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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 Joe Baumgarten

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.

Liz and James Garlock were married at St. Pius X Catholic Church and held their reception at the Hilton Garden Inn in West Des Moines. Photo by Jenifer Suarez of JenV Photography

FEATURE

If you have ever been to a Greek wedding (or seen the popular movie), you know they can be loud, boisterous, pull-out-all-the-stops weddings. However, if you were to ask Liz and James Garlock, Mexican weddings make Greek weddings look like yesterday's souvlaki.

James and Liz worked together at Mom's Meals for years before they really connected.

"Then, one day, I saw her standing by the printer," James says as he looks at Liz with a smile.

They dated for five years and were engaged in 2022.

James is proud of his romantic surprise proposal.

"The whole family went to Disney World in Florida, but no one knew I was going to pop the question," James explains. "I had the ring in my pocket, and we stood in line to get up close to the famous Cinderella Castle. The line was long, and Liz kept wanting to skip it, but I said that I really wanted to get up there for a great picture, so she relented. I was hoping the whole family could be there as witnesses, but they got tired of the line and went someplace else. In the



The groom and groomsmen went to Skeffington's Formal Wear for their attire. The bride, her mother, grandmother, nieces and bridesmaids went to David's Bridal in Clive for their gowns and dresses. Photo by Jenifer Suarez of JenV Photography

end, it was just me and Liz when I popped the question."

"I was really surprised," Liz says. "I guessed that he was going to propose to me sometime on this trip, but I wasn't expecting it at Disney,"

she laughs.

Once the ring was on the finger, did the wedding plans begin immediately?

"No, I was pregnant with our youngest child at the time, so it took a back seat for a while,"

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Liz says. “We even thought about eloping, but we would have had to bring along the whole family, and the kids were young, so we talked ourselves out of that idea.”

The couple quickly ruled out a small wedding.

“We thought at first that we’d keep it small and intimate, just the immediate family,” Liz says. “But, I come from a very large family. My dad has 13 brothers and sisters. Whom do you not invite?”

Not surprisingly, they quickly came up with a guest list of more than 300 people.

The next major decision was the reception venue. Where could they find a place big enough to comfortably hold a gathering of that size? A close friend of Liz’s father works at the Hilton Garden Inn in West Des Moines.

“We toured the hall and quickly decided, ‘This is the place,’ ” James says.

For the wedding, they chose St. Pius X Catholic Church in Urbandale because they are both parishioners there. They met with Lindsay Sweeney, the St. Pius X event coordinator. She worked closely with the couple to customize the Mass with the right music, the right readings, etc. James asked his mother to sing some of the hymns since she is part of the choir at her church. For the presider, they quickly chose Fr. Mathew Luft.

“To our great surprise, we found out that he speaks Spanish, so he did half of the Mass in English and half in Spanish. That was super special to us,” Liz says.

St. Pius X also offers a pre-wedding workshop for engaged couples. This was led by Deacon Rob Stark.

Rather than bachelor and bachelorette parties, the couple decided on a weekend trip to Chicago for all six groomsmen and bridesmaids.

“Most of us are Cubs fans, so we had that be our main event,” Liz says.

“My brother and I were the lone Cardinal fans,” James laughs.

As a surprise bonus, there happened to be a taco festival going on in one of the parks that night, complete with food trucks, drinks and great music.

“One of the unique things about our wedding is that many of our vendors had never done weddings — and certainly none this large,” Liz says. “Our cake was made by Antojitos by Aurora. She had made cakes for us for other occasions, and we knew we wanted her to do the wedding cake. She made four different types of cakes, enough for the



With a large family and many friends, the couple require a reception venue large enough to accommodate their 300 guests. They chose the Hilton Garden Inn in West Des Moines. Photo by Jenifer Suarez of JenV Photography

everyone.”

For the decorations, they chose Garabatos By Me. They set up the entire room: the cake table, guest tables, the wedding party table, the memory table (commemorating deceased family members) and the back wall decorations. The church and the reception were beautifully adorned with flowers in fall colors by Hy-Vee Floral.

Liz chose Solo By Mario for her hair. She had her makeup done by Makeup by Xio. Veronica Salas of Hair By Salas was in charge of all the bridesmaids’ hairstyles. Make up for the bridesmaids was done by Kyrstal Hernandez of KrystalA Artistry. Later, the whole crew went to Pon Nail Spa in Ankeny to get their nails done.

And for the guys? To look their sharpest, they chose the North End Barbershop in Des Moines.

