

# Living

MAGAZINE

## RESIDENTS' CHOICE AWARDS

Ankeny/Northern Polk County residents share their favorites.



**Pan fried catfish**  
RECIPE

**Courtroom history comes alive**  
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WELCOME

## A COMMERCE-CREATING machine

Residents' Choice. Those two simple words have a lot of meaning to those who are recognized and those who seek out the people, businesses, places and events that are honored.

Yes, we have once again compiled the results of our local Residents' Choice poll, the only one of its kind. It is truly unique in two significant ways.

First, our poll is mailed to all residential households with a link to an open website. That makes the poll available to every single resident. No exclusions.

Second, our poll has open-ended questions, which means we don't load the ballots with pre-determined answers to try to sway it in a certain way. The results are what they are. You will likely agree with some of them, and you will disagree with others — kind of like political elections. But, in this poll, all who are recognized are winners, and the end result is a great positive for all involved.

Readers of this publication have proven to seek out the winners and spend their time, energy and money with them. The poll results have become a customized search engine of sorts, providing valuable information on the choices of local residents in a variety of categories that are important to them.

Those who have been chosen tell me how much of an impact this directly has on them, their businesses and their organizations. Being recognized for positive contributions is seemingly always great, but when it helps create commerce, it is even better — and this Residents' Choice poll is a commerce-creating machine.

I explain this next point each year, but it is worth noting again. Those recognized in this poll are the choices of our readers — local residents. Although we agree with many of you on your choices, we do not pick them, and we have no impact on the results. I wouldn't have it any other way.

Other organizations are continuing to try to implement polls like ours, but none have the reach and credibility that ours has. You can't blame others for trying to imitate what we do, but you can question how they implement their polls and how many people actually vote in them.

Meanwhile, I thank all of you who took the time to vote in this year's Residents' Choice poll. Your votes do make an incredible difference. And, if you didn't vote, well, there is always next year.

Thanks for reading. ■

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Owner Sean Munro of District 36 Wine Bar & Grille, which was voted Residents' Choice for favorite restaurant for dinner.

# RESIDENTS' CHOICE AWARDS

**Ankeny/Northern Polk County residents share their favorites.**

**By Tammy Pearson**

Residents of Ankeny/Northern Polk County have again weighed in on their favorite businesses, people, events and places in the latest Residents' Choice poll. The poll results share residents' top three choices in dozens of categories, many of which are extremely competitive with a handful of votes separating the winner from the runners up. Consequently, we view them all as winners. They have captured the favor of people who live in the area and who know the businesses, people, events and places of the area best.

Some winners are now going on three

or more years at the top of their categories. Their supporters have proven to be a loyal bunch. Others are new to the awards list, showing they have made a good impression over the last year and are building up a strong following as well.

Ankeny residents won't have far to go to enjoy many of the winners and runners up. Stop in at Main Street Café & Bakery for lunch or dessert, District 36 Wine Bar & Grille for dinner and Porch Light Coffeehouse for a coffee break. Car trouble along the way? Head over to Aim High Automotive. And

don't miss out on SummerFest and Ankeny Farmer's Market. Shopping? Real Deals, Stuff Etc. and Carmen's Flowers are a hop and skip away. These are only a few of the Ankeny top three. Read on for the others.

If you aren't familiar with any of the winners, give those businesses, events and places a visit and find out why they are residents' favorites. And if you didn't vote this year, be sure to next time. It may be your vote that makes a difference and lifts one of your favorites into the top tier of the Residents' Choice poll.





## Ankeny/Northern Polk County Residents' Choice for favorite...

(Runners-up in alphabetical order.)

### Restaurant

#### Rising Sun Café

**Runners up:** Main Street Café & Bakery;  
Papa's Pizzeria

### Restaurant for breakfast

#### Rising Sun Café

**Runners up:** Early Bird; The Breakfast Club

### Restaurant for lunch

#### Main Street Café & Bakery

**Runners up:** Rising Sun Café; Sports Page Grill

### Restaurant for dinner

#### District 36 Wine Bar & Grille

**Runners up:** Arcadia; Papa's Pizzeria

### Restaurant for dessert

#### Main Street Café & Bakery

**Runners up:** The Creamery; The Outside Scoop

### Place for ice cream

#### The Creamery

**Runners up:** The Outside Scoop; Uptown Dairy

### Pizza establishment

#### Papa's Pizzeria

**Runners up:** Leaning Tower of Pizza; Wig and Pen Pizza Pub

### Bar

#### Polk City Pub

**Runners up:** Fender's Brewing; Yankee Clipper

### Coffee shop

#### Porch Light Coffeehouse

**Runners up:** Café Diem; Rising Sun Café

### Server/bartender

#### Erika Sedgwick - Cabaret

**Runners up:** Alex Fahey - Rising Sun Café;  
Cortney Burchett - Yankee Clipper



### Auto service

#### Aim High Automotive

**Runners up:** Christian Brothers Automotive;  
Heartland Tire & Auto

### Auto Body Shop

#### Karl Chevrolet, Inc.

**Runners up:** Caliber Collision; Dewey Collision Center

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# FEATURE

## Car dealership

**Karl Chevrolet, Inc.**

**Runners up:** Bob Brown Buick GMC; Dewey Ford

## Preschool/Daycare

**Our Lady's Little Learners**

**Runners up:** Lakes Early Learning Center; Yellow Brick Road Early Childhood Development Center

## Nonprofit

**The Ankeny Klothng Exchange (TAKE)**

**Runners up:** Big Creek Historical Society; On With Life

## School

**Southeast Elementary**

**Runners up:** North Polk High School; Northeast Elementary

## Park

**Big Creek State Park**

**Runners up:** Ankeny Miracle Park; Hawkeye Park

## Community festival or event

**Ankeny SummerFest**

**Runners up:** Ankeny Farmer's Market; Polk City Four Seasons Festival

## Church

**Lutheran Church of Hope Ankeny**

**Runners up:** Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Catholic Church; Polk City United Methodist Church

## Pastor

**Scott Rains**

**Runners up:** Dave Heisterkamp; Wendy Musgrave

## Chamber of commerce

**Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce**

**Runners up:** Go Polk City Chamber & Economic Development; Uptown Ankeny

## Library

**Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library**

**Runner up:** Polk City Community Library

## Camping spot

**Jester Park**

**Runners up:** Cherry Glen Campground; Prairie Flower Campground

## Coach

**Tim TeBrink, North Polk Football**

**Runners up:** Ryan Halterman, North Polk Boys Basketball; Wyatt Zoske, North Polk Baseball

## Teacher

**Katie Jones, North Polk West Elementary**

**Runners up:** Ryan Halterman, North Polk High School; Payton Enga, Ankeny Southeast Elementary

## Grocery store

**Fareway Meat & Grocery**

**Runners up:** Aldi; Hy-Vee

## Boutique

**Real Deals**

**Runners up:** The Funky Zebras Boutique; Oak & Berk

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## FEATURE

### Retail Store

#### Real Deals

**Runners up:** Hawgeyes BBQ; Polk City Ace Hardware

### Thrift store

#### Stuff Etc.

**Runners up:** Goodwill; The Salvation Army Family Store & Donation Center

### Home improvement retail store

#### Menards

**Runners up:** Polk City Ace Hardware; The Home Depot

### Nursery or garden center

#### Earl May Garden Center

**Runners up:** Canoyer Garden Center; TNT Landscaping & Nursery

### Place to purchase a gift for a man

#### Kohl's

**Runners up:** Fleet Farm; Hawgeyes BBQ



The staff at Our Lady's Little Learners, which was voted Residents' Choice for favorite preschool/daycare.

