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hosting foreign exchange students

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WELCOME

WHY DO Norwegians have bumps on the backs of their heads?

Imagine being a teenager and spending the bulk of one of your teenage years in another country where you didn't know a single person, had never been to a single place, and could barely speak the language. For most teenagers — including me — that would have been unthinkable. Meanwhile, students from around the globe are foreign exchange students and are thankful for the memorable opportunities and lifelong friendships.



I have been fortunate to know one of them. His name is Jone Helgeson, and he was from Norway. He lived with a family in my hometown, and we spent our senior year of high school together.

I got to know Jone as we both ran on our high school cross country team. He took his running very seriously. I was there mostly to lose a few pounds before wrestling season. As such, he didn't fully appreciate the myriad of practical jokes I played on him during the season, most of which happened in the locker room, and I can't write about them here.

I did share many of my favorite Norwegian jokes with Jone, most of which were simply Pollock jokes I converted. My most favorite, and his least favorite, asked why Norwegians had bumps on the backs of their heads. The answer, of course, was because the toilet lid always hit them on the head when they would get a drink of water. "Stupid American jokes," he would tell me.

I thought Jone should feel what it was like to go 125 mph on a county blacktop. Looking back, this clearly wasn't a wise decision. Fortunately, we made our way through it safely. The look on his face? That was great. Jone having to change his underwear? Not so great.

When the winter season rolled around, Jone decided to join the wrestling team. He had never wrestled before, so this was entertaining in itself. The highlight of the season for him, though, was an exhibition match when he tied up with a foreign exchange student at a nearby school who was from France. It was a back and forth match, but Jone won, and he — and the crowd — went nuts. This was during a time when the "Rocky III" movie was in theaters, and Jone looked and acted the part of Rocky Balboa, at least a Norwegian version.

Jone became a good friend, albeit for a short time. I regret that we have not stayed in touch. I haven't thought about him in years, but writing this column inspired me to reach out. And, of course, I asked, "Do you know why Norwegians have bumps on the backs of their heads?"

I am eagerly awaiting his reply. ■

SHANE GOODMAN
President and Publisher
Big Green Umbrella Media
shane@dmcityview.com
515-953-4822, ext. 305



Tammy Pearson
Editor
515-953-4822 ext. 302
tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com

Kristine McDonald
Advertising Account Executive
515-975-3543
kristine@iowalivingmagazines.com



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Homes

AWAY FROM HOME

Local families share experiences hosting foreign exchange students

By Rachel Harrington

The decision to host a foreign exchange student can come with a myriad of worries. Will the student want to eat the food we make? Will everyone get along? How will we keep the student entertained? Will he or she get homesick? However, many of those who decide to give it a try find their fears to be unfounded as they gain an appreciation of the student's homeland and culture, see their own country from a new perspective and build bonds that endure. Local residents share their stories about the adventure of being a host family.

Jessica Gibbons-Booton with foreign exchange student Amima.

Sharing and learning about cultures

Catherine and Jerry Johnson are no strangers to foreign exchange student programs. Their family has hosted four students so far, coming from Kenya, Kazakhstan and Estonia. Their current exchange student, Ahmad, is from Pakistan. The Johnson family enjoys sharing their lives and learning about their exchange students' cultures as they share their own with them.

"I was sitting in our living room one morning cruising through Facebook and saw an ad for hosting," Jerry says. "I filled out a form to figure out what it was, and, before I knew it, we were on the list to host."

"We have three boys, and, at the time, two of them were in high school," Catherine adds. "They were excited. We'd sit down together and look at the profiles of students who needed host families. The only thing that really mattered was their gender."

With the household mostly males, they wanted to host a male student.

The first year, they welcomed one student. Initially they didn't intend to host a second year right away, but Holly Powell (the area coordinator) said there was a dire need for a host family as a welcome family. The Johnsons didn't want to take on a student just for a few months, but said they were willing to host for the whole year.

The students blended into the Johnson family just as well as if they were born into it. The family has enjoyed the foreign exchange program and keeps in touch with all the boys they hosted in the past. One of them, Ibrahim, asked them to keep their international family growing and growing. Besides the students they hosted, the Johnsons have gotten to know the other exchange students their "boys" befriended. They joke about getting a U.N. flag for their house.

Ahmad was excited to become an exchange student. Coming to the United States was the first trip he made, not only out of his country, but even out of his hometown.

"It was one of my biggest dreams," Ahmad says. "I thought I'd be nervous, but I wasn't. I was super impressed that, as soon as I got the contact info from the Johnsons, Jerry reached out at 6 a.m. Iowa time about a month before I came."

He says he can't pick the best part about being here because everything has been his favorite. He has had the chance to see a baseball



Jerry and Catherine Johnson have hosted several foreign exchange students. This year, they are hosting Ahmad, who is from Pakistan.

game, another of his dreams, complete with the "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" song, and he looks forward to the chance to play baseball this summer. Ahmad has also seen his first snowfall since coming to Iowa. Ahmad says his perspective about many things has changed. He recently turned 16, and he told his older brother that, when he comes back, he'll be a completely different person, including becoming a women's rights activist. He has also enjoyed attending Winterset High School.

Jerry says many people have the wrong perspective about people who come from different backgrounds. By hosting students with an open mind, they've gotten to see their smiles while doing American things.

"The program helps people see that there's a big world outside of our town," Catherine says.

Community hosts Japanese visitors

At the end of the summer, Winterset hosted a group of Japanese students through the Winterset/Japanese Friendship Exchange Program. Student Nicholas Brakhane and his family hosted one of the students in the Japanese group. Both Marshalltown and Winterset are a part of this program.

