

INDIANOLA

APRIL 2025

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# MOVING TO A NEW LOCATION!

After 22 years, we are moving. Since January 2003, we have been located Northwest of the courthouse (what used to be the Funaro's building). It all started with me, one desk, an old computer, and my plant. I have a lot of memories in this building and have walked the same path to the courthouse thousands of times. As I reflect, I experience a flood of emotions. I feel excited about the move. I feel pride in what we have built with Ellis Law Offices, P.C. We have served thousands of clients. We have been involved in community events. We have gone through highs and lows. I feel sad and nostalgic knowing there will be no more memories in this building.

It is time! We have grown our firm. We have a great team of people who are devoted to providing superior service. The team continues to grow and evolve. We have four full-time attorneys, four paralegals and four support staff members. We need more space and a fresh start. We will be moving to 2007 N. 6th Street where Drees Chiropractic was. We will have a fresh and clean look. We will have four conference rooms to better meet the needs of our clients. We will have adequate parking. There are many positives, and we are excited.

One thing that will not change is our commitment to excellence and daily reminder to make a difference. We hope to see you all in our new location.

Finally, I have an overwhelming feeling of gratitude. I am thankful to live in Indianola. I am thankful for my dedicated team. I am most thankful for my wife who has been my support and partner through all of this.

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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. ■

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# Homes

## AWAY FROM HOME

Local families share experiences  
hosting foreign exchange students

By Becky Kolosik

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.

The Banks family showed Pedro, pictured with Bank's granddaughter, Charlotte, the Iowa countryside, including the many fields of corn.



## Indianola Lions welcome international students

The Iowa Lions Youth Camp and Exchange Program welcomes foreign exchange students to Iowa each summer. Students age 16-19 stay with host families then attend camp where they see historical sites around the state, visit the capitol building, experience a county fair and amusement park, and participate in other activities. In exchange, they present country flags; talk about their countries, families and home life; and participate in a camp talent show.

Two years ago, Indianola Lions Club members Greg and Laura Avitt welcomed Gianvito Carbone from Italy and Romain Parissi from France into their home. In the weeks prior to camp, the family packed in as much fun as they could, visiting Pella and Lake Red Rock as well as Knoxville, where the boys enjoyed the sprint car races and Sprint Car Hall of Fame. They saw many sites in downtown Des Moines. They ate at restaurants — La Mie for Romain and Graziano's for Gianvito — and took in an Indianola High School softball game, visited the high school for a summer band lesson and rode four-wheelers.

"When they heard about hot air balloons, both wanted a ride," Laura says. "A good friend who is a pilot was able to make that happen. The only request for food was Burger King one night after ballooning."

The Avitt family learned that Gianvito was passionate about music, especially classic rock and, of all things, the band Slipknot. Two of the original members have passed away, so they visited the cemetery where the band members are buried. After a few hours in the blazing July heat, they found both headstones.

"It was a memorable moment for Gianvito," Laura says. "Afterwards, we stopped at the nearby Quik Trip, and both boys were in awe of the wall of fountain pop."

## Last-minute decision

Brock and Angie Banks decided at the last minute to host in 2024.

"We had an open bedroom, and, after receiving an email from Shari Holliday regarding exchange kids, we thought it might be fun," Angie, who is also a Noon Lion, says. "I talked to Laura about their experience, and we decided to go for it. Pedro was 19 and from Estrela, Brazil."

They exchanged several emails with Pedro asking about things like allergies, foods he



The Avitts and their foreign exchange students — Grace, Romain, Gianvito, Laura, Ben and Greg — enjoyed the exchange of cultures on both sides.

liked/disliked, preferred mealtimes, activities he liked, and what "American" things he wanted to experience while here. The Banks involved Pedro in most aspects of their family life and exposed him to as many experiences as possible — boating on Lake Rathbun, the AE Dairy cows, shopping at big box stores, a concert in Kansas City, 4th of July parade and fireworks, Yankee Doodle Pops and more. He watched Angie's granddaughter at tae kwon do and BMX practice; played board games; went to church, the zoo, figure eight races and the farmers market; and enjoyed a ride in a hot air balloon.

"Judge Parker gave us a tour of the justice center, and we sat through a court hearing," Angie recalls. "Pedro plans to be a lawyer and had just passed the test to get into the university in Brazil for law."

Both the Avitt and Banks families agree there's much to learn from exchange students.

"We hope they learned a bit about life here in the Midwest," Laura says. "And while some things aren't the same here, the love of family is."

The Avitts applied to host again this summer. The Banks will be hosting a 16-year-old girl from France.

"We chose her because she is close to our daughter, Payton's, age, who is taking French and plans to go see the Eiffel Tower someday," Angie says.



Max Hertzberger's dad, Wouter, spoke fondly of his host families and the friendships he built while in Indianola and Max was happy to share that same experience.

## Like father, like son

In the 1980s, Wouter Hertzberger had an interest in the United States.

"It wasn't as easy to find out about other countries and cultures, but there were lots of American TV shows, movies and music," he says. "I was attracted to the 'American way of life' but had no idea how large and varied the United States was."

Wouter came to Indianola in the fall of 1989 as a Rotary Exchange Student. Little did



he know that year would change his life. He had wonderful host families who introduced him to all aspects of Indianola as well as the Midwest. He also won a state championship with his IHS track and field team. He even met his future wife.

"I planned to go back to the Netherlands and study business," he says. "But I loved the combination of academics and sports in the U.S. and looked at several different track programs. Meeting Jessica (then Halgren) ultimately kept me at Simpson."

Wouter and Jessica live in Amsterdam, but they have always considered Indianola their second home. As their children were growing up, Jessica would bring the kids for an extended stay. Their son and daughter both attended Irving year-round school in their elementary years. They currently have a home here and are renovating it with plans to retire in Indianola.

When their son, Max, finished high school in the Netherlands, he decided to take a gap year before University.

"I really wanted to gain some independence, and since both my mom and dad had a history in Indianola, it felt like a good place to get a taste of the American high school experience," he says. "We don't have school sports or show choir and band because everything is done through clubs. I was excited to go to games and get involved in activities."

Max had a great experience with both of his host families, staying with the Pipers first semester and the Barnes family the second half of the year. Max has been friends with the Pipers' son, Logan, as well as Dawn Barnes' daughter, Shae, from his time going to elementary school here, so it was an easy decision for both families to welcome Max into their homes.

"Max quickly became our fourth son and transitioned into our family seamlessly," Gina Piper says. "We tried to treat him as our own, respecting, of course, his parents. It was important to us to communicate weekly with his family back home, sending pictures, so they felt connected to his everyday life here."

Max made the most of his time attending football and volleyball games, homecoming, as well as joining DECA. He even got a job. People here were curious and wanted to learn more about where he came from, and he enjoyed hearing about their experiences growing up. It was also surreal to walk the same halls his parents once did — and see that his dad still holds some track records at IHS. He would often meet people in town who knew his



Two of Norah Leuwerke's host parents were Peggy and Julien.

parents, and hearing them share stories he had never heard before was fun and meaningful.

