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APRIL 2025

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MAGAZINE

Homes AWAY FROM HOME

Local families share experiences
hosting foreign exchange students

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RECIPE

New programs for adults offer something for everyone
LIBRARY

Annual alumni banquet brings generations together
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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 is from Norway. He lived with a family in my hometown, and we spent our senior year of high school together.

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

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

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

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

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

I am eagerly awaiting his reply. ■

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Homes

AWAY FROM HOME

Local families share experiences
hosting foreign exchange students

By Rachel Harrington

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

Kiel Archer and kids enjoy time with foreign exchange student Chiara of Italy.

FEATURE

A journey in parenting

When Jamie Rich was in high school, she had a friend who was a foreign exchange student. In 2022, that friend shared on social media about Iowa Resource for International Service.

"I looked into it, filled out the forms, and started the process of becoming an exchange student host," Jamie says.

The whole process took longer than expected since the school had never worked with the program before, but nine months after the initial call, she and Jordan Sargent were approved to be hosts. They welcomed Melis Ceylan from Turkey for the 2023-2024 school year just two weeks before school would begin.

"Melis is very bright, smart, and a fun person to have around," Jordan says. "Her parents are English teachers in Turkey, so she had a good grasp of English, but there were some language barriers when it comes to the slang we use. For instance, she learned that root beer isn't beer."

Jordan says that Melis was the biggest Taylor Swift fan he had ever met, rivaled only by his brother, who bonded with her over the pop star.



Jordan Sargent and Jamie Rich hosted foreign exchange student Melis Ceylan from Turkey.

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"Melis got really excited to ride a yellow school bus," Jamie says. "She'd only seen them in the movies. She also told us that she needed to go to Taco Bell. It was a goal of hers to try different restaurants here like Chick-fil-A, Taco Bell and Culver's. Culver's was hands-down her favorite."

Jamie shares that much of the convenience we are used to here isn't available to Melis at home. The local Fareway was big to her, so when they took her to Walmart, it was a huge experience. She also enjoyed secondhand stores and Sephora. All U.S. holidays were different for Melis except for New Year's Day, but she was really excited for Christmas, even singing Christmas songs in August.

At school, Melis was considered a senior, so she did all the senior activities.

"She played volleyball, and she joined track as a thrower in the spring. She really enjoyed choir," Jamie says. "It was probably her favorite activity to be involved in."

She made quite a few friends in Bondurant and attended homecoming, prom and senior night. Jamie and Jordan do not have children

yet, so they had to learn to navigate getting Melis to all her activities.

"I had to rearrange my work schedule to whatever she had going on like games or senior night," Jamie says. "Some of the experiences she had were good, and some were challenges to navigate friend/parent roles, but all of it was good parenting lessons for us for the future."

Melis also took a couple of AP classes that transferred back with her to Turkey, allowing her to graduate when she returned.

Jordan says he enjoyed Melis' positivity and wonder.

"Everything was an adventure to her, even going to the store," Jamie says. "We became tourists ourselves so that she could have the experiences. We included her in everything we did, such as concerts and events, and it didn't have to be extravagant. She soaked everything in. She wanted to learn."

Both Jamie and Jordan say their experience with IRIS was a great one, and perhaps one day they will do it again. The couple plans to visit Melis in Turkey this coming fall.

Making memories in the little things

As a young married couple, Kiel and Gina Archer began to consider hosting a foreign exchange student.

"I remembered the international students at my school in high school and how I enjoyed getting to know them, and my wife and I loved to travel," Kiel says. "We thought hosting an exchange student would be a fun thing to do. We thought it would be a good way to learn about other cultures, to celebrate and explore all the differences."

Kiel says their family is multi-ethnic because Gina is Native American/Pacific Islander and he is just a "regular Iowa guy," so the idea of welcoming more of the world into their home fostered their sense of wonder about what they might learn by becoming hosts.

In 2011, the Archers lived in Indianola and welcomed their first foreign exchange student, Sunny, a girl from Taiwan.

"We didn't have kids yet, so we thought it funny that we had a teen in the house before we



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FEATURE

ever had a baby,” Kiel says.

But that family dynamic wasn't going to last long as they learned they were expecting not long after Sunny arrived. Sunny was a junior that school year and learned about Iowa high school life.

Fast forward several years to a different home and larger family in Bondurant. The Archers welcomed Chiara from Italy for the school year through the International Student Exchange Program. Chiara is 17 and considered a senior. She is the youngest sibling in her family back home. She is from Bologna, Italy, a much larger city than her temporary home here. The transition to small-town Iowa and to a host family that has much younger children was a bit trying at first, but the Archers and Chiara have adjusted.

“The experience has definitely changed from when we were a newly married host couple,” Kiel says. “We do a lot more family-focused activities now. We try to do as many Iowa things as we can, like visiting Zombie Burger, going to high school football games and visiting the State Capitol.”