"When they came here to Winterset, we hosted a student named Kantaro Kobayashi for a 10-day stay," Nicholas shares. "At night, he spent time with our family, and, during the day, everyone gathered as a group again for activities. We took them for a tour of the Iowa Capitol building, Pammel Park, and the Madison County courthouse. Agri-vision gave

us rides in some of their tractors, we went to Wildwood to ride horses and rented the pond for an hour or two, and we swam in the Winterset pool."

Nicholas says he was impressed with how much English the Japanese students knew compared to the little to no Japanese that he and his classmates knew.

"Our families and the Japanese students learned to use Google Translate to talk between us," Sue adds.

On the free day, the Brakhanes showed Kantaro their family farm. They showed him their cattle and pigs.

"He really liked our cattle," Sue says. "It was entertaining to see the volume of pictures they took of our cattle."

Kantaro shared that his favorite parts of his visit were their day swimming, getting shown around the farm, and riding horses at Wildwood.

The Winterset students showed their hosted group around their school, and the cheerleaders performed for them during one of their practices.

"They were excited to see our school when they were here, so they're looking forward to showing our students their school setup," Nicholas says.

Nicholas has stayed in touch with Kantaro since the Japanese students returned home. Winterset will be sending six students, including Nicholas, on a similar exchange at the end of July for a 10-day trip. This will be their first exchange since before the COVID pandemic. Students who were interested had to submit an application.

FEATURE

“There were a lot of great students who applied,” Nicholas says. “In the past, they sent 10 students, but this time they only accepted six, along with two chaperones.”

“The students have had great support from the community for their fundraising,” Sue says.

Nicholas says the group chose to do larger fundraising events. They did a pancake breakfast at the Legion, pork chops on a stick at the Winery, change jars at Hy-Vee, and served a RAGBRAI lasagna dinner. They will be holding another pancake breakfast in the near future.

Nicholas has worked on learning Japanese as best he can, though he is searching for a good app to use since Duolingo is limited and not easy to use for Japanese. He says every student should consider participating in the program in the future.

“You get to meet new people, even from your own school,” he says. “The experience was great. You get to learn about Japanese culture, and I don’t see any reason not to do it.”



Winterset students took their Japanese exchange students to see the sites in town.

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Carrying on the tradition

Jessica Gibbons-Booton's first experience with foreign exchange students was her senior year, when her family hosted Olga from Belarus. She says she still keeps in touch with Olga and talks with her regularly. Because she enjoys traveling and learning about new cultures, Jessica, now a mom of two, figured it would be a fun way for her kids to learn about other cultures.

Now married to Warren Booton and mother to sons, Miles and Max, her family continues the tradition of hosting students from around the world. She feels like the biggest challenges usually involve cultural differences, though those aren't the only thing. Because she had a young family when she hosted students in the beginning, she had a learning curve to conquer in more ways than one.

"When my boys were young, having a teenager to make curfews and rules for was, at first, challenging," Jessica says. "Some were used to public transportation and a different set of hours than we were."

In the end, they found a rhythm that worked for both their family and their hosted students.

She says the best part about hosting exchange students is learning about yourself as a host, including new foods, new traditions, and meeting new families. Their full-year exchange student was from Kyrgyzstan and is named Sanzhar.

"His mom was a teacher, and she and I talked a lot — and still do," Jessica shares.

Additionally, the Booton family has enjoyed celebrating new holidays. Another of their exchange students, Amina from Pakistan, made a great meal, and they had a big celebration for Eid. Jessica's family feels another highlight of hosting is introducing their students to the beautiful places around Winterset and the Midwest in general.

"We've gone to professional soccer games and gone on lots of road trips to show them the Midwest. Our kids have been able to experience having older siblings and learning so many things about countries they may never see," she says. "Most summers, we have had soccer coaches stay with us, and we also keep in close contact with them — and a few have even stayed with us since their original time with us."

Both Sanzhar and Amina liked all the activities available at school. Jessica shares that World Link expected and encouraged the



Michael Booton and Jessica Gibbons-Booton and their sons attend a football game when their foreign exchange student, Amer, was on the Winterset team.

students to be a part of different, new things, so most foreign exchange students have been in the student council.

"They also were always impressed by all the volunteering," Jessica says. "They are required to do so many hours, so finding meaningful places to serve was exciting for them."

One of them worked regularly at The Cellar. Another worked at the historical center. They liked the way people in town helped each other and recognized them. Homecoming was always

a big memory, too. They rode in the parade in convertibles and experienced the whole week of fun.

Jessica says another great part is seeing the students go back to their home countries and be positive leaders in their communities.

"They have graduated college, continue to work with students, and lead great lives," Jessica shares. "I love checking in with them to see where they are and hope someday to see them again. Our door is always open." ■

MEET Lana McDonald

A legacy of learning spanning 30 years

Lana McDonald has gained a wealth of knowledge over her 30-year career as an educator. But what stands out most?

“I’ve learned over the years from teaching elementary all the way to high school that kids are kids ... no matter their age,” the high school special education teacher shares. “They really just want to be heard and understood.”

For McDonald, teaching is an honorable profession that brings her great joy. She liked to “play school” as a child and loved her fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Pat Gorman, who, ironically, grew up in Winterset.

“I would pretend to be her while reading aloud in my bedroom as a young child,” McDonald recalls.

McDonald herself has been teaching in the Winterset School District since August 1996. Her husband, Randy, was teaching in Winterset at the time, so when a job opportunity became available, she applied and was hired.

“We’ve loved being a part of the Winterset community and value the family life and friendships we’ve made,” she says.

When it comes to teaching in the community, McDonald has most enjoyed the connections she’s made with students, colleagues and parents.