“All of our photography was done by Jenifer Suarez of JenV Photography,” Liz says. “I had worked with her before and knew she did great work, but she had never done a wedding before, so she cut us a great deal. All the pictures turned out perfectly. We were very pleased.”

To complement the still shots, the couple chose Axel Vazquez of Archetype Productions to be the official wedding videographer.

The groom and groomsmen received their attire from Skeffington’s Formal Wear. The

bride, her mother, grandmother, nieces and bridesmaids went to David’s Bridal in Clive for their gowns and dresses. In fact, Liz and James earned so many “points” there that David’s Bridal footed the bill for the couple to honeymoon in San Diego.

“They provided the airfare, the hotel for four days, and \$100 Lyft credit,” Liz says. “We’re planning on going in October.”

Once the marriage ceremony at St. Pius X concluded, the wedding party boarded a bus provided by Prestige Party Bus. They drove the entourage out to the Capitol Building for more photos.

When it was time for the reception, the wedding party was escorted into the hall by the Mariachi band Femenil Tecaliton, which traveled from Omaha for the occasion. Continuing the Mariachi theme, Perla del Sur, from Des Moines, also played. Once dinner was over, DJ Samuel Ibarra of VJ Samuel got the guests dancing to all the favorites.

The food was Mexican-themed, Liz says. A friend of the family is a Mexican chef, and he prepared all of their favorite dishes. Liz’s mom contributed her signature home-made salsa, and traditional Mexican Sweetbread was provided by Lara Bakery. The cupcakes from Sam’s Club were a big hit, especially with the younger guests.

To keep all of the guests entertained, the couple hired Royalty Events to set up a photo booth, cold sparklers, giant letters that spelled out “Garlock,” and even a “guest phone” where people could pick up an old-school rotary dial phone and leave a message for the bride and groom. The videographer set up a TikTok video booth. An open bar from 3 p.m. to midnight added to the festivities. Bernardo Robles was the bartender.

After a great night of eating, drinking, dancing and general fun, the guests were able to make their way to their rooms. The couple rented out an entire floor of rooms at the Garden Inn so no one had to worry about driving anywhere. The next morning, James and Liz provided a “day after” lunch for anyone still around. Everything was provided by the families for this event, making it extra special.

Looking back at all the planning, Liz says one task was exceptionally daunting.

“By far, the hardest thing for me to do was to do the seating chart for 300 guests,” she says. “I wanted everyone to mingle but not feel uncomfortable or not know where to sit.”

James attests that she spent many hours,



Liz and James Garlock dance their first dance as a married couple. Photo by Jenifer Suarez of JenV Photography

often late into the night, trying to make it just right.

“In the end, the table cards got messed up,

so some people ended up where they weren’t supposed to be after all. It’s always something,” she laughs. ■

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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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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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WHEN a child with a disability becomes an adult

A child transitioning from a minor to a legal adult can be challenging for any parent. However, parents of children with a disability run into additional difficulties. A parent's ability to make decisions about services and medical cares end when the child turns 18. There are three major things to consider:



Is my child able to make their own decisions about health care, finances and independent living? In January 2020, significant changes were made to the Iowa Code regarding guardianships. To establish a guardianship, there must be a finding of incapacity. This places restrictions on the rights of the individual under the guardianship. Under the new law, prior to establishing a guardianship, the court must consider less

restrictive alternatives. Children with minor impairments may be able to sign medical authorizations to release information to allow parents to continue to talk to providers. With more severe mental and cognitive disabilities, the adult child may be able to execute a power of attorney. If a guardianship is required, the law allows a petition to be filed when an individual is 17 ½ years old instead of waiting until after the child turns 18. This prevents a potential gap in services.

How will my child support themselves? A child receiving benefits does not automatically qualify for disability as an adult. The standards for disability differ from children to adults. If a child receives Supplemental Security Income, the Social Security Administration will do a review to determine if that child's disability continues. A minor who is not eligible for child benefits may still meet the criteria for adult disability. After 18, a claim for Social Security

disability should be filed.

Who will provide for my child when I die? Parents of children with disabilities should review their own estate planning documents to ensure that, when they die, money can be set aside for the children without making them ineligible for government benefits. This can be done with a Supplemental Needs Trust, also known as a Third Party Trust. This is a specifically-worded Medicaid-compliant trust that conforms to the regulations of the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and the Social Security Administration.

It is important to talk to an attorney who specializes in disability and is familiar with government benefits for your child and for yourself. ■

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

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HOW ABOUT a Roth IRA?