### Place to purchase a gift for a woman

#### Real Deals

**Runners up:** Oak & Berk, XoXo Gift & Home

### Florist

#### Carmen's Flowers

**Runners up:** Grace Fiore Co.; Hy-Vee Floral

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# FEATURE

## Dad/child date spot

### Rising Sun Café

**Runners up:** B&B Theatres Ankeny; The Playground for Kids

## Mom/child date spot

### Rising Sun Café

**Runners up:** B&B Theatres Ankeny; The Playground for Kids

## Place to take your mom and dad

### Rising Sun Café

**Runners up:** Main Street Café & Bakery; Perkins Restaurant & Bakery

## Place to take your kids or grandkids

### The Playground for Kids

**Runners up:** Jester Park; Rising Sun Café

## Children's birthday party spot

### The Playground for Kids

**Runners up:** AR Workshop; Urban Air Adventure Park

## Golf course

### Otter Creek Golf Course

**Runners up:** Jester Park Golf Course; Tournament Club of Iowa

## Hair salon

### Salon PC

**Runners up:** PURE Salon Aveda; Shear Style Hair Salon

## Physicians clinic

### The Iowa Clinic

**Runners up:** North Polk Family Medicine; UnityPoint

## Dental office

### Ankeny Family Dental Center

**Runners up:** Advanced Family Dentistry; Cornerstone Dental

## Orthodontist office

### Ankeny Orthodontics

**Runner up:** Central Iowa Orthodontics

## Chiropractic office

### Polk City Chiropractic

**Runners up:** Renze Chiropractic Clinic; Sands Clinic of Chiropractic

## Vision care

### Ankeny Family Vision Center

**Runners up:** 20|Twenty EyeCare; Polk City EyeCare

## Health club or gym

### Legacy Fitness

**Runners up:** Fitness Ankeny 24-7; Trail Point Aquatics & Wellness

## Pharmacy

### Hy-Vee Pharmacy

**Runners up:** Medicap Pharmacy; Walgreens

## Cosmetic services

### RenuYou Aesthetics & MedSpa

**Runners up:** Salon PC; Sephora at Kohl's

## Physical therapy

### Rock Valley Physical Therapy

**Runners up:** Athletico; The Iowa Clinic



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## FEATURE

### Alternative health care

#### RenuYou Aesthetics & MedSpa

**Runners up:** Ankeny Acupuncture | Total Family Wellness; Deeply Rooted Healing

### Weight loss clinic

#### RenuYou Aesthetics & MedSpa

**Runners up:** Farrell's eXtreme Bodyshaping; Legacy Fitness

### Medical spa

#### RenuYou Aesthetics & MedSpa

**Runners up:** Nova MedSpa; Spavia Ankeny

### Dance studio

#### Michelle's School of Dance

**Runners up:** Ashlee's Creative Arts Academy; Encore Dance Academy

### Gymnastics and/or tumbling studio

#### Triad Gymnastics

**Runners up:** Grace Ballet & Acrobatics Studio; Michelle's School of Dance

### CBD Store

#### Sunmed Your CBD Store



Heidi VanCleave, Rebecca Conable and Garry VanCleave are team leads at The Playground For Kids, which was Residents' Choice for favorite place to take kids and grandkids and favorite place for a children's birthday party.

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## Financial planner

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**Runners up:** Brandt R. Hockman, Edward Jones; Justin M. Bjerke, Edward Jones

## Law firm

**Lamberti, Murphy & Strong**

**Runners up:** Mark Gray Law, PLC; Nading Law Firm

## Veterinarian

**Ankeny Animal & Avian Clinic**

**Runners up:** Creature Comforts Veterinary Hospital; Ankeny Veterinary Clinic

## Lawn care business

**Sutter Lawns**

**Runners up:** Rasmussen Lawn Care; Total Quality Inc.

## Landscaping company

**TNT Landscaping & Nursery**

**Runners up:** Rasmussen Lawn Care; Sutter Lawns

## Heating and cooling business

**Polk County Heating and Cooling**

**Runners up:** 72 Degrees Comfort Company; Obsidian Heating and Cooling

## Plumbing company

**Premier Plumbing**

**Runners up:** Polk County Heating and Cooling; Todd's Plumbing, Heating & Cooling

## Senior living establishment

**Mill Pond**

**Runners up:** The Bridges at Ankeny; Rock Creek Senior Living

## Insurance Agency

**Cupp Insurance**

**Runners up:** Adamson Insurance & Associates; Cullen & Associates

## Realtor

**Susie Sheldahl**

**Runners up:** Sarah Carlson; Jacquelyn Duke

## Bank/credit union

**Veridian Credit Union**

**Runners up:** Grinnell State Bank; Luana Savings Bank

## Place for guests to stay

**Holiday Inn Express**

**Runners up:** Courtyard by Marriott; Residence Inn

## Contractor/construction services/remodeling

**A & Co. Design**

**Runners up:** Des Moines Deck LLC; Reese Builders

## Cleaning company

**Tracy Lund Care**

**Runners up:** Molly Maid; phClean

## Painting company

**Nick's Painting Plus LLC**

**Runners up:** Five Star Painting; Painting By Jen

## Home builder

**Redwood Builders**

**Runners up:** Greenland Homes; Sage Homes ■

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## RUNNER UP:

### FAVORITE CHURCH

*Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Catholic Church*



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# COURTROOM history comes alive

Ankeny-based lawyer showcases collection in Law Museum of Iowa.

From the outside, the office building at 7900 Hickman Road, Des Moines, looks like any other. But walk inside, and you'll find a 2,000-square-foot courtroom packed full of history.



The Law Museum of Iowa was created by Chris Johnston, founding partner of Law Group of Iowa. Each artifact is cataloged and organized into different displays, each with its own exhibition text. Many items can be viewed online at [lawgroupofiowa.com/museum](http://lawgroupofiowa.com/museum).

"It was a tremendous amount of work, just unbelievable," Johnston said. "I knew we were going to put in a courtroom — I'm a trial lawyer, and it's what I do and believe in. I also knew that was going to result in a whole bunch of wall space."

The courtroom displays artifacts like a jury wheel used to select jurors at random, a stenograph machine from 1978 and even leather jury chairs from the old Warren County Courthouse, built in 1938.

One of his more recent additions is the Iowa's Amazing Courthouse mural, a painting done by West Des Moines Valley High School students Ava Goering and Ash Scarbrough. Each county in the state is featured along with a piece of memorabilia from or about that county's courthouse.

The 8-foot by 9-foot piece of art was completed in about two months' time, says Johnston, who had been acquiring Iowa legal memorabilia for the last five or six years to eventually display.

"I looked for only courthouse-specific pieces, regardless of what it was specifically," he says. "Thus, my collection is fairly diverse, ranging from original tin ceiling tiles to paperweights to spoons to thimbles to belt buckles."

