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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 haven't 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 Joe Baumgarten

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.

Jia Xuan Gao (a.k.a. Bruce) has been in the United States for two years, and Paula Foster has provided a host home for him through Education Without Borders.

Big house offers opportunities

Jia Xuan Gao, a.k.a. Bruce, has been in the United States for two years, and Paula Foster has provided a host home for him through Education Without Borders.

"It was a first for both of us," Bruce says. "It took us a bit to get into the rhythm and work out the kinks, but now it's fantastic."

Paula also hosts another teen from China in her home. Both students are sophomores at Dowling Catholic High School.

For Paula, who wasn't seeking to be a host home for international students, it is as if the opportunity was seeking her.

"I recently purchased this large home from my mother after she passed away. My neighbor, who works at Dowling, proposed the idea to me as we were visiting one day. I retired recently, and I had this big empty house. It seemed to be the perfect fit."

Being retired allows Paula to invest the time and energy that one would expect two active high school boys would require.

"I take them everywhere they need to go, to and from school, to school events and

special activities. I also do all the grocery shopping and cook the meals."

She says that Education Without Borders reimburses her for the boys' living expenses, food and transportation. Bruce happily reports that Paula is an excellent cook.

"I pride myself on serving them well-balanced meals," she says.

Bruce's situation differs slightly from other foreign exchange students.

"I am here for five years, not just one. After I graduate from Dowling, I plan to go on to college, maybe Harvard," he says.

When Bruce first arrived in the U.S. two years ago, he barely spoke the language. He totally immersed himself, looking for any opportunity to practice the language and learn the culture. Fortunately, Bruce is outgoing. One of his Dowling friends describes him as "one of the friendliest and most talkative persons I know."

He is eager to learn and experience new things in this unfamiliar country. During a recent trip to Denver, he visited the state capitol because he is fascinated by American

politics. On a whim, he took the elevator up to the governor's office and requested a meeting. The governor's secretary told him he would need an appointment. Undaunted, Bruce gave the woman his cell phone number and asked her to give it to the governor. As he was leaving the building, his phone rang. It was Gov. Polis himself, inviting Bruce back up to his office.

Bruce says, when he first arrived in Iowa, it wasn't what he expected. The America he imagined was New York, Los Angeles or Chicago.

"My hometown is a small city in China called Shandong Dezhou; only 5 million people live there. That's two million more than the entire state of Iowa," he laughs.

Eager to learn more about American customs, Bruce requested to be interviewed at the Starbucks close to Dowling.

"This is only my second time in a Starbucks," he laughs. "I had no idea what to order. I just asked the people behind the counter, and they helped me so much. They didn't even charge me."

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Lasting friendships

If you were to climb to the top of “Foreign Exchange Mountain,” seeking wisdom, you would find Cynthia Dabrieo there. She would greet you with a warm smile and eagerly share the wisdom she has gained over two decades of hosting exchange students.

In the late 1970s, she and her husband lived in an average house in Des Moines with their two middle-school children.

“One evening, my husband came home from his Rotary Club meeting,” she explains. “He was very excited about a new program that the Rotary was sponsoring to bring foreign exchange students to Iowa. We talked it over for a while and agreed to give it a try. That was how it all began.”

Their first student was a high school girl from Peru. She stayed with them for a two-week program over the summer and then returned home. Having enjoyed the experience, they decided to “re-enlist” and apply for a second student. The next student was a girl from Norway. She stayed for the entire school year but divided her time between three families, staying with each for three months. Having



One of Cynthia Dabrieo’s exchange students sent her this photo years later with her husband and children. Cynthia is still in touch with students she and her husband hosted through a Rotary Club program.

enjoyed the first two short-term experiences, the couple felt ready for a full-year student. They accepted a boy from Germany, and he quickly

became part of the Dabrieo family during that year.

When asked which program she preferred,

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she does not hesitate with an answer: "The full nine-month program is absolutely the best," she says.

