symptoms, but it also addresses emotional, social and spiritual needs.
- **Palliative care typically includes a variety of specialists,** such as physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains and therapists. They will all work together to create a care plan that's tailored to your spouse's needs.
- **It's focused on managing pain, fatigue, nausea, breathing**



difficulties, and any other symptoms of illness. If your spouse is dealing with discomfort related to their chronic condition, palliative care can significantly help decrease that.

- **It also supports loved ones.** Assistance offered with palliative care can include counseling, caregiver support and education, and help navigating health care systems and decisions.

- **Palliative care doesn't replace other treatments for your spouse's condition.** It can be given alongside curative treatments, helping to manage the side effects or helping cope with difficult symptoms during treatments like chemotherapy or dialysis.

- **It's offered in various settings.** If receiving care at home is preferable to you and your husband, make sure you find a provider that offers home-based palliative care. The overall aim will be to provide your spouse with enhanced quality of life while managing the challenges presented by his condition. The care is highly personalized, and most families report that palliative care enhances comfort and helps everyone navigate the health care journey more smoothly. Best wishes to you both. ■

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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INSURANCE

By Corey Hoodjer

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INVESTMENT

By Kyle Matzen

FINANCIAL 'spring cleaning'



Spring is here — which means it's once again time to wash the windows, organize your cabinets and steam your carpets. This year, besides tidying up around your house, why not also consider some financial spring cleaning?

For starters, you could "de-clutter" your investment portfolio. How? Look for duplicate, or near-duplicate investments. If you've got several, you might be better off selling some to broaden your investment mix.

Here's another spring-cleaning tip: Dust off your investment strategy. If you've experienced changes in your life, such as a marriage, a new job or the arrival of new children, you might need to adjust your goals and the methods of reaching them.

Also, just as you may get rid of broken tools or other dangerous items when you clean your house or garage, you need to watch out for threats to your financial security, such as a major home or auto repair. You can protect yourself by building an emergency fund containing several months' worth of living expenses.

Of course, some of these moves can take some time — but by getting started on them soon, you can help put your financial house in better shape for the next spring cleaning. ■

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FINDING 'home' in Elkhart

For Buell, there's no place like it.

Moving to a small town was never part of Tricia Buell's plan.

Born and raised in Boston proper, she was nervous about leaving the city for somewhere entirely new. But since making the move in 2020, she has fallen in love with everything Elkhart has to offer.

"God guided us to Elkhart," Buell says.

Buell and her husband, Kerbie, settled in the countryside, right next door to his parents, who gifted them 6 acres of land. Their kids can simply cut through the field to visit their grandparents.

Buell was also excited to enroll her children in the North Polk School District after previously living in Ankeny. One of the things she likes most about Elkhart is how her kids have strong connections with their peers and never feel lost in the mix. The sense of community runs deep, and she appreciates the many opportunities people have to help one another.

Before building their dream home, Buell and her husband lived in a fixer-upper while they were dating.

"It was a dump," she recalls, laughing.

The house had neon carpet, and, at one point, Buell even called her mom to say she was moving back home. But everything changed when her husband started renovating. His craftsmanship turned the house into something beautiful, and she fell in love — not just with the home but with his talent and dedication.

Eventually, their family outgrew that home, and Buell knew her husband wouldn't be truly happy until he built something of his own. The land they received was an answered prayer, and he spent a year cleaning it up and building a home for his family — waking up at 5:30 a.m. and working until 11 p.m. every day.

His hard work paid off.

"It's our forever home," Buell says. "As soon as I come down my driveway, I get this overwhelming feeling, like 'Wow. I live here.'"

Her favorite space in the house is her plant room just off the kitchen. Filled with greenery, it's where she finds peace and tranquility. She enjoys



Tricia Buell and her husband, Kerbie, built their dream home and couldn't be happier raising their children in the country near Elkhart.

reading her Bible and spending quiet moments alone while looking over the pond in the backyard.

"It's my room, and I love it," she says.

Looking back, Buell sees God's hand in every step of their journey. Moving to Iowa changed everything for her.

"My life didn't start until I moved to Iowa," she says.

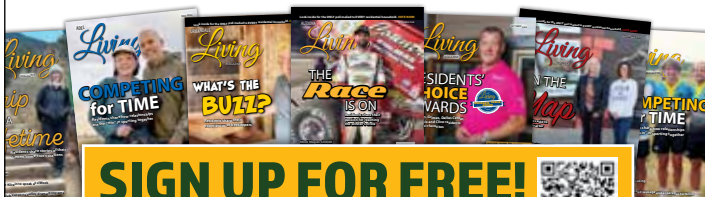
Now, surrounded by nature, family and a community she appreciates, she knows she is exactly where she is meant to be.

"I love it," Buell says. "I love the small community. And I love where we are in Elkhart, right outside of town, right out in the country. It's serene, it's beautiful, there's wildlife, it's our home that we built. We take a lot of pride in that. We built it together — it was our dream." ■

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WHAT IS probate?