Aside from courtroom equipment, other exhibits include an assortment of antique political campaign pieces, Iowa-specific items, law in advertising, and international pieces in a display titled "Justice Around the World." Here, Johnston pointed out an unassuming piece of paper: a diploma from Scotland, showing that law school lasted all of five months in the 1800s.

The courtroom also doubled as a movie set for "When Jack Came Back," a 2022 drama by local director Thor Moreno, in which Johnston played a judge. Not only was it Johnston's big-screen debut, it was also a trip down memory lane of sorts. One of the actresses in the film was none other than Lyndsey Wagner, star of the 1970s television series, "The Bionic Woman."

"The film is about an Iowan who goes to Hollywood seeking fame and fortune," Johnston says. He has to return to Iowa as his ailing mother



An 8-foot by 9-foot mural honoring each county's courthouse graces the interior of The Law Museum of Iowa. The display is one of many in the Law Group of Iowa office, of which Ankeny resident Chris Johnston is a founding partner.

(Lyndsey Wagner) developed dementia."

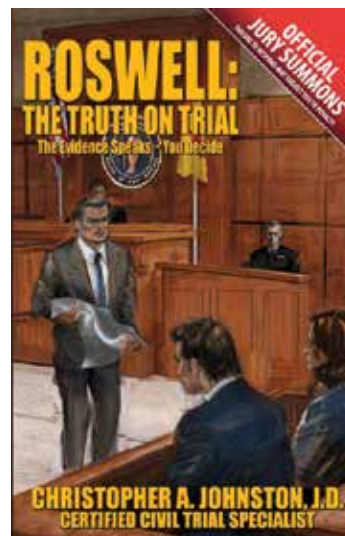
The court scene deals with the son trying to have his mom removed from her guardianship so he could take care of her, Johnston says. The scene was done in one afternoon.

As if he weren't busy enough, Johnston recently completed his book, "Roswell: The Truth on Trial," which will soon be available on Amazon.

His focus, however, remains squarely with his passions in life — lawyering and trial work.

The courtroom continues to be open to both museum visitors and community groups looking for a place to meet. Since it is a working law office, Johnston recommends calling first, but, rest assured, he says it's never an inconvenience.

"I will put down what I'm doing," he says. "If you go, 'Hey, Chris, I heard you've got this collection; I want to come see it,' I would easily stop working on a case and say, 'Come on!' This is more fun." ■





## EVENTS IN THE AREA

To submit calendar items for consideration, send to [tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com).

Check for cancellations

### Upcoming in Ankeny 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).

### Writers Workshop

April 17, May 1 and May 15,  
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Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library,  
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Do you like to write and tell stories? Ankeny area writers gather the first and third Thursdays of each month to support, encourage and offer one another suggestions. They listen, laugh and write together. All abilities and passions are welcome to join.

### Neighbor to Neighbor Free Meal

April 27, doors open at 4 p.m.,  
serving at 5 p.m.

St. Anne's Episcopal Church,  
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This month, the meal will feature Westside Maidrites. No one is required or expected to be a member of St. Anne's. The meals are free and are followed by seven hands of free bingo. There are small prizes for six hands and a \$15 gift card for the last hand. Freewill donations are accepted but not required or expected.

### Broasted Chicken Dinner fundraiser

Sunday, April 27, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Ankeny Legion Post 42, 521 S.W.  
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The public is invited to join the Ankeny Albaugh-McGovern Legion Post 42 for a delicious broasted chicken dinner. The Ankeny Legion Auxiliary will also be having a bake sale. The fundraiser supports the youth and veteran programs sponsored by the Legion Post. Dine in and carry out available. The meal is catered by Staley's Food Service. Cost is \$15 for adults, \$7 for children 4-12, free for children 3 and younger. Cash or checks only; no credit cards.



### Ankeny Art Center Garage Sale

Thursday, May 1, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Friday, May 2,  
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Saturday, May 3, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
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## EVENTS IN THE AREA

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Check for cancellations

### The Sparkle Run

Sunday, May 4, 2 p.m.  
DMACC Campus, 2006 S.  
Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny

Packet pick-up and family activities will be held on race day, with the 5K walk/run and 1-mile fun run for kids. The cost is \$30 per person for ages 19 and older and \$20 per person for those 18 and younger. Cost includes a T-shirt, which can be picked up the day of the event. The run is held to honor the memory of Erin Moomey. To register or make a donation, visit [sparklerun.org](http://sparklerun.org) or check out The Sparkle Run on Facebook.

### Coffee Sunday Open House

Sunday, May 4,  
1-3 p.m.  
Edencrest at Siena  
Hills, 455 S.W. Ankeny  
Road, Ankeny

Curious about senior living? Want to see what it is all about? Join in on the first Sunday of the month for coffee and delectable desserts as you casually tour and learn more about Edencrest Senior Living. RSVP to Tammi Loucks, 515-587-4551

### Tour Ankeny

Wednesday, May 7, 1-4 p.m.  
Start at Ankeny Fire Station and  
end at Ankeny Historical Society

Celebrate 150 years of Ankeny at Tour Ankeny. This free event begins at The Ankeny Fire Station, 120 N.W. Ash Drive, where participants will enjoy a light snack and a short presentation. Then walk or drive to the Ankeny Historical Society for a private tour and learn about the history of Ankeny. Members and non-members are welcome. Register at <https://web.ankeny.org/events/TourAnkeny-7315/details>.

### Ankeny Arts Festival

Saturday, May 17, 10 a.m.  
to 4 p.m.  
Uptown Ankeny

The Ankeny Art Center and Uptown Ankeny will host the Ankeny Art Center Arts Festival. The festival will transform several streets of Ankeny's Historic Uptown into a vibrant celebration of creativity and artistic expression. It will feature 50-plus fine art vendors, live music, the uptown train, food trucks and activities for kids.



### Ankeny Art Center Classes and Workshops

Various dates

The Ankeny Art Center, 1520 S.W. Ordinance Road

Registration is open for summer classes and workshops at the Ankeny Art Center. Summer camps run June 10-13, June 17-20, July 8-11 and July 15-18. Each week will have different projects so campers can sign up for multiple sessions. For more information and to register, visit [www.ankenyartcenter.org](http://www.ankenyartcenter.org).

### Bankers Trust Ankeny Customer Appreciation Event

Thursday, June 12, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
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## EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

### Doggy Patio Party

April 27, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Whiskey River, The District, Ankeny

Join the Doggy Party, an Ankeny school project to help promote a local doggy daycare called Pawsabilities. Included are a dog lunch menu, dog charcuterie board, make and take dog treats, photo session with your dog, meeting the team of PawsAbilities doggy day care, 5 Cities Brewing sampling, and Tito's sampling and giveaways.



### Zoo Bites

Zoo Bites is a community education class made possible through a partnership between Ankeny Community Schools and Blank Park Zoo. Students in grades K-3 with an adult are invited to join an evening of fun mixed with a bite of learning. Explore through science experiments, snacks and more. These classes focus on family bonding by discovering more about animals. Each class has a fun animal-based activity, interactive materials, and two live animal visitors. Students do not need to be enrolled in Ankeny schools to participate. Registration is available at: [www.ankenyschools.org/community/community-engagement/course-registration](http://www.ankenyschools.org/community/community-engagement/course-registration).

