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Local families share experiences hosting foreign exchange students

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WELCOME

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

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



I have been fortunate to know one of them. His name is Jone Helgeson, and he 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. ■

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



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

Martha Munro
Advertising Account Executive
515-953-4822 ext. 314
martha@iowalivingmagazines.com



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Homes

AWAY FROM HOME

Local families share experiences hosting foreign exchange students

By Jackie Wilson

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.

Erin and Tyler Maxon took Benedicta, their foreign exchange student from Ghana, to see "Hamilton" at the Civic Center.

Benedicta from Ghana

When Erin and Tyler Maxon’s friend told them a host family was needed for a foreign exchange student from Ghana, they were intrigued. A host family had backed out due to the COVID pandemic. With three small kids already at home, they hesitated.

Then, after considering how it might change lives for the student and the family, the Maxons agreed.

“It was a big draw for us,” Tyler explains. “The students go back to their country to teach and share what they learned in the United States.”

They accepted Benedicta, a student from Ghana. She was hosted through Iowa Resource for International Service. IRIS is a nonprofit that brings foreign exchange students to Iowa. It was established 32 years ago, not only to bring students, but also adults to connect with business leaders for leadership training and volunteer efforts. IRIS has placed more than 900 students from 30 different countries over the past 25 years.

The IRIS program coordinates the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study



Benedicta, a foreign exchange student from Ghana, with her host family, the Maxons.

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Program through the U.S. Department of State. The program started after 9/11 with a goal to expose the youth with Muslim populations to the welcoming nature of families in Iowa.

Foreign students who arrive through IRIS are awarded a scholarship from their own country. Not all students get to come to the U.S., as it is a competitive process. Other programs and travel can be costly for students wanting American experiences.

“I know she went through a difficult process to get a scholarship,” Tyler explains. “Their goal is to give students from a lower economic background opportunities to study abroad — especially from countries where women don’t have the freedom to travel.”

Benedicta attended Waukee Northwest High School. She was proficient in English and easily communicated with the family. Erin says Benedicta was resilient with the change.

“It was a culture shock for her. She came from a home of extreme poverty. A lot of families with foreign exchange students come from families who have money, but not Benedicta,” Erin says.

Benedicta got along well with their kids, Frances, Estella and Abel (Zeke wasn’t born yet). When Benedicta was around, she engaged easily with their children.

“She was incredible with our kids. She had a generous heart and knew how to play with them. I think it’s because she had three younger sisters at home,” Erin says.

Benedicta became involved in the church, as her own church back home was important to her. She joined the Black Student Union group at Waukee Northwest. Part of her scholarship requirement was to perform volunteer work and put in community hours in the U.S.

The Maxons took her to see various Iowa staples, such as an Iowa Cubs baseball game.

“We wanted to give her opportunities. It was just like an expense for another child,” Tyler says.

Benedicta experienced many “firsts.” She saw snow for the first time. She visited Santa Claus with the kids and went sledding. When she went to a zoo, she was surprised to see animals in cages. The family took her swimming.

“She had never been swimming before, nor had she had a swimsuit. It wasn’t safe to swim in the river,” Erin says. “People in her country needed money to go swimming.”

Benedicta introduced Ramen noodles to the family and shared her cooking after discovering a store that carried some of the food from her home country.

“She loved mayonnaise and not ketchup for her french fries. She ate a lot of rice and loved Costco hotdogs,” Erin says.

Erin says the winter was a difficult time for Benedicta. She had never experienced cold and snow, and the holidays were hard on her.

“She missed her family at Christmas time.”

After she returned home, the family kept in touch. Benedicta returned for Christmas last year and also came back to the U.S. to attend college at the University of North Carolina Pembroke. She returned one summer back to Iowa to help nanny and provide respite care for Maxon’s niece.

Erin says that Benedicta was a problem solver and a hard worker.

“She was so grateful for everything — even the smallest things she thanked us for,” Erin

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Tyler said she succeeded and did well in school.

“I think by having the resilience to come to America, it made her a hard worker,” he says. “It was easy for her to be successful at everything she tried. She had a willingness to try new things.”

The whole family recalls her being a friend to play with.

“There was a lot of joy. She became a part of our family,” Tyler says.