While he was homesick at times, Max says being a foreign exchange student is about immersing yourself in other families and culture — even if there are differences.

"Things like what time people go to bed, when they have dinner, or what kind of food is served were small but noticeable differences," he explains. "Also, I thought my English was very good, but when conversations moved quickly or people made jokes, I sometimes wished I understood more."

Dawn Barnes, who was his second host "mom" says she simply enjoyed talking with Max because he had such a different perspective growing up in Amsterdam and was curious about American culture.

"We learned so much from him... especially that we Americans tend to hurry through one

thing to get to the next," she says. "Max taught us to slow down and enjoy the simple moments. I hope he knows how much he was loved in our home and that he always has another family in this world that will welcome him with open arms."

## A year of self-discovery and growth

As Norah Leuwerke started her senior year at Indianola High School, she wasn't sure what her future would look like.

"I was a year younger than everyone in my class, and I didn't feel ready for college," she explains. "To be honest, college applications were stressing me out. All I wanted to do was go somewhere I could speak French all the time."

When she shared this with her family, her

parents supported the idea and wanted to help make it happen. They knew how much Norah's French teacher, Ronda Priebe, inspired her to continue learning the language. Plus, Norah had already traveled to France with her high school French class and felt at home there. She was also interested in "la gastronomie," which is the culture of food in France.

After researching several options, they found Rotary Youth Exchange. Because the program is 100% run by volunteers, the Leuwerkes felt like Norah would be safe and cared for. They also thought that a gap year dedicated to pursuing something she was passionate about was the opportunity of a lifetime.

The Indianola Rotary Club became the sponsor for Norah's exchange. She went through the application process — submitting health records, a letter of recommendation, and eventually being interviewed by District 6000 Rotarians in charge of the program. Once she was accepted, and her host country confirmed, there were several trainings to prepare her for things like public speaking and conflict management, plus she learned how to deal with culture shock and homesickness.

Norah tried to imagine life in France only using Google Maps.

"I knew it would be difficult to adjust to a new/different school and living with strangers, but I approached it with a kind of brash optimism and overconfidence," she says. "That turned out to be very helpful when solo traveling on multiple international flights."

Norah lived with three different families in a small town of 7,000 called Remiremont in a valley in the Vosges mountains of eastern France. There were some distinct differences she noticed — especially the culture of eating a family meal, which typically included salad, a main course, fresh baguette with an array of soft and hard cheeses, fruit, dessert and a shot of espresso (which she often substituted with a cup of green tea). She says it was impossible to leave the table not completely satisfied.

Working off all the calories wasn't difficult.

"Walking 20 minutes home from school up the side of a mountain every day warranted a 'steep' learning curve... no pun intended," she smiles.

The first friends she made were students who spoke English, and they introduced her to others. It took some time to become comfortable conversing in French, and it was also difficult to show people her personality. She joined a community choir, and it was a great way to express herself.

"Joining the community choir meant that I became friends with a lot of French retirees who were very excited that I could sing all of the highest and lowest notes," she laughs.

And while her time in France brought personal growth, it was an emotional experience. She missed home.

"My family was able to visit me in March of my exchange year, and that helped," she says. "Seeing all of the people that I considered my family enjoying a meal together was wonderful. I feel like the luckiest person in the world to have four families that care for me."

Norah's exchange year helped her overcome social anxiety and learn how to ask questions and advocate for herself even when she was thrown into unfamiliar environments. She also learned how to respect other people's time and their customs.

Norah is currently a freshman at Seton Hall University studying international relations and international economics. She says her experience helped mold her into the person she is becoming, and she hopes to study abroad in Morocco and Egypt as she learns the Arabic language at college. ■



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Source: American Academy of Pediatrics 3/25



# SECURE 2.0 aims to brighten the future for retirement

The \$1.7 trillion appropriations bill passed by Congress at the end of 2022 included some notable provisions affecting workplace retirement plans and IRAs. Dubbed the SECURE 2.0, the bill continues to change options for retirees in 2025.

**Looser RMD rules:** The 2019 SECURE Act raised the age at which retirement savers must begin taking taxable distributions from their traditional IRAs and most work-based retirement accounts to 72. SECURE 2.0 raised that age again to 73 beginning in 2023 (for those who reach age 72 after Dec. 31, 2022) and to 75 in 2033 (for those who reach age 73 after Dec. 31, 2032).

Prior to SECURE 2.0, those who failed to take their full RMD by the deadline were required to pay a tax of 50% of the amount not taken. The new law reduced that tax amount to 25%; the tax is further reduced to 10% if account holders take the full required amount and report the tax by the end of the second year after it was due and before the IRS demands payment.

Bringing Roth 401(k)s and similar employer plans in line with Roth IRAs, the legislation eliminated the requirement for savers to take minimum distributions from their workplace Roth accounts.

**Expanded QCDs:** The amount eligible for a qualified charitable distribution from an IRA is now indexed for inflation. In 2025, the limit is \$108,000. In addition, investors can make a one-time charitable distribution from an IRA to a charitable remainder annuity trust, charitable remainder



unitrust, or charitable gift annuity — the limit is \$54,000 in 2025.

**Rolling 529 plans to Roth IRAs:** When parents or grandparents contribute to a 529 college savings plan for a student, the investment earnings accumulate on a tax-deferred basis, and withdrawals are tax-free as long as they are used for qualified education expenses. But for withdrawals not used for qualified education expenses, earnings may be subject to taxation as ordinary income and possibly a 10% tax penalty. Thus, when there is money left over in a 529 account that won't be used for a family member's college expenses, the owner may dread the tax bill that would come from cashing out and repurposing the money.

Fortunately, account beneficiaries are now able to directly roll over up to \$35,000 from 529 plan accounts to their own Roth IRAs, provided the 529 accounts were open for at least 15 years. The rollover amounts would be subject to Roth IRA annual contribution limits (\$7,000 in 2025; \$8,000 for those age 50 and older). Distributions from the Roth IRA will be tax-free and penalty-free if the five-year holding requirement is met, and they are taken after age 59½ (or an exception applies). ■

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# WHEN DOGS go bad

Our canine companions can add a great deal of joy to our lives. Dogs have been with us from the beginning of civilization and are often considered “part of the family.” Unfortunately, sometimes they can get out of control and cause harm to others. Because of this, Iowa has long recognized liability on the part of the owner for damages. Iowa Code Chapter 351.28 provides in part: “The owner of a dog shall be liable to an injured party for all damages done by the dog when the dog is caught in the action of worrying, maiming, or killing a domestic animal, or the dog is attacking or attempting to bite a person, except when the party damaged is doing an unlawful act directly contributing to the injury.”

This law is a “strict liability” statute which attaches liability to the owner regardless of whether the owner is negligent or not. As indicated, the only exception is when the person injured is committing an unlawful act.