As a financial advisor for over 20 years, there are many questions that we get from our clients about retirement, about saving, and about insurance. One of the most common questions that I receive pertains to whether a Roth IRA is a good choice as an investment and how can it be used to improve a retirement income platform. Here are five reasons we share with our clients.



- **Access.** A Roth IRA gives you the ability to access your contributions without incurring any type of penalty or income tax. You have already paid tax on those contributions, so pulling them back out, without accessing your gains, will allow you to utilize the benefit of its value immediately, regardless of your age.

- **Tax-free growth.** The Roth IRA is one of few investments that allows you the opportunity to grow your money without having to pay tax on gains. That means you don't pay any taxes along the way and will not have to pay additional tax in the future when you seek to take a withdrawal. As long as you follow the rules, like waiting five years from when you established the account and being over the age of 59 ½ before you pull money out, you will have access to 100% of the value without owing any additional money to "Uncle Sam."

- **Use for college.** The Roth IRA gives you money that can be used for college and for retirement. We tell people all the time, you can borrow money to go to college, but you cannot borrow money to retire. So, using a Roth IRA gives you some flexibility to be able to pull money out to send "Junior" to college without the burden of a long-term financial aid obligation. Your contributions are accessible without penalty. Your growth or interest will avoid a 10% penalty, but you will have to pay tax on that gain.

- **No Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs).** As of December 2022, under the SECURE Act 2.0, RMD age was increased to age 73 and 75 for withdrawals on any IRA or 401K. The Roth IRA has no requirements to draw money out at any particular age. So, you can allow this to grow all the way through your date of death. This will open up many opportunities for your legacy planning and for your golden years' income planning.

- **No tax consequences at your passing.** With taxes and inheritance being a big concern for many, securing a tax advantaged investment to pass on to the kids and grandkids is always important. The Roth IRA transfers, by beneficiary, to the next generation without income taxes needing to be paid. Your beneficiary will be subject to a 10-year RMD schedule if it is reinvested in an inherited-Roth IRA, but it will still never be subject to a 10% penalty or income taxation.

There are many savings vehicles available to everyone. A Roth IRA may be a great fit for you. ■

Information provided by Daniel Rundahl, Financial Advisor, Rundahl Financial Consultants, 8230 Hickman Road, Suite 300, Clive, 515-727-1701, drundahl@rundahlfinancial.com, www.rundahlfinancialconsultants.com.

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FAITH By Steve Smith

COMPELLING compassion

I picked my wife up at the airport, and we headed straight to the hospital to counsel and console our dear friend whose baby was arriving several weeks early. The anticipation of coming home is often arrested by the sobering reality we face upon arrival.



Such was the case for King David following the suppressed revolution led by his deceptive and now deceased son, Absalom, in 2nd Samuel 19. David's previous critic named Shimei had arrogantly cursed the king as a "worthless fellow" (2 Sam. 16:7) and cast stones on him and his followers as they fled from Absalom. But then Shimei "rushed to meet King David" (19:17) and humbly cowered before him to win his favor and save his own life.

In verse 19, Shimei asked David to forgive him, forget his past mistreatment of the king, and forgo any grudge. Shimei offered his confession — "I have sinned" — and his conduct — "I have come today, the first of all the house of Joseph..." (verse 20) — as reasons for David to refrain from retaliating.

Shimei was a chameleon, as are some church goers today whose interest in God's king (Jesus), kingdom and people is purely selfish. Their church involvement promotes their business, placates their spouse, and/or pleases their parents, and so they profit from it.

David's bodyguard recognized Shimei's hypocrisy and insisted that this scoundrel get what he deserved for cursing "the Lord's Anointed" (Exodus 22:28), but the king decided otherwise.

The king's compassion in sparing Shimei is worthy of our consideration. David "swore to him, you shall not die" (2 Sam. 19:23), which anticipated the good news of pardon available through faith in David's greater son, Jesus. The guilty one (Shimei) confessed his wrong and was shown mercy by the Lord's Anointed, just as all who are guilty now and turn from their sin (Acts 3:19) and trust in Christ (Acts 16:31) will mercifully escape eternal condemnation (Romans 6:23).

Whether we pretend allegiance to the Lord or purposely reject Him, He wants us to experience His forgiving compassion. We must confess our sin and accept by faith that Jesus paid the price to release us from the penalty our evil deserves (John 3:36; 1 Peter 2:24).

All who have experienced the Lord's mercy are admonished and able to express it — "just as the Lord forgave you so also should you" (Colossians 3:13). Lord help us delight in forgiving and not giving our spouse, children, siblings, neighbors and co-workers what their errant conduct deserves.