For spring break, they asked Chiara



Gina Archer and the Archer children welcome Chiara at the Des Moines airport. Chiara is from Bologna, Italy.

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what she would like to do that was uniquely American. She chose to go to the Mall of America.

“We got to see her in a big sister role while there,” Kiel says. “We also got to see her be a teen just like any other here in Iowa in her love for roller coasters and riding them with our kids.”

The Archers have included Chiara in all their family trips and activities. Gina’s family is from Oklahoma, and, on a trip to see them, the group hiked up a mountain to Turner Falls.

“Every day there had been nice except for that day,” Gina remembers. “It was raining, and we got soaked but, in the end, were able to see a beautiful waterfall.”

Most challenges the Archers say they encountered as a host family revolved around language barriers. When Sunny was with them, they didn’t have as many tools to use, but with Chiara, when there is a struggle to communicate a particular word or concept, they use Google Translate to help them. They have also had to navigate gauging and differentiating between doing life as normal with Chiara and giving her a uniquely American experience.

“We want the exchange students to integrate

into the community as much as possible, to take ownership of their experience,” he says. “We also know that high school is still high school no matter where you are, and we’re trying to make sure it’s a positive experience for her here. The memories we have made are mostly in the little things, like when we went geocaching together during spring break.”

Chiara has shared her culture with the Archers throughout the year. One of the Archers’ favorites foods she has made is carbonara, a bacon and spaghetti dish. Chiara also found out how different our diets and palates are here in the states than her native Mediterranean diet.

“We eat a lot more meat here,” Kiel says.

Chiara tried tater tots for the first time at Sonic and taco pizza from Casey’s.

Chiara has bonded with the Archers in moments like shopping for homecoming and prom dresses, cooking and family game time. She has also made a lot of friends since coming to Bondurant. In the classroom, the school makes a few language accommodations when they are needed, such as making sure Chiara understands the material and what is being asked of the students.

“The teachers have been very helpful, and the community has been very supportive,” Kiel says.

Chiara will return home at the end of May, but the Archers aren’t done hosting. They’ve already signed up and been matched with a student named Claudia from Spain for next year.

Kiel and Gina say their favorite aspects about being a host family are learning about different cultures, how we are similar, and not focusing as much on the differences. They want their kids to take away being world learners and appreciating other cultures. Gina advises others who are considering becoming host families to focus on the mentality that the exchange student is another one of your kids in almost every way, and that the sooner you have access to communicate with the student before their arrival, the better you can iron out kinks and expectations on both sides. They share that hosting an exchange student is a low-cost investment, mostly just requiring a bed for them to sleep and making sure they are nourished and loved. Some programs offer half the school year options if someone wants to try it out. ■

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News from the **BONDURANT-FARRAR** COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

April 2025

Hands-On Learning: Spotlight on Industrial Technology Course Offerings

Did you know Bondurant-Farrar High School offers 13 industrial technology courses designed to equip students with hands-on skills and real-world knowledge?

▶ Industrial Technology Course Offerings:

- Woods 1 & 2
- Understanding Construction 1 & 2
- Basic Electricity, Advanced Electricity
- Metals 1 & 2
- Auto Maintenance & Repair
- Home Maintenance & Repair
- Industrial Design & Production
- Construction Technology 1 & 2

These courses provide opportunities for students to explore careers in the trades while also developing practical skills and problem-solving abilities.



▶ Spotlight: Automotive Maintenance & Repair

Automotive Maintenance and Repair offers hands-on experience with real vehicles. Taught by Mr. Long, the course covers everything from basic maintenance to engine repair.

Students also gain valuable knowledge about financing and negotiating vehicle purchases. Whether they want to become informed car owners or pursue careers in automotive work, students have opportunities to explore their interests and prepare for life beyond high school.



Celebrating Our School Board in May

May is School Board Appreciation Month, and we're honoring our board members for their dedication to our students, staff, and families. Their leadership helps ensure every student has the tools needed to succeed in a safe, supportive learning environment. Join us in celebrating their impact in May!

We appreciate our board members!



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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.



REAL ESTATE

By Austin Sullivan

IS NOW a good time to buy or sell?

This is one of the most common questions I hear, and, honestly, there isn't a one-size-fits-all answer. The truth is, the best time to buy or sell depends on your unique situation. My advice is always simple: If it makes sense for you to move, then it's the right time.



What about interest rates?

A frequent follow-up question is, "Where are interest rates today, and where are they headed?" It's a great question, but the reality is that people buy and sell homes every day, regardless of interest rate fluctuations.

What truly matters to most of my clients is their monthly payment — not just the rate itself. While interest rates play a role, it's crucial to focus on affordability and finding a payment that fits your budget.