When Benedicta first arrived, she saw the movie “Zootopia” with the family. In the movie, Benedicta resonated with the characters and the theme of being brave and having the courage to be anything you want to be with hard work.

“After she saw that movie, she wanted to experience life. She said she was like the characters in ‘Zootopia.’ She gave it her all,” Erin explains. “It was a joy and a gift to see how blessed we are. She had a good heart and wanted to take back what she learned and do good things in her country.”

Experience different cultures

Tom and Becky Buckmiller of Waukee became experienced in hosting foreign exchange students after hosting for four years with girls from three different countries.

Becky is a Spanish teacher at St. Francis of Assisi, and Tom is a professor of leadership at Drake University. The pair, interested in different cultures, also wanted their three kids to experience various cultures.

All of the students came through World Link, an organization that partners with Muslim countries to promote good relations between the countries. The girls were on scholarships, which paid for them to come to the United States.

Prior to their arrival, the family did Zoom calls with each of the students. They hosted Azizah from Indonesia. The second year, they weren’t going to host, but World Link was having trouble finding a home, so they hosted Aisha from Kazakhstan for a few months.

They also hosted two other girls, Dilnaz from Kazakhstan and Asema from Kyrgyzstan for a short time until they could find a host family.

“You can be a welcome family to get them



The Tom and Becky Buckmiller family greeted Aisha from Kazakhstan upon her arrival to the U.S.

started. If they don’t have a family in July, they can still come and keep looking for a family,” Tom says.

All of the girls attended Waukee High School, and each came with different personalities. Students were required to be proficient in speaking English.

“I was impressed with their language,” Becky says. “It was never a problem. Once in a while, they couldn’t find the right word but figured it out.”



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“Aisha once said there were a lot of coos in Iowa. We finally figured out she meant cows,” Tom says.

All of the girls were Muslim and often shared their traditions with Ramadan and other celebrations.

“They went to church with us,” Becky says. “They celebrated Thanksgiving, and we treated them like our family. It was special to have them with us.”

Iowa is known for agriculture and its pork production. Yet Muslims don’t eat pork products.

“We still ate pork. This is Iowa, and there is a lot of pork. They just put it aside,” Tom explains.

The girls made their own food occasionally and brought it to share in the home.

“They called it a five-finger dish,” Tom recalls.

They had never eaten at McDonald’s and enjoyed going to shopping malls and other retail stores not available where they lived. It was a treat for them to experience new places.

Tom is from South Dakota, and they took family outings to visit extended family

members. Whenever the family went, so did the students.

“We took Aisha to Disney World. It was like she was another daughter,” Becky says. “We took her to Mall of America, too.”

They tried to experience different places. With regards to cost, Becky and Tom said it was “just another mouth to feed.”

“They were allowed only one suitcase and were conscious of spending their money. They shopped sales, and we went thrifting. They never asked us for money,” Becky says.

The students got along with their three kids. The Buckmillers found early on what it was like to have a teenager in the house.

“They like to spend time on their phone. Teens are teens — no matter where they’re from,” Tom says.

One joined the tennis team. Another attended prom, and another student was a cheerleader.

“Dances were a big deal, as they never experienced that. For homecoming, a network of people donated dresses,” Becky says.

They celebrated Halloween for the very first time. They dressed up and took the Buckmiller



The Tom and Becky Buckmiller family hosted Azizah from Indonesia.

kids trick-or-treating.

“They were really excited to see it,” Becky says. “They were excited to put up a Christmas tree. It was fun to experience it through their eyes.”

Overall, it was a great experience for the whole family. Their daughter, Josie, 11, liked having another a “sister” around.

“We received a lot. We gave these students something valuable,” Tom says. “These memories will last a lifetime.” ■



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ESTATE planning for millennials

According to a recent survey, 78% of millennials don't have a Last Will and Testament. Many think they don't have enough assets to do basic estate planning or that they are too young. But, if you die without a will, the consequences for your loved ones can be disastrous.



A will spells out how you want your assets distributed after your death, and it names an executor to handle these transfers. Otherwise, you will die intestate, meaning your state decides how to distribute your property and funds.

If you are single and have no children, your parents will receive your assets. If you have minor children, the assets will pass directly to

them. That means that their inheritance will be subject to court supervision until they turn 18. At 18, your children will have unrestricted access to the money, with no one to guide them or help them plan for their future.