The Lord's compassion compels the rebellious to experience it and the righteous to express it. ■

Information provided by Steve Smith, Creekside Church, 2743 82nd Place, Urbandale, 515-279-3919.

A DIFFERENT approach

Karen Acres staff and students embrace the year-round concept.

Although year-round school is a fairly new concept that has yet to become the new normal, to the 250 students enrolled at Karen Acres in Urbandale, it is exactly that. Totally normal.

Dania Wilson, the principal of the school that houses kindergarten through fifth grade, agrees.

"All of the families here are really word-of-mouth from other families here who have had good experiences," Wilson says.

Karen Acres is a school of choice in Urbandale, meaning it has no assigned neighborhood. Anyone in the district can choose to enroll in Karen Acres, no matter where they live in Urbandale.

Karen Acres features two sections of each grade, making it the smallest Urbandale elementary in the district. Being a year-round school is different, according to Wilson. But don't let that fool you, she says.

"Year-round is a little misleading," Wilson notes. "We have the same number of instructional days as everyone else in the district, but we just spread them out to give people more breaks."

In October, for example, the school takes two weeks off for a fall break. Week-long breaks are taken during Thanksgiving, winter, spring and May, followed by a six-week summer break in mid-June. For the staff, the breaks are huge, Wilson says.

"It gives them breaks at all the right times so they can refresh and regroup and come back with energy to support kids," she says. "When they're doing well and supported, they're doing well at supporting our students."

The input she's received from parents



Ms. Piscitello and some of her third-grade students at Karen Acres Elementary in Urbandale.

trying the year-round concept has been overwhelmingly positive.

"For the families who like to travel, they are able to do so when things aren't so expensive, which is beneficial," she says. "We also have a lot of families who have family outside the country. On those longer breaks, they can do extended stays other than just in the summer or in the winter when it's really expensive."

Equally crucial is burnout factor. Or lack thereof.

"Kids aren't so exhausted because they get breaks at just the right times," she says. "The shortened summer break is beneficial in that it's

long enough to feel like you've had a break, but not so long that kids get out of routine. When this happens, the transition back to school isn't so challenging."

Currently there are 41 kindergarten students, 37 first-graders, 43 second-graders, 43 third-graders, 39 fourth-graders, and 41 fifth-grade students.

Anyone in the district who may be interested in learning more about Karen Acres can reach out to the school. Wilson says they are happy to talk more about the facility and give prospective parents and students a tour as well. ■

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NEWS BRIEFS

SHADE TREE AUTO provides transportation for veterans in need

Shade Tree Auto announced the launch of its Jump Start Program, a nonprofit initiative dedicated to providing safe and reliable vehicles to veterans facing transportation challenges. Through this program, Shade Tree Auto aims to give back to those who have served by helping them regain independence and stability through access to dependable transportation. The program's first vehicle giveaway was March 11 at Shade Tree Auto's Grimes location.

The Jump Start Program will identify and donate vehicles to veterans in need, ensuring they have the means to commute to work, attend medical appointments, and take care of daily responsibilities. Each donated vehicle will undergo a thorough inspection and necessary repairs to ensure safety and reliability.

"Our veterans have sacrificed so much for us, and we want to do our part in giving back," says Clint Dudley, owner of Shade Tree Auto. "Reliable transportation is a necessity, not a luxury, and through the Jump Start Program, we hope to remove barriers that prevent veterans from moving forward in their lives."

Shade Tree Auto is seeking community support through vehicle donations, sponsorships, and partnerships with local businesses and organizations. The program welcomes contributions of used vehicles, as well as financial donations to help with repairs and maintenance costs.

For more information about the Jump Start Program, or to learn how you can support the initiative, visit www.shadetreeauto.biz/jump-start or contact Shade Tree Auto at 515-986-5241 or contactus@shadetreeauto.biz. ■

SCHOLARSHIP program awards college funds

Forty-three Iowa high school and college students have each received \$1,000 for college as part of the ISL Education Lending Scholarship. Local winners include, parents: Michael Berg, Urbandale.

In its second year, the program has now awarded \$123,000 as college savings deposits for Iowa students.

The winners were chosen from among more than 11,000 registrations from Iowa parents, high school students and college students during the fall 2024 registration period. While registering, the parents and students were able to view and interact with relevant financial literacy tips to learn more about paying for college.

