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MAY 2025

Living

Pampered Pets

**Residents share how
they go the extra mile
to spoil their critters**

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WELCOME

A LITTLE dog and a pink sweater

My only requirement in searching for a family pet was that it had to be a short-haired, masculine-looking dog. Now, before you start calling me sexist, you should know that I didn't really care if the dog was male or female. In fact, I preferred female dogs. I just didn't want a poodle named Fifi.

After lengthy searches, we eventually adopted a female miniature pinscher named Pudding. She was quite small and quite chubby. As such, Pudding was a fitting name, but it did not match the masculinity thing I was seeking. So, we compromised a bit and renamed her Roxy.

Keep in mind that, at the time, I was the father of three young girls, all who mothered this dog like a newborn child. They showered her with clothes and toys and treats. I wanted to be the dog.

As the dad, I was charged with the doggy duty of taking Roxy out for bathroom breaks and walks, and I was bound and determined to work the pudding off this dog. What I didn't expect was the harassment from my neighbor, Robert, as he mocked me and my little dog in her pink sweater.

"Hey, Goodman," he yelled at me one morning after one of our first walks. "You are looking tough with that little dog in the pink sweater!"

It clearly was not a macho moment. I got over it, eventually. But that pink sweater quietly disappeared.

Two decades and three dogs later, we were still pampering a pet. More clothes. More toys. More treats. And now for dogs of all sizes.

Today, we no longer have a dog, but we continue to hang on to much of the dog "stuff," apparently just in case we opt to pamper one again someday.

Time will tell. Meanwhile, the royal treatment we gave our dogs pales in comparison to how some residents spoil theirs. Whether you are a pet lover or not, you will certainly be amused by these stories.

Have a great month, and thanks for reading. ■

SHANE GOODMAN

President and Publisher
Big Green Umbrella Media
shane@dmciview.com



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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Pampered Pets

Residents share how they go the extra mile to spoil their critters

By Jackie Wilson

Many pet owners view their animal companions as part of the family — deserving of the best care, lots of attention, and at least a few perks. Besides the usual walks, pet beds and toys, some of these pampered pets get extra special treatment: pup cups from drive-throughs, birthday parties, paw soaks and a special place in those important days of their owners' lives — as well as in their hearts.

Andrea Meyer spoils her goldendoodles Gus, pictured, and Fred. They are cherished members of her family. Photo by Jackie Wilson

FEATURE

Gus and Fred

Gus and Fred are two goldendoodles that reside with their “dog mom,” Andrea Meyer, in West Des Moines.

Meyer admits that the pair — that share the same mom — might be a bit spoiled.

One way she spoils her dogs is with a membership at Paws & Pints in Des Moines.

There, Gus and Fred can romp and play unleashed while Meyer watches from a glass observation room while working or relaxing with a cocktail. She also drops them off for doggie daycare. While at daycare, dogs aren't just given a ball to run and play — the dogs create crafts and are provided interaction opportunities.

“They come home with little paw print art flowers on paper. Or little Santa crafts. I can't believe I do this,” she laughs.

She has hosted and attended dog birthday parties at Paws & Pints. Dogs and their humans are invited, complete with special meatballs for the dogs, cake, dog hats and dog toys for attendees. Humans can participate, too, with their own cocktails and catered food items.



Andrea Meyer takes her goldendoodles, Fred and Gus, to Paws & Pints nearly every day of the week for doggie daycare, dog playdates and more. Photo by Jackie Wilson

She says the dogs get excited and know it is party time whenever they head to the party room.

“Never in my life did I throw a dog birthday

party until now,” Meyer says.

Meyer had cats for years and wanted a dog when she lived in California. After her last cat passed away, she “de-catted” the place. A

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neighbor had a goldendoodle she pet-sat once, and she became fond of the breed.

Meyer got Fred, a goldendoodle, as a puppy in 2018. Ironically, he was born the same day her cat died. In 2021 during the pandemic, Meyer moved back to Iowa. As she searched for a house, her parents, who lived in West Des Moines, told her about Paws & Pints and the Raccoon River Dog Park.

"I looked at properties and wanted to live close to these places for my dogs," she explains.

She worked from home during the pandemic, and her youngest dog, Gus, is more attached to Meyer.

"He's chewed up furniture. I love him so much, it's OK," she says.

She has six pet beds scattered around her home, plus a plethora of toys. The dogs are treated to extra bones after dinner. For their dinner, food gets a special topper, consisting of salmon oil, bone broth and extra nutrients.

"It's ridiculous," she admits. "I want them to live as long as possible."

She has arranged photo shoots with Santa, the Easter bunny and a newborn photo shoot with her dogs. She travels with them, searching

out pet-friendly accommodations and patios.

Meyer says the money she spends on grooming and daycare, parties and dog memberships are well worth it.

"Who's not happy around dogs? I don't have kids, so I won't have to pay for college. I don't say they are my kids, but they are like kids," she reflects.

The best part of having dogs is they provide social and emotional support, she says. When she confides in them, she is confident they won't tell her secrets. Additionally, she has gotten to know other dog parents, and it forces her to exercise by walking the dogs daily.

"They bring joy and unconditional love," she reflects. "They are the biggest part of my life. I make sure they're happy before anything else."

Corgis are cuddle bugs

Christina Melcher considers her two corgis to be family members. Tobi is a full, 1-year-old corgi. Bo, 14, is half corgi and half Norwegian elkhound.

Melcher has had corgis since college. She acquired her second corgi, Tobi, as a distraction



Christina Melcher says her two corgis are an important part of her life. Photo by Jackie Wilson

from life events. She also thought Bo needed a new friend.

"Bo is adjusting to not being the only child. I thought a puppy might bring some energy to him," she explains.