"When they stay for a shorter time, they feel, and act, like guests. You feel compelled to entertain them, show them around, and make their stay as meaningful as possible in a short time. When you have someone stay for the full school year, they become one of the family. It is a calmer and much more enjoyable experience for everyone."

When asked for her best advice for people who are hosting for the first time, she says it is important to work with an experienced organization. It will handle the details of the stay and serve as a good source of advice, and help, when needed.

Since the early 1970s, the Rotary Club has made the foreign exchange program one of its hallmark offerings. They now host student exchanges with 100 countries, including helping American students stay with host families in other countries.

According to the Rotary website (www.rotary.org/en/our-programs/youth-exchanges) the benefits for the exchange students include

developing lifelong leadership skills, learning a new language and culture, building lasting friendships with young people from around the world, and becoming a global citizen.

Cynthia would certainly agree with all of those benefits, but especially the one touting "lasting friendships."

"We became very close to our German student," she smiles. "He traveled back to visit us multiple times. One year, he even brought his girlfriend over to meet us. We were living on the East Coast at the time. He proposed to her on their trip to Maine. They enjoyed the state so much, they returned to get married there. We still stay in touch with him."

Long-term hosting

For a student coming from the dense population of Chinese living, moving into a house so tucked into the forest that you can't see any neighbors or even the street you drove in on must be a shock. Getting used to Iowa life takes a bit of time.

Yikin Zhou (a.k.a. Nancy) seems to be quite at home living in Urbandale with her host mom, Donna. Nancy, and one other student

from China, have been with Donna since the school year starting last fall. For Donna, however, this is nothing new; she has been hosting foreign students for the last 10 years.

Most of those students have come through the Des Moines-based U.S. Education Without Borders program (www.usewb.com). Nancy credits this excellent organization for doing most of the "heavy lifting" of getting the students settled into the United States by helping them with everything from visas to required immunizations. USEWB will enroll students in Valley High School for a year if their English needs work. Most, however, go directly into Dowling Catholic High School. USEWB has worked closely with Dowling since 2011. The students are typically not Catholic, but attend Dowling for the experience of a private school.

Compared to the rigorous educational system Nancy knew in China, she has found her time at Dowling much more calm.

"In China, we don't have a lot of spare time," she said. "We are at the school from early morning to very late at night and then have homework to do after that. Here, we have

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FEATURE

more spare time, so I have joined a lot of clubs and met a lot of new people.”

Nancy’s clubs are not the ones that you would normally think of. One club packages up donated items for delivery to homeless veterans. Another involves being a mentor to Special Olympic athletes.

“Somehow, she also finds time to volunteer at Lutheran Hospital,” Donna says proudly.

Unlike other foreign exchange students whose stay is only a year or less, the students in the USEWB program stay a minimum of four years through high school.

“They are granted an F1 visa,” Donna says. “I have had students here as young as 13. They go through high school then into college. Some even go on to get a master’s and doctorate. After they finish with their education, they are granted an additional three years to work in a U.S. company. Often times, these companies will sponsor the person to get their green card.”

Many of her hosted students maintain contact with Donna for years after they have left her home.

“I’m still their host mother,” she says. “I have one student from Vietnam who was with me years ago. He recently wrote to me and said that he was getting married and invited me to come... so I’m going to Vietnam.”

Nancy plans to stay with Donna through the summer while she takes some additional courses at Dowling. Next fall, she is hoping to stay with Donna again.

“It is very nice here; it feels like home,” she says. ■



Yikin Zhou (a.k.a. Nancy) seems to be quite at home living in Urbandale with her host mom, Donna. She has lived with her since the beginning of the school year and hopes to stay next year as well. Photo by Joe Baumgarten

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URBANDALE COUNCIL RECAP



April 1, 2025 - Council Meeting

The Mayor and City Council met on Tuesday, April 1, and began with the swearing-in of five new police officers, each introduced with personal and professional backgrounds that highlighted their dedication to public service and the diversity they bring to the force. Officers Kale Crimmins, Om Tiwari, Rocky Lutz, Ryan Brungardt, and Jackson Smith were formally welcomed to the Urbandale Police Department.