“In the past 30 years, I’ve taught in three buildings, and I’ve had so much fun with staff and students in all three positions,” McDonald shares.

She adds that two of her daughters are in education, and one is a licensed mental health therapist.

“I always tell them to ‘Find the people that bring you joy and laughter and stick closely to them,’” McDonald says. “It’s so important to have people by your side that will encourage you, push you in your own learning and teaching, and bring positivity to your life.”

McDonald has made many cherished memories over the past three decades in education. She especially enjoyed the end-of-the-year picnic when she taught at the elementary level. Now that she’s at the high school level, her favorite memory is starting the Best Buddies program in 2018.

“This club has grown tremendously, and I’m incredibly proud of our students with how they are embracing inclusivity and celebrating differences at Winterset High School,” she says.

As the school year winds down, McDonald looks forward to continuing to watch her students grow in their confidence and self-advocacy skills.

“I also love seeing how the freshmen grow and mature from August to May,” she says. “It’s like they become different human beings. Being a high school teacher is great in the fact that you get the opportunity to watch kids enter high school as teenagers and leave as young adults.” ■



Lana McDonald started the Best Buddies program in 2018.



Lana McDonald with her family.

BEAUTY

By Annie Wiseman

MAKING it right

We've all received a service or a product that left us feeling dissatisfied. Why is it so few of us don't do what we can to see that our expectations are met? What if I told you that most providers of a service or product desire to make it right. Without the customer, businesses do not prosper, so we want you happy.

In the cosmetology industry, we all want the most amazing outcome. It's true when Vidal Sassoon said, "If you don't look good, we don't look good." When a look we are trying to create doesn't turn out how we want, we want to make it right. Actually, we insist on it. There are many reasons things can go awry: poor communication, bad placement or incorrect color formulation can result in a less-desired outcome. But, guess what? All of these can absolutely be "fixed," creating a beautiful hair style.

I'm always impressed with the customer who calls back and expresses his/her complaint and gives us that chance to make it right. In my personal experience, we've had 100% success in executing desired results in the redo process. Sometimes this happens by seeing your original stylist and sometimes it's with someone else that you might communicate with better. No matter how it happens, it's important to us that it happens.

We recognize you've spent your money and have an expectation of the end result, and we value that. So please don't hesitate to tell us when you need it made right. ■

Information provided by Annie Wiseman, owner of Salon 107 and a licensed cosmetologist with 25 years of experience. 107 John Wayne Drive, Winterset, 515-462-4247, salon107style@gmail.com.



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HEALTH

By Dr. Amanda Queck

MOVE like a baby again

The latest research shows that injury and trauma are not the only causes of pain. Pain can be caused by other factors such as diet, mental, social, or even psychological factors. Did you know that, if you have pain for more than three months, it means your brain has learned to be in pain? We have to retrain the brain out of that pain. The primary way we do this is through chiropractic adjustments because we know that addressing the dysfunction of the spine plays a major role in making these changes. But another way we do this is through movement patterns.

Most of us have developed improper movement patterns that have overwhelmed our brain. So, we simply need to return to the basics. What is the first movement you ever learned — even before you learned to crawl? Rolling. Think of how rolling as a baby influenced your balance and coordination as an adult.

How about crawling? Think of the core muscles that engage as babies learn to crawl. These same movement patterns are just as important as adults. When your muscles engage properly, they can give proper feedback to your brain. When they don't function properly, then your brain gets a negative feedback — and your body receives the message as pain. So, regardless of what type of pain you are experiencing, take it back to the basics. Move like a baby again. Your brain will thank you for it. ■

Information provided by Dr. Amanda Queck, D.C. Flourish Chiropractic & Wellness, 108 W. Court Ave., Winterset, 515-384-0360, www.flourishchiro.life.



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REAL ESTATE

By Jennifer Stover

RADON and real estate

If you're in the process of buying or selling a home, understanding radon testing's significance can save you from potential health risks and financial liabilities. Let's explore how radon testing plays a crucial role in real estate transaction.



Incorporating radon testing into the home inspection process has become increasingly common among homebuyers seeking to ensure the safety and quality of their prospective homes. Radon, a naturally occurring radioactive gas, can pose significant health risks when present at elevated levels indoors. Therefore, integrating radon testing into home inspections offers buyers valuable insights into potential radon hazards and empowers them to make informed decisions regarding their real estate investments.

Buyer's right to radon testing: As a prospective homebuyer, it is important to exercise your right to radon testing during the due diligence period of the home-buying process. Radon testing can be conducted using a short-term kit which measures radon levels over a specified period of time. If elevated radon levels are detected, buyers may negotiate with sellers to address radon mitigation or request a reduction in the price.

Mitigation options: Sellers may opt to install radon mitigation systems. These systems typically involve sub-slab depressurization or ventilation to prevent radon from entering the home and to reduce concentrations. ■

Information provided by Jennifer Stover, 515-480-3389, Madison County Realty, 65 W. Jefferson St., Winterset, jenniferstover@madisoncountyrealty.com. Licensed in Iowa.

AUTOMOTIVE

By Dawn Lauer

OUT of alignment

While spring brings some wonderful things like warmer temperatures and longer days, it also brings us potholes. Potholes are an unfortunate result of the harsh Iowa winters that take a toll on our roadways and, in turn, on our vehicles. As much as we try to avoid them, you may just accidentally hit a large pothole head on. Doing so may cause more than just a loud thud. It can actually throw off your car's wheel alignment.



Your car being out of alignment might not always be noticeable at first. There are no warning lights or indicators if your alignment is off. However, if you notice your vehicle pulling to the left or right, a vibration in your steering wheel, or that the steering wheel is off-center when driving straight, you should get it into your trusted automotive repair shop to have it checked out.