Both dogs attend doggy daycare at Camp Bow Wow in West Des Moines. She says the daycare keeps the dogs from sitting at home on

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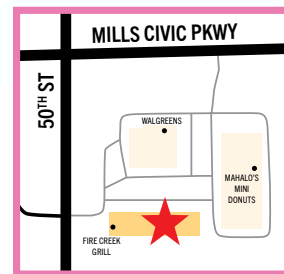


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FEATURE

long days.

"It's not fair. They're locked up all day. Modern problems call for modern solutions," she says.

At Camp Bow Wow, dogs participate in "enrichment" days where they participate in activities, such as playing outside with water or hunting for Easter eggs. A "pawcasso" activity involves the dogs painting with their paws, and the "paintings" are given to their owners.

"Camp Bow Wow is great. It's mentally stimulating, and it wears them out. When we get home, he's not a lunatic," she explains about Tobi.

She takes her dogs to Raccoon River Dog Park and finds pet-friendly spots, such as a hardware store and bars with patios. A play date at the dog park followed by a pup cup treat at Starbucks makes for a full day.

Melcher says her pets are considered family.

"It's more acceptable to have and rely on pets or call them family, especially after the COVID pandemic," she reflects. "People get upset if you consider them children. But sometimes it is. They are such an important part of life. They offer so much love and



Christina Melcher of West Des Moines takes her pets on trips with her.

support, as if they are a family member. They are like my roommates."

Her dogs have free run of the house, and she likes their cuddly nature.

"We've been through a lot together. When I see them, it's an instant pick-me-up if I'm

stressed from the day. As soon as I see them, things don't seem as bad or important," she says.

"I'd be lost without them. I can't imagine them not being there. We've had so many life experiences together."



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FEATURE

Bowie, Zeus and Millie

Cecily and Matt Decklever of West Des Moines are long-time pet owners. Zeus, 13, is a half lab/half Pyrenees dog that needed a playmate.

Since the Decklevers liked the Pyrenees breed, they discovered a mom about to give birth to a litter of puppies that had just arrived at AHeinz57 Pet Rescue in De Soto. With more than 300 applicants and just 10 puppies available, Matt says the “COVID babies” were popular.

“We jumped on it and were lucky to get one,” he recalls.

They received a little fluff ball, naming her Bowie, after singer David Bowie, because she had a stripe on the side of her eye that made her look like a Ziggy Stardust character.

Bowie’s breed is known for its thick fur, and she has quarterly spa appointments at the Paw Spa in Clive. There she gets special treatment including a de-shedding, nail trim and more.

“She’s there for four hours — it’s a salon day,” explains Cecily. “She smells good for a week after that.”

When they got Bowie, they realized her fluffy coat would need constant upkeep.

“The thick fur keeps her temperature regulated, so you can’t cut it short. We knew she would shed a lot and require high maintenance. We got a Roomba vacuum, which runs every night,” Matt says. “It can be a pain, but it’s all worth it. We wouldn’t trade it for anything.”

Their school-aged kids, Isabel and Graeme, love the animals. In addition, they have Millie, a ragdoll cat.

“Her and Bowie are two different species, but they look alike,” says Matt. “We have to brush her every day, too.”

Bowie enjoys car rides and pup cups at Smokey Row. She knows when it is Friday night and Isabel and Graeme’s friends come over.

“She gets so excited for Friday nights,” Isabel says. “She loves company and attention from our friends. She thinks she’s a lapdog.”

The family often takes the dogs on vacations, or they will have a pet



Graeme Decklever holds Millie, a ragdoll cat.



Matt, Isabel, Graeme and Cecily Decklever consider their pets, Bowie and Zeus, as part of the family. Each family member chips in to take care of pet duties. Photo by Jackie Wilson

sitter from Rover. Whenever they take Bowie for a walk, onlookers stop to compliment the pretty dog.

“The Paw Spa does such a great job,” Cecily says.

Matt says pet ownership has helped their kids learn responsibility. And, large dogs offer a sense of security. Yet the best reason for their pets is something the whole family agrees on.

“The companionship is why we like pets. They are like family,” Matt reflects. “If you’re having a bad day, someone comes to greet you at the door who is always happy.” ■

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A LOOK at diversification

Ancient Chinese merchants were said to have developed a unique way to manage their risk. They would divide their shipments among several different vessels. That way, if one ship were to sink or be attacked by pirates, the rest stood a good chance of getting through. Thus, the majority of the shipment could be saved.

Your investment portfolio may benefit from that same logic.

Diversification is an investment principle designed to manage risk. However, diversification does not guarantee against a loss. The key to diversification is to identify investments that may perform differently under various market conditions.

On one level, a diversified portfolio should be diversified between asset classes, such as stocks, bonds and cash alternatives. On another level, a diversified portfolio also should be diversified within asset classes, such as a diverse basket of stocks.



For example, let's say a stock portfolio included a computer company, a software developer, and an internet service provider. Although the portfolio has spread its risk among three companies, it may not be considered well diversified, as all the firms are connected to the technology industry. A portfolio that includes a computer company, a drug manufacturer, and an oil service firm, however, may be considered more diversified.

Similarly, a bond portfolio that invests exclusively in long-term U.S. Treasuries may have limited diversification. A bond fund that invests in short-term and long-term U.S. Treasuries, plus a variety of corporate bonds, may offer more diversification.

The concept of diversification is one reason why mutual funds and Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) are so popular among investors. Mutual funds accumulate a pool of money that is invested to pursue the objectives stated in the fund's prospectus. The fund may have a narrow objective, such as the auto sector, or it may have a broader objective, such as large-cap stocks. ETFs also can have a narrow or broader investment

objective. Keep in mind, though, the more narrow an investment objective, the more limited the diversification. Furthermore, a narrow investment objective may result in more volatility and additional risks associated with a particular industry or sector.