Two other documents may be even more important than a will for young, healthy individuals. The first is a durable financial power of attorney, which names the person who can manage financial matters on your behalf if you are unable to. The financial power of attorney is a great tool to have in reserve if you ever need it.

The second is an advance medical directive, which defines your end-of-life wishes concerning life support and comfort measures. If you don't specify your wishes or designate a health care agent, you will likely be kept alive artificially by default.

Another aspect of estate planning is maybe

the scariest one of all for millennials: What happens to your digital assets — personal photos, messages, and e-mails — when you die? Iowa has enacted a law that governs how an executor can access digital assets.

To get started, think about the person you want to appoint as your executor and agent under a power of attorney for health and finances. Choose the best person to make financial or medical decisions on your behalf and delve into your private matters. You want to know that people you trust are in charge of your legacy.

Then, make an appointment with an estate-planning lawyer. An experienced attorney can help you put simple documents into place to give you peace of mind. ■

Information provided by Ross Barnett, Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm, 2560 73rd St., Urbandale, 515-278-0623, www.ARPCLaw.com.

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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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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.

Vibrant Music Hall events

2938 Grand Prairie Parkway, Waukee
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- **Wednesday, April 30**, Lazer 103.3 Presents Spiritbox: Tsunami Sea North American Tour
- **Saturday, May 3**, Nick Swardson: Toilet Head

A-MAY-ZING Mother's Day Family Glow Bowling Party

Sunday, May 11, noon-1:30 p.m.
 Warrior Lanes, 190 S.E. Laurel St., Waukee

This Mother's Day, celebrate with fun, laughter and strikes. Treat Mom to an amazing afternoon of glow bowling, lunch, music and quality family time under the black lights. Prepaid reservation required at <https://warriorlanes.com/specials/>.

Waukee Firefighters Association Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, May 17, 7-11 a.m.
 Waukee Public Safety Building, 1300 S.E. L.A. Grant Parkway, Waukee

Come and enjoy \$5 per person all-you-can-eat pancakes. Children 4 and younger eat for free. All proceeds and donations go to the Waukee Firefighters Association. Come eat your fill of pancakes, meet Waukee Fire Department staff and enjoy family-friendly fun.



Gary's Annual Brain Cancer Bike Ride

Saturday, May 17, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Start: Waukee Raccoon River Valley Trail Head, Hickman Road and N.W. 10th St.

End: Dallas Center at the HandleBar Restaurant 1607 Sugar Grove Ave.

This ride is a fundraiser to increase awareness of glioblastoma and support Richard Deming Cancer Center's terminal brain cancer patients through the center's Integrative Medicine. The ride also supports Iowa Oncology Research Association for clinical trials for terminal brain cancer patients, especially those with glioblastoma.

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Golf Scramble

June 6; rain day June 13
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Waukee American Legion Post 737 presents its first golf scramble fundraiser with proceeds going to support local veterans. The four-person best shot format will be 18 holes with team entry fee of \$300. Prizes will be awarded. Registration is 7:30-8:15 a.m. with an 8:30 a.m. shotgun start. Lunch will be served at the turn and awards and raffle prizes presented at 2:30 p.m. To register, sponsor a hole, donate, or for more information, email John.parcel@hotmail.com.

Emerald City Make A Wish Gala

Saturday, May 17, 5:30 p.m.
Iowa Events Center, 730 Third St.,
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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,
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www.iowacubs.com

- **April 29** at 6:38 p.m. vs. Buffalo
- **April 30** at 12:08 p.m. vs. Buffalo

DMPA Free Outdoor Family Events

Des Moines Performing Arts announced the engagements headed to Des Moines as part of its 2025 Free Outdoor Family Events series. These free presentations are designed to engage new audiences and performing arts enthusiasts alike, while also removing the barrier of cost.

- **May 2-26:** OPTIK, Cowles Commons
- **June 14-17:** Bindlestiff Family Circus, parks across the metro
- **July 21-22:** Dupont Brass, parks across the metro
- **June 11, July 9, Aug. 13:** Storytime Under the Green Umbrella, Cowles Commons
- **June 21, July 12, Aug. 23:** Dancing on Cowles Commons

For more information including times and park locations, visit www.desmoinesperformingarts.org/whats-on/series/free-outdoor-family-events.