**Saturday, June 28** from 10:15-11:15 a.m., "Scaly not Slimy."

Discover the softer side of snakes.

**Saturday, July 12** from 10:15-11:15 a.m., "Pollen-Nation."

Pollinators are all around us. Discover their importance with one of our favorite foods: pizza.

### Des Moines Performing Arts

Various dates

Des Moines Civic Center, Cowles Commons, Stoner Theater, Temple Theatre, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines  
[desmoinesperformingarts.org](http://desmoinesperformingarts.org)

- April 23: Neil Degrasse Tyson: "An Astrophysicist Goes To The Movies"
- April 26: Des Moines Symphony, "Music From Final Fantasy"
- April 27: 360 ALLSTARS
- April 30: The Rock Orchestra by Candlelight



### Vendor Market

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](mailto:k2marketplacemagic@gmail.com) for information. ■

# FEAR FREE care: your questions answered

Last month, we introduced the Fear Free veterinary initiative and why it is such a big deal for our clinic. But what does it actually mean for you and your pet? And how does it change your veterinary experience? Let's dive into the most common questions we hear.



**Q: What exactly does "Fear Free" mean?**

**A:** Fear Free is about making vet visits less stressful for pets. We use gentle handling, a calming environment, and, when necessary, pre-visit medications to help pets feel safe and relaxed. The goal? Happier pets, easier exams, and a more positive experience for both you and your pet.

**Q: Why don't you just hold my pet down if they're difficult?**

**A:** While forceful restraint may seem like a quick fix, it actually makes things worse in the long run. Pets who are held down against their will often become even more fearful, making future visits even harder. Instead, Fear Free techniques focus on building trust and reducing anxiety — leading to calmer, more cooperative pets over time. Plus, a stress-free pet is safer for both our team and for you.

**Q: Will my pet need medication for vet visits? And are they safe?**

**A:** Not every pet needs medication, but for those that do, it can be a game-changer. We tailor medications to each pet's needs, and sometimes

it takes a little trial and error to find the right fit. The medications we use are safe, and our goal is always to use the least amount necessary to keep your pet comfortable.

**Q: Do Fear Free visits cost more than traditional vet visits?**

**A:** While some Fear Free strategies — like pre-visit medications or sedation — may have additional costs upfront, they often save money in the long run. A calm pet means easier exams, more accurate diagnostics and fewer repeated visits. Plus, keeping stress levels low contributes to better overall health, which can help prevent costly medical issues down the road.

**Q: How can I help make my pet's visit Fear Free?**

**A:** You play a huge role. Here are some easy ways to help:

- Get your pet comfortable with their carrier ahead of time.
- Bring a favorite blanket, toy or treats for reassurance.
- Stay calm. Your pet picks up on your energy.
- Let us know if your pet has anxiety so we can tailor their visit.

Fear Free techniques don't just work at the vet's office. They can make car rides, grooming and boarding less stressful, too. If you have any questions about reducing your pet's anxiety, we're always here to help. ■

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

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## LIBRARY

By Library Staff

## MAKE a difference: Join our teen advisory group

While making summer plans, we hope Ankeny teens will consider joining the **Teen Advisory Group (TAG)** at Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library. Led by our teen librarian, Brena, this group allows teens grades 4-12 to gain leadership skills and earn volunteer hours while giving back to the community. No registration is necessary.

In TAG, teens have the opportunity to work together on projects they choose at the library. They also recommend books and programs to library staff. Silver cord hours can be earned as well. If you are interested or have questions, reach out to Brena Barton at [bbarton@ankenylibrary.gov](mailto:bbarton@ankenylibrary.gov).

The library is getting ready for a fantastic **Summer Library Program**. We have reading challenges and programs for all ages. Our Summer Library Kickoff will be May 29. There will be activities, swag bags and fun for all ages. More details to come but save the date. You won't want to miss it.

Exciting news. The **Friends of the Ankeny Library RAYGUN store** is open. You can order library shirts in adult and children's sizes. Please consider visiting the online store today to purchase your Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library shirt at [www.rayguncustom.com/collections/friends-of-the-ankeny-library](http://www.rayguncustom.com/collections/friends-of-the-ankeny-library).

Proceeds support the Friends of the Ankeny Library. For more information about the Friends, visit <https://ankenylibraryfriends.org/>.

Interested in what else is happening at the Library? If you haven't already, sign up to receive the library's monthly eNewsletter by visiting <https://bit.ly/ankenylibrarynewsletter>. ■

### Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library

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Sunday: 1-5 p.m.

## NEWS BRIEF

### QUAM serves aboard USS Tripoli



Aviation Electronics Technician 3rd Class Kaelynn Quam, from Ankeny, participates in an anti-terrorism force protection assessment aboard amphibious assault carrier USS Tripoli (LHA 7), Feb. 25. Tripoli is an America-class amphibious assault ship homeported in San Diego. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Paul LeClair ■

# PUT YOUR tax refund to work

Most of us probably don't enjoy preparing our taxes, but there's often a reward at the end — a tax refund. If you get a refund this year, how can you make the best use of it?

Of course, the answer depends somewhat on the size of your refund. Last year, the average tax refund was \$3,050, according to the Internal Revenue Service. Whatever the size of your refund, though, you'll want to maximize its benefit. Here are a few suggestions:



- **Contribute to your IRA.** If you were to receive about \$3,000, it would go a long way toward funding your IRA for the year — but any amount would help. You still have until April 15, 2025, to contribute to your IRA for the 2024 tax year, but if you've already "maxed out" on it, you could use your refund for 2025. The annual contribution limit for a traditional and Roth IRA remains \$7,000, or \$8,000 if you're age 50 or older. And by getting an early start toward fully funding your IRA, you can reduce the pressure of having to come up with large amounts later in the year.

- **Build an emergency fund.** Your tax refund could help you start or expand an emergency fund. It's a good idea to keep up to six months' worth of living expenses in such a fund, with the money kept in a liquid, low-risk account, separate from the funds you use for your daily expenses. You might need to draw on this fund for unexpected expenses, such as a major home or car repair or a medical bill that's not fully covered by your health insurance. Without such an emergency fund in place, you might be forced to dip into your IRA or other retirement accounts to pay for these types of costs, and such a move could be expensive, resulting in taxes, penalties and lost opportunities for growth.

- **Contribute to a 529 plan.** If you have children or grandchildren, and you'd like to help them further their education someday, you might consider investing in a 529 education savings plan. With a 529 plan, earnings and withdrawals are federally tax free, provided the money is used for qualified education expenses. Based on where you live, your 529 plan may provide state tax benefits, too. (It is possible, though, that 529 withdrawals could affect financial aid packages, depending on who owns the account.) A 529 plan can be used to help pay for college, accredited trade school programs, some K-12 expenses and even to help repay some student loans.

- **Pay down debts.** Your tax refund may give you a chance to reduce your debt load. But which debts should you tackle first? You could follow the "snowball" method by paying off the smallest of your loans or debts as quickly as possible. Or you could choose the "avalanche" route by making minimum payments on all debts and using extra funds — such as your tax refund — to pay off the debts that carry the highest interest rates. Either method could help you save money in the long term.