In a case involving a dog groomer who was bitten by a dog and sued for damages, the owners asserted that the dog groomer had assumed the care, custody and control of the dog, was negligent and assumed the risk of her injuries. The Iowa Supreme Court held that the dog bite statute only allows the owner a defense when the injured party is doing an unlawful act. Therefore, the dog groomer could proceed with her case, and the defenses raised by the owner were not available. See *Collins v. Kenealy*, 492 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa 1992).

The dog bite statute has existed since 1913 and is well settled law. In a favorite quote from a 1919 case, the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Moyer*, 186 Iowa 1322, 171 NW 297 (1919) observed: Thus the law says to the dog: “Don’t attack or attempt to bite a good man. If you do, the penalty is death, and your master must respond in damages for the consequences of your act. You may, however, attack and bite a bad man caught in the doing of an unlawful act, tear him to pieces, chew him up, and the law approves your act — at least, does not condemn it. It is up to you to make no mistake.”

This particular case held that the owner of a dog that had simply knocked the plaintiff down but was not attacking was not liable for damages.

**Conclusion:** Dog owners should realize that they can be liable for their dog’s behavior whether they were negligent or not. Most homeowner’s or renter’s insurance policies provide coverages for damages caused by dogs. However, in many cases, certain breeds may be excluded. ■



Information provided by Ken Winjum, The Winjum Law Firm, P.L.C., 1220 Sunset Drive., Suite 103, Norwalk, 515-981-5220, [www.winjumlaw.com](http://www.winjumlaw.com).

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# REMAINING independent at home as you age

## Know your options

Michael is 70 and plans to remain in his home forever. He works out, eats well, and is healthy, but his children are concerned; each of the three lives several states away, and they wonder what will happen if their father ends up needing health assistance.



Those concerns make sense. Continuing to live at home as we age is not always possible; chronic health challenges can make living independently ill-advised, and full-time care at home can be expensive.

So, you may wonder, either on your own behalf or on behalf of a family member: If moving into a community is not a desired option and there are concerns about potential health issues later on, what are my choices?

A Continuing Care at Home (CC@H) membership initiative, a program usually

administered by an organization that serves older adults, is one potential solution. CC@H programs are designed to help people proactively focus on their health at home while enabling them to plan financially for potential services and care down the road.

If you're interested in learning more about a CC@H program, make sure to ask specifically what the program includes. A reputable CC@H program not only will offer services to enhance your well-being so you can remain independent longer; it will also help fund future long-term care needs.

### Questions you'll want to ask about the program include:

**Does it feature personal support, such as wellness coaching?** According to a variety of studies, people who embark on a life-enriching program or activity are more likely to succeed with encouragement from a trusted adviser or advocate.

**Are care costs and options included?** A solid program will help fund your care, if it's needed, whether through home health care or services in a community for older adults later on.

**Regarding the organization that's backing the program:** What is its reputation in the aging services industry? Even if the program itself does offer all the services you're looking for, make sure you're comfortable with the organization itself. A reputable provider will have longevity and solid outcomes behind it.

Not all CC@H programs are created equal. If a program appeals to you, make sure it meets both your current and future needs and provides you with peace of mind. ■

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



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## 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.



## Start your morning off right with an update from thedailyumbrella

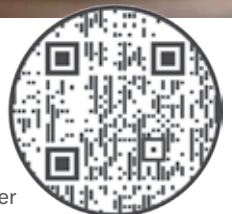
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# PRE-PURCHASE vehicle inspections

This month's topic is pre-purchase vehicle inspections. A pre-purchase inspection is a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a certified technician or auto specialist to assess a vehicle's mechanical, performance, cosmetic and safety condition. The technician will identify any existing issues, highlight potential future problems, and verify that any previous damage has been properly repaired. During a PPI, we also research the vehicle's maintenance history to understand how well it has been cared for. With this detailed report, you can make an informed decision about whether to proceed with the purchase or walk away.

Typically, if you're buying the vehicle from a dealer, they will have already performed an in-house inspection. It's important to communicate your desire for an independent technician to examine the car. As a consumer, you have the right to request a pre-purchase



inspection, and if the seller refuses to allow it, that should signal you to reconsider.

## Here are some options for pre-owned vehicle inspections:

- **Brand specialist:** Look for a technician who specializes in the brand of vehicle you are considering. A simple Google search can help you locate a specialized shop in your area.
- **Local service shop:** Your local service shop can also be a great option for inspections, as they may handle any necessary repairs.
- **AAA and Auto Club members:** Those with memberships can find inspection facilities on their websites and may even discover special deals.

During a PPI, the technician will perform a safety inspection to check various components. Inspections are mainly visual and should include an examination of the engine and mechanical systems, inspection on a lift, and checking for broken or rusted components, leaks and other issues. Additionally, the technician will use a diagnostic scanner to prepare a full diagnostic report, and they will take the car for a test drive to assess its steering,

brakes, performance and transmission shifting while listening for any unusual sounds.

A vehicle with a history of damage can still be a good deal, offering you the chance to purchase a more premium model than you might otherwise afford. Don't let a rebuilt title intimidate you. If the repairs have been verified as done correctly, you could secure a great bargain. The PPI can confirm that previous damage has been properly repaired and that the car is safe to drive. The extent of any past damage can also serve as a useful negotiation tool when discussing pricing with the seller.

The cost of a basic PPI typically ranges between \$100 and \$200. For that amount, you can expect a thorough mechanical and safety assessment, a diagnostic report and a test drive.

We recommend a PPI on every vehicle before you make a purchase. Understanding what you are buying is always better before finalizing the deal. ■

Information provided by Chris Werner, owner and lead technician, Werner's Elite Auto, 506 1/2 E. Euclid Ave., Indianola, 515-259-0122, [www.wernerseliteauto.com](http://www.wernerseliteauto.com).

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# PAYING for assisted living

Paying for assisted living can feel overwhelming, but with the right planning and resources, it becomes more manageable.

Understanding the costs and exploring a range of financial options can help families make informed decisions about senior care.



## Understanding assisted living costs:

Assisted living communities offer housing, meals, personal care and support with daily activities. Costs vary based on location, level of care needed, apartment size and amenities. On average, assisted living costs around \$5,350 per month in the U.S., though this figure may vary widely.

## Personal savings and retirement funds:

Many families use a combination of savings, 401(k)s, IRAs, and investment accounts to cover assisted living expenses. It is important to speak with a financial advisor to determine the most tax-efficient way to draw from these sources and ensure funds last over time.

## Long-term care insurance:

Long-term care insurance can help pay for assisted living if the policy includes this type of care. It's best to review the policy details thoroughly and speak with an insurance representative to understand the benefits, limitations and eligibility requirements.

**Veterans benefits:** Veterans and their spouses may qualify for financial support through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The Aid and Attendance benefit and Housebound allowance can help cover the costs of assisted living for those who meet the criteria.

**Life insurance:** Some life insurance policies offer options for accessing funds while the policyholder is still alive. These include: accelerated death benefits, life settlements and policy loans. Each option has implications, so consultation with a financial planner is recommended.