Another important consideration: What happens when rates drop? Lower rates could lead to increased competition, fewer available homes, and a surge in bidding wars — all factors that may drive prices higher. These are possibilities worth keeping in mind when deciding whether to act now or wait.

Sell now or wait for spring?

As the year winds down, another top question I get is: "Should we sell in the winter or wait for the spring market?" There are two ways to look at this:

Selling in winter: Buyers who are willing to brave the cold, snow and wind to tour homes in January and February are highly motivated. While there may be fewer buyers in the winter, those who are actively looking tend to be serious about purchasing.

Waiting for spring: The spring market typically brings more buyers, but it also means increased competition. More homes on the market give buyers more options, which could impact how quickly your home sells or the offers you receive.

At the end of the day, it all comes back to this: If it makes sense for you to move, then it's a good time.

The bottom line

Every home and buyer is different, and certain market conditions may make one time better than another. But, overall, we're still seeing a strong real estate market.

Whether you're thinking of buying or selling, the best move is to assess your situation, talk with a Realtor for additional market information and make the decision that works best for you. ■

Information provided by Austin Sullivan, Re/Max Concepts, 3880 Prairie Fire N.W., Altoona. 515-943-9797. austin@soldwithsullivan.com

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NEW programs for adults offer something for everyone

Bondurant Community Library has added some exciting new programs for adults in 2025.

- The library kicked off its

2025 Humanities Iowa Speaker Series

in February with "AI and the Human Future." The next event in the series, a presentation

called "Your Grampa and

Grampa's Farm" is at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 29. This presentation focuses on the history of the Secrest livestock farm near West Branch.

Attendees can learn about farming in the late 1800s and early 1900s, including the ingenious farm machinery and tools that enabled growth and prosperity. Old farm tools are shared as part of the presentation.

Some you won't recognize. The final presentation in the series, "Savor Iowa's Culinary History," is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Thursday, July 31. This fun and interactive program serves up fascinating tidbits and cooking tips related to more than 150 years of Iowa cuisine and ethnic food traditions from all corners of the state. These programs have been funded by Humanities Iowa and the State Historical Society, and they are free and open to the public.

- In addition to the Humanities Iowa Speaker Series, the library has added a monthly **Introvert Book Club**. At this book club, attendees can escape into a good book and enjoy a mocktail. There's no assigned reading. Just bring any book you feel like diving into. Attendees briefly share what they're reading and then read in companionable silence for the rest of the hour. This book club, which meets at 6 p.m. the third Tuesday of the month, is perfect for introverts or anyone who has trouble finding quiet time to read.

- Those who are looking for a more social event can try the library's new monthly **Coffee Social**. Attendees can enjoy a good chat over a cup of coffee (or tea) at Coffee Social. Bring a friend or come solo and make new ones. Beverages and conversation starters are provided. Coffee Social is at 1 p.m. the third Friday of the month.

Here is what's happening in May:

- Story Times: Tuesday and Wednesday at 10:30 a.m., Friday at 12:45 p.m.
- Baby Story and Play: Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.
- Fit for Life: Mondays and Thursdays at 8:30 a.m.
- May 1: Adult Craft Night at 6 p.m., registration required
- May 5: After School Cinco de Mayo party at 2:30 p.m.
- May 6: Book Club (grades 3-5) at 6 p.m.
- May 7: Pokémon Club at 4:15 p.m.
- May 11: Teens Only Sunday Funday at 3 p.m.
- May 12: After School BINGO at 2:30 p.m.
- May 13: Book Discussion for Adults at 6 p.m.
- May 14: Curious and Creative Kids Club at 4:15 p.m.
- May 15: Anime Club at 4 p.m.
- May 16: Coffee Social at 1 p.m.
- May 19: After School Art Program at 2:30 p.m.
- May 20: Book Club (grades 6-8) at 5:30 p.m.
- May 20: Introvert Book Club at 6 p.m.
- May 22: Understanding healthcare.gov at 5:30 p.m.
- May 25 and 26: LIBRARY CLOSED for Memorial Day
- May 27: Adult Crafternoon at 1 p.m.
- May 29: Your Grampa and Gramma's Farm at 5:30 p.m.
- NOTE: Sign up for Summer Reading beginning May 19. ■

Bondurant Community Library

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SUMMER learning loss

How to keep your child's mind sharp

As the school year winds down and summer break begins, many students relish the chance to take a break from homework and tests. However, as the weeks pass, many children experience summer learning loss, also known as the "summer slide." This refers to the decline in academic skills that often happens over the summer when students are not actively engaging with learning materials. Research shows that students can lose up to one to three months of academic progress during this time, especially in subjects like reading and math.