During an alignment, the technician will inspect three main things: camber — the inward or outward angle of the tire when viewed from the front of the vehicle; toe — the extent to which tires turn inward or outward when viewed from above; and caster — the angle of your steering axis when viewed from the side of your vehicle. Without proper alignment, your tires will wear unevenly, requiring you to replace them prematurely.

Proper wheel alignment is important for your vehicle in many ways, but, most of all, it ensures optimal drivability and safety. ■

Information provided by Dawn Lauer, marketing specialist, Quality Car Care, 1012 N. 10th St., Winterset, 515-462-1035.

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Baby teeth start coming in as early as 6 months and continue to erupt for the first 2 through 3 years. Although these teeth fall out to make room for permanent teeth, they need to be cared for so they hold the places for permanent teeth to come in.

Just like permanent teeth, baby teeth are protected with a hard outer coating called enamel and can get cavities. Cavities develop when bacteria on the teeth turns the sugar in foods or drinks to acid that can eat a hole in the enamel. This allows bacteria to attack the tooth's nerves or blood supply. It can cause infection in and around the tooth, which, in severe cases, can spread to other parts of the head or neck.

For that reason, your child should visit the dentist for a well-baby checkup at some point after the first tooth comes in,



but before the child's first birthday.

Once teeth start to come in, you can gently brush them, twice per day, with a child-sized toothbrush and a smear of fluoride toothpaste (approximately the size of a grain of rice). You also can clean between teeth that are next to each other by gently sliding floss between them once per day.

Sugar-sweetened beverages should be completely avoided, or at least limited, to help prevent cavities. Limit the amount of time foods or liquids are in contact with your child's teeth. Do not let your child suck on a bottle or sippy cup full of anything but water for long periods, especially not at naptime or bedtime. Avoid letting your child snack on cookies, crackers or other foods that can stick to their teeth.

Cleaning teeth, having good feeding habits, and visiting the dentist can help you keep your baby's teeth healthy. ■

Information provided by Dr. Jason Phelps, Winterset Dental, 225 Wambold Drive, Winterset, 515-462-5755, Instagram: dr._jason_phelps

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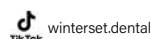
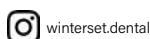
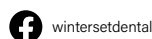


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INSURANCE

By Eric Johnson

THE COMPLETE guide to your insurance declarations page

Let's go back to the basics and talk about your insurance declarations page. Whether you're insuring your car, home or business, every policy comes with one. The insurance declarations page provides you with the important information and details you need to know in order to understand the intricacies of your policy.



Let's get started.

Your insurance declarations page, or "dec" page, specifically states what is being insured, whether it's a vehicle, home or something else. It also states the active coverages on the policy, so you know what you are paying for exactly.

The first page lists basic information about you and your agency.

It states your name, address, policy number and your agency's name and contact information.

Other information listed on the first page includes: premium, deductible, limits, policy term and coverages.

Premium is a yearly fee that you pay in order to make the insurance policy effective. Depending on your payment plan, you can pay this monthly, quarterly or semi-annually. You could also choose to pay it all at once, annually.

Deductible is the portion of a covered claim that you pay. Your insurance company covers the rest, up to your policy's limits.

Which brings us to policy limit, which is the maximum dollar amount your insurance company will pay towards a covered loss. For example, if there is a loss to your home that results in another individual getting an injury that requires medical attention, your homeowners policy lists the limits for medical payments. Let's say the limit for medical payments is listed at \$5,000. Then, \$5,000 is the highest dollar amount your insurance company will pay toward medical payments for this loss.

Policy term is the length of time your policy will be active.

Coverages are additional specific ways your policy may protect you in the event of a loss.

Simply put, an insurance declarations page exists to help you understand what you are insuring and what is covered.

For example, if you make a change to your policy or buy a new piece of property, you can check your declarations page to see if your current coverages/limits are enough or if you need to increase them. This is especially important should a loss occur. If something unfortunate were to happen, the last thing you want to be doing is wondering if you have adequate coverage, which is why your dec page spells it out for you. ■

Information provided by Eric Johnson, IFG Insurance, 224 E. Highway 92, Suite B, Winterset, 515-462-4553. Credit: Auto-Owners Blog



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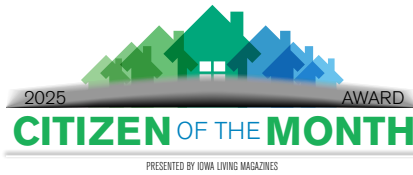


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SAINT JOSEPH pantry helps meet many needs

Generosity of parishioners leads to ability to serve more people.

A well-known Bible verse (Matthew 17:20) tells how even a small amount of faith can lead to moving mountains. Similarly, a small idea can lead to big things. That's true of the food pantry at Saint Joseph Catholic Church in Winterset.



The church's food pantry began in the heart and mind of Joan Loftus.

"I started working on it in January of 2021. The thought came to me through prayer. The Lord just put the need on my heart, that there was a need for food assistance," Loftus says. "It started out small with a China hutch that we started filling with donations from our parishioners."

As church members donated to help other members, word spread of a greater need.

"At first, it was just open to our parishioners, but then Natalie Montross, who is a community liaison, came to me and asked if we could expand it to the community," Loftus says.

So, the pantry was then opened to anyone, but only on one Thursday per month, to dovetail with when other food pantries in the community were open.

As the generosity of the church's members continued, the pantry schedule expanded to two Thursdays per month and eventually to every Thursday, 10 a.m. to noon. Loftus and Mary Burrack are the coordinators of the pantry, but they are quick to point out that it's a churchwide effort.