The concept of diversification is critical to understand when you are evaluating a portfolio. If you want more information on diversification or have questions about how your money is invested, call your financial professional to review your situation.

Mutual funds and exchange-traded funds are sold only by prospectus. Please consider the charges, risks, expenses, and investment objectives carefully before investing. A prospectus containing this and other information about the investment company can be obtained from your financial professional. Read it carefully before you invest or send money. Shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. ■

Information provided by Travis Gaule, Founding Partner/Financial Advisor, 4090 Westown Parkway, Suite 108, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-207-4346.

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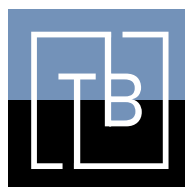
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CITY awarded for outstanding service delivery

Mayor Russ Trimble and members of the West Des Moines City Council received the coveted Leading the Way Award during a presentation at the April 7 city council meeting. This is the third time West Des Moines has received this award for outstanding achievements in the delivery of services to residents.

ETC Institute, a national survey and research firm, said West Des Moines ranks in the top 10% of all local governments in the United States that participated in the DirectionFinder® Citizen Survey during the summer of 2024. The average reflects West Des Moines' top-tier performance across three core areas:

- **Overall quality of services:** West Des Moines residents expressed high satisfaction with the comprehensive quality of services provided by the city.
- **Customer service provided by employees:** The city's employees received exceptional marks for their customer service, reflecting a strong dedication to serving the community.
- **Value residents receive for local taxes and fees:** Residents of West Des Moines appreciate the value they receive for local taxes

and fees; understanding the city's effective and efficient use of public funds.

In addition to ranking in the top 10% for all cities in the United States, West Des Moines' performance exceeded the national average by more than 25% in 22 specific areas, including customer service; quality of parks, recreation, programs and facilities; overall value received for city tax dollars/fees, and the effectiveness of city communication with the public.

City Manager Tom Hadden said West Des Moines is fortunate to have dedicated employees who are always looking for ways to improve services for residents.

"Our employees earned this recognition, and I'm so proud to share this news with them, our elected officials and our amazing residents," he said.

Since 2002, ETC Institute has conducted the City of West Des Moines Citizen Survey, which provides an assessment of community satisfaction with city services. The city has used the survey as a tool for strategic planning and benchmarking. ■

NEVENHOVEN participates in leadership class

First-year student Nathan Nevenhoven of West Des Moines is nearing completion of the 2024-25 President's Leadership Class at Iowa State University.

Nevenhoven majors in finance and is a graduate of Waukee High School.

Each fall, Iowa State President Wendy Wintersteen invites 30 first-year students to participate in the program. They are selected for the class based on high school leadership experience, academic achievement and involvement in school and community service. The President's Leadership Class builds on these abilities

and experiences, serving as an important training ground for students who will go on to become campus leaders, and, ultimately, leaders in their professions and communities.

The class meets weekly in The Knoll, the president's residence, to discuss a variety of topics related to leadership with President Wintersteen, and students are given the opportunity to interact with Iowa State administrators, faculty and staff, and state and local leaders. Each student receives a \$1,000 scholarship. ■



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May Is Hepatitis Awareness Month

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver that can cause health problems, such as liver cancer and liver failure.

Learn the ABCs of this serious virus.

Hepatitis A

- Spread through contaminated food and drink.
- It's very contagious and you can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

Hepatitis B

- Spread through contact with an infected person's blood or other bodily fluids.
- There's no cure for hepatitis B, but treatment can delay or reduce the risk of developing liver cancer.

Hepatitis C

- There isn't a vaccine to prevent hepatitis C, but treatment is available.
- Most people with hepatitis C can be cured with just 8–12 weeks of treatment.

Help Protect Your Liver From Hepatitis



Ask your healthcare provider about hepatitis vaccines and testing.

Source: cdc.gov 4/25

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

Upcoming in the West Des Moines / Jordan Creek 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.

Yards: Enjoying the green spaces around your home: Do you have a lush, green lawn with plenty of open spaces? Tell us how you keep your yard healthy and how your family makes the best of the space. Perhaps your yard provides space for barbecues, fun around the pool or hot tub, room for play equipment and lawn games. Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com with your experiences enjoying the cool feeling of grass beneath your feet.

Jordan House Tours

Fridays and Sundays, 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Jordan House Museum, 2001 Fuller Road, West Des Moines

Weekly guided tours are offered at the Jordan House. The cut off for purchasing tickets is noon Thursday for Friday tours and noon Friday for Sunday tours. If you have missed that cutoff, call 515-225-1286 to find out if walk-up tickets are available. To reserve a ticket, see the schedule and links at <https://www.wdmhs.org/openhousevisit/>. All tours will be guided by a docent. Arrive at the Jordan House Museum at least 10 minutes before the tour begins. The tour will involve taking stairs to the basement and the second floor, as well as walking and standing for at least one hour. If you have a group of eight or more, call to schedule a private tour.

Paint a Birdhouse

(ages 3 and older)

Friday, May 9, 5-6:30 p.m.

Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge,
2500 Grand Ave., West Des Moines

Create a heartfelt gift this Mother's Day at this memorable painting experience. Come to the Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge and paint your own birdhouse. Each participant will receive a ready-to-paint birdhouse, brushes and paint to choose from. This is a perfect way to create a special gift or just spend time with your loved one. The fee is \$7 per birdhouse.



Craft Craze: Crochet Sunflower

(ages 18 and older)

Tuesday, May 15, 5-7:30 p.m.

Valley Junction Activity Center, 217
Fifth St., West Des Moines

Join this beginner's crochet class to learn the stitches to create a beautiful sunflower. Once you've created the sunflower, you can sew it onto another project, create multiple sunflowers to use as coasters, or add additional pieces to turn it into a keychain.