Probate is the court-supervised administration of an estate. If you have a will, upon your death your executor will present it to the court. It is a common misconception that merely possessing the will vests someone with the authority to act. In order for a will to be effective, it must be admitted to probate. If you die without a will, the Court still has control over the assets of your estate.

Probate is necessary where there are assets which cannot be transferred. For example, real estate titled in the decedent's name cannot be sold without passing through probate. Investments with no beneficiary designation generally require probate to transfer them to heirs.

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require "Letters of Appointment" or "Letters Testamentary." This is an official document, issued by the clerk of court, empowering the executor to act on behalf of the estate.

Court supervision of probate ensures that your executor or the court-appointed administrator handles your estate legally and according to your wishes. To ensure that the will or the rules of inheritance are followed, the personal representative must report the assets, debts and disbursements of the estate to the court. The personal representative also files tax returns on behalf of the decedent and the estate.

Iowa law requires that notice of probate be published. The notice must be published for two consecutive weeks. Then, the estate must remain open for four months before it can be closed. During this time, the personal representative will sell real estate, liquidate assets, pay creditors, and make disbursements to beneficiaries. Other factors may require

a longer probate period, but generally, the probate of an estate lasts around six months.

Attorney's fees and court costs cannot be paid until the estate closes. In Iowa, attorney's fees are statutorily-controlled and are capped. The personal representative is also entitled to fees. By comparison, other methods of asset disposal (like a revocable trust) have no fee caps.

Probating an estate is fairly straightforward. Court-supervised administration of an estate is neither lengthy nor overly expensive and has the benefit of ensuring that all the assets of the estate have been disposed of properly and legally. If you have questions, make sure that you contact an attorney who specializes in probate and estate administration. ■

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

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SHADE TREE AUTO

THE GREAT IOWAN

SPRING BREAK ROAD TRIP

TRIP PLAN

DAY 1

THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY
(WINTERSET)



DAY 2

AMERICAN GOTHIC HOUSE
(ELDON)



DAY 3

FIELD OF DREAMS MOVIE SITE
(DYERSVILLE)



DAY 4

PIKES PEAK STATE PARK
(NORTHEAST IOWA)



Car Prep:

Ready for Iowa's Wild Weather?

Before you set off, make sure your ride is road-trip ready—Iowa conditions can throw anything from tornado winds to blizzards at you, depending on the season.

☐

Tires: check air pressure

☐

Fluids: check coolant

☐

Tires: tread test

☐

Battery: test charge

☐

Tires: rotate

☐

Lights: test your lights

☐

Fluids: oil change

☐

Pack an Emergency Kit

☐

Fluids: top off washer fluid

☐

Pro Tip: stop by Shade Tree!

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HOME STATE BANK

Happenings

SPRING CLEANING FINANCIAL TIPS

As Spring is right around the corner, It's not only your closets and toy chests you should be cleaning, but also your finances. Make sure to add these items to your spring cleaning checklist for

- Consolidate Accounts - One banking institute is easier to manage than many!
- Go Paperless - Less mess and likely easier to find!
- Review & Adjust Budgets - Are you sticking to your goals?
- Review Bills - Are you using everything you're getting charged for or is it time to drop some?

Visit Home State Bank for more financial and budgeting tips to help you reach your goals faster.

HAPPY SESQUICENTENNIAL BIRTHDAY, POLK CITY!

Wishing Polk City a happy 150th birthday! We've only been here for one year, but we can't wait for the next 150 years!



MAKING AN IMPACT FOR STUDENTS

On DATE, Home State Bank was honored to award Celebrate North Polk with a \$2,500 donation to support their efforts in our community.

CNP raises money to help enhance our Polk City schools' educational opportunities and extracurricular activities. Funds are distributed equally among Fine Arts Boosters, Athletic Booster Club, and North Polk Foundation.



101 E. Bridge Road | Polk City | 515-329-8801



FINANCE

By Clayton Harreld

HOW TO stay organized for tax season

It's that time of year again. Tax season is upon us, and you're likely in one of two situations: the one who has everything neatly filed and organized, or the one who puts everything in a pile to sort through later.

Regardless of which you are, you're not alone, and many are likely in the latter category. Life happens no matter how good our intentions. But to make tax season a little easier, we've compiled some organizational tips to help you now (or next year).

Designate one tax folder: Whether this is an actual folder or a digital folder, designate one folder to put all of your tax documents into. Make sure this folder is also easily accessible so you don't put files in multiple places.

Organize within your folder: To take your organization a step further, categorize your files within your designated tax folder. This is especially important and necessary if you have a business or businesses, as it will simplify the process for everyone.

In addition to your tax documents, we recommend you also categorize your receipts. From donations and medical expenses to business expenses, it's important and time-saving to categorize receipts as they come in. You can do this physically with additional folders or in a digital manner as well.