"This program is designed to benefit more Iowa families, through the awards themselves and through education," said Steve McCullough, president and CEO, Iowa Student Loan Liquidity Corporation, which sponsors the scholarship under the name ISL Education Lending. "Awarding ISave 529 deposits allows the winners to use the money for education expenses when it's most suitable for them. In addition, the information provided to parents and guardians and to students helps them plan for future college financing."

The financial information provided with the scholarship is always available to the public at www.IowaStudentLoan.org. In addition, families can visit the website for additional resources and to sign up for other services, like the parent email service Student Planning Pointers for Parents.

ISL offers two registration periods each year for the scholarship, and eligible students may enter each registration period for which they meet the eligibility requirements. The spring 2025 registration period is open through March 31. Details for the ISL Education Lending Scholarship are available at www.IowaStudentLoan.org/Savings. ■

RECIPE

A LOADED casserole that is quick and comforting

(Family Features) It's tough to beat an easy dinner that's equal parts comforting, convenient and delicious. This loaded hamburger potato casserole is no exception. Just brown ground beef then mix in a casserole dish with potatoes, bacon, cheese and more before baking for an hour. Find more casserole recipes and beyond at Culinary.net. ■

Loaded hamburger potato casserole

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"

Servings: 4-6

- 1 pound ground hamburger
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 bag (1 1/2 pounds) tri-colored baby potatoes
- 1 can (10 ounces) cream of mushroom soup
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup fried onions (optional)
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 1/2 ounces bacon pieces
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- chives or green onions, for topping

Directions

- Heat oven to 375 F.
- In skillet over medium heat, brown ground beef with garlic powder; drain and set aside.
- Cut potatoes into small pieces. In casserole dish, mix beef; potatoes; soup; sour cream; milk; fried onions, if desired; cheese; and bacon pieces. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Bake, covered, 50 minutes then uncover and bake 10 minutes.
- Top with chives or green onions.



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LIBRARY

By Staci Stanton,
Programming & Outreach Manager

URBANDALE Public Library news

• Special Storytime

Explorers: Seed Starters:

Join us on Friday, March

21 at 10 a.m. with

Amanda from Nine Square

Feet, a local non-profit

organization dedicated to

supporting gardeners at

every stage of growing and

inspiring a new generation of plant enthusiasts. Amanda will assist

us in starting spring/summer seeds (your choice of one flower and

one vegetable) in cups, which you can take home to replant once

they sprout. This program is aimed at ages 3-6, but older siblings

interested in joining are welcome.

• Iowa's Prohibition & Bootlegging Legacy: Join us on

Monday, March 31 at 6 p.m. with historical fiction writer Ann

Hanigan Kotz, who will shed light on Iowa's Prohibition journey

and why families turned to bootlegging. From the murder of a

pastor in Sioux City to the rumrunning of Iowa's infamous rye

whiskey in Templeton, Ann will take you through the past up to

current exploits of today's underground whiskey business.

• Community Fridge: You can now find a community fridge at

the Urbandale Public Library in the Justin Martin Community

Room. Together with the City of Urbandale and Food GRID, this

initiative aims to eliminate food insecurity and reduce food waste.

The fridge is available during library hours and is intended for

anyone to take what they need or share what they can. Perishable

items like fresh produce, eggs, deli meats, pre-packaged meals,

and dairy products are accepted. Non-perishables accepted include

bread, grains, dry beans, canned goods, cereal/oatmeal, pasta, flour

and other standard pantry items. Pre-packaged and individually

wrapped items as well as freezer items are also accepted. Expired

items, home-cooked or open and partially-consumed food, alcohol

and raw meat, poultry and fish are not accepted.

• Donna Kessler Seed Library: The seed library has been

restocked with generous donations from Nine Square Feet,

including carrots, spinach, lettuce, tomatoes, radishes, peppers,

okra, basil and cilantro, to name a few. We also partnered with

Pocket Prairies of Des Moines to stock the seed library with native

flowers, including Butterfly Milkweed, Black-eyed Susans, Little

Bluestem, Bee Balm, Goldenrod, Coneflower and more. Anyone

with an Urbandale library card can check out up to six packets of

seeds each year. The library also accepts donations of seeds that

have not been treated with pesticides.

• National Library Week Book Sale: The library is holding its

annual book sale during National Library Week from Friday, April

4, through Sunday, April 13, during library hours. ■

Urbandale Public Library

3520 86th St., Urbandale

515-278-3945

www.urbandalelibrary.org

Monday – Thursday: 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Friday – Saturday: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Sunday: noon to 6 p.m.