Mayor Andeweg issued three proclamations recognizing important observances. April was

proclaimed as Fair Housing Month, reaffirming Urbandale's commitment to equal housing access. National Arab American Heritage Month was also recognized, celebrating the contributions of Arab Americans to the city's cultural and civic life. Lastly, the Mayor read the "All Are Welcome in Urbandale" proclamation, emphasizing the City's commitment to being a discrimination-free and inclusive community. This aligns closely with the City's Strategic Plan and its goals around inclusivity, public safety, and community health.

Three final plats were approved for Magnolia Heights, located north of Waterford Road and east of 156th Street. These plats are part of a multi-phase residential neighborhood that also supports walkability and access to Waterford Elementary.

Site plans were approved for two park improvements. Dunlap Park will see a new accessible restroom facility added, while a significant upgrade is planned at Walker Johnston Park with a new open-air shelter. This new shelter will include restrooms, storage, and ample seating space. The shelter will also include an adult changing table—enhancing accessibility for all residents.

March 18, 2025 - Council Meeting

The Mayor and City Council met on Tuesday, March 18, 2025. Mayor Andeweg issued two proclamations recognizing the Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIP) for providing free Medicare counseling and declaring Monday, March 31 as Transgender Day of Visibility, affirming the city's commitment to inclusivity.

The Council moved forward with the sale of nearly \$13 million in General Obligation Bonds, which will help fund infrastructure projects outlined in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Cities commonly issue bonds to secure funding for major projects that enhance public infrastructure and services. Instead of paying for everything upfront, the city spreads out the cost over time, much like taking out a mortgage for a house. This approach allows the city to invest in essential infrastructure and improvements while keeping property tax rates stable. The money raised from bonds is then paid back over time using property tax revenue.

The Council approved a pickleball court reservation policy for Lions Park and approved several engineering agreements for trail replacements, storm sewer improvements, and streetscape enhancements along Douglas Avenue.

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

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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.



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.



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INHERITING debt from a loved one

The death of a loved one is a traumatic experience — even more so when the deceased left debts to be dealt with. Who inherits debt when you die? In general, surviving family members aren't responsible for the debts of a decedent. But there are major exceptions.

A spouse will inherit credit card debt if they were a joint account holder. Likewise, a co-signer on a loan will automatically be responsible for the balance. The spouse is potentially liable for the reasonable and necessary expenses of the family and education of the children, even if not on the account.

Secured debt, like mortgages and vehicle loans, must be paid if heirs wish to retain the asset. A mortgage creates a lien; if the loan is



unpaid, the lender can foreclose the mortgage and take possession of the house. A vehicle will be repossessed if the note is unpaid. The right of foreclosure and repossession exist even if a surviving spouse isn't on title to the asset, or if inheriting children didn't sign the loan papers.

If you don't have sufficient savings, consider purchasing life insurance to ensure that debt is paid off. An heir could also purchase assets from your estate, and the proceeds can be used to pay the debt.

One way to identify debts is to order a copy of the deceased's credit report. The credit report may show loans, lines of credit, or credit cards that were unknown. Obtaining a credit report is also important because personal information can be stolen.

Identity thieves can use the identities of a deceased person to fraudulently open credit card accounts, apply for loans and file tax

returns. Referred to as "ghosting," this type of fraud is difficult to catch because survivors don't often monitor the deceased's credit activity. Notify the three credit-reporting bureaus and ask them to place a "deceased alert" on the credit report.