Refer to last year's taxes: Reviewing your previous year's tax documents can help you identify information you'll need for this year. You may need to include information from the previous year as well, so it's good to keep this close by when preparing.

Are you itemizing? If you decide to itemize instead of taking the standard deduction, you'll want to make sure you have a checklist of all the expenses you need to keep track of. This could include childcare, medical expenses or even square footage of your office if you work from home.

Update any milestones: Did you move? Get married? Maybe bought a new car? Be sure to keep track of these bigger changes you had throughout the year as you'll need to include or update information in your taxes. Common life events include getting married, adopting or having a child, buying a home or car, job changes, loss of a spouse, and getting divorced.

Organizing your taxes doesn't have to be hard, but it does take some discipline to get started with your processes. If you're not filing yourself, finding a supportive and helpful tax representative is a sure way to help you stay organized and understand what you'll need to file. ■



Information provided by Clayton Harreld, AVP/Business Banker, Home State Bank, 101 E. Bridge Road, Polk City, 515-329-8801.

NPHS newspaper, The Orbit, shares news

Zoe Marquez, editor and storyteller

As many teenagers rely on social media sites and apps to communicate and find information, local news continues to be relevant. People want to know what is happening in their own backyards.

One way students can obtain information is through The Orbit, an online student-run newspaper for North Polk High School. The Orbit evolved into an online publication during the pandemic.

The Orbit comes out weekly with a variety of content, such as a student poll or “people in the halls” columns. It covers sports, arts, theater, reviews and more — just like any newspaper. Longer features are published once a month.

The Orbit's editor is senior Zoe Marquez. She shares editorial duties with Addison Hop and Morgan Eyanson-Renken. Students who take Intro to Journalism classes become interested and join the newspaper or yearbook staff and contribute content, videos or photos. The high school advisor is journalism teacher Jessica Trier.

Marquez says the publication launched online after the COVID pandemic. She says many students read stories, with up to 1,000 views.

“People read it in the Des Moines metro, and we get a wider range of readers,” she explains.

To determine what stories to cover, she looks right to the school to see what's relevant.

“We figure out the big story for the week,” says Marquez. “We factor in what's relative and what people actually want to read about.”

They'll interview teachers, students, business owners, coaches and more. Yet, most stories include a student-focused theme.

“We like to include at least one student's perspective in each story,” she explains.

Each section allows readers to post comments.

“All feedback is appreciated. It means people are reading our stories. We are always looking for feedback and ideas.”

Marquez has attended NP Schools since the beginning. She has enjoyed writing and plans on attending college for journalism. She's interviewed dozens of people, yet one story stands out from 2022.

She wrote a story on an East High School student's shooting and contacted the student vice president to get her take on the tragedy.

“I wasn't aware the teen who passed away was a close friend. It was very eye opening,” she reflects. “You don't know what's going into a story and what might come out of it.”

Her advisor edits to ensure sensitivity regarding content.

“With the story (East High School) students were informed. It was a positive outlook as to what was going on in the school.”

The best part of writing is distributing information, Marquez says.

“That's my passion. I love spreading awareness and getting people in the loop,” she says. “It's super important to be informed of things outside the school. It's my goal as a storyteller to let people know the facts.”

To read The Orbit, visit <https://northpolkorbit.org>. ■



The Orbit's editor is senior Zoe Marquez.

POLK CITY Community Library news

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- National Library Giving Day is April 1.
- National Library Week is April 6-12.
- The library will be closed Saturday, April 19.

• **Pokémon Card Swap, Tuesday, April 1, 4 p.m.** Join us for an exciting Pokémon Card Swap event designed for kids and teens. Whether you're a seasoned trainer or just starting your collection, this is the perfect opportunity to meet other fans, trade cards, and level up your Pokémon deck.

• **Library Giving Day, Tuesday, April 1.** Library Giving Day is a one-day fundraising event with the goal of encouraging people who depend on and enjoy public libraries to donate to their individual library system. In turn, that support will go toward the incredible programs, services and materials provided by local libraries all over the country.

• **Brew Your Own Kombucha with Carissa Thoma, Thursday, April 3, 6 p.m.** Learn the ins-and-outs of brewing one of the world's most popular fermented drinks. Topics include health benefits, flavoring, brew process and more. Samples will be provided. Registration requested but not required.

• **Lego Club, Tuesday, April 8, 3:45 p.m. K-2 grades; 4:45 p.m., grades 3 and up.** Learning through stacking and building with these deceptively simple bricks, you can enhance your problem-solving skills and teamwork. Registration is required. Register online at polkcitylibrary.org.

• **Nutrition for Heart Health Lunch and Learn Series with AHA HeartCorps, Wednesdays April 9, April 23, 11:30 a.m.** Join us for this free lunch and learn series presented by the American Heart Association's HeartCorps. We'll be learning about the ways our diet can shape our heart health. Enjoy a simple lunch prepared by the library or bring your own lunch. Aimed at adults. Register for each session online at polkcitylibrary.org.