Iowa Files: The History of Women's Correction in Iowa

Sunday, May 18, 2:30-3:30 p.m.
West Des Moines Public Library, 4000 Mills Civic Parkway, West Des Moines

Iowa began building its first prison before achieving statehood, and women were sentenced to penitentiaries prior to the establishment of plans for their own housing. Early in Iowa's correctional history, women disproportionately served time for crimes considered to be against public decency, such as prostitution, lewdness and incorrigibility. Over time, their conditions and crimes evolved, but incarcerated women continually faced obstacles, such as access to treatment and programming, adequate facilities and opportunities for reentry and reform. Author Erica Spiller will explore the history of incarceration that began even before Iowa was a state.

Out to Lunch: El Toreado Mexican Bar and Grill

Thursday, May 22, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
El Toreado Mexican Bar and Grill,
3751 EP True Parkway, West Des Moines

Connect with fellow business and community leaders while supporting local bars and restaurants. "Out to Lunch" is a networking series hosted by the West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce and the Explore WDM Committee. Bring your business cards and appetite. You're responsible for the cost of your own lunch. You are encouraged to make a reservation if needed. It's a great way to build relationships, enjoy delicious meals, and boost the vibrant local dining scene.

Youth Handmade Market

(ages 7-17)
Thursday, May 15, 5-8 p.m.
Valley Junction Activity Center,
217 Fifth St., West Des Moines

This is your chance to see and support the amazing handmade items created by talented young people. You'll find the market at the Valley Junction Activity Center Ballroom happening at the same time as the Valley Junction Farmers Market. If you are a budding artist or crafter, grab your spot. A 10-foot by 10-foot booth is \$20. Organizers provide an 8-foot table and two chairs. They encourage youth to handle their sales, helping them learn valuable skills. And, for all you shoppers, admission is free.

Colby Park Splash Pad Ribbon Cutting and Touch A Truck

Friday, May 30, 4:30-7:30 p.m.
Colby Park, 6900 School St., Windsor Heights

Attend the Colby Park splash pad ribbon cutting at 4:30 p.m. followed by Touch A Truck from 5-7:30 p.m. The Des Moines Children's Museum and the City of Windsor Heights are excited to team up to bring you this year's Touch A Truck. Get ready for a hands-on experience with all kinds of cool trucks and vehicles that you can explore, climb on, in, around, take pictures with and touch. From construction equipment to garbage trucks to city snow plows, this Touch A Truck will have it all.

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>.

Mother's Day Craft Show

Saturday, May 10, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Northbridge Event Center, 4530 E. 46th St., Des Moines

Shop with more than 40 vendors.

Bands, Brews and Bikes

Every Sunday, June through October, 1-3 p.m.
Water Works Park, 2201 George Flagg Parkway, Des Moines

Bike, family and pet-friendly, Bands, Brews and Bikes returns to the biergarten this summer. Ride your bike, grab a cold brew and enjoy live music. **June 1** features The Other Brothers; **June 8**, Chip Albright; **June 15**, Dick Danger Band; **June 22**, Velvet Trio; **June 29**, Trio Aceto; **July 13**, Southbound: A tribute to the Allman Brothers. For more information, visit www.waterworkspark.org/event-calendar.

The Kate Goldman Family Series presents "Alice in Wonderland"

Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from May 2-18. Fridays, 7 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays, 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.
Des Moines Playhouse, 831 42nd St., Des Moines

The Kate Goldman Family Series at The Des Moines Playhouse presents "Alice in Wonderland." Tickets may be purchased online at dmplayhouse.com and by phone at 515-277-6261. "Alice in Wonderland" is presented in the Studio Theatre and is sponsored by Nationwide.

DMPA Free Outdoor Family Events

Various dates and parks

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.

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

Bird Watching and Bagels

Saturday, May 10, 8 a.m.

Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, 9981 Pacific St., Prairie City

The public is invited to a fun introduction to bird watching. May is a great time to get outside to see the spring bird migration. Take a guided walk along the Oak Savanna Trail loop. Free loaner binoculars will be available for check out. Participants can enjoy free bagels and coffee at the visitor center after the walk. This event targets birdwatchers of all skill levels, ages 8 and older. Meet at the Oak Savanna Trailhead. The Oak Savanna Trail is a half-mile loop with a gravel surface and gradual inclines. A restroom is available at the parking lot. Wear pants and sturdy walking shoes. Bringing a refillable water bottle and insect repellent is also advised. For more information and to register, contact nancy_corona@fws.gov or call 515-994-3400.



12th Annual Race to Feed Kids

Saturday, May 10, 9-11 a.m.
Women of Achievement
Bridge in Downtown Des Moines

The Des Moines Mary's Meals Race to Feed Kids isn't your average 5K run/walk. It's a passion to end hunger for our world's youth. Every race registration will feed one child at Mcheza Primary School in Malawi, Africa, for an entire school year. For many of the youth, this may be their only meal of the day, and you are helping to feed them. Register at <https://runsignup.com/marysmealsracetofeedkids>.



Mothers Day Breakfast Buffet and Bake Sale

Sunday, May 11, 8 a.m. to noon
Elks Lodge, 2060 N.W. 94th St., Clive

Enjoy a Mother's Day breakfast which includes biscuits and gravy, French toast, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage patties, cheesy potatoes, and all-you-can-eat pancakes (including blueberry and chocolate chip pancakes), orange juice, milk and coffee for \$11. Children younger than 10, \$5. Enjoy a bloody Mary or mimosa for \$3.50. Proceeds support the Elks' Hoop Shoot Program, other youth activities and veterans' activities.



Great Strides Walk

Saturday, May 17, 10 a.m.

Outlets of Des Moines, 801 Bass Pro Drive N.W., Altoona

Outlets of Des Moines will host the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation Iowa Chapter's Great Strides Walk. The 2-mile walk starts at 10 a.m. with registration opening at 9 a.m. Now celebrating 70 years as an organization, all funds raised benefit the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and its mission to cure cystic fibrosis. Sign up information and various ways to raise funds for the cause can be found on the chapter website at FundRaiseCFF.org/DSM2025.