Iowa Barnstormers home game

Wells Fargo Arena, 730 Third St., Des Moines
www.theiowabarnstormers.com

- **April 26** at 7:05 p.m. vs. Fishers Freight ■



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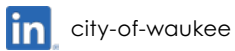


City of Waukeee Bulletin

APRIL 2025

Find more information on City services, programs and events at Waukeee.org

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On April 21, the Waukeee City Council held a meeting to approve the Fiscal Year 2026 budget as well as the five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The City's property tax rate will lower from \$12.95 to \$12.80 per \$1,000 of taxable valuation. The \$159.4 million budget includes basic operating expenditures of \$27.2 million, business/proprietary expenses of \$45.1 million, debt service expenditures of \$15.6 million and capital improvement expenditures of \$51.2 million.

Highlights of the CIP include phase 1 in closing the gap in University Avenue, widening NE Alice's Road, improvements to downtown streets, refurbishing the existing Public Safety facility and a new outdoor fitness court in Ridge Pointe Park.

The City Council approved increases to the water, wastewater, stormwater and solid waste rates. The changes will net a 3.77 percent increase, which is about \$4.89 more per month for the average Waukeee household. Visit Waukeee.org/Budget for more details.

Useful resources:

- Waukeee.org/Tax outlines how the City spends its portion of property tax revenues on the services we all depend on. You'll also find a recording of our Property Tax 101 session and a guide to understanding the tax statements mailed by the county in March.
- In her annual State of the City address, Mayor Clarke covered highlights of 2024 and priorities for Waukeee in 2025. Watch the video at Waukeee.org/StateoftheCity.

Dates
to Know

Bingo (cards for purchase)
Friday, May 2, 1-2:30 p.m.
Waukeee Public Library

Regular City Council Meetings
May 5 & 19 at 5:30 p.m.
Waukeee City Hall and Zoom
Waukeee.org/CityCouncil



Kalona Amish Day Trip

Head for the countryside on Wednesday, June 18 to learn about the Conservative Mennonite faith and the changes it has undergone since the 16th century. Visit an Amish farmstead and discover the exhausting workday of the Amish farmer, observe an Amish casket maker and enjoy an authentic, family style meal. \$125 includes transportation, tours, fees, lunch and gratuities. Register at Waukee.org/Registration.



Save Money on Irrigation

Portable irrigation meters can help save you money on sewer charges for your water bill if you frequently irrigate your lawn and garden. If you already have a meter, get your meter certified now to stay eligible for credits on your account. Fill out the form at Waukee.org/UtilityBilling or bring your meter to City Hall (230 W. Hickman Road) on a weekday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. To purchase a meter, contact WaukeeUtilities@Waukee.org.



Don't forget the permit

If you're adding a fence, deck, shed or other structure, you may need a permit. Check Waukee.org/BuildingPermits or call 515-978-9533. If you're part of an HOA, be sure to check your covenants for any requirements before starting work.



Dial Before You Dig

National Safe Digging Month reminds everyone who excavates or digs to have the approximate location of utility lines marked before you dig! If you are planting trees, installing a fence or any other digging project, submit a request to IowaOneCall beforehand, so you can avoid knocking out utility service, injuring yourself or facing fines. During the busier summer months, we recommend submitting your request at least one week before you dig by calling 811 or visiting IowaOneCall.com.



Low Cost Trees

Waukee residents can add some beauty and future shade to their yard for \$55 or less with the Waukee Canopy program. Choose from Black Cherry, Red Oak, Sugar Maple, Swamp White Oak and White Oak.

Reserve up to two trees per household at Waukee.org/Registration. Pick-up will be May 14 at the Waukee Public Works building.



Scholarship for Rec Programs

Do you want to enroll your kid in a Waukee Parks & Recreation program but the cost isn't in the budget? Our Play It Forward program may be able to help. Waukee residents 18 years old or younger who qualify for free or reduced lunch at school (or an equivalent financial aid program) can receive 50% off the cost of up to two Waukee Parks & Recreation programs for the calendar year. Learn more and apply at Waukee.org/PlayItForward.