• **Friends of the Library Meeting, Wednesday, April 9, 6:30 p.m.** Anyone interested in supporting the library is welcome and encouraged to attend.

• **Adult DIY: Book Fairies, Thursday, April 10, 6 p.m.** Join us for a relaxing evening of crafts. We'll be making cute fairies out of old library books. All supplies will be provided. Ages 17 and older, registration required.

• **Game Night with The Dealt Hand, Friday, April 11, 5:30-8:30 p.m.,** Polk City Community Room (new city hall). Drop in at any time for a fun evening playing games. The Dealt Hand will provide more than 200 games for your enjoyment. Play one of your favorites or learn something new. You are welcome to bring your dinner and eat while playing. The Friends of the Library will provide popcorn and a hot cocoa bar. Any and all ages are welcome!

• **Where My Peeps At? - Peeps Diorama Decorating Contest. Pick up April 14 and return by April 18.** Ready to get creative with Peeps? We're providing the Peeps, and you bring the imagination. Decorate a diorama with the Peeps we give you and let your creativity run wild. The top two dioramas will win awesome prizes.

• **Adult Crafternoon: Quilled Flower Photo Frames, Tuesday, April 22, 2 p.m.** Join us for a fun afternoon of crafting. We will be learning basic quilling techniques to make paper flowers to decorate a photo frame. All supplies will be provided. Ages 17 and older, registration required. ■

A FEAR-FREE revolution

Making vet visits better for pets and their people

When I first began at the clinic in 2009, my cat, Lionel, was a veterinarian's nightmare. At home, he was sociable and friendly. But when his carrier crossed the clinic's threshold, his entire body stiffened. He growled, hissed and lashed out, making even getting him out of his carrier nearly impossible. The stress was overwhelming — for both of us. Each visit ended in sedation and exhaustion, reinforcing his fear and making me dread every appointment (and I was the vet).

A few years later, we learned about a revolutionary approach called “fear free” veterinary care, designed to reduce stress and anxiety in pets. At first, I was skeptical. Could soft music, different wall colors or pheromones really make a difference? Would slowing down to work at a pet's pace throw off our schedule? It sounded like wishful thinking. But then, we tried it.

We started with small changes — using non-slip mats, offering treats, and adjusting our handling techniques. Gone were the days of scruffing cats or pinning dogs to the floor. Over time, we saw a shift. Our patients became more willing to trust us, and their visits became smoother. But the real turning point for me was Lionel.



With a feline-only exam room, calming pheromones, and anti-anxiety medication, Lionel transformed. For the first time in 12 years, he didn't need sedation. I was able to take him out of his carrier without a struggle AND do a full exam. That moment changed everything. Lionel had never been difficult — he had been terrified. And now, he didn't have to be. I cried with relief.

And Lionel wasn't alone. Imagine being leashed or caged, taken to a building full of unfamiliar smells, surrounded by other scared animals, and handled by giant beings who don't speak your language — all while being poked and prodded. That's what vet visits feel like for many pets. But they don't have to. “Fear free” is not just a philosophy — it's a way of life that means better care.

Stress and anxiety don't just make vet visits difficult — they impact overall health. When pets feel safe, exams are more effective, treatments are easier, and long-term outcomes improve.

If vet visits have been stressful for your furry family member, consider giving “fear free” care a try. It might just turn what was once a dreaded trip into a positive, even enjoyable, experience for you and your pet. ■

Information provided by Dr. Amanda Gigler, Ankeny Animal & Avian Clinic, 742 S. Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny, 515-964-7387, amandagigler@ankenyanimal.com.

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NORTH POLK COMETS

SPRING SCHEDULE '25



Iowa Living
MAGAZINES

Schedules are subject to
change. Scan for
up-to-date schedule.

V. BOYS TRACK

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Mar 10	2:00PM	A.D. Dickinson Relays	UNI-Dome
Mar 25	4:15PM	Multiple Schools	Johnston High School
Apr 3	4:00PM	Indian Relays	Indianola Stadium
Apr 3	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Ogden High School
Apr 7	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Norwalk Warrior Stadium
Apr 8	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	PCM High School
Apr 10	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Nevada High School
Apr 12	8:30AM	Jim Duncan Inv.	Drake Stadium Track
Apr 15	4:30PM	Fred Smith Relays	Northview Middle School
Apr 17	4:00PM	Waukee Boys Relays	Waukee Stadium
Apr 17	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Saydel High School
Apr 21	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Valley High School
Apr 24-26	8:00AM	Drake Relays	Drake Stadium Track
Apr 24	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	South Hamilton HS
Apr 28	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Gilbert High School Track
Apr 29	4:30PM	Comet Relays	North Polk High School
May 5	4:30PM	North Polk Coed Inv.	North Polk High School