Concrete Cruizers Charity Car Show

Saturday, May 17

Deery Chevrolet, 6000 E. University Ave., Pleasant Hill

Registration is from 8-11 a.m. with awards starting at 3 p.m. Day of show cost is \$25 without a T-shirt. The event will include an auction, music, food and goodie bags for the first 100 registrants. For more information, call 515-299-3165 or 515-360-8257.



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 Street.

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

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

RAP Carousel Day

Saturday, May 31, 4-6 p.m.

Union Park, 725 Thompson Ave., Des Moines

This annual event, sponsored by Real Advantage Partners, welcomes spring and brings families and neighbors together at beautiful Union Park (home of the famous Rocket Slide) in Des Moines for free rides on the historic carousel. Attendees also enjoy games and refreshments provided by RAP team members.

Workshops With Master Drummer Bolokada Conde

Saturday, May 31, 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., and Sunday, June 1, 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.
Unity Center, 414 31st St., Des Moines

Bolokada Conde, lead soloist of Les Percussions de Guinée (Guinea's National Ballet) for more than a decade, will be conducting workshops in traditional Malinke rhythms. Cost is \$35 per session or \$120 for all four. Bolokada has taught drumming internationally for decades, including at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where he was a full-time visiting artist from 2008 to 2011. For more information, contact Linda Foster at 515-669-5820 or Bob Miller at 641-472-2479. ■

ASIAN ground turkey bowl is healthy and flavorful

When our girls were younger, and we were running from one activity to the next seemingly every night, we treated ourselves, often to Chinese take-out. Shane and the girls loved the sweet sauce on orange chicken. My choice was cashew chicken, and we all devoured the fried rice.

We like Asian food, but it has not been something I cook at home. This recipe caught my eye the other day, so I thought I would test it out. My family loved it!

I appreciate this Asian ground turkey bowl recipe for its perfect balance of flavors and textures. The savory turkey, cooked with garlic, ginger, hoisin sauce and soy sauce, brings a rich base that pairs well with the freshness of crunchy vegetables. It is a healthy yet satisfying dish with

lean ground turkey providing a great source of protein.

I also appreciate how customizable it is. You may choose to add a little spice with sriracha or keep it mild. Adjust the flavors to your taste. The rice gives it a comforting feel, while the vibrant toppings — like cucumbers and lettuce — add just the right amount of crunch. It is one of those meals that feels indulgent but is actually good for you with only 366 calories and 32 grams of protein per serving.

Enjoy and let me know what you think. ■

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



Asian ground turkey bowl

Ingredients

- 2 pounds lean ground turkey
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 4 green onions, chopped
- 1.5 cups carrots, shredded
- .5 cup water chestnuts, chopped
- 4 teaspoons minced ginger
- 4 teaspoons minced garlic
- 4 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
- .75 cup hoisin sauce
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 4 cups rice (any variety – I use Jasmine)
- 1-2 cups lettuce, finely chopped
- 1-2 cups cucumbers, diced

Directions

- Make sauce by combining hoisin sauce, soy sauce, rice vinegar and sesame oil. Save for later.
- Heat olive oil over medium high heat. Add turkey once hot and brown for 3-5 minutes. Push the turkey to the sides of the pan. Add red and green bell peppers, green onions, water chestnuts, garlic and ginger. Stir together and cook for 4-7 minutes. Cook until turkey is cooked. The vegetables should be tender-crisp.
- Add sauce and cook 2-3 minutes. Sauce will thicken and coat the turkey and vegetables nicely. Serve turkey and vegetables on top of a bed of rice. Top with lettuce and cucumbers. You can add additional carrots and green onions if desired. Serves eight. ■



NATURAL solutions for chronic pain

Chronic pain can make daily life difficult, but natural remedies like CBD, THC and alkaloids offer effective relief without the risks of traditional medications. CBD interacts with the body's endocannabinoid system to help reduce inflammation and pain. Research shows it may ease conditions like arthritis, muscle soreness and nerve pain. Unlike pharmaceuticals, CBD is non-addictive and has minimal side effects.



THC, in low doses, can also aid in pain management by altering pain perception and improving relaxation. Additionally, THC helps reduce stress and anxiety, which often accompany chronic pain, leading to an overall improved sense of well-being.

Natural alkaloids, such as those found in kratom, provide another layer of relief. These compounds interact with pain receptors while also promoting energy and mood stability. This makes them particularly beneficial for individuals struggling with both physical discomfort and the mental fatigue that chronic pain can bring.

While online shopping may seem convenient, purchasing from a locally owned CBD store ensures you receive high-quality, third-party-tested products. Certified hemp consultants can guide you to the best pain relief options, including tinctures, topicals and capsules to fit for your needs.

If you're looking for safe and effective pain relief, visit your local CBD store for expert advice and trusted products. ■

Information provided by Ashley Powell, CBD American Shaman, 800 S. 50th St., No. 106, West Des Moines, 515-380-5251, and 3418 Eighth St. S.W., No. 3, Altoona, 515-967-4036. Sources: Ueberall, M. A. (2020). "Effectiveness and Tolerability of THC:CBD Extracts in Chronic Pain Patients." Journal of Pain Research.

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SUMMER Reading at the WDM Public Library

Our annual Summer Reading Club

is back and bigger than ever this year. Everyone who registers (yes, adults, too) will get an exclusive WDM Library Summer Reading sticker. Registration opens on May 19. You'll track your reading through the handy Beanstack app or with paper trackers handed out at the Children's Desk. Readers of any age who log more than 30 reading days will win exciting prizes at the end of the summer. Learn more at wdmlibrary.org/summer.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Reminder: The library will be closed on Sunday, May 11 for Mother's Day as well as Sunday, May 25, and Monday, May 26, for Memorial Day.