"Our Knights of Columbus donated the freezer and refrigerator, and the parish gives food and monetary donations," Loftus says. "And we partner with the Iowa Food Bank and are able to purchase some food from them at a minimal cost."

"About 20 to 25 people usually come on a Thursday," Burrack says, and she notes that cleaning supplies, eggs and meat are some of the most sought-out offerings.

"We just recently started working with Rose Acre Farms, donating eggs, and we have a parishioner that is making that monthly run to go pick those up," Loftus says.

Because of the partnership with the Iowa Food Bank, there is a form that recipients are asked to complete, but Loftus emphasizes it asks for only very basic information.

"They don't have to reveal income status. It's basically name, address and number of people in the household," Loftus says. "We don't turn people away."

Loftus and Burrack say they've made personal connections with many of the recipients who come to the pantry frequently.

"One of the nice things is, we've gotten to know them, and I think they feel comfortable coming here and visiting with us," Loftus says.

Burrack says the personal connection they make with recipients has allowed additional needs to be met, also. For example, if recipients mention unmet needs, Burrack and Loftus are often able to steer people to other agencies and community services.



Kim Clark and Candice Dole of Scot Clark Farm Bureau present the Citizen of the Month certificate to Mary Burrack, Joan Loftus and Fr. Thomas Dooley.

"People have said to me, 'I don't know what I would have done without this food every week,' so it's gratifying to know we can make a difference in someone's life, by supplying basic needs," Loftus says. "But none of this would be here if it weren't for the generosity of our parishioners." ■

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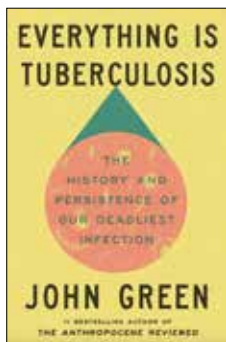
'Everything Is Tuberculosis: The History and Persistence of Our Deadliest Infection'

Tuberculosis seems like one of those diseases from the Victorian era that was left in history like cholera or dysentery. Yet, it lingers large in vast portions of this world that we rarely see, and its insidious nature pervades human history in myriad ways right up to this very minute.

This is a book of questions, rather than answers. There is history and science and tragic personal stories aplenty, but, really, this book serves more as a light to show us all that there are real, solvable problems that exist and how we should use the march of forward progress that has brought us so much to make life better for all of us, not just the few.

The eradication of smallpox, polio and many other endemic human diseases was such a monumental human achievement, done without the heaping mountain of technological resources we now have available. Tuberculosis, for all its insidiousness in the human condition, should be no different. We have proven that we can do this; now, it's just a matter of making it happen. This book is the call to action I hope will take us there. ■

Review by Julie Goodrich



By John Green
03/18/25
208 pages
\$28
Crash Course Books

'The Staircase in the Woods'

Stop me if you've heard this one before. A group of kids go into the woods together, find something supernatural and mysterious when tragedy strikes, and their lives are shaped forever. Many years later, that same group goes back to solve the mystery after growing up with all the complex baggage of adulthood and childhood trauma being carried along with them.

This familiar plot is shaken up in a lovely, compelling and very fun way with this newest offering from the always fantastic Chuck Wendig. This book takes a trope we all know and expands and enlivens the familiar beats into something sparkling, lyrical and terrifying.

I loved every second of this thriller, even if I guessed some of the twists. Wendig's writing never fails to enthrall me, and I found myself reading this when I should have been working on other things. It was compulsive in a way I haven't felt in a while. Sometimes touching on the familiar can make a story even more intriguing and addictive, especially when done well. It is why certain series and genres become comfort reading. There are only so many stories to tell; it's all about finding the ones worth telling. ■

Review by Julie Goodrich



By Chuck Wendig
04/29/25
300 pages
\$27
Del Ray



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RECIPE

A LOADED casserole that's 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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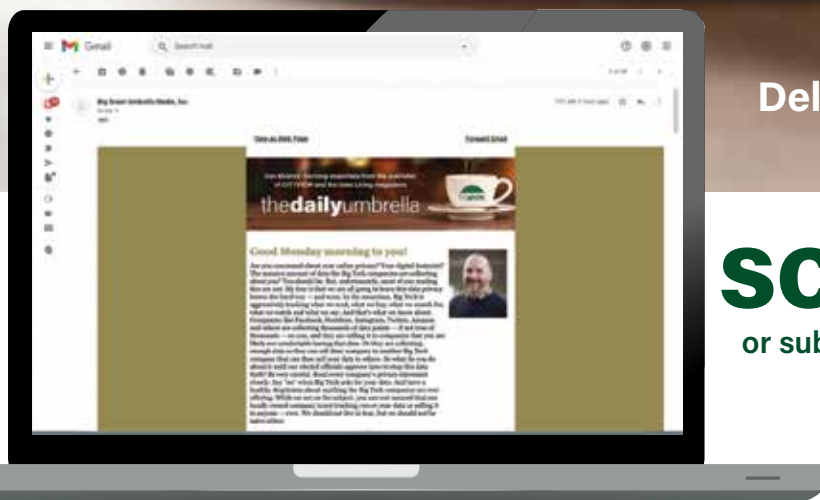
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WHEN she needed it the most

MCHCS program saves a life.

Deb Kahler is direct and to the point when she describes what Senior Life Solutions did for her.

It saved her life.

The program, which is part of the Madison County Health Care System, is an outpatient group therapy program designed to meet the needs of people over the age of 65 struggling with symptoms of depression and anxiety, often related to aging.

According to the program's website, a board-certified psychiatrist, licensed social workers, a registered nurse, and other professionals provide assistance to seniors suffering from crying, hopelessness, loneliness, restlessness, sadness, decreased energy, difficulty sleeping and low self-confidence.