V. GIRLS TRACK

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Mar 11	2:00PM	A.D. Dickinson Relays	UNI-Dome
Apr 1	5:00PM	Multiple Schools	North Polk High School
Apr 4	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Roland-Story
Apr 7	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Norwalk Warrior Stadium
Apr 8	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	PCM High School High
Apr 10	4:00PM	Multiple Schools	Northwest High School
Apr 10	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Nevada High School
Apr 12	8:30AM	Jim Duncan Inv.	Drake Stadium Track
Apr 15	4:30PM	Madrid Girls Inv.	Madrid High School
Apr 17	4:15PM	Ron Werling Relays	Indianola Stadium
Apr 17	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	EBF Schools
Apr 21	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Bondurant-Farrar HS
Apr 24-26	8:00AM	Drake Relays	Drake Stadium Track
Apr 24	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Roland-Story
Apr 28	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Saydel High School
May 1	4:15PM	Carlisle Invite	Carlisle High School
May 5	4:30PM	North Polk Coed Inv.	North Polk High School

V. BOYS/GIRLS SOCCER

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Mar 31*	7:00PM	DM Hoover	North Polk High School
Apr 3	7:00PM	ADM	ADM (B) / North Polk (G)
Apr 7	7:00PM	Winterset	Winterset (B) / North Polk (G)
Apr 10	7:00PM	Perry	North Polk (B) / Perry (G)
Apr 11*	7:00PM	Norwalk	Norwalk Warrior Stadium
Apr 14	7:00PM	Boone	Boone (B) / North Polk (G)
Apr 17	7:00PM	Nevada	North Polk (B) / Nevada (G)
Apr 21**	7:00PM	Oskaloosa	North Polk High School
Apr 24*	7:00PM	Indianola	Indianola Stadium
Apr 28	7:00PM	Carlisle	North Polk (B) / Carlisle (G)
May 2	4:30PM	Van Meter	Van Meter (B) / North Polk (G)
May 3**	11:00AM	Gilbert	North Polk High School
May 5*	7:00PM	Ballard	Ballard High School
May 6	5:45PM	Ballard	North Polk (B) / North Polk (G)
May 8	7:00PM	DM Christian	DM Christian
May 10*	2:30PM	Gilbert	Gilbert High School
May 12**	7:30PM	Norwalk	Norwalk Warrior Stadium
May 12*	7:00PM	Ankeny	North Polk High School
May 13	7:00PM	Carroll	North Polk (B) / Carol (G)
May 16	7:00PM	Bondurant-Farrar	Bondurant-Farrar (B) / North Polk (G)

*Girls Only **Boys Only

V. GIRLS TENNIS

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Apr 7	4:00PM	Webster City	North Polk High School
Apr 8	4:15PM	Grinnell	Grinnell High School
Apr 11	9:00AM	Johnston Inv.	Johnston High School
Apr 14	4:00PM	Ankeny Centennial	Prairie Ridge MS
Apr 15	4:00PM	Ballard	North Polk High School
Apr 17	4:15PM	Boone	Boone - McHose Park
Apr 28	4:15PM	Saydel	Saydel High School
Apr 29	4:15PM	Pella	Pella Tennis Courts
May 2	4:00PM	Oskaloosa	North Polk High School
May 8	4:00PM	Iowa Falls-Alden	North Polk High School
May 9	1:00PM	Waukee Northwest	Northwest High School

V. BOYS GOLF

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Apr 8	4:00PM	North Polk Invite	Tournament Club of Iowa
Apr 14	2:00PM	Multiple Schools	Terrace Hills Golf Course
Apr 17	1:00PM	Multiple Schools	Woodward Golf Club
Apr 18	4:00PM	Gilbert Meet	Ames Golf & Country Club
Apr 21	4:00PM	Multiple Schools	Tournament Club of Iowa
Apr 22	2:00PM	Norsemen Invite	River Bend Golf Course
Apr 28	4:00PM	Multiple Schools	Perry Golf & Country Club
May 4	4:00PM	Multiple Schools	Ballard Golf & CC
May 8	1:00PM	Multiple Schools	Briggs Woods Golf Course
May 10	9:00AM	Gilbert Invite	Ames Golf & Country Club

V. GIRLS GOLF

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Apr 8	4:00PM	North Polk Invite	Tournament Club of Iowa
Apr 18	4:00PM	Multiple Schools	Ames Golf & CC
Apr 24	1:00PM	Multiple Schools	River Bend Golf Course
Apr 28	4:00PM	Multiple Schools	Perry Golf & Country Club
May 1	2:00PM	Carlisle Tri	Shady Oaks Golf Course
May 5	4:00PM	Multiple Schools	River Bend Golf Course
May 13	4:00PM	Panorama Invite	Lake Panorama GC
May 19	4:00PM	Ballard Tri	Ballard Golf & CC

V. BOYS TENNIS

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Apr 1	4:00PM	Pella	North Polk High School
Apr 3	4:15PM	Knoxville	Knoxville High School
Apr 5	9:00AM	Boone Invite	Boone - McHose Park
Apr 10	1:00PM	Multiple Schools	Ballard High School
Apr 17	4:00PM	Webster City	North Polk High School
Apr 18	4:15PM	Indianola	Indianola High School
Apr 26	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Saydel High School
Apr 28	4:15PM	Saydel	North Polk High School
May 1	4:15PM	Boone	Boone - McHose Park
May 9	12:30PM	North Polk Invite	North Polk High School

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Stay Safe From Shingles

1 in 3 people will get shingles. Prevention is possible.