Retirement University

Wednesdays from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

We invite you to attend the three-part Retirement University programs presented by the Society for Financial Awareness.

- **May 7:** Social Security and Medicare
- **May 14:** Investment and Taxes
- **May 21:** Estate Planning, Long Term Care and Legacy Planning

"Get Growing" with the Budding Optimist - Oh So Many Uses for Ornamental Grasses

Tuesday, May 13, 7-8 p.m.

Learn about the wide range of ornamental grasses and best practices for selecting and planting for a successful garden space. Bring a notebook. Registration required.

Crossroads: A Journey with the Blues

Saturday, May 17, 1-2 p.m.

The library welcomes vocalist extraordinaire Tina Haase Findlay and Iowa blues legend and guitarist Rob Lumbard for a great afternoon of jazz and blues. No registration required.

Final Friday Fiber Club

Friday, May 30, 10-11:30 a.m. (adults)

All fiber artists are invited to join us for Final Friday Fiber Club, an informal opportunity to get together with other fiber artists to make new friends while creating your own handmade masterpieces. Registration required. ■

West Des Moines Public Library

www.wdmlibrary.org

515-222-3400

4000 Mills Civic Parkway,

West Des Moines

Mon.-Thu. 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Fri. 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Sat. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sun. 2-5 p.m.

THE WHY and how of deadheading

Keep your flowers blooming longer and your garden a bit tidier with deadheading. Removing faded flowers can promote repeat bloom on some plants, encourage fuller, more compact growth, and tidy up the garden.

Use a bypass hand pruner, garden snips or other dead-heading tool to remove faded flowers. Bypass tools have two sharp blades like scissors, resulting in a clean cut that closes quickly, leaving your plant looking its best. Corona Tool's Ergocut dead header has a finger loop that provides better control and an ergonomic design for less stress on your hands and wrist.

The type of flower will influence how and where to make the cut. In general, remove the stem of faded blooms back to the first set of healthy leaves or nearby flower buds.

Remove the flower stem of salvias, speedwells (Veronicas), and snapdragons as the blooms begin to fade. Cut below the spike of flowers just above the first set of leaves or the side shoots where the new flower buds are forming.

Encourage additional blossoms and improve Shasta daisy's appearance by removing faded flowers. Prune back just above a set of healthy leaves.

Cut the flowers of plants like Armeria and coral bells back to the base of the flower stems that arise from the foliage. This improves the appearance and encourages more blooms on some of this type of flowering perennial.

Plants like daylilies and balloon flowers require a bit different care. Remove the individual blooms as they fade if you don't like looking at the faded flowers. Once all the individual flowers have bloomed out, you can cut the flower stem back at the base.

Removing fading flowers of fuchsia and lantana will prevent the plants from going to seed and encourage more blooms. Remove any berries that do form to keep these plants flowering throughout the growing season.

Deadheading peonies is strictly for aesthetics and won't extend the bloom time. Remove the faded flowers or seedpods as they form. Cut just above a healthy set of leaves to keep the stems more upright and create a tidier appearance in your garden.

Prevent some flowers, like columbine, Amsonia and Alliums from reseeding and spreading throughout the garden by removing



A gardener uses an Ergocut dead header in the garden. Photo courtesy of Corona Tools

the faded flowers. Even though it won't promote additional blooms, it will help eliminate unwanted seedlings in next year's garden.

Remove flowers as they appear on coleus, grown for its colorful foliage, to promote more compact growth. Late blooming, flowerless varieties and self-branching coleus hybrids reduce or eliminate time spent on this task.

Reduce time spent deadheading by including some self-cleaning, also called free-flowering plants, like impatiens, fibrous begonias, Calibrachoa and moss rose. Lobelia, many of the newer petunias and verbenas are also self-cleaning but may benefit from a bit of grooming. Prune back heat-stressed lobelia and verbenas that get leggy and petunia stems that need to be kept in bounds.

Allow seedheads to develop on coneflowers, rudbeckias and other plants that provide winter interest and food for the birds. And consider skipping the deadheading of late blooming

perennials. This allows them to prepare for winter and form seedpods for additional winter interest.

And while you are out in the garden deadheading, pick a few flowers at their peak to enjoy in a summer bouquet indoors. ■

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the recently released "Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition" and "Small Space Gardening." She is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and was commissioned by Corona Tools for her expertise to write this article. Myers' website is www.MelindaMyers.com.



DISABILITY and retirement

Clients frequently ask what happens when a disabled person meets retirement age. Simply put, when a disabled person attains full retirement age, disability benefits automatically convert to Retirement



Insurance Benefits. Most disabled beneficiaries will notice no difference when they become retirement beneficiaries.

A more complicated issue is whether to apply for disability or early retirement.

Some people close to — but not at — age 62 do not apply for disability thinking they will just wait until they can apply for early retirement. This results in a reduced monthly benefit.

However, if you are having difficulty maintaining employment because of a

severe medical condition or combination of conditions expected to last at least 12 months, you may want to consider applying for both early retirement and Social Security Disability. You can apply for both at the same time, or, if you already have a disability claim filed, you can apply for early retirement while the disability claim is processed. This can provide for monthly income while you are waiting for a decision on your disability claim. Should you be found disabled, you may receive compensation for the period of time you received the lower amount. This back-pay amount can be significant.

The amount of monthly benefits you receive depends on when you are found disabled. Regardless of when you apply, if you are found disabled, and your disability began before the age of 62, you will receive your full retirement benefits. If you are found disabled

after the age of 62, your monthly payment will be reduced by the number of months of full retirement benefit but will still be more than the amount of early retirement. You cannot receive disability and full retirement.