The main reason for summer learning loss is the lack of structure and routine that school provides. During the academic year, students are engaged in daily lessons, homework and learning activities, which help reinforce important skills. In the summer, without these activities, students may forget key concepts, or their academic growth may stagnate.

The impact of this learning loss can extend beyond the summer break. Students who return to school may find themselves struggling to catch up, affecting their confidence and motivation. Summer learning loss can widen the achievement gap, as students may not have access to enriching programs or resources during the break.



It is important to make learning a fun, engaging part of the summer. Personalized summer programs are designed to help prevent summer learning loss while keeping students excited about learning. Through one-on-one or small group instruction, it's important to focus on each child's unique needs, whether it's improving reading, math or study skills. Flexible scheduling allows families to choose tutoring sessions that fit around summer vacations and activities.

Additionally, there are simple, effective ways to keep learning alive at home. Encourage your child to read daily or start a summer reading challenge. Help them practice math through everyday activities like measuring ingredients for a recipe or keeping track of family expenses. Visiting museums or cultural sites is also a great way to spark curiosity and engage with new subjects.

By keeping your child engaged in learning during the summer, you can prevent the summer slide and set them up for success in the upcoming school year. Summer tutoring is the perfect way to help make sure your child's academic growth doesn't take a break this summer. ■

Information provided by Angela Jones, Owner and Center Director of Sylvan Learning of Altoona, 301 Center Place, Suite C-1, Altoona, 515-957-2923, Angela.Jones@sylvanlearning.com.




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Bondurant *News*

April 2025



CONNECT WITH US...

Did you know that our city entities have 11 social media sites offering information about what is happening in the city? Make sure you follow us! Also, a city and library newsletter can be sent to your email. Remember that the Bondurant Living Magazine publishes a City-specific spread sent to every resident's mailbox.

ENGAGE WITH US...

Have you wanted to attend a public meeting at City Hall but needed to know when the meetings were or how to conduct yourself during a public meeting? Guides are being developed to help you. Find them on the City's website.

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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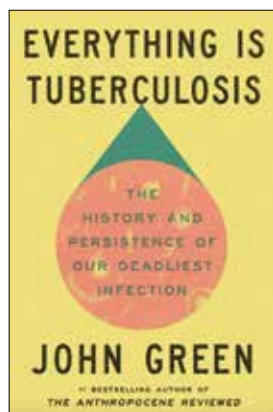


'Everything Is Tuberculosis: The History and Persistence of Our Deadliest Infection'

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

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

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



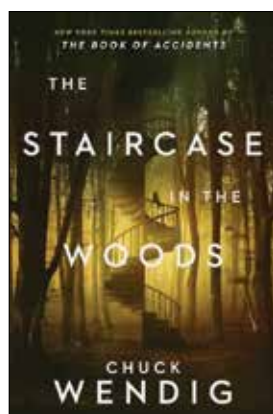
By John Green
03/18/25
208 pages
\$28
Crash Course Books

'The Staircase in the Woods'

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

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

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



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CELEBRATING the past

Annual alumni banquet brings generations together.



This year's Bondurant-Farrar Alumni Banquet will be June 7.

Each year, on the first Saturday in June, the Bondurant-Farrar Alumni Banquet brings together decades of graduates for an evening of fun and connection.

This year's banquet is set for June 7 and will take place at the new junior high school, located at 1201 Grant St. N. Alumni from all years — 2025 and all the way back — are invited to begin gathering at 6 p.m. for appetizers, followed by the banquet at 7.

A short business meeting will follow dinner, along with the annual presentation of the 50-year class. This year, the class of 1975 will be honored. The 60-year class will also be recognized. Both groups typically take the lead in reaching out to classmates, sending letters, organizing additional gatherings, and sometimes planning activities for the Friday night before the banquet.

The event is catered by Hy-Vee and served as plated meals by volunteers, a tradition that's helped keep the event running smoothly for years. Reservations are \$25 per person and should be sent by May 21 to Dwayne Hall, alumni historian, Box 463, Altoona, IA 50009. Those who prefer can also confirm attendance by emailing lccdwayne@hotmail.com.

While the banquet continues to be a beloved tradition for many longtime alumni, organizers have noted a drop in attendance by more recent graduates. The youngest attendees in recent years have typically been from the class of 1980, as younger classes often plan their own reunions separately. Still, last year's banquet brought in about 100 guests, and this year's oldest attendee planning to come is 96 years old.

Jan Johnson, a 1968 graduate, remains a loyal supporter.

"There still seems to be an interest," she says. "It's fun. It's a nice evening."

Audrey Eshelman, class of 1957, has attended since 1960, following in the footsteps of her parents.

"We wouldn't want to give it up," she says.