Finally, be careful about taking money or property that belonged to the person who died if there are debts outstanding. Even if you aren't personally responsible for the debt, creditors may have a claim on the property and may look to you for payment if you obtained the assets without following the proper procedure. Get advice from an estate planning or probate attorney before distributing assets. ■

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DON'T PUT all your eggs in one basket: a financial perspective

The old saying, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket," is often used as advice in various contexts, including financial planning. However, after nearly two decades of hearing it from clients, prospects and even family members, I've realized that its meaning is often misinterpreted. Is this proverb always a wise approach? Or is there a deeper message we need to consider?



Let's start with the origin of the phrase. It was first coined by Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes in 1605 in "Don Quixote." His version was: "It is the part of a wise man to keep himself today for tomorrow, and not to venture all his eggs in one basket." When I first read this book years ago, I didn't think much about financial planning, but today, after nearly 20 years as a financial advisor, I see how this saying is frequently applied to investment strategies.

Many believe that "not putting all your eggs in one basket" means spreading your investments across multiple financial advisors or avoiding a single fund family like T. Rowe Price or American Funds. Others suggest diversifying even further by using multiple financial institutions to avoid potential fraud or mismanagement. While these concerns are valid, it's important to consider what we're actually trying to achieve by spreading out our resources.

Two months ago, my car needed repairs. I've trusted my mechanic for more than 15 years, and while he's great at what he does, certain tasks required outsourcing to specialized shops. Despite this, I didn't doubt his ability to manage the work and ensure its quality. I trusted him because of our long-standing relationship, and he coordinated with specialists while remaining my main point of contact. The same principle applies to financial planning.

A Financial Advisor and Fiduciary's role is to act in the best interests of their clients, offering holistic strategies that sometimes involve collaboration with trusted specialists. It is not uncommon that they may work with "sub-contractors" for tasks like tax planning or estate management but remain the primary contact. Much like a contractor who coordinates multiple subcontractors to build a house, a financial advisor ensures all financial strategies align to meet their clients' goals.

The key takeaway isn't necessarily about avoiding putting all your eggs in one basket. It is about being strategic in your approach. Diversification in investments is important, but it's equally crucial to have a trusted professional coordinating everything. One advisor can help you navigate complex financial decisions, and it often makes more sense than spreading your trust across many advisors.

So, when you hear "Don't put all your eggs in one basket," I encourage you to think about your true objective. If you're talking about diversification, that's one thing, but if you're making your strategy overly complicated, it might be time to rethink your approach. Sometimes, a strong partnership with the right advisor is all you need.

If you're unsure about your financial plan, this may be a good time to schedule a review meeting. ■

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

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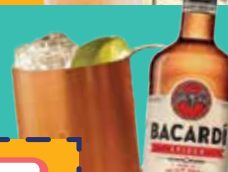
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FAITH By Steve Smith

WELCOME repetition

Older people are in the habit of repeating themselves because they forget a previous conversation. Christians are in the habit of repeating themselves on purpose when it comes to sharing the reality and riches of Jesus' resurrection.

The apostle Paul reveals why recounting the resurrection is significant. "For I delivered to you as of first importance... that Christ died for our sins... and that He was raised on the third day..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Christ's death and resurrection are foremost and foundational teachings of Christianity.

All of humanity suffers from the same malady: "...both Jews and Greeks are all under sin... There is none righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:9b-10). Our natural and practical bent is toward selfishness, not surrender to God. In our thoughts, words and actions, our lives are characterized by rebellion against God's word and will.

In the same way a rebellious child deserves punishment for their waywardness, humanity's guilt requires God's just reward consisting of eternal condemnation (Romans 5:12).

But God's love provided a way for the guilty to be free from our deserved penalty. "Christ died for our sins," taking the punishment for our evil upon Himself so that all who trust in Him are made right in God's eyes (Romans 3:22).

Christ's sacrificial death enabling those who believe to be forgiven and enter eternal life was "according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). The entire Bible contains the message of Christ's death for our sin. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" trilogy is all about the return of the ring. God's word is all about salvation from sin that Christ's death brings.