Safety Tips for Bicyclists and Pedestrians

- If riding on streets, always ride with traffic flow and follow the rules of the road.
- When walking where there is no sidewalk, always stay on the left-hand side of the road and walk facing the traffic flow.
- Watch for items on the road or trail that might make you swerve or fall.
- Watch for turning traffic at every intersection.
- If walking or riding at dusk or night, always wear reflective gear.
- Wear a helmet at all times when cycling.
- Yell "on your left" when passing someone on the trail, so they can keep to the side of the path.



Waukee Firefighters Association Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, May 17 at 10 a.m.
Public Safety Building
LA Grant Parkway

City offices and library closed

Monday, May 26
Trash pick-up delayed one day

Stories in the Park (Kids 5 and younger)

May 27, 10-10:30 a.m.
Windfield Park
WaukeePublicLibrary.org/Events

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PLAN AHEAD

By Sarah Masteller

THE PERFECT celebration

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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55+ Active Living

SENIOR

By Jay Heaton

THE POWER of walking

As you age, keeping up with regular walks and staying fit becomes more important than ever. Walking isn't just about getting from point A to point B; it's a powerful tool for boosting your overall health and well-being. When you lace up your shoes and hit the pavement, you're not just doing your heart a favor, you're also strengthening your bones. This helps with preventing those dreaded fractures and osteoporosis down the road.

It's not just your body that benefits from a stroll around the block. Walking has this incredible knack for lifting your spirits, too. It's like a natural mood booster, easing stress and anxiety while giving you a lovely dose of those feel-good endorphins. Regular walks have been linked to sharper cognitive function and a lower risk of memory issues as you age.

Walking is a fantastic way to connect with others. Whether it's catching up with a friend or joining a walking group, it's a chance to chat, laugh and share stories while taking care of your health. Oh, and did I mention it can help you sleep better, too? A good walk can set the stage for a peaceful night's sleep, leaving you feeling refreshed and ready to tackle whatever the day brings.

So, as you journey through life, let's keep putting one foot in front of the other because, when it comes to staying healthy and happy as you age, a regular walk might just be your best companion yet. ■



Information provided by Jay Heaton, leasing counselor, Attivo Trail Waukee, 835 N.E. Boston Parkway, Waukee, www.attivotrail.com.

DISCOVER more at the Waukee Public Library

Your library, your way

The Waukee Public Library is redefining accessibility and innovation, offering a diverse range of resources and experiences tailored to meet the evolving needs of the community. From a cutting-edge mobile app to hidden literary treasures in the Book Nook and hands-on STEAM learning kits, the library continues to serve as a gateway to knowledge, creativity and discovery.

Waukee Public Library

950 S. Warrior Lane, Waukee
515-978-7944
www.waukeepubliclibrary.org
Monday - Tuesday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Wednesday - Thursday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Friday, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Sunday, noon to 4 p.m.

Your library at your fingertips: the Waukee Public Library app

In a fast-paced digital world, the Waukee Public Library app ensures that your library is always within reach. With just a few taps on your smartphone or tablet, you can:

- Browse the catalog and place holds.
- Renew items effortlessly.
- Receive notifications about upcoming events, due dates and library news.

Available for free on iOS and Android devices, the app transforms how the community connects with the library. Whether at home or on the go, users can enjoy uninterrupted access to books, services and programs. Download the app today and carry the library with you wherever life takes you.

Find hidden treasures in the Book Nook

For book lovers, the library's Book Nook offers a curated collection of gently used books, DVDs and other media at unbeatable prices. With an ever-changing selection, visitors never know what literary gems they might find. Best of all, every purchase supports the Waukee Public Library Friends Foundation, ensuring continued investment in community resources. Whether building a personal collection or searching for the next great read, the Book Nook is a must-visit destination.

Hands-on learning with the STEAM library

Expanding beyond traditional books, the Waukee Public Library fosters creativity and exploration through its Dr. Mayank K. Kothari STEAM resources. Patrons can check out engaging, hands-on tools, including:

- **Coding Kits and Robotics:** Perfect for budding programmers.
- **STEM Games and Puzzles:** Make learning interactive and fun.
- **Creative Tools:** From art supplies to musical instruments, explore new hobbies and talents.

These innovative learning kits bring education to life, sparking curiosity and engagement for learners of all ages.

To find out more about the Waukee Public Library, go to waukeepubliclibrary.org or contact the library at askme@waukee.org or by phone at 515-978-7944.