A combination of some of these symptoms following the death of her father led Kahler, 68, to the program to begin the therapy process in August of 2024. She finished the program on Feb. 21, 2025.

"I had gone through losing my dad, having to move my mom to Winterset, and taking care of her and her needs, as well as several other family issues," Kahler says. "It became overwhelming for me, and I became anxious and depressed in dealing with it all at once."

Initially, Kahler attended group therapy three days a week and had one-on-one therapy twice a month. In the group setting, patients discussed why they were there, their concerns, positive things, and encouraged each other.

"We learned coping skills, how to apply them, what worked for us individually and what did not," she says.

One of the biggest things Kahler learned was the necessity to simply say "no" and planning time for herself. She began looking for the positive in the days, rather than the negative, and realized that she was not responsible for someone else's happiness.

"It is their issue to deal with," Kahler says. "I needed to let go of always being the caregiver/person who everyone would come to if they needed something."

As fate would have it, a Life Solutions employee came to her mother's apartment dining area to talk with the residents there about their needs. One of the fliers she handed out was about the Life Solutions program.

"After reading it, I knew that was what I needed," Kahler says. "I called the next day, went through some tests to see if I qualified, and started two days later."

Without the intervention, she says, things could have taken an even more drastic turn for the worse.

"Life Solutions saved my life," Kahler says.

For more information on the program, call 515-462-5120. ■



Deb Kahler of Winterset says Senior Life Solutions saved her life.

IT'S TIME TO GET IN THE INTERNET FAST LANE WITH OUR FIBER BUILDS

Starting in spring 2025, Panora Fiber will invest in the installation of fiber-optic connections—first in Rural Redfield to Adel/Earlham, followed by Rural Madison County. We can't wait to be your new provider and bring you the much-faster fiber internet service you've been wanting. However, it takes time for us to complete the many steps of a fiber build.

Your part of the process is easy and can be done today. Go to panorafiber.com/fiber-build and fill out the Fiber Interest Form and Permission to Bury Form. These forms do not commit you to Panora Fiber services. We'll simply schedule an appointment with you for a site visit to determine the best route for bringing underground fiber to your home.

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CATCH-UP contributions

A recent survey found that 21% of workers are very confident about having enough money to live comfortably through their retirement years. At the same time, 32% are not confident.¹

In 2001, congress passed a law that can help older workers make up for lost time. But few may understand how this generous offer can add up over time.²

The “catch-up” provision allows workers who are over age 50 to make contributions to their qualified retirement plans in excess of the limits imposed on younger workers.

How it works: Contributions to a traditional 401(k) plan are limited to \$23,500 in 2025. Those who are over age 50 — or who reach age 50 before the end of the year — may be eligible to set aside up to \$31,000 in 2025. Those between the ages of 60 and 63 have the option to make additional contributions up to \$34,750.³

Catch-up contributions and the bottom line: Setting aside an extra \$7,500 each year into a tax-deferred retirement account has the potential to make a big difference in the eventual balance of the account, and, by extension, in the eventual income the account may generate.

This chart traces the hypothetical balances of two 401(k) plans. The blue line traces a 401(k) account into which \$23,500 annual contributions are made each year. The red line traces a 401(k) account into which an additional \$7,500 in contributions are made each year, for a total of \$31,000 in contributions a year.

Upon reaching retirement at age 67, both accounts begin making withdrawals of \$7,000 a month.

The hypothetical account without catch-up contributions will be exhausted before its beneficiary reaches age 80.

Keep in mind, the IRS regularly updates these maximum contribution limits.

This hypothetical example is used for comparison purposes and is not intended to represent the past or future performance of any investment. Fees and other expenses were not considered in the illustration. Actual returns may vary.

Both accounts assume an annual rate of return of 5%. The rate of return on investments will vary over time, particularly for longer-term investments.

In most circumstances, you must begin taking required minimum distributions from your 401(k) or other defined contribution plan in the year you turn 73. Withdrawals from your 401(k) or other defined contribution plans are taxed as ordinary income, and if taken before age 59½, may be subject to a 10% federal income tax penalty. ■

1. EBRI.org, 2024. 2. Economic Growth and Tax Relief Act of 2001. 3. IRS.gov, 2025. Catch-up contributions also are allowed for 403(b) and 457 plans. Distributions from 401(k) plans and most other employer-sponsored retirement plans are taxed as ordinary income and, if taken before age 59½, may be subject to a 10% federal income tax penalty. In most circumstances, you must begin taking required minimum distributions from your 401(k) or other defined contribution plan in the year you turn 73. The content is developed from sources believed to be providing accurate information. The information in this material is not intended as tax or legal advice. It may not be used for the purpose of avoiding any federal tax penalties. Please consult legal or tax professionals for specific information regarding your individual situation. This material was developed and produced by FMG Suite to provide information on a topic that may be of interest. FMG Suite is not affiliated with the named broker-dealer, state- or SEC-registered investment advisory firm. The opinions expressed and material provided are for general information, and should not be considered a solicitation for the purchase or sale of any security. Copyright FMG Suite.



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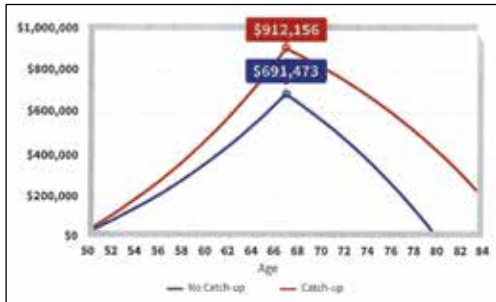
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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations

Upcoming in Winterset 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.