Of equal importance and also "in accordance with the Scriptures" was Christ's resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Christ's death paid the debt of guilt we owed, and His resurrection proved God's acceptance of that payment (Romans 4:25). When a person believes, the benefits of that divine transaction are applied to them, and they are "made righteous" (Romans 5:19b) before God. It was Christ's death and resurrection together that accomplished salvation for all who believe (Romans 3:28).

I never tired of hearing my great grandfather recount how Karl Hubbell struck out "murderous row" — Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Jimmy Foxx — in the 1934 baseball All-Star game.

We should never tire of hearing or heralding the greatest good news ever told, "Christ died for sin, once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God..." (1 Peter 3:18).

We repeat that message often as an invitation for unbelievers to trust Christ for salvation and inspiration for Christ followers to express appreciation. ■



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

BECKER serves others

Gives back to his neighborhood

When Mark Becker and his wife, Susan, first moved to Urbandale in the early 2000s, they kept to themselves. They were both working and had a special needs child at home, all of which kept them busy.

A few years later, Becker had a heart attack. As he recovered, his doctor advised him against activities like shoveling snow. That's when his neighbors started pitching in, clearing his sidewalk and driveway after snowfalls.

"People were kind, and they didn't need to be," Becker says.

A bit later, the Beckers' son passed away. As Becker's health improved, he knew it was time to give back.

When a neighbor down the street needed assistance with yard work, he helped out. Then, little by little, more and more neighbors needed help for various reasons.

Today, Becker clears 24 neighbors' driveways and sidewalks.

"It's just kind of morphed on its own," Becker says.

For years, he used his dad's equipment — his father had owned a farm in Boone County and had plenty of tools. Eventually, however, he secured a tractor with a heated cab, allowing him to stay outside longer to clear snow.

In addition to helping at neighbors' properties, Becker also clears snow on the Urbandale trails surrounding his neighborhood.

What he enjoys most about pitching in is meeting so many neighbors he hadn't known before — people with their own stories, abilities and



Mark Becker bundles up and heads out on his John Deere to clear neighbors' walks and driveways, as well as neighborhood paths.

limitations.

"It's been a blessing in that it's a way for us to meet so many more of our neighbors," Becker says. "We've enjoyed getting to make the connections of community just by finding ways to help with no expectations or monetary considerations — just stepping in and helping where we can."

Becker does all his work for free. A handshake is all he asks for.

But his neighbors are still incredibly generous. Some bring out cinnamon rolls or a fresh loaf of bread, while others drop off a dessert or meal, always unexpected.

Ultimately, for Becker, this act of service is a way to give back and pay it forward. As someone who had a special needs child, he always appreciated when people stepped in unasked to help.

"It's been a joy to give where we can," Becker says. "This is where I'm planted, my home, my neighborhood, and where I get to make the world better." ■



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COMMUNITY

NEW Urbandale Food Pantry now open



The Urbandale Food Pantry announced the official fundraising kickoff for its new facility, with \$2.3 million raised toward the



\$3.5 million goal. The pantry opened April 1.

At a recent Pack the Pantry event, city leaders and local media gathered to celebrate this milestone. During the event, Urbandale Mayor Bob Andeweg placed the first item of food on the shelves of the new pantry, marking the beginning of a new chapter for the organization.

"We are just days away from opening our new building, which will allow us to better serve our mission of feeding neighbors with dignity and compassion," said Patty Sneddon-Kisting, executive director of the Urbandale Food Pantry. "This new space will not only expand our capacity but also create a welcoming environment where families can access food with respect and security."

The new facility, located at 7901 Douglas Ave., is a two-story building that more than doubles the size of the former pantry operations, with a spacious warehouse, larger shopping areas, and a dedicated food recovery space, referred to as the "anytime room." Additionally, the building features a lobby and reception area, enhancing the pantry's overall accessibility.