Shingles can cause a painful skin rash and lead to serious health problems, such as long-term nerve pain and vision loss. Shingles stays dormant in your nervous system after you recover from chickenpox. Your risk of shingles increases with age.

The shingles vaccine is the best way to protect against the virus and its complications. The shingles vaccine is recommended for:

- Adults 19 and older with weakened immune systems.
- Adults 50 and older.



Ask your healthcare provider about the shingles vaccine.

Source: cdc.gov 2/25

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations.

Upcoming in North Polk Living magazine:

Pampered Pets: Do you enjoy pampering your pet(s)? We are looking to interview people whose cats, dogs and other animals live a life of luxury. If you are one of those spoiling their critters rotten and proud of it, reach out to be included in our May issue. We want to hear your story! Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.

Celebrate North Polk

Saturday, May 31, 5:30-11:30 p.m.

DMACC FFA Enrichment Center, 1055 S.W. Prairie Trail Parkway, Ankeny

Celebrate North Polk (CNP) is the biggest event of the year that raises money for all the additional expenses North Polk Community School has and creates opportunities for students, athletes and the arts. CNP distributes funds equally among Fine Arts Boosters, Athletic Booster Club and North Polk Foundation. To purchase tickets, visit www.celebratenorthpolk.org.

Library Book Clubs

• **Wednesday Adult Book Club, “Bright Young Women” by Jessica Knoll, Wednesday, April 2, 7 p.m.** The book opens on a Saturday night in 1978, hours before a soon-to-be-infamous murderer descends upon a Florida sorority house with deadly results. The lives of those who survive are forever changed.

• **Graphic Novel Book Club, Monday, April 14, 4 p.m.** Join us for an exciting Graphic Novel Book Club at the library. Kids in grades 4-7 can dive into the world of colorful stories, amazing characters and thrilling adventures. Each month, we’ll read a different graphic novel and discuss the art, plot and our favorite moments. Whether you’re a comic book expert or new to graphic novels, everyone is welcome to join the fun. April Book: “Create Your Own Graphic Novel.” Join us for a special book club where we share the graphic novels you created. Stop by the library for your CYO kit. Registration required.

• **Monday Book Club, “Midnight at the Blackbird Café” by Heather Webber, Monday April 21, 2 p.m.** It was supposed to be a quick trip to close the café and settle her grandmother’s estate, but despite her best intentions to avoid forming ties or even getting to know her father’s side of the family, Anna Kate finds herself inexplicably drawn to the quirky Southern town her mother ran away from so many years ago and the mysterious blackbird pie everybody can’t stop talking about.

Elks Pancake Breakfast Buffet, Bake Sale and the Easter Bunny

Sunday, April 13, 8 a.m. to noon

West Des Moines Elks Lodge, 2060 N.W. 94th St., Clive

Yes, the Easter Bunny will be at the breakfast to greet the children and have treats to share. The breakfast buffet includes biscuits and gravy, French toast, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage patties, cheesy potatoes, and, of course, all you can eat pancakes (including blueberry and chocolate chip pancakes), orange juice, milk and coffee. Enjoy a bloody Mary or mimosa for \$3.50. Cost is \$11 for adults and \$5 for children 10 and younger. Proceeds support the Elks Hoop Shoot Program, other youth activities and veteran support activities.



EVENTS IN THE AREA

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

Be sure to check for cancellations.

African Violet Show and Sale

March 28 and 29

Wesleyan Church, 2025 Lower Beaver Road, Des Moines

The Evening African Violet Club of Des Moines invites the public to its 2025 African Violet Show and Sale. This is a nationally sanctioned show and sale that will have judges from the African Violet Society of America. Club members' plants and supplies will be available. The sale hours are Friday, March 28, noon to 6 p.m., and Saturday, March 29, noon to 5 p.m. The judging of violets, gesneriads and floral design will take place on Saturday 10 a.m. to noon. Educational exhibits and AVSA promotional information will also be displayed. The Evening African Violet Club of Des Moines meets monthly from February to November on the third Saturday of the month at 2 p.m. at the Debra Heights Wesleyan Church. The public is invited.

Playhouse Summer Classes

Various dates

Des Moines Playhouse, 831 42nd St., Des Moines

The Des Moines Playhouse offers students from kindergarten through high school more than 30 different classes and camps this June-August to fill the long summer days and keep minds active. A complete list of classes and registration is available at dmplayhouse.com. Theatre arts education at The Playhouse provides students with the opportunity to explore, create, imagine and express themselves, all within a safe, nurturing environment. Every class at The Playhouse is unique and led by the theatre's professional teaching artists. For more information on summer theatre camps and other Playhouse educational offerings, contact The Playhouse education department at 515-974-5365.