Both Johnson and Eshelman hope the next generation of alumni will continue the tradition. While the banquet is a great way to connect with fellow graduates, it's also a way to preserve the shared history of the Bondurant-Farrar community. ■



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MEET Angie Wilson

Living and working in Bondurant

Angie Wilson is a reading and math interventionist at Bondurant-Farrar Intermediate School. She is a veteran teacher with 31 years of experience and brings her passion for reading to lead the Battle of the Books Club.

Since the fall, the Battle of the Books Club has met twice weekly — on Tuesday afternoons and Friday mornings — until the final competition held on March 29. Her teams competed by answering questions about 20 books and their authors. Three teams placed with high scores with one team placing in the final four, one in the Elite 8, and one in the Sweet 16 out of 72 teams.

Angie started her career after graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1992 as a kindergarten teacher at Holy Family in Saydel. While at Saydel, she completed her master's degree in administration at Drake University.

"It was important to grow as an educator to keep myself fresh," she says.

While at Ankeny, she started the Empowerment Preschool Program through a grant. As much as she enjoyed teaching in Ankeny, she decided it was time for another change.

When she started raising her own family, the family built a house on an acreage in Bondurant in 2003. When her youngest daughter was school-age, and her son was only 1, she jumped at an opportunity to join the B-F district as a reading and language arts teacher in grades 4-6.

"I wanted my kids in the same school that I taught in. It was really important to me," she says, adding she appreciates the small-town feel in Bondurant.

One of her favorite memories was taking her sixth-grade readers to Springbrook State Park to go camping and spend the night in cabins.

"It was so fun," she says.

Students and teachers traveled just over an hour by bus to get to the park north of Guthrie Center. The students would switch stations every two hours with activities such as owl pellets, bird banding, canoeing, archery and shelter building.

"Shelter building was a fun competition where the kids would compete to make the best shelter out of nature such as logs and trees — anything they found in the forest for 1.5 hours."

Currently, she works with students one-on-one and in small groups. She likes to watch students learn, and her favorite moments are when their eyes light up when they understand a concept they had been struggling to learn.

"I enjoy working with data. I see their growth, and I help them with what they need to learn," she says.

Angie has many hobbies include reading, gardening, traveling and competitive sailing with her family.

"We have competed in the U.S. and Canada and own a small Hobo Cat sailboat. When raising our kids, we traveled to 32 out of 50 states and Canada."

Angie's favorite place she has visited so far was Rome, Italy.

Angie and her husband, Todd, continue competition sailing with their now adult kids, daughter, Reagan, 24, and son, Will, 19. ■



Angie Wilson enjoys traveling with her family. She says a trip to Italy was her favorite.

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FAITH

By Mark Spencer

GOD of the details

If you read through the book of Joshua, the first 11 chapters read almost like an action movie. God miraculously stops the Jordan River. The Israelites march around the walls of Jericho, shout, and God brings the walls down. Rahab demonstrates great courage by turning away from false gods and turning to the true God of Israel, ultimately saving herself and her family. The Israelites execute a great military strategy, splitting the Canaanite territory in half before defeating the southern and northern tribes to finally claim their inherited land as God had promised them. It's all really quite exciting.

Then comes Joshua chapter 12, which is just a list of kings and places. It feels like reading the credits after a movie ends. The last verse of chapter 12, after listing all of these kings, concludes with: "in all, thirty-one kings." God could have simply summarized this and told us that "many kings" were defeated, but He chose to give us a specific number.

Details are important to God.

We all have too small a picture of God. We often think He is only involved in the big issues of the world. God is involved in the big issues of the world, but He is also involved in even the smallest details. I've heard people say things like, "I think God's got bigger things to worry about than how my job interview goes."

That's not just wrong thinking; it's heretical thinking. Matthew 10:29-31 says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."

Our God is so big that He can be working through a major military battle on the other side of the world and still be walking beside you as you search for your lost car keys. And He loves you so much that He cares about your frustration when you can't find them.

It's right and good for us to come to Him, praying for major wars to end and for peace to come. It's also right and good for us to come to Him asking for His help in finding our car keys, securing the right job, and giving us mental sharpness to pass a test in school.

God doesn't have better things to do than be involved in the small things. Your loving God also wants to be working in you through those pesky details of life. ■



Information provided by Mark Spencer, lead pastor, First Family Church Bondurant, mspencer@ffcblife.com, 515-587-5930.

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TIPS for a better night's sleep

Getting a good night's sleep can become more challenging as we age, but it's still essential for maintaining physical health, emotional well-being, and overall quality of life. If counting sheep is no longer cutting it, don't worry, here are some tried-and-true tips to help you rest easier and wake up feeling refreshed.



Soak in natural light during the day: Spending time outdoors or near a window during the day helps regulate your circadian rhythm, the internal clock that controls your sleep-wake cycle. Even 20–30 minutes of morning sunlight can make a big difference.