URBANDALE COUNCIL RECAP



Mayor Andrew Weg announcing the book selection for 2025 All Urbandale Reads: *The Light Pirate* by Lily Brooks-Dalton

February 18, 2025 - Council Meeting

The Mayor and City Council met on Tuesday, February 18, to discuss several key items, including property taxes, park improvements, and a development agreement to help address the shortage of attainable housing in the community.

A public hearing will be held on Tuesday, April 1, for the proposed property tax levy rate, and a separate public hearing to approve the full budget will follow on Tuesday, April 15. Urbandale's proposed levy rate will decrease by 5 cents to \$10.03 per \$1,000 of assessed value, while total property tax revenue is projected to grow due to an increase in taxable valuation. The budget includes four new positions, with three dedicated

to public safety and one in fleet services, ensuring the City continues to meet the needs of a growing community. For years, Urbandale has maintained one of the lowest property tax rates in the Des Moines metro area, balancing fiscal responsibility with high-quality services. While recent changes in state law have reduced financial flexibility, the City remains committed to efficient operations and responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

The Council also approved the purchase of new playground equipment for three parks. Coronado Park will receive upgrades totaling \$104,000, Ashleaf Park will see \$130,000 in new equipment, and Horizons Ridge Park will be updated with \$125,000 in improvements.

The City Council approved a development agreement with Hubbell Realty to help expand housing options in the community. The proposed Line Seven housing development at 142nd Street and Waterford Road connects Urbandale's past and future, drawing its name from the original streetcar line that helped shape the city's growth within the Greater Des Moines region. In total, Line Seven would include 135 multi-family apartment homes — consisting of 120 market-rate apartments and 15 units designated as affordable for families earning 60–80% of the area median income for at least 15 years. This initiative aligns with the Forward Urbandale Comprehensive Plan's goal of expanding housing options for residents at diverse income levels. Once Hubbell purchases the property, construction could begin this year, bringing new housing options to the area by spring 2027. The City is committed to improving housing affordability in the community and working to ensure Urbandale is a welcoming place for all.

February 4, 2025- Council Meeting

The Mayor and City Council met on Tuesday, February 4, beginning the evening with two important proclamations. February was officially recognized as National African American History Month, honoring the achievements and contributions of African Americans throughout history. The Mayor also announced the book selection for 2025 All Urbandale Reads, the city's annual reading initiative designed to foster community connection through shared stories and meaningful discussions.

The City Council approved bids for several key infrastructure projects aimed at maintaining high-quality roads and improving stormwater management in Urbandale: (1) A \$650,000 project to rebuild damaged storm sewer intakes, ensuring better drainage and stormwater management. (2) Road patching totaling \$3 million was approved for two areas of the City—the first area is generally located in the neighborhood west of Merle Hay Road and north of Meredith Drive and the second area is generally located in the neighborhood north of Douglas Parkway and east of 128th Street. (3) A \$1.45 million project to extend the lifespan of Justin Drive (100th to 109th Street) with pavement preservation work. And (4) a \$2 million project to improve Meredith Drive (86th to 104th Street), enhancing one of the city's major east-west corridors. The projects will begin this year and are expected to be completed in the fall of 2025.

This is a custom publication from the City of Urbandale. The Council Recap is not the official minutes of the Council meeting, it's an easy-to-read and easy-to-understand digest of the Council Meetings specifically designed for residents. You can watch all the City Council meetings on YouTube and download Council agendas on the City's website.

Urbandale City Hall | 3600 86th Street, Urbandale, IA 50322 | 515-278-3900 | www.urbandale.org

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

Upcoming in Urbandale 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.

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.

Electronic Recycling Event

Saturday, April 12, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
3600 86th St., Urbandale

Items accepted include laptops, desktops and servers; CRT televisions and monitors; LCD, Plasma and OLED TVs and monitors; keyboards, mice and speakers; printers, scanners and MFPs; network switches, routers and firewalls; phones, tablets and e-readers; CDs (for destruction only) and flash drives; loose lithium-ion, alkaline, NiMi and NiCAD batteries; and anything else that is electronic and not an appliance or hazardous waste.

Used Bicycles Collection

Saturday, April 12, 8 a.m. to noon
Urbandale Library Parking Lot, 3600 86th St.

The Des Moines Bike Collective will collect Urbandale used bicycles prior to the annual spring cleanup. The Des Moines Bike Collective is a non-profit that collects and refurbishes used bicycles. Instead of throwing your used bike on the curb for the annual clean-up, bring it to the Urbandale Library parking lot and donate it to the Collective. Additional information about the Bike Collective can be found at www.dsmbikecollective.org. The Urbandale Lions will be helping with the collection.