Another factor to consider is Medicare. Individuals are eligible for Medicare at the age of 65. Rather than wait until age 65, disabled persons are eligible for Medicare after they have been entitled to SSDI for 24 months.

If you are close to, or over the age of 62, and unable to work because of a medical condition, you should consider filing for disability, early retirement or both. Contact an attorney who specializes in Social Security disability claims to find out which options are best for you. ■

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

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BEYOND books

Guntly champions the library.

Ever since Deb Guntly's kids were young, she has felt it was important to give back. Over the years, she's done so in numerous ways — volunteering at her daughters' school, serving as a Girl Scout leader for seven years, and acting as treasurer for both her church's preschool and the elementary school her girls attended.

The list goes on. She's contributed in a variety of ways at her church and has been a member of the West Des Moines Library Friends Foundation for the past two years.

"The library is one of my very favorite places to visit," Guntly explains. "I feel safe and welcome there."

Guntly appreciates the strong programming the library offers for all ages and that she can attend a book club or learn something new in a class.

"A library is an important part of a community, something that does not discriminate or require membership fees," she says. "Reading is a necessity for everyone, and it's important that children, youth and adults have access to books."

That's just part of why Guntly enjoys serving on the Friends Foundation. She also recognizes that the library offers much more than books, including study and meeting rooms, notary services, faxing and computers for those who may not have access at home.

As part of her service, Guntly has been involved in the Foundation's fundraising efforts. In March, the committee hosted a highly successful event: the annual Wine and Cheese Night. In addition to food, attendees could sign up for a library card, check out materials, snap photos in a fun booth and take a behind-the-scenes tour.

Last summer, the Foundation also hosted a fun event to celebrate the rebranding of the WDM Library kiosk in Valley Junction, complete with free ice cream.

Another major milestone came when the Words on Wheels (WOW) truck launched last year, following extensive planning and effort. The mobile library now travels throughout the city and visits parks during the summer, making it easier for young people to access reading materials.

"I get so much from the library, and I am excited to help them in return," Guntly says. "Tax dollars don't cover everything, so we can help with some of the extras. Through volunteering, I meet a lot of great people who also love the library and help make it even better."

Guntly has read that volunteering is good for your health. It can lower your blood pressure.

"I can't think of a more enjoyable way to boost my health and help the community at the same time," she says. ■



Ryan Mehalovich of Edward Jones presents the Neighbor Spotlight certificate to Deb Guntly.


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MARY'S Helping Hands

Items for babies, moms in need



Lauren Burke established Mary's Helping Hands to provide clothing and other supplies for babies and toddlers.

After Lauren Burke gave birth to her fourth and final child, she was ready to give away baby clothes and supplies.

Yet, as she tried to donate the items, she found nobody wanted them.

"They all wanted new clothes," she recalls. "I thought, there has to be a place where people need baby clothes."

She started a small mission at her church, Sacred Heart, and asked for donations of infant to 2-year-old children's clothes and supplies. Donations flooded in.

Her next question was, "How do we find moms to get the supplies to?"

Burke reached out to a Medicaid nurse, asking for referrals to new mothers they had cared for. The first year they helped 700 moms. Throughout the next four years, it's grown to assisting 6,000 moms last year.

In 2021, Burke established a nonprofit, Mary's Helping Hands Iowa. As the church ran out of room for the program, she found a new location in West Des Moines, where the space was generously donated to the group.

At the location, they take donated goods

and give them away.

"We only take the good stuff, and we give away only good items," she explains.

Parents fill out an application regarding need, family size and more. Then, volunteers go "shopping" for the clients. The order is filled and clients pick up a one-year supply, consisting of about 110 pieces of clothing.

They also give away maternity clothes, nursing supplies, diapers, bottles and more. Some people come back once a month to receive diapers and wipes. Since starting the nonprofit, they serve approximately 500 moms and babies a month.

A volunteer staff of more than 250 people help out on a rotating basis. They recently hired a fulltime director to take on donations, grants and other tasks, yet only spend about 6% in operating costs.

In addition, Mary's Helping Hands partners with various organizations and businesses for donations and grants. They've received funds from Polk City Early Childhood, United Way, Big Grove Brewery and others.

Some moms who have been given clothes volunteer their time in return to the organization. She says clients are grateful for the assistance.

"There's a lot of disbelief that they don't need to do anything to get something in return. I see a lot of smiles, hugs and tears," says Burke. "We never had a person not thank us."

Burke is surprised at how the idea took off quickly.

"It's morphed into something I never thought would exist."

She says she was called to assist others.

"I believe God called me to start this mission. The humility and people we touch — you can't put it in words. It will be a part of my life forever."

She encourages fellow West Des Moines residents to help out, even for a one-time need.

"We can always do better as a community. The need is right under our noses, and residents don't need to look far to help their neighbor."

To volunteer, donate or request items, visit www.maryshelpinghandsiowa.org. ■

MEET Randi Glaser

STEM BEST award winner

As Randi Glaser teaches science classes at Walnut Creek Campus, she is constantly looking for ways to incorporate STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) challenges in the curriculum.

As a result of her dedication to STEM work, she was awarded a STEM BEST (Businesses Engaging Students and Teachers) Program award in 2024 by the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council. Only 29

school districts received the award. The award encourages teachers and industry professionals to work side-by-side to develop work-based learning models that incorporate STEM subjects.

When the classroom is awarded STEM support, Glaser is quick to use it in her classroom.

"I always seek experiences and ideas," she says. "In every unit, I attempt to do a STEM challenge to connect the unit outside the normal text."

In a class taught on homeostasis (a balancing of body systems to survive), she created a lesson to be like a walrus. Students devised a flipper-type device, while maintaining temperature.

"We look for the ability for kids to connect in real life," she explains.

Glaser is fascinated with science and originally went to college to be a pharmacist. After completing a job shadow, she realized the profession provided little interaction with people.