**Home equity:** Homeowners may consider using home equity to pay for care. Common options include home equity loans and reverse mortgages. These can provide substantial funding but come with risks, including interest rates and potential repayment challenges.

**State assistance programs:** Many states

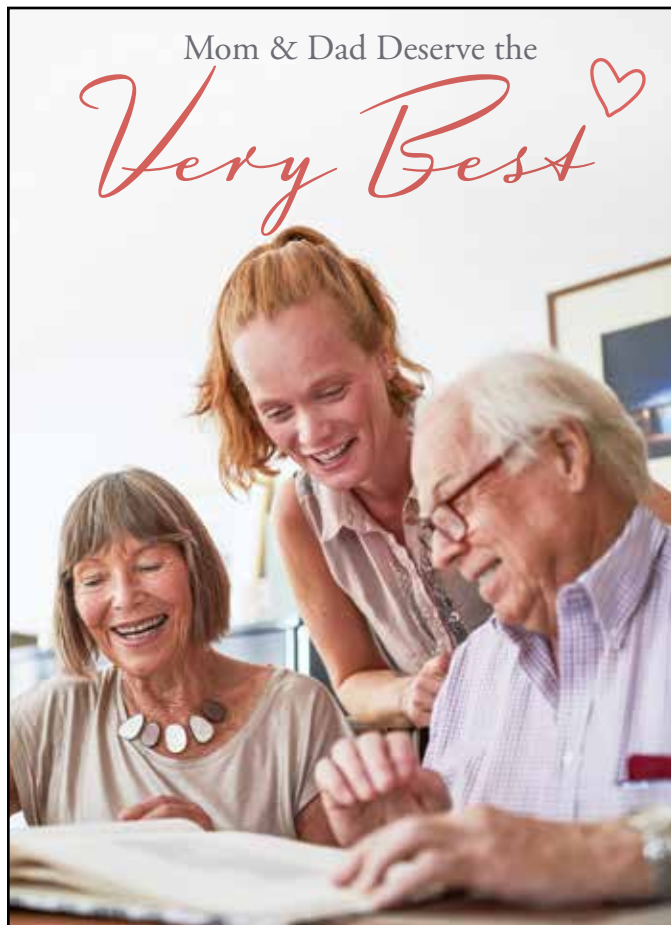
offer financial assistance for seniors through Medicaid waiver programs, sliding scale fees or nonprofit grants. Availability and eligibility vary, so it's important to contact local agencies on aging or senior resource centers.

**Tax considerations:** Some assisted living costs may qualify as deductible medical expenses. Additionally, individuals supporting a dependent in care might be eligible for tax credits. A tax professional can provide guidance based on individual circumstances.

**Bridge loans:** When waiting on longer-term funding like the sale of a home or benefit approvals, short-term bridge loans may offer temporary support. However, they should be used carefully due to interest rates and repayment obligations.

Paying for assisted living involves a range of strategies. Early planning and exploring available resources can help families find solutions that align with their needs and budgets. ■

Information provided by Ashley Bergman, Addington Place of Des Moines, [addingtonplaceofdesmoines.com](http://addingtonplaceofdesmoines.com). Written by Discovery Senior Living, 3461 Bonita Bay Blvd., Suite 100, Bonita Springs, FL 34134.



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# TIME to do some gardening

It seems like spring is finally starting, so don't be afraid to start getting some gardening done this month. Spring blooms are beginning to bloom; snowdrops, crocus, daffodils and tulips are emerging. Take a few moments to mark where this first color is with a garden map or flag them. This will help you plant your summer perennials and annuals without digging up these established bulbs. While doing this, think about adding some lily bulbs or peonies to sunny areas (they are available now). When they begin to grow, they will hide the leaves of the spring bulbs.



Indoors, your tomatoes and peppers are started, along with other veggies and flowers to plant out when the threat of frost is over. But, outside, you can start your cool season veggies: radish, leaf lettuce, spinach, onion sets and potatoes. Have your kids or grandkids help you, making and marking the rows, planting the seeds (even use seed tape if the seeds are small or you are working with younger kids) and then tending them through harvest. And, while you are considering that bountiful produce this summer, consider entering it in the Warren County and/or the Iowa State Fair; premium books are online.

We are eager to clean gardens off, pruning back perennials and annuals we missed last fall, but delay as long as possible. Until days are consistently above 50 degrees, bees and beneficial insects are using hollow stems and refuse to hide until warmer temps bring blooms and food sources. Once we can clean up, trim Annabelle hydrangeas and spirea close to the ground, cut grasses back before new growth emerges, and cut roses and paniculata hydrangeas back to the highest bud. Kids can help here as well, moving refuse to the compost bin and other tasks.

Now is the time to dig and split daylilies, hosta or monarda. Doing so now will allow them to fill out while coming out of dormancy, forming a symmetrical mound instead of looking chopped up. It is also a great time to thin out trumpet and oriental lilies. Remember to do this after the soil can be easily worked and not wet, otherwise you will have a clumpy mess all summer long.

Now is the time to design containers and determine what tropicals and annuals you will need. Even have your kids (or grandkids) design and care for one all summer (they can enter it in the Warren County or Iowa State Fair). If you are using elephant ears, cannas, caladiums or bananas (there is a hardy banana that can grow to 10 feet tall here), consider purchasing them now, potting up and putting them in a sunny window to get started, and you will have growing plants to put into gardens and containers.

Finally, keep feeding and watering your bird friends. Food and water will attract the migrating birds to your garden and help keep them there through the summer, as food sources become plentiful with nectar and seeds from the flower garden and trees.

Planting season is almost here. Finish your spring chores and get ready to plant for summer blooms. ■

Information provided by Barry Laws, co-owner, Quilted Gardens Nursery and Landscaping, 19635 130th Ave., Indianola, 515-720-3089, [www.quiltedgardens.com](http://www.quiltedgardens.com).



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## Upcoming in Indianola 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](mailto: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](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com).

## The Village's Third Annual Prom

Friday, April 25, 5-7 p.m.  
The Village, 1203 N. E St., Indianola

The public is invited to The Village's Third Annual Prom. Doors open at 4:45 p.m. Bring a friend or make one there while you dance the night away under twinkling lights. Enjoy complimentary hors d'oeuvres and a full-service bar with specialty cocktails available for purchase. Don't miss this enchanting evening of fun and community celebration! RSVP to Amber at 515-961-0878 or [amcdonald@wesleylife.org](mailto:amcdonald@wesleylife.org).



## Tuesday Tunes & Treats: Back to Vinyl

Tuesday, April 29, 1 p.m.  
Indianola Activity Center, 2204 W. Second Ave.

Back to Vinyl celebrates 1970s and 1980s rock with arena anthems, hard-hitting hits and southern rock classics. Based in Des Moines, they tailor each set with influences like Aerosmith, Rush and Led Zeppelin. The concert is free thanks to The Village, a WesleyLife Community, and Oak St. Health. Cookies provided by Indianola Hy-Vee.