Spring Clean Up

Week of April 14

On your regular collection day, during the week of April 14, the city will collect items that do not fit in your waste container. This collection is available to all Urbandale residents who are eligible for city-provided solid waste collection. The annual curbside cleanup allows residents to dispose of almost anything. The city rents large trucks, equipment and employs temporary workers to help collect all the items. For more information and list of items accepted, visit www.urbandale.org/942/Spring-Clean-Up.

Urbandale Historical Society events

Second Sunday events, 2 p.m.
Urbandale Public Library, 3520 86th St.

The Urbandale Historical Society will feature history programs at the Urbandale Public Library on the second Sunday of the month. Upcoming programs are:

- **April 13**, Starting Your Garden, by Megan Bannister.
- **May 18**, A Tour of Urbandale presented by Pat Finnerty at the library.
- **June 8**, Urbandale Schools by Dr. Doca and Dean Hatch.



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.

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Health and
Human Services



Ask your
healthcare
provider
about the
shingles
vaccine.

Source: cdc.gov 2/25

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

Talk with Officials

Saturday, March 29, April 26, 10:30 a.m. to noon
Urbandale Chamber of Commerce office - limited
in person, 2830 100th St., Suite 110, Urbandale, and
available virtually

Talk with Officials is a forum for the community to connect with elected officials representing Urbandale at the state, county, city and school district. Space is limited. The Talk with Officials events are open to the general public and held on the last Saturday of each respective month. Registration is required for in-person attendance. Virtual attendance is unlimited, however, registration is still required to receive the link.

Invited elected officials include: Mayor Bob Andeweg, Sen. Matt Blake (D), Rep. Eddie Andrews (R), Rep. Dan Gehlbach (R), Rep. Larry McBurney (D), Polk County Supervisor Jill Altringer, and School Board President Jason Menke.

To register, visit the chamber's calendar and click on the event: <https://businesses.uniquelyurbandale.com/events/calendar/2025-02-01?c=6>.

Urbandale Senior Rec Center programs

7305 Aurora Ave.
515-278-3907

A variety of programs are offered. For a full listing, more information and registration, visit the website, www.urbandaleseniors.org.

- **One-on-One Tech Support:** Sign up for a 30-minute appointment on a Friday afternoon through April to have high school students and tech experts from Waukee's APEX program provide one-on-one tech support at no charge. Bring your mobile device and a few questions about what is tripping you up.

- **5 Buck Bingo, Thursday, April 3, 1-2:30 p.m., free.** Bingo is back, and now it's easier to play. No registration is required. Play up to 10 rounds, and winners from each round will take home a choice of \$5 gift card.

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. ■



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WHAT to know about 're-grief'

When children have someone significant in their life die, it can be difficult to know how to best support them. It's natural to want to "fix it," but this is one of those things we cannot fix.

Children will continue to grieve as their development and understanding of the world changes. When the death occurs, the child understands only as fully as their cognitive development allows. As they age, and their development changes, their understanding changes, too. They may have new questions or wonderings and may express their grief in new ways. This is called "re-grief" and can sometimes catch their adults off guard.

While our fundamental understanding of death may not change after adulthood, our understanding and experience of grief can change over time, too. Whenever a new life milestone occurs (i.e., we get married), we understand the world in a different way (as a newly married person). This can also have an impact on our grief. Remember, there is no time limit on grief.

How to help? 1. Listen, compassionately. "It makes sense you feel that way. Do you want to tell me more about it?" 2. Answer questions honestly — and repeatedly if asked — in consistent, developmentally appropriate ways. 3. Encourage creative and physical activities (that they enjoy) to get feelings out of their bodies. 4. Encourage sharing memories and, if you knew their person, share memories you have. They may learn something new about them, and what a gift that is. ■

Information provided by Buffy Peters, Director of Hamilton's Academy of Grief & Loss, 3601 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-697-3666.



MEET Brenden Ball

From one side of education to the other

Brenden Ball is a third-grade teacher at Webster Elementary School in Urbandale and the assistant director for three show choir groups at Urbandale Schools: the all-treble group, the prep group and the varsity group. His inspiration for teaching was his grandparents.

"My grandma was an elementary school teacher, and my grandpa taught in the high school," he shares. "I also had a lot of great teachers that did a lot of great things for me and inspired me to do the same things for kids in the future."

He attended Iowa State University for his undergraduate degree in education. Initially a music education major, after three semesters at school, he switched gears to add an additional education degree. Now three quarters of the way through his first year teaching, Brenden enjoys his job.