It's not often that you receive a financial windfall such as a tax refund — so think carefully about how you can maximize its benefits. ■

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones. Member SIPC. Information provided by Graciela P. Van Wyk, Financial Advisor, 1255 N. Ankeny Blvd., Suite 102, Ankeny, 515-964-4404.

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**FAITH**

By Pastor John Wagner

## EASTER for us

Matthew 28:1-10 - 1 Now after the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 Suddenly there was a severe earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descending from heaven came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were shaken and became like dead men because they were so afraid of him. 5 But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here, for he has been raised, just as he said. Come and see the place where he was lying. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead. He is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there.’ Listen, I have told you!” 8 So they left the tomb quickly, with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 But Jesus met them, saying, “Greetings!” They came to him, held on to his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. They will see me there.”



For those of us who participate in Christian practices, the scripture above contains what could be considered the climax of the story of God’s love. Though the son of God (Jesus) was sentenced to death by the very humans he came to love and to save, Jesus conquers death by rising from the grave. This miracle reminds Christians of God’s power, faithfulness, grace, mercy and love.

For those of us who participate in other faith traditions or don’t find religion or religious observances to be meaningful, this “Easter story” could appear to be simply words on a page — perhaps fanciful or even unimportant.

For all of us — respectfully — the Easter story is an invitation to believe. I believe that God loves you. I genuinely believe that Jesus’ life, death and resurrection are already having an impact on your life, on our community, and on our world. I believe we feel it when we wake up each day. We are met in our waking with grace and forgiveness. We are offered a fresh chance to ask questions, to seek God and to discover that God is real — that whoever learns to believe can have everlasting life that begins today.

I have come to trust that God’s love for us isn’t predicated on our belief, but instead offered in grace — before we could ever understand or deserve it. I genuinely don’t believe that we “believe” God into being but that God simply loves us enough to offer us opportunities to discover it and believe for ourselves.

In respect and in love, I offer blessings to you even as I type. God is with us. God loves us. Happy Easter, Ankeny. ■

Information provided by John Wagner, campus pastor, Christian Life Center, Ankeny First United Methodist Church, john.wagner@ankenfirst.org.



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## SPRING CLEANING: a time to refresh and reset

Spring is the perfect time to refresh and reset, and, for seniors in assisted living, a little decluttering can go a long way. Spring cleaning isn't just about getting rid of things — it's about creating a space that feels comfortable, safe and calming. A tidy home can make everyday life easier by reducing fall risks, clearing mental clutter, and making room for the things that truly matter. Over the years, it is easy to accumulate belongings, and, while many hold sentimental value, too much stuff can feel overwhelming. By taking the time to simplify, seniors can create a more peaceful and functional living space that enhances their daily routine.

Spring cleaning does not have to feel like a chore. With the right approach, it can be an enjoyable and even nostalgic experience. A great way to start is by sorting items into three categories: keep, donate or discard. Loved ones and caregivers can lend a helping hand, but it's important to let seniors make decisions at their own pace. Tackling one area at a time — like a closet, dresser or bookshelf — helps keep the process from feeling too overwhelming. Items in good condition that are no longer needed can be donated to local charities, giving them new life in someone else's home. Letting go of unused possessions can bring a sense of lightness and freedom, making space for things that bring joy



and purpose.

Refreshing a living space isn't just about decluttering; small updates can make a big difference. Rearranging furniture to create more open space, adding a pop of color with flowers or décor, and incorporating personal touches like framed photos or keepsakes can make a room feel more inviting. Ensuring that everyday items are within easy reach can also improve accessibility and make life a little easier. It's also a great time to check for any safety hazards — loose rugs, exposed cords or poor lighting — and make adjustments to create a more secure environment.

Beyond just tidying up, spring cleaning has emotional and psychological benefits. Holding on to too many things can sometimes weigh us down, while letting go can be a way to embrace the present and welcome new experiences. A clean, organized space can reduce stress, boost relaxation and even promote a sense of independence. Whether tackling the process alone or with the support of family and caregivers, spring cleaning can be an uplifting way to start fresh. With a little effort, seniors can create a home that feels lighter, brighter and ready for the season ahead. ■

Information provided by Michelle Eilander, Residential Services Director, CopperWood at Prairie Trail Senior Living, 2855 S.W. Vintage Parkway, Ankeny, 515-415-4401, copperwoodseniorliving.com.

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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.



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# WELCOMING new family members

Ankeny family hosts foreign exchange students.

Wendy and Jeff Sontag, along with their daughters — Sarah, Ankeny High School class of 2008, and Suzanne, AHS class of 2011 — decided they were interested in inviting a foreign exchange student to live with them.

"I think we became interested in hosting for two reasons," Wendy says. "First, we love traveling and learning about new cultures. Hosting an exchange student was a way for us and our daughters to learn about another country and culture in a different way since we couldn't always travel as extensively as we would have liked. Also, we loved parenting, especially parenting teens."

The family hosted Elora from Germany in 2010-2011. She attended Ankeny High School with the Sontag daughters and was involved in some of the same classes and extra-curricular activities, including choir, musicals, robotics and cross country.

When Suzanne graduated, the Sontags say they felt they had more to give, so they looked for a program needing a host family. They happened to be involved at the time with Iowa Sister States when the program sponsored several students from Kosovo, so they signed up to host. Fyolla came to them from Kosovo for 2015-2016.

Wendy says the main thing to consider before deciding to welcome an exchange student is if you can be accepting of someone living in your space who may do things differently.

"Clear, consistent and regular communication is essential, because your house rules and our American cultural and societal expectations will differ from the home and country where the student is coming from. At the same time, it is important to be flexible enough to balance the responsibility of keeping a teen safe while allowing them enough independence to learn, grow, explore and try new things."

Just as in parenting their own children, the Sontags found each student had their normal highs and lows, laughter and tears, and their unique challenges and strengths. Treating them as your own children means parenting them through all of that and accepting them as the unique individuals they are.

Their favorite memories center around observing the girls in situations of accomplishment. For Elora, that was freedom when they found her a bicycle and the joy and excitement she experienced as a member of the robotics team. Fyolla found new confidence on stage in a musical.

"Interestingly, we have visited both girls' home countries and met their parents. We felt it was a huge commitment to take on the responsibility of someone else's daughter, but we treated them as our own, and their parents have expressed endless gratitude. In each mother, I feel like I have a German sister and a Kosovan sister."

"Our relationships with these two young women have enriched our lives immensely, as well as gained us new family members in the form of their parents in Germany and Kosovo." ■



Wendy and Jeff Sontag with foreign exchange student Fyolla from Kosovo.

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# FINANCIAL documents: save, toss or shred

Whether it's monthly bank statements, receipts, quarterly retirement statements, annual tax returns or other financial documents you receive, it's easy to accumulate an unmanageable amount of paper over time. You might find yourself asking if you really need to save all of these records and, if not, when it may be safe to dispose of them.



document if it is not handed over to the new owner in the case the document is duplicated. Home and auto insurance policies should also only be discarded after you receive a renewed policy. Consider purchasing a safe or using a safety deposit box at a bank to store these documents and other important paperwork.