Dome After Dark

Fridays through March, 6-10 p.m. • Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, 909 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines • dmbotanicalgarden.com

The Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden's lush tropical conservatory and Gardeners Show House are colorfully illuminated for Dome After Dark. Flora, the botanical garden's restaurant, serves food and drinks till 9 p.m.

"Jesus Christ Superstar"

Through March 23

Des Moines Playhouse, 831 42nd St., Des Moines

The Des Moines Playhouse presents the Broadway musical "Jesus Christ Superstar." Tickets may be purchased online at dmplayhouse.com and by phone at 515-277-6261. "Jesus Christ Superstar" tells the story of Jesus in the final days leading up to his crucifixion. Loosely based on the Gospels, "Superstar" focuses on the conflicts between Jesus, his disciples, the people of Israel, and the leadership of Rome. Told by his wavering disciple and ultimate betrayer, Judas, the rock opera by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice features such songs as "I Don't Know How to Love Him," "Gethsemane" and "Superstar." Show times are 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets start at \$29. ■

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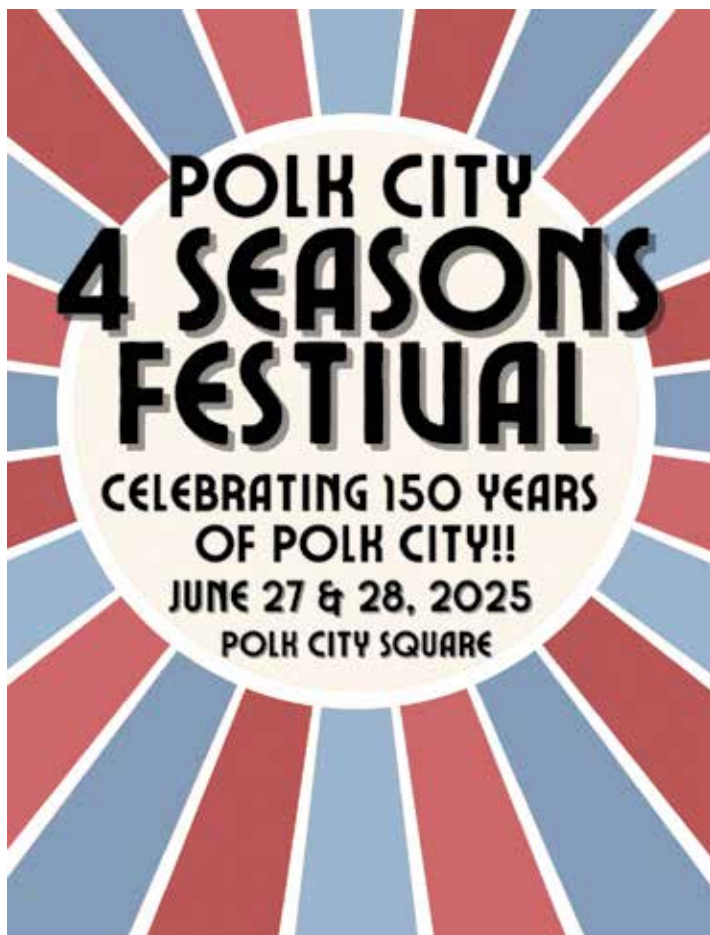

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WHY a strong chamber of commerce benefits everyone

A chamber of commerce is often seen as a business resource, but its impact goes far beyond storefronts and office buildings. A strong chamber helps shape the local economy, enhances quality of life, and fosters a sense of community that benefits everyone.



Supporting local businesses strengthens the community.

A chamber's mission is to support businesses, but this creates a ripple effect that reaches all residents. When businesses thrive, they generate jobs, offer more services, and contribute to the local tax base — helping fund schools, parks and infrastructure. A strong business community leads to a strong city.

Go Polk City Chamber & Economic Development helps businesses grow through networking, marketing and professional development. It also attracts new businesses, increasing options for dining, shopping and services. This keeps money circulating locally and improves convenience for residents.

The chamber serves as a voice for businesses, working with local leaders to create policies that encourage economic growth. A well-supported business climate often means lower property taxes, better public services and an improved quality of life.

Additionally, the chamber promotes fair regulations, ensuring the needs of both small and large businesses are considered. When businesses and local leaders collaborate, solutions emerge that benefit everyone — from job seekers to homeowners.

Many local events — festivals, farmers markets, parades and networking opportunities — are made possible or enhanced by the chamber. These events drive economic activity, create community pride and encourage people to shop locally.

Go Polk City Chamber & Economic Development also connects businesses and residents by sharing job openings, volunteer opportunities and local initiatives. When people feel engaged, they invest their time and resources back into the community.

Go Polk City Chamber & Economic Development is more than just an organization — it's a movement dedicated to making Polk City a great place to live, work and do business. Whether you're a business owner, resident or someone who cares about the future of our community, there's a place for you at the chamber.