One summer, she taught swim lessons to kids, and, before long, she melded her two passions — teaching and science.

"It fell into place. It was a perfect career," she reflects. "I love watching kids learn their potential and identifying their passions."

Glaser is in her 13th year of teaching, the past four years at Walnut Creek, an alternative high school. She says it's important to connect with kids on a different level.

"These kids are often overlooked. There's a lot of stories and reasons for kids not being in school. That's what makes it a challenge — a kid's home life," she explains. "Some live on their own, some have babies and are trying to get their high school diploma. That's when school should be fun. Instead, they are adulting and managing outside factors."

She is proud of her contributions at Walnut Creek.

"There is a good group of kids who show up every day," she says. "My colleagues are amazing — they're all helping kids find their passion."

One thing she's looking forward to is funding for a new hydroponic garden, which, in turn, will help fill food pantries.

"It's super exciting, and it will connect with the curriculum and give hands-on work experience for students."

She's helps kids invest in their future by building relationships.

"If I had to leave a legacy, I want to help kids by having an adult in their corner, giving support. Every day provides an opportunity to change a kid's life," Glaser says. ■



Randi Glaser with Dr. Matt Adams, WDMCS superintendent, and Dr. Kim Davis, Walnut Creek Campus principal.

WHAT IS a circle of protection?

So many times we deal with families that indicate their loved one had "everything taken care of" only to find out that everything was not taken care of. Maybe the loved one had their cemetery arrangements handled in advance but had never visited with the funeral home. Or, maybe they had talked with a funeral home but never decided on a cemetery.



What we know is that this can leave a family with an unexpected burden and/or unexpected expenses at what can otherwise be a very emotional and stressful time.

Complete arrangements often involve the selection of services and merchandise from two separate entities: the cemetery and the funeral home. A funeral home and cemetery can help you with completing this "circle of protection" so you can protect your family from having to make these decisions when they are grieving.

It truly is the difference between the question, "What would Dad have wanted?" and the confident statement, "This is what Dad wanted." Do your family a favor and start the conversation today. Reach out to your cemetery and funeral home of choice. You will be glad you did, and it will be a gift for your family. ■

Information provided by Dave Cortner, Hamilton's on Westown Parkway, 3601 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-697-3681

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HOME HEALTH

By Aaron Wheeler

PALLIATIVE care: What is it, and how does it help?

Q: My wife's nurse practitioner suggested we look into palliative care. I'm nervous, as this is not a type of care I'm familiar with. My wife has diabetes and suffers from congestive heart failure. While her care team says she could live with her conditions for several years, we would both like her to have a better quality of life. What can palliative care do for her?



A: Great question. Palliative care is a specialized form of care focused on providing relief from the symptoms, pain, and stress of a serious illness. Rather than trying to cure the illness itself, palliative care is designed to improve the quality of life for both the person living with illness and their loved ones.

Here's what you should know about palliative care.

Anyone with a serious or chronic health condition, regardless of their prognosis, can take advantage of it. The goal is to alleviate suffering and improve comfort by managing physical symptoms while also addressing emotional, social, and spiritual needs.

A variety of specialists, such as physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains, and therapists, make up a palliative care team. They will all work together to create a care plan that's tailored to your wife's needs.

It helps manage symptoms such as pain, fatigue, nausea, breathing difficulties, and anything else that goes along with illness. If your wife is dealing with discomfort related to her chronic condition, palliative care can significantly help decrease that.

It also supports family members. Assistance offered with palliative care can include counseling, caregiver support and education, and help navigating health care systems and decisions.

Palliative care doesn't replace other treatments. It can be used alongside curative treatments, helping to manage the side effects or help cope with difficult symptoms during treatments like chemotherapy or dialysis.

It's offered anywhere. If receiving care at home is preferable to you and your wife, make sure you find a provider that offers home-based palliative care.

The overall aim will be to provide your wife with enhanced quality of life while managing the challenges presented by her conditions. Palliative care is highly personalized, and most families report that it enhances comfort and helps everyone navigate the health care journey more smoothly. Best wishes to you both. ■

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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RUSH Hour

West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce Rush Hour was March 27, hosted by the Blue Zoo.



Gil Coosner and Dustin Lambert



Connie Blodgett, Rhonda Mock and Ruth Ebke



Andrea McGinness



Rob Cramer and Everett Mullican



Tricia Evan, Lauren Watson and Katherine Harrington



Jacob Wisel



Jill Crosser and Mady Arndt



Aaron Burns



Jay Mathes and Tricia Evan

RIBBON cutting

West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for Simply Stunning Events, 5525 Mills Civic Parkway, No. 105, March 26.



West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for Simply Stunning Events, 5525 Mills Civic Parkway, No. 105, March 26.



Ruth Ebke and Rob Cramer



Tim and Shannon Stephany



Ellan Sattler and Mike Torrez



Peter Gunter and Edgar Ortiz



Everett Mullican and Jared Galligan



Lauren Watson and Tricia Evan

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Tim, Shannon and Brenda Stephany

OUT & ABOUT

RIBBON cutting

West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for US Bank, 3738 Western Parkway, on April 2.



West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for US Bank on April 2.



Charity Baird and Amy Anderson-Vali



Brian Campbell, Amy Anderson-Vali and Lori Bachman



Mary Ann Woods, Mack Rankin and Sara Bister



Lindsay Ostrem and Amy Thorson



Elizabeth Squier, Morgan Hanson and Cassandra Youngblut



Caitlin Hurley and Michael Bailey-Battaglia



David Carlson and Megan Culver



Lauren Watson and Charity Baird



Frank Hanson, David Carlson and Ruth Ebke

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Wednesday, May 28
12 p.m.

Biaggi's
in West Des Moines

Lunch served.

Thursday, May 29
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