## Financial documents to toss

Some documents do not need to be saved for any period, and you do not necessarily need to shred them either.

Your bank, insurance company or other organizations may send promotional booklets and flyers that do not contain any personal information. While you should shred the envelope or small slip of paper within — whichever contains your name and address — you do not necessarily need to shred the promotional content.

## Financial documents to shred

You should shred documents you no longer need to verify a payment, deposit or purchase

that contain your personal information, including name, address, phone number, credit card number, signatures, Social Security number and account number.

Examples of documents to shred include: utility and credit card bills after you confirm payment, bank statements once you determine there is no suspicious activity, receipts once you match the purchase up against account statements, expired credit and debit cards, and quarterly retirement plan statements once you receive your annual statement.

Occasionally, banks will designate a “shred day” at their branches so customers can bring in documents to shred. This can be helpful for those who have accumulated many documents and do not have a powerful shredder at home. Keep an eye out for the next shred day at your bank. ■

Information provided by Tracy Gibson, VP, Ankeny Branch Manager, 515-965-2497, [tgibson@bankerstrust.com](mailto:tgibson@bankerstrust.com), 1925 N. Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny, IA 50023.

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\*\*Visit [BankersTrust.com](http://BankersTrust.com) for more information on Benefits Banking Loyalty Program terms.

# WHICH IS best — an LLC or S-Corp?

Starting your own business can be a tremendous opportunity fraught with challenges. When you have an idea, a marketing plan, and the enthusiasm to go out on your own, you need a legal partner. One of the first legal choices is the business structure: whether to create a Limited Liability Company (LLC) or a Subchapter-S Corporation (S-Corp).



## Benefits of an LLC:

- LLCs provide liability protection for the members. Your personal assets will be protected against debts, losses and court judgments against the business.
- LLCs are “pass-through” entities for taxation. The LLC doesn’t pay income taxes; the profits are passed to the members. Dealing with business taxes is much easier because you pay those taxes on your personal 1040 return.

• LLCs provide great flexibility. Management structures are less rigid than those of an S-Corp. Within the Operating Agreement, you can create the management structure of your choosing.

• LLCs have far less paperwork up front and in the long-term. This makes them easier to run and to keep compliant with state and local laws.

## Why to Start an S-Corp:

- S-Corps provide liability protection for the shareholders. Only the money invested in the S-Corporation by its shareholders is at risk. Personal assets are protected.
- S-Corps are not taxed, but shareholders are. While your S-Corp will need to file IRS 1020 S form, S-Corps are “pass-through” entities, much like LLCs are.
- S-Corps can sell stock to investors to raise capital. Investors often view the corporate structure as more permanent than that of an LLC.
- S-Corps have a more rigid management structure. There are rules for how to remain

compliant, who can vote on corporate practices, and the authority of the shareholders to act. These rules give shareholders and owners a clear path to follow.

• S-Corps require more paperwork. This may seem like a disadvantage, but the additional paperwork actually gives you a concrete record of your decisions and proof that you acted in the best interest of your company. Having these documents can be valuable for tax and liability purposes.

Both LLCs and S-Corps will provide personal liability and a legitimate business structure. They’re both good options if you are just starting your business. Check with an experienced attorney to determine which corporate structure is right for you. ■

Information provided by Charlotte Sucik, Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm, 2560 73rd St., Urbandale, 515-278-0623, [www.ARPCLaw.com](http://www.ARPCLaw.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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To learn more about WellAhead as a smart solution for staying right where you want to be, call **(515) 642-1726**.



**Mary R. in Des Moines says,** "I'm 77 and planning for my future. I want quality time with my family, not difficult decisions during difficult times. WellAhead offers me a holistic approach and a leading-age philosophy towards aging, with benefits for the future and for today."



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## PLAN AHEAD

By Sarah Masteller

## THE PERFECT celebration

We plan for everything: weddings, milestone birthday celebrations, that perfect trip, retirement. We even plan for those things that may not happen: the loss of a home, the loss of a vehicle or getting injured on the job.



Death is the one thing that we are guaranteed will happen to all of us. When you think of all that goes into planning life's special events, don't you think it would only make sense that we give the same consideration and preparedness to one's final celebration of life?

There are so many things that can contribute to making a service personal and memorable. What are the things I would want displayed that reflect who I am? What special songs do I want played for my service? Is there a special scripture or reading I would want shared? Are there special loved ones I would want involved?

Rather than leave these important and significant decisions to be made by your loved ones at a very emotional — and possibly stressful — time, why not give your family the gift of making some of these decisions now so that things will be easier for them?

It truly is the difference between the question, "What do you think Dad would have wanted?" and the statement, "This is what Dad wanted."

It is a gift...one that we encourage you to give to your family. ■

Information provided by Sarah Masteller, Advanced Planning Counselor, Hamilton's Southtown Funeral Home, 5400 S.W. Ninth St., Des Moines, 515-697-3679.

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## WELLNESS

By Tricia Heberer

## WHY sunscreen matters

Sunscreen is the most essential step in any skincare routine. It helps protect the skin from harmful UV rays, which contribute to premature aging, sunburn, and even skin cancer. Rain or shine, UV radiation is always present, making daily sunscreen application a necessity. Key benefits of sunscreen are:



**Prevents premature aging** - UV exposure accelerates the breakdown of collagen and elastin, leading to wrinkles, fine lines and sagging skin. Sunscreen helps prevent photoaging.

**Reduces risk of skin cancer** - Prolonged sun exposure is a leading cause of skin cancer, including melanoma. Using sunscreen regularly can significantly lower this risk.

**Prevents hyperpigmentation and sunspots** - UV rays can trigger an overproduction of melanin, leading to dark spots, uneven skin tone and conditions like melasma.

**Protects against sunburn and skin damage** - Sunburns not only cause immediate discomfort but also weaken the skin's natural barrier, increasing sensitivity and risk of further damage.

**Maintains skin health and hydration** - Sunscreen helps prevent moisture loss and protects the skin's natural barrier, keeping it healthy.

Consistent sunscreen use is one of the most effective ways to maintain healthy, youthful skin while reducing the risk of damage and cancer. ■

Information provided by Tricia Heberer, Owner/LE, Luxe Medical Spa and Aesthetics, 88 Paine Circle, Suite 7, Bondurant, IA 50035, [theberer@luxemedicalspa.net](mailto:theberer@luxemedicalspa.net), 515-630-8637.

# THE BENEFITS of low-level laser therapy

Low-level laser therapy is the use of cold laser energy that safely penetrates 1- to 2-inches into the skin to create therapeutic effects in the muscles and joints. Research has shown that these effects include improved healing time, pain reduction, increased circulation and decreased swelling. When laser light is absorbed by living tissue, it triggers biological reactions within the cells. Chemical substances are produced, released and carried by blood and lymphatic flow to other parts of the system. In this way, the effects of cold laser light create broad systemic impact.

In the United States, laser therapy has been FDA approved for the treatment of many pain syndromes. It is considered to be a safe and effective modality when used properly by a licensed practitioner.