Upcoming closures: Sunday, May 11; Thursday, May 22; Friday, May 23; Sunday, May 25; Monday, May 26.

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Most events require advanced registration and can be viewed at waukeepubliclibrary.org/upcoming-events.

KIDS

• Stories in the Park (0-5 years and their caregivers),

Tuesdays in May, 10 a.m. Get outside and enjoy around 25 minutes of songs and stories at Windfield Park, 114 Windfield Parkway. Registration is not required.

TEENS

• **Finals Cafe and Pop-Tart Tasting (grades 9-12), Monday, May 12, 4 p.m. and Tuesday, May 27, 3:30 p.m.** Are you a high school student who needs a quiet and comfortable space to focus, study and do work for your final exams and projects? Join us at the Waukee Library where space will be provided, as well as tea, coffee and a variety of Pop-Tarts.

ADULTS

• **Happy Houseplanting, Monday, May 19, 6 p.m.** Are you ready to have a plant-astic time learning about houseplants? Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned pro, come join us for a fun and engaging time. You'll learn everything from providing the best care for your leafy companions to planting your very own. This event is the perfect opportunity to boost your plant care skills and turn your home into a lush, vibrant haven. We will supply a variety of small houseplants with soil. All you will need to bring is a pot or container to plant in (4- to 6-inches in diameter).

MULTI-AGE

• **Flower Crafts, Saturday, May 10, 10 a.m.** Come and make a craft that is suited for everyone. We will all start with the same supplies and idea, but everyone's creations will be unique. This month, we will be making flower crafts. Registration is not required. ■



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MEET Betsy Atwood

Grateful to be able to witness kids grow and learn

After growing up on a farm in Minnesota, Betsy Atwood earned a degree from South Dakota State University and a master's degree in clinical/counseling psychology from Illinois State University. She lived in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, for 13 years with her family before relocating to Waukee in 2019.

Although Atwood has known she wanted to work in the counseling field since she was young, it took a while for her to find her way to school counseling. She began her career in the area of addictions and mental health, working with adult clients in inpatient and outpatient settings. She learned a lot and enjoyed her work, but she found herself curious when an opportunity opened through her agency for school-based services. Atwood started working at area schools as a guest counselor, and the role clicked right away. She completed extra classes to become licensed as a school counselor and has been on that path ever since.

"I was partnering with school counselors, and I admired their role so much. The school setting was full of energy and fun. It was a joy to work with kids, and I loved the mix of counseling and teaching that you get to do as a school counselor," Atwood says.

She currently splits her time between Sugar Creek Elementary and Eason Elementary. Regardless of the building, she typically begins each day at breakfast, which is a great way for her to connect with students as they start their day. This is followed by a mix of teaching guidance lessons and working with students in small groups and individually. Some of those are planned, and some are more flexible.

"Learning is truly magic, and we get to see it happen. It always amazes me when I think about how kindergarten students come in, not knowing how to read. By the end of the year, they can. It's an incredible thing to witness kids grow and learn in that way, and I'm grateful to be part of it," Atwood says.

Her favorite project this year combined art, color and emotion. In this unit, second-grade students named emotions using watercolor paints to create their own paint strips, similar to those at a paint store. Each color strip was labeled with different levels of intensity of each emotion. For example, if yellow represented happiness, students could label the strip with words such as excited, thrilled, joyful, glad, happy and content.

"There are so many rewards in this job. The excitement and joy that students show when they greet you in the morning or come back from a break is rewarding in itself. One of my favorite moments is when we get to witness students showing kindness and generosity on their own or navigating a tough situation in a respectful and responsible way," Atwood says.

This spring, Atwood's students wrap up guidance by focusing on the world of work. At Sugar Creek Elementary, fifth-grade students will have the opportunity to explore a career fair, complete with guest speakers and presenters. At Eason, students participate in dress-up days and weeks of interactive lessons. ■



Betsy Atwood began her career in the area of addictions and mental health, working with adult clients in inpatient and outpatient settings, before making the move to school-based services.

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THE COMPLETE guide to your insurance declarations page

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



Let's get started.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Information provided by Chase VanWerden, IFG Insurance, 520 Walnut St., Waukeez, 515-987-9598. Credit: Auto-Owners Blog

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LEGION RIDERS support veterans

Fundraising golf tourney is June 6.