Join us at an event, volunteer or support local businesses. If you want to be part of shaping Polk City's future, reach out today. Visit www.gopolkcitcity.com to learn more. ■

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

KIWANIS honors Seniors of the Month

The Kiwanis Club Seniors of the Month for February are Ava Kathryn Husak and Qwynn Louise Nerem.

Qwynn Louise Nerem

"My name is Qwynn Nerem, and I am in the North Polk graduating class of 2025. I have been involved in many extracurricular activities during my time at North Polk including volleyball, softball and track. My time as a Comet was well spent, being able to receive an All State Academic Award, DMACC Presidents List, and, at graduation, a future valedictorian. Being at North Polk has given me the opportunity to serve my community in more ways than one. I have spent countless hours working with the young girls of our community so they can one day give back to the community that does so much for them. I am grateful to God for blessing me with a community that has supported me and many others. I plan to further my education at Faith Baptist Bible College in Ankeny to continue to play volleyball and grow in my knowledge of God."



Qwynn's parents are Bobby Nerem and Megan Nerem of Alleman. Her siblings are Victoria and Isaac Nerem. She has been involved in Spanish Club, Mock Trial and Environmental Club. She has been involved in her church youth group, works at Panera Bread in Ankeny, and volunteers at Meals for the Heartland and at the Miracle League in Ankeny.

Ava Kathryn Husak

"Hello, my name is Ava Kathryn Husak, and I am from Cambridge. I have one older brother named Joe. In school, my favorite classes have been biology, along with anatomy and physiology. I am in the Spanish Honor Society, have been on the Gold Honor Roll all four years and on the DMACC President's List the past two years. Throughout high school, I have participated in volleyball, basketball and softball. Outside of academics and athletics, I've volunteered at church, Kiwanis Miracle League, and also spend time sharing my softball knowledge with the younger generation. In the fall, I plan to attend Drake University to continue playing softball while majoring in health sciences and minoring in kinesiology."



Ava is the daughter of Julie Husak and Joe Husak. She has participated in the Raccoon River Leadership Conference twice. In softball, she earned first team and second team All-Conference Honors, first team All State and three-time West All District honors. ■

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CHAMBER Lunch

The Go Polk City chamber lunch was held at Luana Savings Bank on Feb. 19.



Attendees at the Go Polk City chamber lunch held at Luana Savings Bank on Feb. 19.



Sara Wilson and Staci Allen



Steve Karsjen and Rob Cupp



Wanita Corn and Jamie Dobson



Colby and Larry Cupp



Bobbi Cowden and Charlotte Loter



Carson and Emily Rhodes



Seth Bonifas, Clayton Harreld and Eric Hockenberry



Taylor Maiefski, Aime Mukiza and Ringo Kienitz



Hunter Fleshner and Ryan Snaadt



Sarah Bacehowski and Brandon Converse

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THE COMETS CORNER

NEWS FROM NORTH POLK CSD

MARCH 2025

PHYSICAL PLANT & EQUIPMENT LEVY - APPROVED

On March 4, 2025, voters cast their ballots in the special election for North Polk's Physical Plant & Equipment Levy (PPEL). Based on unofficial results indicated by the county election offices, the district is pleased to announce that the PPEL Renewal has passed with 80% voter approval. To secure a passing vote, a minimum of 50% plus 1 of the total vote was required. Please note that the results remain 'unofficial' until certified by the County Board of Supervisors.

The revenue generated from this levy will be dedicated to upgrading facilities and technology, maintaining and expanding our busing fleet, and ensuring a safe, sustainable environment for students and staff. These essential improvements will benefit all students for years to come. Thank you to the community, district stakeholders, and voters for your continued support of North Polk Schools!



NORTH POLK BECOMES 8TH DISTRICT IN IOWA TO EARN MODEL PLC AWARD

The North Polk Community School District has been officially recognized by Solution Tree, one of the nation's leading educational professional development organizations, for its success in raising student achievement. North Polk is now only the 8th district in Iowa to receive the Model PLC Distinction.

This prestigious award reflects the dedication of our staff, teachers, and leaders

who have worked together in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). PLCs are collaborative teams focused on improving student learning. These teams (e.g., Science or 3rd-grade teams) analyze student data, share instructional strategies, and support each other's professional growth to ensure the best outcomes for our students.

The PLC framework focuses on three key ideas:

- Focus on Learning
- Build a Collaborative Culture
- Create a Results Orientation

Achieving this distinction involved a rigorous review process, including a deep dive into student achievement data and how well PLC teams—across all five buildings—have applied these principles. Solution Tree evaluated North Polk's collaborative culture and commitment to continuous improvement.

The PLC journey began in 2018 and has grown alongside our district's progress. This national recognition is a direct result of the collective efforts of our teachers, staff, and leaders in making sure all students succeed. We're excited to continue this work to support our students' ongoing growth and success.



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