## Research documents:

- Reduction in pain by causing production of natural pain killers called endorphins.
- Reduction in inflammation by suppressing inflammatory enzymes that create swelling, redness, pain and heat.
- Enhanced lymphatic drainage, which increases circulation and reduces swelling.
- Release of tight muscles that create chronic pain, joint problems and decreased mobility.
- Faster bone repair by stimulating fibroblastic and osteoblastic proliferation.

*Tuner, J., & Hode L. (2009). The New Laser Handbook. Grangesberg, Sweden: Prima Books.*

There are thousands of published studies that describe the beneficial therapeutic effects of cold laser therapy, including hundreds of carefully controlled scientific trials that have demonstrated its clinical effectiveness. The following is a partial list of conditions that have shown successful outcomes in recent studies: tennis/golf elbow, peripheral neuropathy, planta fasciitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, bursitis, arthritis, herniated disc, jaw pain, back and neck pain, whiplash, shingles, muscle pain, sprains/strains and tendinitis.

There are two broad categories of lasers: hot and cold. Hot lasers are used for surgery, skin resurfacing, destroying tumors and, when the power is lowered, for pain relief. However, the heat that so effectively destroys tissue becomes a problem, because the heat may slow down healing and cause burns. Hot lasers may actually hinder healing. As the heat increases, it initially produces tissue over-heating, followed by tissue damage.

Low-level cold lasers, such as the Apollo Class 3b laser, do not generate perceivable heat. Therefore, when the laser contacts the skin, the patient experiences no warmth or burning as a result of the laser. Most patients feel nothing at all, while a few may feel a slight tingling during the treatment. Many people will see a reduction in symptoms immediately. Others will experience relief more gradually. How fast your symptoms improve will help your clinician design the most effective treatment regimen.

If you or someone you know is suffering from pain and have not found the relief for which you are looking, consider chiropractic. They may be able to help. ■

Information provided by Christopher M. Renze, D.C., D.I.B.C.N., of Renze Chiropractic Clinic, P.C. For more information, visit [www.renzechiro.com](http://www.renzechiro.com) or call the office at 965-3844.



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# FRIENDS of the Library makes a difference

Celebrating 20 years of support



The Friends of the Ankeny Library is celebrating a big milestone this year — 20 years of enhancing the library through fundraising and advocacy. Since its inception, the organization has played an important role in ensuring the library continues to thrive.

Proceeds from the organization's book sales, fundraisers and donations help support library programs, events and special projects — the "extras" that aren't covered elsewhere. This support is especially important as the city of Ankeny's budget primarily covers staffing and collection costs at the library.

Friends of the Library serves as the chief funder of the library's Summer Reading Program, which provides activities, speakers, prizes and more. They've also sponsored Hoopla, an online streaming service available to all library cardholders, and Group Book Discussion Sets, which encourage community members to connect through literature.

One great way to support the Friends of the Library is by shopping at the group's bookstore, Novel Findings, located inside the Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library. Proceeds from purchases directly fund library initiatives like teen and adult programming, special events and Hatch Makerspace equipment.

This month, the Penny Wars fundraiser is bringing an exciting showdown to the library. The battle between Marvel and DC invites visitors to vote for their favorite characters using pocket change. Votes can be cast at the Circulation Desk until May 1, and the winner will be announced on social media. A new battle will follow next month, keeping the friendly competition going while raising funds for the library.

Another highly anticipated event is the upcoming Bingo fundraiser on June 28 at the Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library. This community gathering offers a fun way to support the library while enjoying an evening of entertainment.

For those looking to make an impact, there are two key ways to get involved.

"First, a donation is always appreciated," says Cami Brazelton, president of the organization. "It's easy to support the library by visiting [friendsoftheankenylibrary.org](http://friendsoftheankenylibrary.org). Second, become a volunteer. We're looking for individuals who may be interested in joining our Friends Board of Directors as well as those who might be interested in donating their time at an event or fundraising effort."

From book sales to fun fundraisers, Friends of the Ankeny Library continues to strengthen the community's connection to the library. As they celebrate 20 years of service, they invite everyone to join in the celebration and be part of shaping the library's future. ■



## ANKENY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

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# BEING a great leader starts with knowing yourself and knowing your impact

Mark Twain said, "The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out WHY." Understanding your purpose and beliefs helps leaders find their "north star" and lead authentically.

Leadership is a dynamic role that requires vision, adaptability and a commitment to continuous improvement. At the heart of effective leadership are core beliefs — deeply held values that shape decisions, actions and interactions.

Core beliefs define a leader's decision-making, ethics and interpersonal relationships, acting as a moral compass through challenges. A leader who values integrity will prioritize honesty and transparency, fostering trust. Similarly, a leader focused on perseverance will push through obstacles and inspire resilience. However, core beliefs can't be rigid. Effective leaders recognize self-awareness and feedback are essential for growth and effective leadership.

Once leaders are successful in aligning their values with their work, it's important to identify ways to continually assess if their intentions are lining up with their impact (actions). How we intend to lead can sometimes be misinterpreted based on others' experiences, skills or understanding. That's why leaders must focus on building their self-awareness as a leader. As part of becoming self-aware, leaders should seek feedback on their actions.

Feedback is a powerful tool for improvement. It provides a leader with different perspectives, highlights areas for growth, and helps them refine their approach. Leaders who actively and regularly seek and embrace feedback demonstrate humility, emotional intelligence and a commitment to progress to those they lead.

Receiving feedback allows leaders to identify blind spots — areas where they may be unaware of their weaknesses or how their actions impact others. For example, a leader who believes they are approachable and supportive might receive feedback indicating that their team finds them intimidating or unresponsive. Without this external insight, the leader may continue ineffective behaviors, unknowingly creating barriers to communication and collaboration.

Feedback also strengthens relationships between leaders and their teams. When leaders listen to and act on feedback, they show they value input and respect diverse viewpoints. This fosters an inclusive environment where employees feel heard and empowered. Furthermore, by modeling openness to feedback, leaders encourage a culture of continuous learning within their organization. Those being led are more likely to seek improvement and innovation when they see their leader doing the same.

Great leadership is built on a foundation of strong core beliefs and an openness to feedback. As part of the Ankeny Leadership Institute program, we focus on helping our participants understand their top personal strengths and encourage them to seek ways to align them with their core values and assess their impact on those they lead. By staying true to their values while continuously learning from others, we challenge them to cultivate trust and clarity. In the end, our ALI program goal is to help inspire leaders who lead with conviction yet remain humble enough to grow. ■





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There Will Be A Drawing For A **\$50 GIFT CARD**

**ankeny | lpt**  
REAL ESTATE GROUP  
2425 N ANKENY BLVD  
**MAY THURSDAY 8 4:00-5:30 PM**

**Come Open Doors to New Connections!**

**TOUR ANKENY** GRAPHITE  
**FREE TO ATTEND MUST REGISTER**

**CELEBRATE THE HISTORY OF ANKENY!**  
**JOIN US FOR A TOUR!**  
Beginning at the Ankeny Fire Station & concluding at the Ankeny Area Historical Society

**SPRINGFLING**  
Wednesday June 4th 10am @ Briarwood Golf Club

Presenting Sponsor **DMOS** ORTHOPAEDIC CENTERS  
Sponsor **WineStyles**

**NCORKED**  
Wine, Food, Fun. PRESENTED BY **WineStyles**  
REGISTRATION REQUIRED  
First Glass On Us! \*\*  
Thursday, May 22nd 6:00-8:00PM  
WineStyles Ankeny | 1450 SW Vintage Pkwy #120  
\$25 Members | \$35 Non-Members  
FREE GIFT INCLUDED WITH PURCHASE

**INVESTOR MEMBERS**

**THE DISTRICT** **POLK COUNTY** Board of Supervisors **city of Ankeny** **MURPHY ENTERPRISES** **Central Bank**

**PREMIER MEMBERS**

**DMOS** ORTHOPAEDIC CENTERS **CSB COMMUNITY STATE BANK** **Casey's** **Community Choice**  
**Availa Bank** **ankeny | lpt** **REAL ESTATE GROUP** **ROOF IOWA** ROOFING GUTTERS SIDING  
**JOHN DEERE** **Bankers Trust** **LGL LAW OFFICES** LAWRENCE, MURPHY & STOLZ, P.C.