## "A Night of Opera at The Village"

April 19, 5 p.m.

The Village, 1203 N. E St., Indianola

Immerse yourself in the world of opera at "A Night of Opera at The Village." The public is invited for an enchanting evening featuring a variety of opera music from the Des Moines Metro Opera. Enjoy complimentary heavy hors d'oeuvres before and after the performance, with wine and cocktails available for purchase. Guests are welcome to dress for an elegant evening at the opera, but it is not required. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. with the performance beginning at 5 p.m. Reservations are required. RSVP to Amber at 515-961-0878 or [amcdonald@wesleylife.org](mailto:amcdonald@wesleylife.org).

## Spring Madness! Community Day

Saturday, April 12, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Indianola Wellness Campus, 306 E. Scenic Valley Ave.

Discover all the Indianola Wellness Campus has to offer as you explore the facility, classes and programs during a free community open house. Play a game of racquetball, use weight machines, shoot hoops in the gym, swim in your choice of two pools or use the walking track. Enjoy free family activities like face painting, a scavenger hunt and coloring contest, plus special events throughout the day like a hula hoop contest and egg relays.



## Jam Making and Food Dehydrating Workshop

Saturday, April 26, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Warren County Historical Museum, 1300 W. Second Ave., Indianola

Learn all the basics of water bath canning, making jam and dehydrating food at a Food Preservation Workshop, part of the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Preserve the Taste of Summer program. Cathy Drost, a health and human sciences educator in food and health with ISU Extension and Outreach, will lead the workshop. The cost of this hands-on workshop is \$25. Participants can register for the workshop at: <https://go.iastate.edu/I9XX8A> until April 18 or until spaces are filled. To learn more or to ask questions, contact Bethany Cecot at 515-961-6237 or [bcecot@iastate.edu](mailto:bcecot@iastate.edu).

## Contra Dances and Storytelling

Saturdays, April 19 and May 17  
First United Methodist Church, 307 W. Ashland Ave., Indianola

Indianola Community Contra Dances are from 7-10 p.m. Storytelling will be held from 5:30-6:30 prior to the dances.

## VITA offers income tax help

Get your taxes done for free with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. Boost your family's income with the earned income tax credit or child tax credit if you qualify. Some guidelines apply. Learn more by visiting [www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/vita](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/vita).

## Afternoon Adventures: Reid Miller Storytelling

Tuesday, May 13, 1 p.m.  
Indianola Activity Center, 2204 W. Second Ave.

Join Reid Miller for an enchanting afternoon of exploring Then, Now and Tomorrow! Enjoy a rich blend of music and stories as he weaves songs and tales of love, life and laughter. This free speaker series is hosted by Indianola Parks and Recreation and sponsored by Community 1st Credit Union and Oak St. Health.

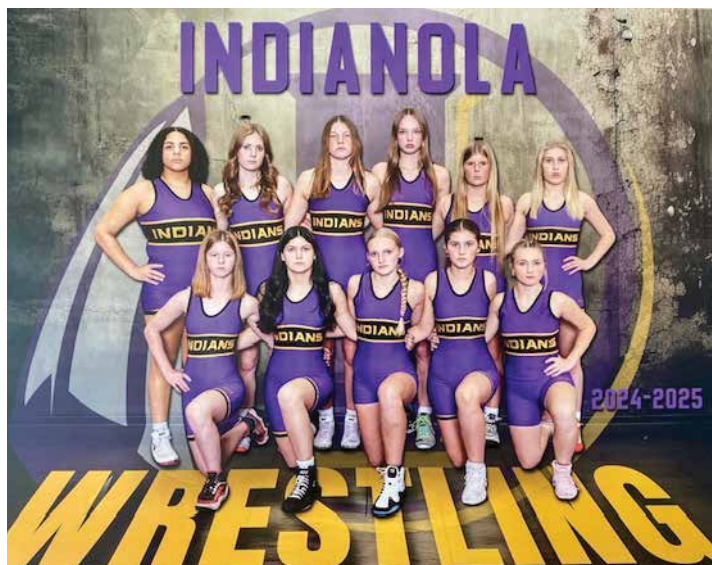
## Container Gardening Class for Grades K-12

Tuesday, May 20, 6-7:30 p.m.  
Warren County ISU Extension and Outreach, 200 W. Second Ave. (Highway 92)

The Ackworth Garden Club is offering a container gardening class for all Warren County youth in grades K-12. At this free class, participants will learn about selecting plants, pots, maintenance of plants, and grooming entries for the Warren County Fair. The class includes hands-on experience in preparing soil, selecting a plant and potting it to take home. Register no later than Friday, May 16, on the Ackworth Garden Club website, <https://ackworthgardenclub.blogspot.com>. ■

# FROM humble beginnings

Indianola girls wrestling program crowns first state champion.



The Indianola youth and high school wrestling programs have seen tremendous growth and success in recent years.

A few short years ago, the notion of high school girls being able to wrestle competitively was unheard of. There were exceptions dotting the landscape, but, overall, the participation level was small.

Fortunately, those are days gone by. Vinny Gomez, who just completed his third season as head coach for the Indianola girls wrestling program, looks back with amazement as to how far they've come.

The program recently celebrated its first state championship when sophomore Siera Becker took first place at the state tournament in Des Moines. Teammates Jazelle Smith and Nora Ohnemus were place-winners as well.

And the future looks bright. In the lower grades, the youth program has had five state champions in the past few years and several place-winners. This year's state champions included Everly Heitz, Markee Gomez and Kinsley Petek. Ava Schuler, Sophia Schuler, Letty Gomez, Everly Shehan, Faith Carlson, Aleah VanderLinden, Raegan Fridley and Arabelle Sharp also placed at the big tourney.

Girls wrestling has indeed come a long way from its humble starting place.

"Numbers were scarce," Gomez says of the school's initial foray into the sport.

But when the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union made girls wrestling a sanctioned sport in 2022, Indianola decided to jump in all the way and run a K-12 program.

In grades 7-12, the numbers were low initially. Understandably so; it was something new.

"Our first season we had around five girls in middle school and under 10 in high school," Gomez says.

But the growing pains are over. The school's middle school numbers have increased. This season, more than 20 girls went out.

Gomez says he didn't have many trepidations in having girls wrestle.



There were unknowns, he admits, first and foremost being getting girls to come out and stick with this new sport.

"(Wrestling) is a very tough sport," Gomez says. "We had to find the balance of how hard we could push them and (at the same time) help them stick with it and enjoy it."

And stick with it they have. It was simply a matter of giving the girls a chance.

"I think it's more they had the opportunity to do it," Gomez says of the program's growth. "A lot of our older girls always wanted to wrestle — just not against the boys."

Gomez has a simple piece of advice for girls who know nothing about the sport but may be interested in being a part of this phenomenal growth.