• **Limit daytime naps:** Short naps can be refreshing, but long or late-afternoon naps might make it harder to fall asleep at night. If you enjoy napping, aim for no more than

20–30 minutes earlier in the day.

• **Stick to a schedule:** Your body loves routine. Aim to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, even on weekends. This helps regulate your internal clock, making it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep.

• **Create a cozy sleep space:** Make your bedroom a sleep sanctuary. Keep it cool, quiet and dark. If noise is a problem, consider a white noise machine or earplugs. Comfortable bedding also makes a huge difference.

• **Watch what you eat (and drink):** Avoid large meals, caffeine and alcohol in the evening. While a glass of wine might seem relaxing, alcohol can disrupt your sleep patterns later in the night.

• **Stay active:** Regular exercise is a great way to improve sleep quality. Even a short walk during the day can help. Just try not to exercise too close to bedtime, as it can be invigorating rather than relaxing.

• **Power down early:** Electronic devices

emit blue light, which can interfere with your body's production of melatonin, the sleep hormone. Try to avoid screens for at least an hour before bed.

• **Address stress and anxiety:** If worries keep you awake, consider relaxation techniques like deep breathing, meditation or journaling. Talking to a trusted friend can also be beneficial.

• **Consult a professional:** If sleep issues persist, don't hesitate to talk to your doctor. Sleep disorders like sleep apnea or insomnia are treatable, and getting help could lead to major improvements.

Remember, quality sleep is the foundation for feeling your best every day. With a few adjustments to your routine, peaceful nights can once again become a regular part of your life. Sweet dreams. ■

Information provided by Stephanie Proper, executive director, Valley View Village, 2571 Guthrie Ave., Des Moines, 515-265-2571.



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Valley View Village Receives 2025 Customer Experience Award

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- Activities

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

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



Ask your child's healthcare provider about vaccines.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics 3/25

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations.

Coming up in Bondurant Living magazine

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

City events

Check for updates and information at www.cityofbondurant.com/parks-and-recreation/pages/2025-community-events-programs.

- Safety Village, May 7, downtown Bondurant. Watch for details.
- City-wide Garage Sales, May 10
- Bondurant Spring Cleanup, May 17
- Bondurant Tire Drop Off, May 17, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., 306 First St. N.W.

Home Alone Awareness

April 28, 2:30-5:30 p.m.

Bondurant City Hall, 200 Second St. N.E.

Thinking of letting your child stay home alone this summer? Make sure they are equipped with ways to stay safe. Presented by Bondurant Parks and Recreation, taught by members of the Polk County Sheriff's Office, Blank Children's Hospital and Bondurant Emergency Services, providing educational tools and safety tips as they make kids aware of potential dangers in and around your home. Class limited to 20 students. Register at https://bondurantia.municipalonlinepayments.com/bondurantia/easypay/ju3HW_nEGkyNzrRwZnpn3w/home-alone-awareness

Bondurant Farmers Market Opening Day

Wednesday, May 7, 6-8 p.m.
Downtown Bondurant

The opening day of the Bondurant Farmers Market is May 7. Enjoy a variety of fresh produce, handmade goods and local treats as organizers kick off the season. In addition to the market festivities, the Polk County Sheriff's Office will host its Safety Village for kids. This engaging program teaches children essential safety skills in a fun, interactive environment.



Emerald City Make A Wish Gala

Saturday, May 17, 5:30 p.m.

Iowa Events Center, 730 Third St., Des Moines

Experience the magic of a wish. Currently more than 300 wishes are waiting to be granted — and you can help ensure these children receive their wish when they need it most. Bring hope and joy to Iowa kids waiting for their wish. Guests will enjoy dinner, live and silent auctions, after party, plus wish stories that will touch your heart and inspire you. Tickets are available at <https://wish.org/iowa/32nd-annual-des-moines-gala>.

Iowa Cubs home games

Principal Park, 1 Line Drive, Des Moines

www.iowacubs.com

April 29 at 6:38 p.m. vs. Buffalo

April 30 at 12:08 p.m. vs. Buffalo

Be sure to check for cancellations.



Bondu Bike Night

Friday, May 23, 5 p.m.
Downtown Bondurant -
Intersection of Main Street and
First Street

Bondu Bike Night is an annual event that celebrates motorcycle enthusiasts, music lovers and local businesses. Attendees can enjoy an evening filled with entertainment, live music and community engagement. The event aims to provide a fun and memorable experience for all. Sponsorship packages are available. Email: director@bondurantchamber.com.

Tai Chi Class at The Tuscany

Every Thursday from 9:45-10:30 a.m. until
June 5

Edencrest at Tuscany, 1600 Eighth St. S.E.,
Altoona, lower east entrance

Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese exercise program to promote strength, flexibility and balance. Individuals will learn warm-up, cool-down, six basic forms and six advanced forms, with modifications available for those who need to remain seated for all or most of the class. Classes offered on a contribution basis for those age 60 and older. For those younger than 60, there is a \$4 charge. All donations go to Aging Resources of Central Iowa, a non-profit agency serving older adults in central Iowa.