As a military veteran, giving back to fellow veterans is important, even beyond time spent in the service. One way veterans do that is by supporting and volunteering for veterans organization.



The Waukee American Legion Post 737 meets at Veterans Hall in Waukee, which also serves as a meeting facility for the Waukee American Legion Auxiliary, Danny White Waukee VFW Post 11517, Danny White Waukee VFW Auxiliary and the Waukee American Legion Riders.

Treg Marcellus is vice director of the Waukee American Legion Riders. He's served for 37 years and is a first sergeant with the Army Band of the Iowa National Guard.

The Army Band has three ensembles that travel around the state of Iowa, performing more than 100 times a year. They spread the word to give positive messages about the National Guard across Iowa.

Treg has been an active member of the American Legion since 1991. As a motorcyclist, he discovered the Waukee Legion Riders chapter and has served as vice director the past five years.

The Legion Riders' mission is to support local military families in



Travis Gaule, TrustBridge Wealth Advisors, presents the Neighbor Spotlight certificate to Treg Marcellus, James Swearingen and Jay Knox.

need. At Christmas, they sponsor a toy run and fundraiser to provide meals and winter clothing to the families they "adopt."

The group also provides assistance to veterans in need. Last year, Legion Riders donated TVs to the Veterans Home in Marshalltown and organized clothing drives.

"We try to support the veterans anyway we can," Treg says.

The Legion also supports law enforcement officials. It gave \$10,000 for the Dallas County Law Enforcement bike trail memorial, which honors fallen first responders.

Treg says it's important to give back.

"Those of us who are fortunate to have the time and the ability to help out veterans is important. They've done so much for our country," he reflects.

He says only 1% of Americans have served in the military.

"It's not a lot. We depend on them to protect our freedoms. It's nice to thank them for their service and honor them anyway we can," he says.

Treg encourages the public to support veterans locally. For example, the Legion and VFW offers meals for purchase at the Waukee Triangle Farmers Market on Wednesday nights.

He suggests folks contact local American Legion or VFW posts to see how to support them.

"Sometimes it's manpower or financial support. Veterans often need someone who understands and has been in their shoes," he explains.

The Waukee Legion will be hosting a four-person golf scramble fundraiser on June 6 at Sugar Creek Golf Course in Waukee. The event includes 18 holes of golf, lunch, raffle prizes and more. Cost is \$300 per team. All of the money raised goes directly to supporting local veterans. To sponsor a hole, donate, register your team, or for more information, call 860-303-6593 or email john.parcel@hotmail.com. ■

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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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Treatment process: Consultation – A thorough consultation is essential to assess individual needs and determine how many vials will be required to get optimal results. **Injection** – Most patients require three sessions spaced about four to six weeks apart. **Aftercare** – Post treatment care includes massaging the injected areas for five minutes five times a day for five days to ensure even distribution of the product. Avoid strenuous activities for 24 hours. ■

Information provided by Lauren Lohse, MSN, FNP-C, 4EverYoung, 1180 S.E. University Ave., Waukee, 515-304-2324, www.4everyoungantiaging.com.

VOLUNTEER can't 'sit still'

Tuel named Waukee Citizen of the Year.



Val Tuel was recently awarded Waukee Citizen of the Year by the Waukee Chamber of Commerce.

From rocking babies to managing a free medical clinic, Val Tuel is all about giving back to the community she lives in.

Because of these and numerous other volunteer efforts, she was recently awarded Waukee Citizen of the Year by the Waukee Chamber of Commerce.

Tuel worked as a nurse for 34 years. After she retired, she wanted to stay busy and “have a purpose.” She explains, “I have tons of friends to go to lunch with, but I need to do something fulfilling to me to fill that void.”

She manages the free clinic at WayPoint Resources (formerly Waukee Area Christian Services). She works behind the scenes, ordering supplies and recruiting volunteers. She coordinates with medical students in the clinic, which provides for Dallas County residents in need. The clinic also offers school physicals for local students in need.

At WayPoint, she assists in the food pantry and clothing closet. During the COVID pandemic, she helped with vaccination clinics. “There was a great need, but it wasn't my favorite thing to do,” she admits.

Tuel also rocks babies who are in the neonatal intensive care unit at UnityPoint Hospital.

“It's so great to snuggle these 3- or 4-pound babies and give them love,” she reflects.