"Our families have long braved the elements — from rain to snow and extreme heat — to access the food they need. This new facility will allow us to offer them a far more welcoming, dignified experience," Sneddon-Kisting added.

The upper floor houses offices for pantry staff, as well as shared community spaces that align with the pantry's vision of providing holistic support for families. Additionally, as part of an ongoing development agreement with the city of Urbandale, the grounds will feature a community garden to further engage and support local residents.

"Hunger is rarely about food and more about impossible decisions families have to make, so how can we support them better," Sneddon-Kisting asked.

The fundraising campaign continues with \$2.3 million raised toward the \$3.5 million goal. A dedicated campaign committee, including Mayor



Andeweg, former Polk County Supervisor Bob Brownell, and City Council Member Bridget Carberry Montgomery, is spearheading efforts to meet the remaining goal.

Interested donors are invited to contact Sneddon-Kisting for more information or to schedule a tour. Donations can also be made

online at urbandalefoodpantry.org.

Since its founding in 2008, the Urbandale Food Pantry has seen consistent growth in the number of individuals served. Today, the pantry supports more than 2,000 families per month and has expanded its reach beyond Urbandale to serve residents across Polk County and

beyond.

In 2024, the pantry distributed more than four million pounds of food to those in need. The Urbandale Food Pantry is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For more information about the Urbandale Food Pantry, visit urbandalefoodpantry.org. ■

RECIPE

By Jolene Goodman

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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LIBRARY

By Staci Stanton, Programming and
Outreach Manager

URBANDALE Public Library news

The First Night of the Crescent Moon: An Evening with Author George Khal

Join us on Tuesday, April
29 at 6 p.m. to hear author
George Khal recount his
childhood, from growing
up in Palestine to fleeing
to Cairo and later the United States amid the turmoil in the Middle East
in the 1950s and 1960s. Khal's memoir chronicles his struggles with
the expectations of his parents and finding his way once he arrived in
America. This memoir is a vivid retelling of one young man's experience
as part of the Middle East diaspora.

Urbandale Public Library

3520 86th St., Urbandale

515-278-3945

www.urbandalelibrary.org

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

Friday – Saturday: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Sunday: noon to 6 p.m.

Living With Nature: Being Coyote Aware In and Out of the City

Join Iowa DNR Wildlife Biologist Andy Kellner on Saturday, April 19 at
1 p.m. to discuss coyotes, an adaptable wildlife species that lives inside
and outside of urban places. Topics will include coyote history, ecology,
and tips for avoiding human-wildlife conflict.

New website launching soon

The library is in the process of transitioning to a new website to improve
user experience and overall functionality. The new website will make it
easier to discover library resources and services, register for library events,
and access our vast collection, both digital and print. We will share more
information on our social media when we prepare to launch the new site.

Sustainability Fair

As a member of the Sustainable Libraries Initiative, the Urbandale
Public Library has established a number of partnerships prioritizing
sustainability, including recycling programs with Metro Waste Authority
and Blank Park Zoo's Eco Cell Campaign.

Building upon these initiatives, the community is invited to join
us on Thursday, May 8 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Charles Gabus
Memorial Tree Park for our second annual Sustainability Fair. The fair
will highlight various resources available to the community as you begin
or continue your sustainability journey.

Representatives include Blank Park Zoo, Cultivate Local Food
Connections, Down to Earth Living, Electronic Asset Security,
GreenIowa Americorps, Iowa Family Gardens, Iowa Outdoor Products,
Metro Waste Authority, Neighborhood Finance Corporation, Pocket
Prairies of Des Moines, the Rain Campaign and Sustainable Urbandale.
Bring your own water bottle to fill up at the water station provided by
Des Moines Water Works and enjoy fresh fruit from Urbandale Hy-Vee.
While you're checking out all of the different booths, enjoy an acoustic
and interactive performance from the 4Neys. Attendees can enter a prize
drawing to win a sustainable gift basket. ■



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MEET Mirela Enderton

Helping students shine

The Urbandale School District has been Mirela Enderton's work home for the last 15 years. She began working with Urbandale schools at Olmstead Elementary School. When the schools went through building changes, she shifted to Karen Acres as a classroom teacher, spending the majority of her years teaching fifth grade. In 2021, she accepted a new position as Elementary Social Emotional Behavior Mental Health Specialist serving all elementary buildings in Urbandale. This year is her first year as a school counselor.