"Just come out and try it and just give it a shot," he says. "It's the most rewarding sport out there." ■

## Suggest a teacher

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# THE FUTURE of hearing devices

## Deep neural networks and artificial intelligence

Hearing technology has come a long way over the years; however, one aspect of hearing loss that many hearing aids have difficulty addressing is trouble understanding speech in noise. Fortunately, some of today's state-of-the-art devices can solve this problem by utilizing deep neural networks (DNNs) and artificial intelligence (AI).

Sensorineural hearing loss causes difficulty understanding speech in background noise. This type of hearing loss is caused by damage to the hair cells of the inner ear that convert sound waves into electrical energy, which is then interpreted by the brain. This causes the quality and quantity of the signal sent from the ears to the brain to diminish over time, resulting in the brain expending more energy and effort to make sense of it.

DNNs may help improve the transmission of the neural code, making hearing easier on the brain.<sup>1</sup>

It's important to know what DNNs are in order to understand how they can help. DNNs are a subset of AI. They rapidly analyze large data sets so they can teach hearing aids and other technological devices how



to respond to data like a human would, all while verifying accuracy and making corrections.

DNNs are beneficial in hearing technology because they can help with speech enhancement. DNNs can be applied as "time-frequency masks," meaning select sounds — like speech — are allowed while other sounds are suppressed. DNNs can also identify and separate multiple voices, selecting a primary voice to emphasize and one or more secondary voices to suppress.

This feature can help hearing device wearers in a variety of settings. For example, at a restaurant or party, the hearing device can emphasize a conversation partner, allow other nearby voices at a reduced volume and suppress background noises such as dishes clinking.

Schedule an appointment to talk to an audiologist about our vast state-of-the-art hearing solutions today. ■

Information provided by Dr. Kelly Cook, Audiologist, Iowa Hearing Center, 1228 Sunset Drive, Suite B, Norwalk, 515-416-5990, [www.IowaHearingCenter.com](http://www.IowaHearingCenter.com). 1 Beck, D. (2021). Deep neural networks in hearing devices. *The Hearing Review*. <https://www.hearingreview.com/hearing-products/hearing-aids/deep-neural-networks>



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# ACUPUNCTURE, chiropractic for the vagus nerve

Acupuncture and chiropractic care are two holistic approaches that can positively influence the vagus nerve, a critical component of the nervous system responsible for regulating functions like heart rate, digestion and stress response.

As part of the parasympathetic nervous system, the vagus nerve has these functions:

- **Regulates heart rate:** It helps slow the heart rate when needed.
- **Aids digestion:** It signals your stomach to produce digestive juices and helps move food through your intestines.
- **Controls reflex actions such as coughing, sneezing and swallowing.**
- **Connects to emotional health:** It plays a role in stress response and relaxation, influencing feelings of calm and well-being.
- **Supports vocal cords, which are essential for speech and swallowing functions.**

Essentially, the vagus nerve is a critical player in maintaining balance in your body's



automatic processes.

## Acupuncture and the vagus nerve:

Research suggests that acupuncture can activate the vagus nerve by choosing a treatment that will influence the pathways of the vagus nerve. For example, auricular (or ear acupuncture) can enhance vagal tone, which is the nerve's ability to regulate bodily functions effectively. Improved vagal tone has been linked to reduced inflammation, better digestion and a calmer stress response. Clinical trials have demonstrated improvements in heart rate variability and respiratory sinus arrhythmias, indicating increased vagal activity.

## Chiropractic care and the vagus nerve:

Chiropractic care focuses on spinal alignment and its impact on the nervous system. Misalignments, or subluxations, in the spine can interfere with the vagus nerve's communication between the brain and body. Chiropractors use manual adjustments to correct these misalignments, potentially restoring proper vagal function. For instance, adjustments in the cervical spine (neck region) can directly influence the vagus nerve, which passes through

this area. Improved vagal function can lead to better heart rate variability, enhanced digestion, and a stronger immune response. Chiropractic care may also help manage stress and improve overall well-being by optimizing nervous system health.

**Synergistic benefits:** Combining acupuncture and chiropractic care can offer synergistic benefits for vagus nerve health. While acupuncture focuses on stimulating specific points to enhance vagal activity, chiropractic care addresses structural issues that may impede nerve function. Together, these therapies can promote a balanced autonomic nervous system, reduce stress and improve overall health.

Both approaches are non-invasive and aim to support the body's natural healing processes. Research supports the effectiveness of both acupuncture and chiropractic care in influencing the vagus nerve. ■

Information provided by Dr. Renee Dalrymple, LAC, SEED Meditation Instructor, Soaring Crane Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, 14849 130th Ave., Indianola, 515-808-1548, call or text.

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## WELLNESS

By Jen Penisten

## THE IMPORTANCE of collagen

Collagen is a vital protein that helps maintain the skin's structure, elasticity and firmness. As we age, collagen production naturally decreases, leading to wrinkles, sagging skin and loss of volume. Several aesthetic procedures can help stimulate collagen production, improving skin texture and reducing signs of aging.



Aesthetic procedures can help boost collagen. Microneedling uses tiny needles to create controlled micro-injuries in the skin, stimulating the body's natural healing process and collagen production. Over time, microneedling can enhance overall skin appearance.


Radiofrequency, which uses heat energy to stimulate collagen production, can be done alone or in conjunction with microneedling. The skin will contract, giving it a firmer and smoother appearance. PRP can also be utilized alone as injections or with microneedling, which uses the client's own blood properties to rejuvenate the skin.

Laser resurfacing uses focused light to penetrate the skin and promote collagen remodeling. These treatments help tighten the skin, reduce wrinkles and improve skin tone.

Sculptra, a dissolvable injectable, uses PLLA to help the body generate its own type 1 collagen to build back structure to the face, reduce fine lines and wrinkles, volumize, and give a youthful appearance.

There are many great aesthetic options along with a collagen-rich diet to help you maintain a youthful appearance. ■

Information provided by Jen Penisten, MSN, RN, NP-C, CEO/owner, Vivid Life Spa, 1016 Main St., Norwalk, 515-850-7848, [www.vividlifespaspa.com](http://www.vividlifespaspa.com).



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*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. - Ephesians 2:10*

## FAITH

By Tom Vanderbilt

## THE EMPTY egg

Easter eggs are a spring tradition that anyone can enjoy. The tradition started with hard-boiled eggs dyed pastel colors, then they moved to egg-shaped chocolates. Now, Easter eggs are colorful plastic shells that hold small pieces of candy or toys. These new eggs allow us to teach the meaning of Easter.



If you're preparing the plastic eggs this year, leave at least one of them empty. As the children are finding eggs on a hunt or just opening eggs on Easter day, keep an ear open for someone being disappointed at finding an empty egg. They'll probably be disappointed, but it's a chance to teach about the importance of emptiness on Easter.