Healing Hearts Grief Support

Meets every second and fourth
Tuesday of each month
Edencrest at Tuscany, 1600
Eighth St. S.E., Altoona, lower
east entrance

A supportive gathering for residents and community members to share their experiences, connect with others, and find comfort during their grief journey. Light snacks and beverages are offered. This event will create a safe space for healing and connection within the community.

Spring Tree Sale

Pre-orders are now open for Bondurant's annual Spring Tree Sale. Beautify your yard and help grow the community's tree canopy, but don't wait, pre-orders are required. Trees come in a 15-gallon container with a trunk caliber size of approximately 1.25-1.5 inches. Note: mulch is not included in your purchase. Tree pickup is April 26 from 9-11 a.m. at Public Works, 306 First St. N.W., Bondurant. No trees will be held. They must be picked up during this time. Tree care instructions will be provided. Order online at <https://bondurantia.municipalonlinepayments.com/bondurantia/easypay/R-5wm1sjckSUTBb4UYzzjA/annual-tree-sale> or pay by cash or check at City Hall in-person. For more information, call Katie at 515-630-6982 or email kklus@cityofbondurant.com. ■




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HEALTH

By Dr. Steven Neville

CORRECTING misaligned teeth

One common question discussed among patients and dental professionals is, "What are my options to make my teeth straight?" Most options to straighten teeth are about braces and clear trays. Braces are bonded onto teeth in specific spots, with wires laced through to allow assistance in moving the teeth. Monthly visits to the dental office with adjustments of brackets, wires and chains help make the process easier, quicker and more efficient. Clear trays are completed in a series of multiple trays changed out every two to three weeks. Before the first tray, filling material is placed on teeth for the trays to snap and stay in the mouth. The trays are then removed while eating but worn the rest of the day. After the braces process is complete, wearing a retainer for top and bottom teeth is most important. In the future, teeth have a tendency to move back to their original position before braces when the retainer is not worn. Benefits of doing braces, other than a confident smile, are easier oral care of brushing and flossing and rectifying occlusion of the teeth, overbite of the front teeth and tooth pain caused from misaligned teeth. If you have any questions about what you can do to correct misaligned teeth, discuss with your dentist about the options they would recommend for you. ■



Information provided by Dr. Steven Neville, Bondurant Family Dentistry, 100 Second St. N.E., Bondurant, 515-967-4002.

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WELLNESS

By Nikki Morgan

MINERAL vs. chemical sunscreen

As we recognize Skin Cancer Awareness Month this May, it's essential to understand how sunscreen plays a critical role in prevention. Two main types of sunscreen — mineral and chemical — offer protection, but in different ways.

Mineral sunscreens, also known as physical sunscreens, use active ingredients like zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. These minerals sit on the skin's surface and reflect harmful UV rays. Mineral formulas are ideal for sensitive skin, work immediately upon application, and are often recommended for those with skin conditions or undergoing aesthetic treatments.

Chemical sunscreens, on the other hand, absorb UV rays and convert them into heat, which is then released from the skin. They tend to be lighter in texture and blend easily into the skin without a white cast. However, they may cause irritation in those with sensitive skin or allergies.

Both types can be effective when used correctly, offering broad-spectrum protection against UVA and UVB rays. The best sunscreen is ultimately the one you'll wear daily and reapply regularly.

This Skin Cancer Awareness Month, take a moment to choose the right sunscreen for your skin and make it a habit. Remember, the best sunscreen is the one you will wear. Consistent sun protection is one of the simplest and most effective ways to prevent skin cancer. ■



Information provided by Nikki Morgan, DNP, ARNP, SkinFusion, 200 Second St. S.E., Altoona, 515-967-0587, www.skinfusionfx.com, nikki.skinfusionfx@gmail.com

BUILD movement into your routine

Sedentary jobs take a toll on the body physically and emotionally. Small, intentional changes can lead to big improvements in how you feel, move and function. Movement is essential for your spine, joints, circulation and brain health. The more you move, the less likely your body is to settle into unhealthy patterns that lead to discomfort and fatigue. Find creative ways to build movement into your routine at work.

Walking meetings: Get outside or get a walking pad at your desk.

Standing desks: Alternating between sitting and standing keeps your muscles engaged and your posture in check.

Stretch breaks: Set a timer for at least once per hour to stand and stretch. Even short bursts of movement help prevent stiffness and improve circulation.