Cancer Survivors: In June, we will be sharing the stories of cancer survivors. If you would be willing to share your experiences about how overcoming cancer has impacted your life, please email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com

Lego Club

April 24 and May 29, 3:30-4:30 p.m.
Winterset Public Library,
123 N. Second St.

Kids ages 8-12 are invited to Lego Club. Thematic builds are featured each month and displayed after the sessions. Legos will be provided.

Game on!

Mondays, 3-5 p.m.
Winterset Public Library,
123 N. Second St.

This game time for young adults, ages 12-18, features Xbox 360, Wii, Nintendo Switch and board games. No fees or registration required.



Adult Game Days

Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m.
Winterset Public Library, 123 N. Second St.

Join in on some laughs and fun competitions. Many games to choose from or bring your own favorites. Snacks are welcome. No fees or registration required.

Dinner and Bingo

First Tuesday through May
Jackson Building, Madison County Fairgrounds

Join the Madison County Fair Board on the first Tuesday of April and May for an evening filled with delicious food, community fun and plenty of chances to win. Dinner begins at 5 p.m. Enjoy a meal prepared by one of the area 4-H and FFA youth groups who are creating amazing opportunities for our community. Freewill donations welcomed. Bingo kicks off at 6 p.m. Cost is 11 games, six plays per game, \$10; 11 games, three plays per game, \$5; one game, six plays, \$1.50; or one game, three plays, \$1. Stampers available for purchase or bring your own.



Winterset Wine Walk

Saturday, May 10, 1-6 p.m.

Join the Madison County Chamber of Commerce, downtown Winterset merchants, and area wineries for shopping, wine sampling, music and more. Must be 21 years of age or older to participate. Cost is \$27.50 or \$25 by check or cash, which includes a commemorative wine glass, plus \$5 coupon toward the purchase of a bottle of wine (that night only). Register at <https://business.madisoncounty.com/events/details/winterset-wine-walk-2802?calendarMonth=2025-05-01>.

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- And more



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Source: American Academy of Pediatrics 3/25

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancelations

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



Covered Bridges Winery events

2207 1700th Trail, Winterset
coveredbridgeswinery.com

See website for tickets and any last minute changes.

April 13: Sunday Music at the Winery, 2-4 p.m., no cover charge, Liv McNair

April 19: Music at the Winery, Kracklin, 6:30-9:30 p.m., \$5 cover



Knights Fish Fries

Friday April 4 and 11, 5:30-7 p.m.
St. Joseph Parish Hall

The Saint Joseph Knights of Columbus are serving up their famous Lenten Fish Fry. Enjoy an all-you-can-eat meal for a freewill offering. Menu includes choice of Alaska baked or fried fish, baked potato or fries, baked beans, coleslaw, dinner roll and variety of desserts. A kids menu of cheese pizza and fruit cups will be offered. Come enjoy great food and fellowship while supporting the Knights' charitable efforts. Everyone is welcome.

John Wayne Birthday Celebration

May 23-24

The John Wayne Birthday Celebration will feature musical headliner Riders In The Sky, 40-year veterans of Nashville's Grand Ole Opry. Tickets are on sale for the Friday Night VIP event and the Saturday Night Benefit Dinner and Auction. Seating will be limited for each event. Barry Corbin, a Hollywood legend, will perform a one-man show on May 23. Also returning will be the popular Fly-In Breakfast at the Winterset Municipal Airport, the Winterset Rotary's 5K Run/Walk, and John Wayne in "Chisum" on the big screen at the Iowa Theater. Visit the John Wayne Birthplace & Museum website for tickets and more information, www.johnwaynebirthplace.museum.

Vendor Markets

April 19, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Outlets of Des Moines, 801 Bass Pro Drive N.W., Suite 315, Altoona

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

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WDM Elks Spring Style Show Fundraiser

Saturday, April 26, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
West Des Moines Elks Lodge No. 2752,
2060 N.W. 94th St., Clive

Tickets are \$15 each or reserve a table for eight for \$130 or a table for four for \$70. The Style Show starts at 11 a.m. with a salad luncheon at 12:30 p.m. and door prize drawing at 2 p.m. Many fantastic vendors including K.A.B.E. & Co clothes and accessories will be available. Funds raised will benefit Veterans, Children's Christmas and other Elks-approved charities and outreach.

Planned Parenthood - Shine

Tuesday, May 13, 6-8:30 p.m.

ppncs.org/shine

Planned Parenthood North Central States is hosting its annual event honoring Planned Parenthood in Iowa: Planned Parenthood – Shine. Enjoy an evening with friends old and new, along with cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and a photo booth, while the nonprofit recognize its progress, strengthens its commitment, and ensures that expert health care, education and advocacy remain accessible for all.

Kate Goldman's Family Series presents "Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical"

April 4-13, 7 p.m. Fridays and 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays

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

How far would you go to save a stuffed animal? Based on the popular book by Mo Willems, "Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Musical" is a silly story about young Trixie, who loses her Knuffle Bunny on a family trip to the laundromat. Will she find him, or will Knuffle Bunny be lost for good? Tickets, starting at \$14, may be purchased online at dmplayhouse.com and by phone at 515-277-6261.

The Playhouse can provide for those who have the need for audio description or ASL translations with advanced notice. These services are free and reasonable accommodations will be made. Requests should be made through The Playhouse ticket office.

DMPA Concert Series

Various dates, 7 p.m.

Temple Theater, 1011 Locust St., Des Moines

Des Moines Performing Arts (DMPA) is excited to announce a new concert series. "Made in the Midwest" highlights the artistry of local musicians in the intimate Temple Theater. Celebrating the talents of independent artists from across our region, guests will enjoy a unique experience where the musicians take center stage in a venue known for its unparalleled acoustic quality.