"Working in the education field was more of a calling than it was an inspiration from a single event," Mirela shares. "I actually started my career path in nursing, seeking to make a difference in the medical field. But there was something missing there. I remember opening a college program catalog to try to determine my next steps, and the first page that it opened to was elementary education. I know it doesn't seem like an exciting way to start a new adventure, but it felt right. I could support kids from the beginning, making a difference in their lives from the very start. I've never turned back."

To pursue a calling in education, Mirela returned to school to obtain a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Grand View University and then earned her master's degree in counseling from Buena Vista University.

"Just like our students, we teachers and educators are always learning to get better at what we do," she says.

Mirela says, when she works with kids, she thinks about different ways she can help her students. As a counselor, she gets to support her students socially, academically and emotionally, and she gets to spend one-on-one time with them, giving them a space to feel heard, understood and encouraged to reach their full potential.

"In general, a lot of what I do involves tasks like teaching students skills like empathy and study skills, collaborating with teachers and staff about what they see as barriers for students, and working together to support students, helping oversee peer conflict resolution and communicating with parents," Mirela explains. "I do my best to help students feel heard and to help them reach their potential."

The most challenging part of her job is trying to get to everyone, she says.

"There never seems to be enough time in the day to do everything we want to do, even with two counselors at the school," she shares.

Her favorite part of being a school counselor is building relationships with the students, staff and parents.

"It's a different level of connection than what you get as a classroom teacher," Mirela says. "It's a great feeling to watch the students grow and change as they implement what they learn."

Mirela says she hopes the community can see she and her fellow educators are doing the best they can as a team and village to support each and every student at the school, in their homes, and throughout the community.

"Every day, we work to give the students the chance and encourage them to shine no matter where they are," she says. ■



As a counselor, Mirela Enderton gets to support her students socially, academically and emotionally.

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Source: American Academy of Pediatrics 3/25

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

Upcoming in Urbandale 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.

Ask an audiologist at Edencrest at Timberline

Friday, April 25, 9 a.m. to noon
14001 Douglas Parkway, Urbandale

The public is invited for a special event on hearing health in collaboration with CaptionCall and Sorenson. The agenda includes a presentation on hearing loss, discussion on hearing aids, presentation on CaptionCall candidacy and eligibility, hearing aid checks and routine maintenance, and an opportunity to sign up for CaptionCall service. Light refreshments and treats will be provided. RSVP by Monday, April 21, by calling 515-601-2948.

The Great Egg Hunt

Saturday, April 19, 10-11 a.m.
Giovannetti Community Shelter, 8900 Douglas Ave.,
Urbandale

Kids can fill up their baskets with all the candy and eggs they see. Some eggs even have a few special prizes in them. Meet at the parking lot at the Giovannetti Community Shelter for the send off promptly at 10 a.m. Come early as eggs are found quickly.



Downtown Urbandale Open House

Thursday, May 1, 5-7 p.m.
Urbandale City Hall, 3600 86th
St., Urbandale

Talk about what's next for downtown Urbandale. Stop by anytime between 5-7 p.m. to see the master plan, chat with the planning team and share your thoughts.



Urbandale Historical Society events

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

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

- **May 18, "A Tour of Urbandale"** presented by Pat Finnerty at the library.
- **June 8, "Urbandale Schools"** by Dr. Doca and Dean Hatch.