"I was a graduate of Urbandale schools, so it's fun to come back home and be on the other side of things," he shares.

Brenden says he enjoys getting to teach every academic area.

"It was kind of the deciding factor for me when deciding to teach at the elementary or secondary level," he says. "I like teaching a little bit of everything."

Besides teaching multiple subjects, Brenden also enjoys watching students make progress in learning throughout the year.

"I love getting to see kids' progress and growth, especially when they finally 'get' something. I get to see their pride and confidence grow."

One of the most challenging parts of Brenden's job is that not a single day is the same. Every day, no matter how much prior preparation and planning is done, he must be able to adapt and change things on the fly as unplanned things arise.

"It's hard to plan for the uncertain and unknown," Brenden shares.

He says he would like it if the community could understand just how much time, effort and personal resources teachers invest in their classrooms to help students succeed.

"A lot of what helps make that happen happens outside of those contract hours," he explains. "I work on a team with three other third grade teachers. We're constantly communicating outside of contract hours to figure out how to improve upon methods of teaching and communicating with students and their parents."

When he's not teaching, Brenden invests a lot of time in the district's show choir groups. He was involved with show choir as a student from seventh grade through high school. When he was student-teaching, he saw that they were hiring for an assistant director. The position would work well outside of school hours, and it would balance well with his desire to both develop long-term relationships with his students in his classroom as well as diversify getting to know students in other grade levels.

He just finished his second year as an assistant director for the show choir.

"As a director, my favorite thing to see is how the students bring to life the ideas, music and choreography we designed on paper," Brenden says. "It's wonderful to see the students take ownership of the show and have growth and pride in what they're doing. I wish I'd have taken a video of them in August and shown it to them in March so they could see their own growth." ■



Brenden Ball attended Urbandale schools and now teaches in the district.

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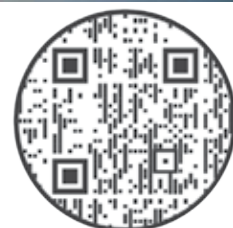
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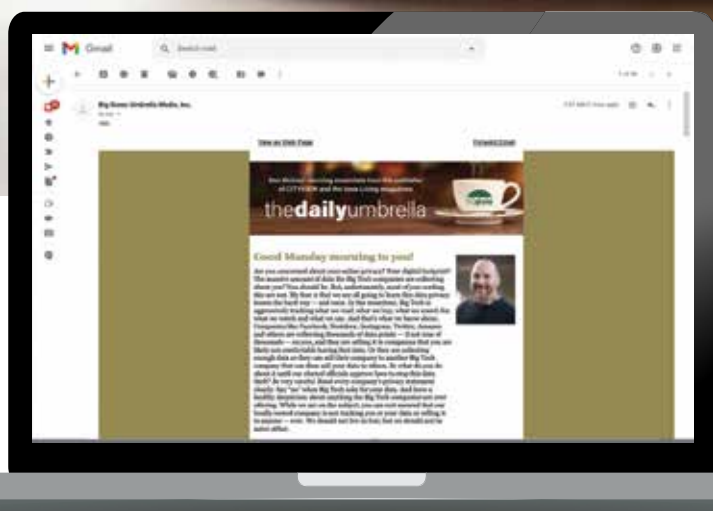
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AM Exchange

Urbandale Chamber's AM Exchange was held Feb. 25 at Homemakers Furniture Store.



Tiffany Menke, Wendy Mesenbrink and Jon Ingraham



Kailey Bebe, Karen Goldsworth and Steve Doughty



Amy Soper and Meg Knapper



David Russell and Kelli Close



Colby Dawes and Kevin McGuire



Jess Bishop and Carrie Blackburn



Melissa Pals and Kahla Wier



Sarah Henry and Karla Rangel



Rhonda Mock and Lisa Hollis Keene



Dave Machovsky and Brett Toncar



Nathan Kneifl and Eddie III

CHAMBER BASH

Urbandale Chamber's BASH
was held Feb. 11 at Exit Realty
Capital City.



Genevieve Whitten, Julie Deutmeyer and Bridget Zeman



Josh Larson, Amanda Mulcahy and Ryan Domeyer



Patricia Everett and Sarah Jarmofsky



Mave Makin and Karen Hall



Laura Aguero and Kyle Lee



Jayden Moore and Sidney Jacobson



Jasmina Schulte and Meg Knapper



Tim Schulte and Barry Hesse



Lindsay Range and Leslie Ibarra



Charity Baird and Antonio Romero



Fletcher Barry and Ryan Nady

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