In Luke 24, we read this: "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, [the women] went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24:1-3). When Jesus' friends reached the tomb, they found it empty because Jesus wasn't there. He had risen, just as He promised He would. The empty tomb is the sign of a promise fulfilled. An empty egg can remind us of that fulfilled promise again this year. ■

Article provided by Pastor Tom Vanderbilt, Mount Calvary Church, Indianola.

# A NEPHEW'S tribute

Hutchcroft restores uncle's 1950 GMC pickup.

For John and Michelle Hutchcroft, there's nothing like driving the backroads of West Lincoln Township in their 1950 GMC 3/4-ton pickup. There's lots of memories in those miles as the Hutchcroft family has lived and farmed in this area of Warren County since 1873.

"It's also fun to jump on the interstate," says Michelle. "I love the look on drivers' faces when we pass them."

The bright red truck is named after its previous owner, John's Uncle, Howard Tipton. It wasn't always the beauty it is today.

"Much like Uncle Howard, the truck had a hard life," John says. "It wasn't always easy, but Howard never complained. He had a tough exterior, but a gentle soul."

For Howard, the old GMC was a good truck for the farm. It had a bumper with two hitches, and he would often use it to transport cattle feed or rake hay. John remembers seeing the truck on his uncle's farm when he was about 16. It was up on blocks and sitting outside exposed to the elements.

When he was 23, John inquired about the dilapidated pickup.

"Uncle Howard said he didn't need it anymore, so I bought it for \$200, and my dad and I got it running pretty quickly," he recalls. "I didn't have much time or money to invest in it back then, so I used it on our farm and eventually put it in storage."

For his entire adult life, John has held on to this treasured vehicle. Five years ago, he and Michelle decided it was time for some TLC. John is passionate about antiques and believes anything old can look new again. As a Realtor and home remodeler, he sees the potential in almost anything, and, after overseeing every detail of the rebuild, the result is nothing short of amazing.

With the help of the guys at Details Plus, John completely modernized the pickup, including setting it on an S10 extended cab frame, installing disc brakes and dropping in a new V-8 engine. Premier Street Rods built the cab, so everything fits and makes the truck solid.



John Hutchcroft restored his uncle Howard's old truck, and, to keep his memory alive, he keeps Howard's laminated photo in the glovebox.

He also had to replace three of the four fenders. The red paint brings it to life.

It still has the original hood, as well as most of the original chrome inside the cab. The GMC emblem was taken from the old grill and given a new shine.

The truck made an appearance in last year's Milo Fourth of July parade, and they hope to get it out for more fun community events. John hoped the transformation would be complete so this uncle could see it, but, unfortunately, Howard passed away before it was finished.

"It's not Howard's old pickup anymore, but his spirit is still there," says John. "I think he would be thrilled with the end result." ■



# A MAGIC summer

Camp Jubilee empowers campers to embrace their unique abilities.



The 2024 Camp Jubilee campers and volunteer counselors were all smiles as they took a break from the activities for a group photo.

Amara (Bryan) Hansen has been volunteering with Camp Jubilee since she was 10.

"My mom was asked to serve as camp nurse, so our entire family headed to Camp Quaker Heights in Eldora," she explains. "We had no idea how much of an impact Camp Jubilee would have on all of us."

Camp Jubilee started in the 1990s at Iowa State University to provide an inclusive summer camp experience for those "differently-abled." When the camp moved to Eldora, the Bryan family not only began volunteering every year, but they also recruited people from Indianola to join them.

Because the camp lacked community support in Eldora... and because more volunteers were from Indianola, it was moved to Camp Wesley Woods.

Today, Camp Jubilee is a dedicated nonprofit organization with the mission to create a safe and welcoming environment where individuals of all abilities can explore the outdoors, build lasting friendships and foster personal growth.

"We believe that every individual, regardless of their abilities, deserves the opportunity to connect with nature, engage in enriching activities, and experience the joy of a traditional summer camp," says Hansen, who now serves as

director.

During COVID, they took a couple of years off to keep campers safe but also used that time to re-group. Kim Ferguson stepped up to work alongside Hansen, and they established a board and by-laws, and bolstered their fundraising.

Camp Jubilee returned in 2024 at a new location — Wildwood Hills Ranch in St. Charles. The cost is \$325; however, organizers try to find sponsors for campers when needed. Anyone — young or old — who has Down syndrome, autism, ADHD, cerebral palsy or other disabilities is generally accepted to camp. There are campers that Amara has known since she started volunteering.

Camp is filled with fun activities like bingo, scavenger hunts, music mania, dancing, fishing, horses and singing around the campfire. There's time for rest and relaxation, too.

The Baldus family appreciates knowing their son, Isaac, is having fun and being cared for while at camp.

"It's the highlight of Isaac's summer," his dad, Rob, says. "He looks forward to seeing his friends (both campers and staff) as well as making new friends."

Camp Jubilee is funded solely through fundraising and community and business donations. Their yearly Turkey Trot 5K is their



biggest fundraiser. Organizers say they hope the camp will grow to 40-60 campers in the future, and that means more volunteers are needed.

Savannah Bryan says that Camp Jubilee is one of the best experiences she's been a part of.

"It allows me to break from my daily life and give back to individuals who look forward to camp every year," she says. "It's a magical and life-changing place where people of all ages come together to have fun and spend time together."

For more information about this year's camp (Aug. 4-8) or how to get involved, email [indianolacampjubilee@gmail.com](mailto:indianolacampjubilee@gmail.com) or find Camp Jubilee on Facebook. ■

## 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/Guardians - Eric Peterson, Indianola.

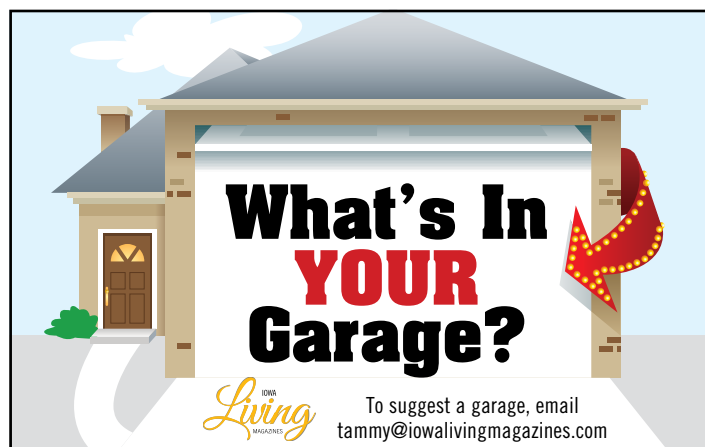
In its second year, the program has now awarded \$123,000 as college savings deposits for Iowa students.