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

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

Talk with Officials

Saturday, April 26, 10:30 a.m. to noon
Urbandale Chamber of Commerce
office (limited seating), 2830 100th St.,
Suite 110, Urbandale, and available
virtually

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

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

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

Kids Kamp

Urbandale Parks and Recreation

Sign up for summer Kids Kamp by Friday, May 9, and get 15% off each week. For more information, visit www.urbandale.org/1346/Youth-Programs#kidskamp.

May Market

Saturday, May 10
4010 70th St.

There will be some items from the Olmsted/Urban House on sale that day. These items are duplicates of other items in the house. They can be viewed on the porch.

Urbandale Public Piano

May 1 - Sept. 1
Urbandale Library Patio

The Public Piano will be available through Sept. 1 during regular library hours. It is free for public use.

Mayor's Bike Ride

Saturday, May 3, 9 a.m.
Walnut Creek Regional
Park Shelter

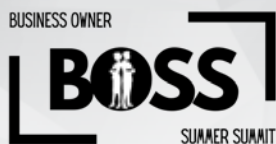
Meet at the large shelter at Walnut Creek Regional Park for the Mayor's Bike Ride. Coffee and donuts are available from 8:15-9 a.m. prior to the start of the ride. This is a free event brought to you by the city of Urbandale.



Art Gallery Reception: Leslie Leavenworth and Sharon Smith

Sunday, May 4, 1-2 p.m.
Urbandale Public Library Art Gallery,
3520 86th St.

The public is invited for light refreshments at a reception to meet painter Leslie Leavenworth and jewelry designer Sharon Smith. Their joint exhibit in the Art Gallery runs through May 17. ■



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WELLNESS

By Annette Smith

DIZZINESS and headaches: the hidden connection

Have you ever felt lightheaded, off-balance, or struggled with frequent headaches? You're not alone. Many people don't realize these symptoms are often linked. Dizziness and headaches can stem from various causes, including inner ear dysfunction, neurological conditions, cardiovascular issues, medication side effects, muscle imbalances, and even stress or anxiety. With so many potential triggers, identifying the root cause is key to lasting relief.



One often-overlooked factor is the neck. Your neck plays a vital role in posture and balance, and when its muscles or joints aren't functioning properly, they can send mixed signals to the brain. This can result in dizziness, tension headaches or even migraines. Poor posture, past injuries and everyday stress can all contribute to these issues.

The good news? You don't have to live with these symptoms. Gentle movement, targeted exercises, and hands-on therapy can often reduce dizziness and headaches, helping you feel more stable and in control of your daily life.

If you aren't sure what's causing your dizziness or headaches, it's time to seek help. Understanding the root cause is the first step toward lasting relief. ■

Information provided by Annette Smith, Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy, 10888 Hickman Road, Suite 2B, Clive, Iowa, 50325, 515-520-8037, mountainlaurelpt.com.

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



JUMP Start

Shade Tree Auto presents its first automobile in the Jump Start veteran's vehicle donation program on Tuesday, March 11.



Shade Tree Auto presents its first automobile in the Jump Start veteran's vehicle donation program.



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Zech, Lillian and Megan Carlson



Tammy Bushman and Katie Wold



J.P. Pearson and Henry Dudley



Genevieve and Melina Carlson



Amie Swain and Gina Boles



Susan Shaffer and Sylvia Canterbury



Destiny Bartmess and Seth Bartmess

AM Exchange

Urbandale AM Exchange
was hosted by Paychex HR
Tuesday, March 25.



Kyle Lee and Keith Riden



Trystin Stille and Lori Jess Bishop



Brandi Smith and Lori Gelhaar



Santee Cook and Lynsey Mulder



Eric Williams and Matt Nuetzman



Tony Ekman and Kyle Younger



Scott Wendel and Kevin McClure



Abbey Hays and Ashley Johnson



Aaron Colyer and Caleb Gilbertson



Melissa Stimple and Nicole Berger



Brenna Strawhacker and Emma McCauley

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