The stress of work and life reaches beyond just physical symptoms. Physical and emotional stress interfere with your nervous system function, manifesting as anxiety, feeling on high alert, irritability, moodiness, difficulty sleeping, brain fog, digestive issues, hormonal imbalances and more. Support whole body and brain wellness with these habits:

Chiropractic care: Regular adjustments help regulate the nervous system, reduce tension, maintain joint mobility and support proper movement patterns. Chiropractic isn't just about pain relief but about improving how your body functions overall.

Drink water: Staying hydrated reduces inflammation.

Manage stress: Chronic stress contributes to muscle tension, poor sleep and burnout. Short walks, breathing exercises or stepping away for a mental reset can go a long way. ■

Information provided by Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich, Swain Chiropractic, 410 Center Place S.W., Altoona, 515-967-9300.



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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, theheberer@luxemedicalspa.net, 515-630-8637.



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PRAIRIE MEADOWS and the impact of live horse racing



For more than a century, horse racing has been a significant part of Iowa's cultural and economic landscape. Live racing at Prairie Meadows plays a central role in both the state's heritage and local economy. The sport's roots in Iowa trace back to when informal races and county and state fair events began to attract regional attention, paving the way for more organized racing, leading to the establishment of formal tracks and racing events.

Prairie Meadows began operations as a nonprofit organization in 1989 and became Iowa's premier horse racing destination, offering live races and simulcast betting that draw thousands of visitors. Prairie Meadows not only contributes to Iowa's vibrant racing tradition but also serves as a major economic hub with the goal of promoting economic development, jobs, agriculture and tourism in the state of Iowa. Through taxes and charitable donations, Prairie Meadows has given more than \$2.3 billion to the state of Iowa. Prairie Meadows offers slot machines, table games, live and simulcast racing, sports wagering, hotel accommodations, entertainment and more.

Revenue for horse racing is generated through admissions, wagering and tourism. Prairie Meadows further boosts Iowa's economy by attracting visitors and through job creation. Hundreds of jobs related to both the racetrack and casino operations establish economic influence.

Horse racing at Prairie Meadows also contributes to the local culture by fostering a sense of community. Races bring fans, horse owners, trainers and bettors together, creating an inclusive environment where enthusiasts of all backgrounds can gather and celebrate the sport. Events such as the Iowa Classic are a testament to the state's enduring passion for racing and its ability to host family-friendly events that attract national attention.

The cultural significance of horse racing is also reflected in the way it highlights Iowa's agricultural roots. The state's thoroughbred and quarter horse breeders play a crucial role in the industry, making Iowa a key player in the larger American racing scene. Overall, the live racing season at Prairie Meadows not only keeps Iowa's equestrian traditions alive but also continues to contribute significantly to the state's economy and boosting tourism.

Visitors can experience the excitement of live racing at Prairie Meadows Friday through Monday, beginning May 9, and through Sept. 2. To learn more, visit prairiemeadows.com. ■

Information provided by Kelsey Kauffman, Marketing & Advertising Supervisor, 515-967-8504, 1 Prairie Meadows Drive, Altoona, IA 50009. Kelsey.Kauffman@prairiemeadows.com.

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OUT & ABOUT



Talon Higgins and Grayson Schultheis at The Creamery wish everyone a Happy Spring.



Library Director Michell Klinker-Feld accepts the Bondurant Community Library's Residents' Choice certificate.



Ryan Larue, owner of Somewhere in the Middle Coffee Shop, accepts the shop's Residents' Choice certificates.



Josh Bryant, Josh Barber, Ron Meandering, Jeff Burrig, Stephany Fuller and Julie Barnes with Vision Bank wish everyone a Happy Spring.



Rochelle VanderLeest, Karson Mittelstaedt, Jenna Hopp and Hillary Hilbert at The Creamery wish everyone a Happy Spring.



Christina King and Megan Schincke with Bondurant Community Library wish everyone a Happy Spring.



Madison Gant and Kayla O'Donnell at Bondurant Family Dentistry wish everyone a Happy Spring.



Matt Cole at Fareway wishes everyone a Happy Spring.



Stephenie, James, Gavin and Calan Mangra at The Creamery wish everyone a Happy Spring.



Bryan Carr at Iowa Floor Covering wishes everyone a Happy Spring.



Chris Schonridge and Audra Jackson at Edward Jones wish everyone a Happy Spring.

HAPPY Spring

People around Bondurant wish everyone a Happy Spring.



Abby Olson at Re/Max Hilltop



Tyler Ergish at Stroom Powersports



Janelle Matter at Iowa Floor Covering



Anna Johnson with the city of Bondurant



Freddy and Callum at The Bird's Nest



Gabbie, Winnie and Ziah at The Bird's Nest



Sutton and Ava at The Bird's Nest



Payton Berger, Lindsay Schaper and Grace Wignall at The Bird's Nest



Elisa, Amanda, Clara, Adele and Gabrien Gamber at The Creamery



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