As she's passionate about her nursing career, she pretends to be a patient during medical student simulation labs, so medical students can practice communication skills.

“They tell me that I've been given a cancer diagnosis and witness my reaction to it. It helps students to better communicate with their patients.”

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NEIGHBOR

For the past seven years, Tuel has served as a CASA — a court appointed special advocate. She advocates for abused and neglected kids in need of assistance, serving as a voice for them and coordinating care with teachers and counselors.

Tuel moved from Des Moines to Waukee 13 years ago to be closer to her daughter. She has five grandkids along with “bonus” family members.

Melissa Stimple, director at WayPoint Resources, invited her to attend the awards ceremony. She initially thought she might miss the ceremony as she and her daughters were going to celebrate the birthday of her son, who died in 2010. Yet she was glad she attended the ceremony.

“My daughters think that was a great way and remembrance to get the award — on the day of his birthday.”

Tuel says she was surprised when she received the award.

“I was totally shocked,” she says. “I volunteer because I like to — not for the recognition. I didn’t even know there was a chamber citizen of the year award.”

Tuel needed a purpose after she retired.

“We still have the skills. I can’t sit still,” she admits. “You can’t take the nurse out of me.”

She encourages others to volunteer and to discover a passion that clicks.

“Even if it’s just for an hour a month, it’s OK. I promise you’ll get back more than you give,” she says. ■



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Source: American Academy of Pediatrics 3/25

CELEBRATE spring's arrival with a skillet fish fry

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



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

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

Pan-fried catfish

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

Ingredients

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

Directions

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



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OUT & ABOUT



Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for Mission Cancer and Blood, 2565 S.E. Encompass Drive, Waukee, on March 27.



Emily Schultz, Megan Watt and Jessica Mitchell at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Mission Cancer and Blood.



Shannon Benson and Madie McManus at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Mission Cancer and Blood.



Justin Brown, Jennifer Brown and Phil Stover at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Mission Cancer and Blood.



Ryan Olson and Dr. Steven Hedinger at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Mission Cancer and Blood.



Mayor Courtney Clarke and Heather Behrens at the Mayor's 2025 Waukee State of the City Address on March 13 at Hope Lutheran Church.



Fire Chief Clint Robinson, Finance Director Linda Burkhart and City Administrator Brad Deets at the Mayor's 2025 Waukee State of the City Address on March 13 at Hope Lutheran Church.



Jill Crosser and Rhett Oselette at the Mayor's 2025 Waukee State of the City Address on March 13 at Hope Lutheran Church.



Kelly Troxel, Randi Willard and Vicki Davis at the Mayor's 2025 Waukee State of the City Address on March 13 at Hope Lutheran Church.



Maddie Starman and Rob Grove at the Mayor's 2025 Waukee State of the City Address on March 13 at Hope Lutheran Church.



Alex Vlach, Zack Vander Ploeg, Megan Watt and Amber Rhodes at the Mayor's 2025 Waukee State of the City Address on March 13 at Hope Lutheran Church.

20 YEAR Anniversary

Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for DeRocher Chiropractic's 20-year anniversary on March 21.



Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for DeRocher Chiropractic's 20-year anniversary on March 21.



Dr. Nick DeRocher and Jessica Taylor-Fink



Laura Hinspeter, Nick Grimoskas and Lance Farrell



Max and Drew DeRocher



Dr. Nick DeRocher, Melissa Stimple, Wendy Marsh and Don Frazer



Kelly Troxel and Jill Crosser



Joe and Katie Nguyen



Kelly Troxel and Brett Braafhart



Lisa and Scott Politte



Brenda Kaiser and Tiffany Blair

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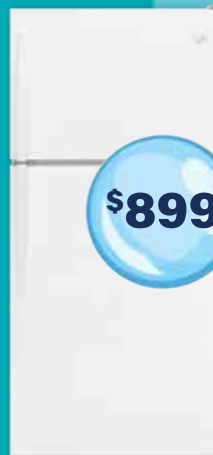
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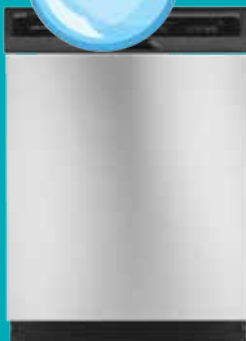
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