- April 25: Allegra Hernandez, rock
- May 9: Abbie Sawyer, folk/Americana

Tickets are on sale now starting at \$20/show. You can purchase tickets by visiting DMPA.org, calling 515-246-2300, or stopping by the Civic Center Ticket Office at 221 Walnut St. You can also purchase tickets night of at the Temple Theater Ticket Office, 1011 Locust St., starting two hours before a performance.

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SEPTEMBER 13 - VELVET
OCTOBER 18 - WILLIE MAC + THE LOST COUSINS

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JUNE 22 - DEVON MILLER
JULY 13 - WILLIE MAC
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SEPTEMBER 7 - MATT WOODS BAND

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OCTOBER 5
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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. ■



RECIPE

CELEBRATE spring's arrival with a skillet fish fry

I am a fan of fish and seafood in general. Healthy and light, it satisfies my hunger every time. Grilling is typically my preparation method, as it is easy with little clean-up and no "fishy" smell.



This time of year, I look forward to the local fish fries. I must confess, "fried" foods do delight my taste buds. So, when I saw this recipe recently, I wanted to give it a try. The Pan-Fried Catfish recipe is perfect for enjoying flaky fillets without the mess. Because this catfish is pan-fried instead of deep-fried, I recommend using butter and olive oil. The mixture adds a delicious, creamy flavor, and it is easy to work with. ■

Information provided by Jolene Goodman, vice president of Big Green Umbrella Media.

Pan-fried catfish

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"
Servings: 4-6

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons mesquite seasoning (or seasoning of choice, such as lemon pepper)
- 1 stick butter
- 1/4 cup avocado oil (or oil of choice)
- 1-2 pounds thawed catfish fillets (1/2 pound each)
- cooked rice, for serving

Directions

- In pie dish, mix flour and seasoning.
- In skillet over medium heat, melt butter and add oil. Coat fish fillets in flour mixture on both sides. Place fish in skillet and fry 5 minutes then flip and fry 5 minutes.
- Place fish on paper towel to drain excess oil then serve with rice.
- Tip: If skillet is large enough, fry two fillets at once. If frying more than four fillets, discard butter and avocado oil then start fresh before frying more.



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OUT & ABOUT



A ribbon cutting was held March 7 for Winterset PTO at MR Post Frame. Photo by Vicky Minor, Madisonian



A ribbon cutting for Meyer Chiropractic was held Feb. 28. Photo by Vicky Minor, Madisonian



A ribbon cutting for Wagner Locker was held on March 14. Photo by Vicky Minor, Madisonian



An open house was held at Evergreen and Lily Floral Studio & Gifts on March 21. Photo by Kylee Tindle



Allissa Johnson, Maria Forgy and April Pike at the Chamber Coffee March 21 at Flourish Chiropractic.



Nicole Kems, Erin Harman, Sarah Pugh and Leslie Allen at the Chamber Coffee held at Meyer Chiropractic on Feb. 28. Photo by Leslie Allen



Debbie Field, Leslie Allen and Stephanie Gerleman at the Chamber Coffee held at Meyer Chiropractic on Feb. 28. Photo by Leslie Allen



Skyler Knutson and Evan Queck at the Chamber Coffee March 21 at Flourish Chiropractic.



Karin Holder, Melissa Callstrom, Donna Jackson and Stephanie Berry at the Chamber Coffee March 21 at Flourish Chiropractic.



Lori Wallace at the open house at Spoons Full of Sugar on March 21. Photo by Kylee Tindle

OUT & ABOUT



Willie Mac and the Lost Cousins at Big Rack Brew Haus on March 15. Photo by Jami Jackson



Alan and Kristina Benshoof and Raquel and Eric Hoveland at Big Rack Brew Haus on March 15. Photo by Jami Jackson



Rick Gray, Aaron Oviatt, Kambria McQuoid, Rick Harding and Amanda Snow at Big Rack Brew Haus on March 15. Photo by Jami Jackson



Paula Worrall, Pam Blohm, Janine Richards, Angie Ross and Jami Jackson at Big Rack Brew Haus on March 15. Photo by Jami Jackson



Cortni and Mia Ramirez in the performance of "A Night of Vaudeville with The Winterset Stage" on March 15. Photo by Leslie Allen



Jami and Trey Jackson at Big Rack Brew Haus on March 15. Photo by Jami Jackson



Pam Blohm and Aaron Oviatt at Big Rack Brew Haus on March 15. Photo by Jami Jackson



Louie and Julia Scadden at the open house at Spoons Full of Sugar on March 21. Photo by Kylee Tindle



Austin Hill in the performance of "A Night of Vaudeville with The Winterset Stage" on March 15. Photo by Leslie Allen



Erin Harman in the performance of "A Night of Vaudeville with The Winterset Stage" on March 15. Photo by Leslie Allen



Scott Burnham in the performance of "A Night of Vaudeville with The Winterset Stage" on March 15. Photo by Leslie Allen

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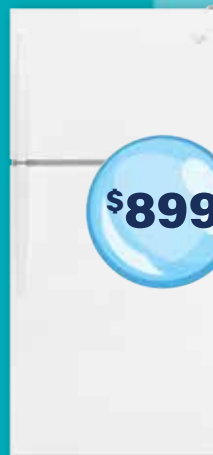
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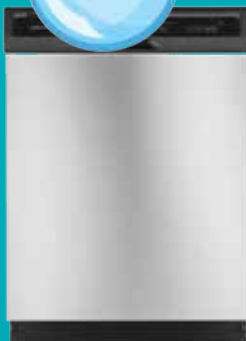
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