Experience senior living  
*at it's finest*



## Walnut Ridge | Mill Pond

Independent and assisted living apartments are now available at two of Iowa's finest senior living communities — Walnut Ridge in Clive, Iowa and Mill Pond in Ankeny, Iowa. Start your journey toward a supportive lifestyle in a Presbyterian Homes & Services senior living community, today!

### Walnut Ridge



**Newly renovated apartments | Refreshed common areas | Updated amenities**

For more details, scan the QR code, visit [walnut-ridge.seniorliving-phs.com](http://walnut-ridge.seniorliving-phs.com) or call 515-457-1111.

### Mill Pond



**Beautiful grounds | On-site rehab services  
Private movie theater**

For more details, scan the QR code, visit [mill-pond.seniorliving-phs.com](http://mill-pond.seniorliving-phs.com) or call 515-964-2273.



Senior Apartments | Assisted Living  
Memory Care | Long Term Care

Equal housing opportunity. All faiths welcome. © 2025 Presbyterian Homes and Services

## OUT & ABOUT

# RIBBON Cutting

A ribbon cutting was held for AR Workshop, 1631 S.W. Main St., Suite 104, Ankeny, on Feb. 25.



The ribbon cutting



Cody Gebauer and Crystal Wright



Brian Thammathay and Randy Pelham



Misty Trogdon and Andrew Johnson



Ginger and Dean Whitmore



Shawn and Terri Whitmore



Joanie Wehofer and Andrea  
and Arro Cooper Stajcar



A photograph of three people smiling for a photo. On the left is a woman with blonde hair wearing a blue patterned blazer. In the center is a woman with blonde hair wearing a dark polo shirt. On the right is a man with a beard and brown hair wearing a grey polo shirt with a name tag. They are standing in front of a bright yellow wall that features a large circular logo with a stylized 'S' and the word 'SQUAD' partially visible. Purple balloons are hanging from the ceiling in the background.

A photograph of three people, two men and one woman, standing together and smiling. They are all wearing purple polo shirts with the "CLUB" logo on the chest. The man on the left has short blonde hair, the woman in the center has long brown hair, and the man on the right has a beard and brown hair. Behind them is a promotional backdrop with the text "WIN 'EM TRADE 'EM" in large, stylized letters, and "FOR COOLER PRIZES AND REDEMPTION COUNTER YOUR CARD FOR SEASONS." in smaller text. The backdrop also features a graphic of a sailboat.

A photograph of two young men standing side-by-side, both wearing blue hoodies with the 'CLAWZ ENTERTAINMENT' logo. The man on the left is smiling and has short dark hair. The man on the right is also smiling and has dark hair and a beard. They are in an indoor setting with a purple wall and a claw machine visible in the background.

A photograph showing a smiling woman in a hospital gown holding a newborn baby. A healthcare professional in blue scrubs and gloves is attending to the baby. The scene is set in a hospital room with a window in the background.

# Protect Your Baby's Health

# Vaccines can help keep your child healthy

Did you know most childhood vaccines are very effective? Vaccines can help protect infants from many diseases including:

- Chickenpox
- Measles
- Polio
- Tetanus
- Whooping cough
- And more

**Ask your child's healthcare provider about vaccines.**



Source: American Academy of Pediatrics 3/25



# OUT & ABOUT

## RIBBON Cutting

A ribbon cutting was held for Mid Iowa Occupational Testing on March 6.



The ribbon cutting



Tate Van Houten and Marc and Cheryl Van Houten



Jake Sanders and Stacey Shaffer



Adam Fraser and Dean O'Connor



Natalie Marroquin and Jenna Johnson



Jazz Underwood and Rachel Pitts



Brittney Pinckney and Maggi Pedersen



Brian Thammathay and Mackenzie Pilcher-Andorfer



Anthony Burriola and Gary Bucher

The door to a beautiful  
Brio future is wide open...

*Take a step inside!*

Brio's brand-new Neighborhood 19 townhomes are nearly all reserved — only two spacious, thoughtfully designed residences remain! Comfort-enhancing features combined with maintenance-free living and priority access to Brio's other levels of living make these homes a smart choice for now and an even smarter choice for the future.

We invite you to stop by any Tuesday or Wednesday in the month of April for a closer look at our neighborhood before it's full!

## NEIGHBORHOOD 19

at brio

### Open House

**Every Tuesday and Wednesday  
in April  
4–6 p.m.**

6901 Peckham Street, Johnston



For questions or to receive more information about Neighborhood 19, call Maria at (515) 252-5380 or email [mjordan@wesleylife.org](mailto:mjordan@wesleylife.org)



**DONATE • VOLUNTEER • SHOP**

ST. VINCENT & PAUL  
THRIFT STORE

700



**ANKENY THRIFT STORE**

# OPENING SOON



**700 N ANKENY BLVD • ANKENY, IOWA 50023**



Participate in a two-week classroom training followed by an internship in the trades focusing on:

- Career readiness
- Soft skills
- Financial literacy
- On-going staff support
- Career follow-up
- Paid pre-apprenticeship in the trades with employment opportunities

## **FAMILY AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

Team members are available to provide adult basic education, sobering services, and facilitate the Safe Babies Court Team process.

- Individual coaching and community navigation
- Financial capability training
- Individualized career coaching and benefits enrollment
- Classes on healthy relationships at home and work



Assists returning citizens and their families on how to navigate through barriers due to incarceration, focusing on:

- Employment
- Education
- Mentoring
- 72 hr. Transitional programming
- Advocacy

## **SOCIAL SERVICES AND PANTRIES**

SVdP Social Services assists people from our community and surrounding areas. We help all in need, including those who may not qualify for services from other agencies.

- Healthy food pantry
- Personal care pantry
- Infant products
- Post-disaster assistance
- Free clothing pantry
- Furniture household item assistance
- Safe Babies Court Team

**ST. VINCENT de PAUL. A FIRST STEP TO A SECOND CHANCE SINCE 1924**

**facebook.com/SVdPofDSM • www.svdpsdm.org**

**1426 6th Avenue, Des Moines**

**520 Army Post Road, Des Moines**

**700 N Ankeny Blvd, Ankeny**

**801 73rd Street, Windsor Heights**



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TO DONATE

**DONATE AT ANY LOCATION OR CALL FOR A PICKUP. 515.282.8327**