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](http://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](http://www.IowaStudentLoan.org/Savings). ■



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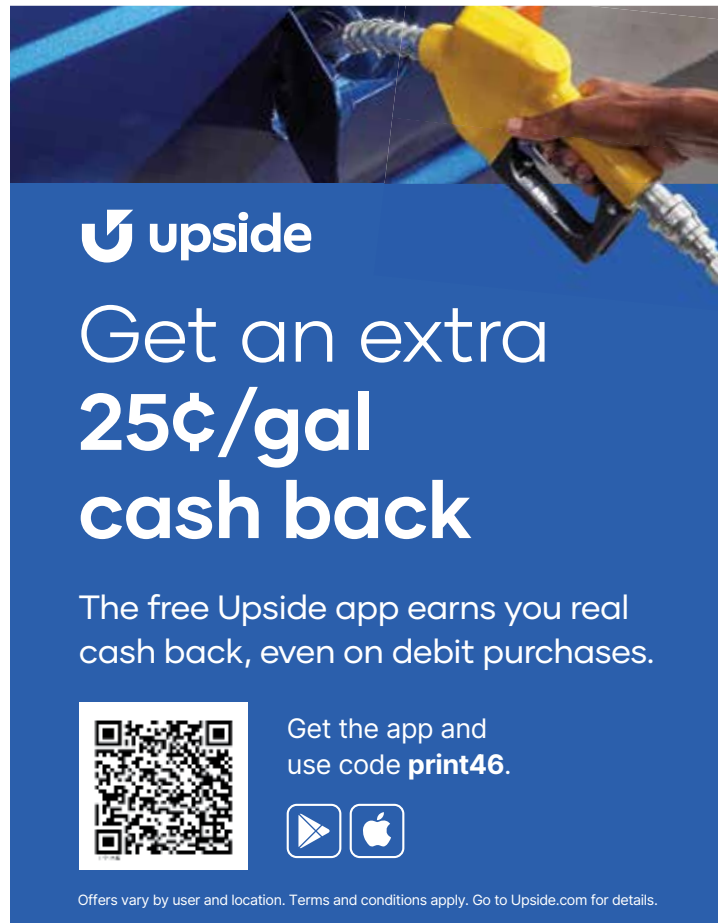
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# HAPPY St. Patrick's

Seen in Indianola on  
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Justin Helgens and Mark Butcher



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Rebekah Ward and Susie Shupe



Rose Ligas



Kathy Putney and Blair Lawson



Joy Amos, Joni Farrell and Gretchen Miller



Chris Schupp, Dave Isgrig and Deb Richardson



Blair and Marylin Lawson



Joni and Mike Farwell and Brenda Conklin



Ron Inman and Lucas Graham



Lillie Gideon and Averie Rogers





Indianola Pickle Ball Team



Isaac Schultz, C.J Hangartner, Kim Kennedy, Erin Karas, Corey Oakes and Keagen Reeves



Ramsey King and Sophia and Patrick Reeves



Scott and Jen Gach and Jacob Ransom



Lisa Hunter, Tangie Litchkey and Ella Geurts



Rick Pope and Ron Dillion



Jean Schroeder and Diane Ogle



Marjorie Leeper and Kris Lange



Amy and Josh Hale



Angel Wallukait and Carie Johnson



Emerie and Kari Hudnutt



# MEET Emily Schwery

Helping students build strengths and achieve goals.

Emily Schwery came to Indianola in the fall of 1994 to attend Simpson College — and never left. As she marks 18 years as a high school counselor, she can't imagine doing anything else.

Her career started as a juvenile court school liaison where she collaborated with schools and school counselors.

"I liked how school counselors wore so many hats, including helping students through a tough time, assisting with college applications or having input into system-wide procedures in the building," she explains. "The idea of having a career that would measure how I make people feel rather than how much I was going to make was more important to me."

While she was the court liaison officer at Indianola's middle school and high school, she decided to pursue her master's degree in school counseling. After graduating from Drake, a position opened up at the high school, and she's never looked back.

Schwery enjoys the variety in her job. Her daily tasks often include adjusting student schedules, writing recommendation letters, answering emails, reviewing grades and working on interventions for struggling students.

"If there's a knock on my door, and a student just needs to talk, I stop everything I'm doing because they are my priority," she says.

Schwery says the key to building relationships with students is being approachable. She and the other counselors strive to make the office feel welcoming and inclusive — but also fun. The students especially like to hang out with Morgan, the therapy dog.

School can be challenging for many students, especially when they juggle homework, part-time jobs, family conflict and the influences of social media. Schwery says that the lack of interpersonal skills such as problem solving, resilience, tolerance and grit often make tackling those things even harder.

"It's hard to see students with so much potential either give up, not give much effort or sometimes drop out," she explains. "Most students just want to be heard, validated and reassured. I may not have a magic wand, but I will always listen, give them genuine feedback and encourage them to persevere."

Schwery herself knows personally about persevering through challenges. She's lived with multiple sclerosis for more than 25 years and is a recent breast cancer survivor. But her family, friends and school community have been there to support her.

When she's not in school, she makes the most of living in this great community and appreciates all that downtown Main Street Indianola has to offer, including restaurants, coffee shops, small businesses and community events. And it's her dog, Hazel's, favorite place to walk.

She volunteers at the Indianola Public Library and the Des Moines Metro Opera and is an avid reader. She also enjoys traveling and attending music concerts, especially Chris Stapleton. ■



Emily Schwery, along with the other school counselors at the high school, are truly "jacks of all trades," wearing many hats as they work to enhance students' overall well-being and academic success.

# THE CROSS was full, the tomb was empty

If you want to truly understand the significance of Good Friday and Easter (April 18 and 20 this year), think of them in terms of physical space — space as in "room," not the planets in the heavens.



## Space fact No. 1 — The cross was full.

No, I'm not trying to be flippant or trite when I say that. Of course, the cross of Christ was "full" in the sense that only one person would fit there. But that's sort of the point. Christ was on the cross along with all of the sin of everyone who would ever trust in Him. Let those words sink in — all sin from all those people from all time. The cross was full indeed.

Truth be told, all that sin wasn't just up there "with" Christ, but it was credited to Him as if He had Himself committed all of it. Christ, on the other hand, being the perfect Son of God, carried no sin of His own onto the cross because He had none. Instead, He willingly took the punishment due others. Even one of His executioners could see this was true because, after witnessing Christ's death, he proclaimed, "This man really was righteous!" (Luke 23:47).

## Space fact No. 2 — The tomb was empty.

I state that as a fact of what was physically inside the tomb on that resurrection morning, the first Easter, the first Lord's Day. Nothing was inside. Yes, some leftover burial wrappings, but you get my point. There was no body because Christ literally, physically breathed again and lived. And lives. The text of Scripture is really quite clear on this point in a large variety of ways, just so we don't wonder. Luke, the same doctor who interviewed eyewitnesses and recorded for us the executioner's statement above also tells us:

"On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. They went in but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men stood by them in dazzling clothes. So, the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground.

" 'Why are you looking for the living among the dead?' asked the men. 'He is not here, but He has been resurrected!' " (Luke 24:1-6).

This coming Good Friday and Easter attend a local church service (in-person or online) to wholeheartedly celebrate the full cross and the empty tomb. ■

Information provided by Kevin Mayer, New Heights Church, 200 E. First Ave., Indianola, 515-442-5111.


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