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JULY 2025

Living

MAGAZINE

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make the best of their
outdoor spaces.

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WELCOME

LAWN striping

I vividly remember the pride that Jolene and I had in owning our first home. That was more than 30 years ago, but, in many ways, it still feels like yesterday.

One of the most satisfying aspects of home ownership, at least for us, was having a yard to care for. We couldn't wait to mow our own lawn, do our own landscaping, plant our own trees, etc. It was a matter of pride, and we enjoyed it. It was also a time before becoming parents when we had more hours and more energy to devote to such things. What we didn't have back then were two dimes to rub together, and that's why we begged and borrowed from family members for used mowers and used trimmers and all the other stuff necessary to take care of a lawn.

I remember when I decided I should apply fertilizer to our lawn. This was new to me, as my frugal parents never spent their hard-earned money on such frivolous things. Mom simply had my siblings and me pull weeds by hand. But, as a first-time homeowner, I wanted my lawn to look nice. So, I bought the fertilizer and the spreader and I went to work, making paths throughout my yard like the instructions said to do. What I didn't do was have the dial set to the right number for my fertilizer spreader, and I burned my entire yard with stripes. This was obviously not what I had hoped for, but it did provide fodder for some good-natured ribbing from my neighbors during the years that followed. I gladly gave that fertilizer spreader to my sister-in-law, and I hired a company to do the fertilization from that point forward. And, in time, my lawn took shape — just in time to sell the property and start all over again at our new home.

Today, I still enjoy taking care of my yard — mowing, trimming, gardening, mulching, landscaping, tree trimming — and I am even fertilizing again. But, as I have aged, these tasks became overwhelming, especially when doubled. A few years ago, Jolene and I bought a home on a nearby lake, which meant we now had two properties to care for. It didn't take long before we realized the benefits in owning a townhome and having those yard tasks handled by someone else. I continue to get my fill of yard maintenance enjoyment at our lake home, but I do smile when watching the pros take care of our townhome property. And, thankfully, neither place has lawn stripes burned into the yards.

Thanks for reading. ■



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Dream YARDS

Residents share how they make the best of their outdoor spaces.

By Ashley Rullestad

Give 10 people the blank slate of a spacious yard, and you are likely to see those yards evolve into 10 different visions. Some will be a fenced-in oasis for dogs and kids to run, roll and play. Others will have pools and fire pits for summer fun. Others will feature makeshift ballfields, sledding hills, playgrounds, ponds. And some will provide a scenic setting for enjoying sunrises and sunsets. Whatever the vision, area residents share how their outdoor spaces have become their dream yards.

Amy and Andrew Johnson and their now 9-year-old daughter, Taylor, moved to a house with a pool rather than installing one at the house they owned.

FEATURE

Yard with a pool

Amy and Andrew Johnson and their now 9-year-old daughter, Taylor, owned a house in Waukee and wanted to put in a pool. They then decided it would be easier to move into a house with an existing pool. They had been looking since 2018, but COVID kicked the search into high gear.

"We always wanted to be back in Johnston, as we had lived here previously. We bought this house pretty much sight unseen in August 2020. The hour the listing went live, it had no pictures. We were the first people in. We walked straight through the front door to the pool and made an offer above asking."

Today, they have people over on weekends and host a variety of events for friends, family, birthdays, anniversaries and Taylor's Girl Scout troop. They enjoy hosting, being outdoors, grilling and smoking meats.

The pool has a hoop, but they also spend a lot of time in the yard playing bucket golf, which is a mix between whiffle ball and golf. Players choose a club and take turns trying to get their ball inside (or at least hit) each bucket.

They also enjoy a covered deck with a TV to watch Indiana Fever basketball or Iowa football,



Amy and Andrew Johnson's pool provides summer fun for the family and guests.

and they have a fire pit for s'mores.

The Johnsons have a lawn service company provide maintenance, and they do the family's irrigation and Christmas lights, too.

"We also took advantage of the city soil restoration program last year, and that has helped the lawn quite a bit."

The city of Johnston started the soil quality restoration program for residents two years ago thanks to help from a \$125,000 grant from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. The city helps pay to aerate residents' lawns and spread a grass seed compost mixture as part of the program.

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Chad and Alissa Strauss wanted a yard with plenty of space for entertaining and for the kids to play. Their yard was big enough to create a makeshift ballfield.

A lawn for ball

Chad and Alissa Strauss moved to Johnston in July 2008. The couple grew up in West Des Moines but moved to Chicago after college. They returned to Iowa when they were expecting their third child so they could be closer to family.

The backyard was definitely a selling point when they bought their house.

“We love the size and openness of the yard — and the fact it’s very private with the wooded area and creek behind the house. Our neighbors to the east have a large open backyard, too, with no fence dividing the properties, so the kids had a large space to play all sorts of games and sports

growing up.”

Nine years ago, the Strausses rebuilt their deck and added a patio and firepit, so the backyard has become the go-to place for entertaining.

Their kids (Samantha, Henry and Charlie) played many sports as kids including softball and baseball. Charlie, specifically, likes to play whiffle ball with his friends in the backyard, so, one summer, they decided to make the area a little more formal.

They painted baselines with white yard paint, added rubber bases, and installed tall yellow foul poles marking left and right field. The outfield



wall is the neighbor’s large white privacy fence on the west side of their property that Charlie and his friends use to mark home runs. Like true Chicagoans, they have nicknamed the space Wrigley Field.

“Our neighbors, Dave and Kathy, have been very gracious given the number of home run balls that end up in their backyard and pool.”

They recently added a TV on the deck and

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The Robb backyard is ideal for activities, including lawn games or birdwatching.

have been watching a lot of Cubs games this summer. It has also become a common hangout spot for neighbors in the cul-de-sac — and they have made more s'mores around the fire pit than Chad can count.

The Strauss family does have a lawn service that helps with weed control, but most of the maintenance is done by Chad or the boys keeping it mowed regularly. If the summer gets too hot and dry (and if there aren't any watering restrictions), they do water the lawn to keep it looking in good shape.

"By far, Charlie and his friends are the most frequent users of 'Wrigley Field,' but our entire family has enjoyed the yard. We've hosted many Fourth of July parties, neighborhood get-togethers, a Cubs celebration after winning the 2016 World Series, countless team celebrations for my kids' baseball, softball and cross-country wins, and even Henry's high school graduation in 2024."

Natural beauty

Eileen Robb lives in one of Johnston's first planned neighborhoods, Green Meadows West. They started building their house in 1991 and moved in 1992. There was the first house built east of Foxboro Road in Green Meadows West. The mail carriers had a hard time finding them at first; they hadn't heard of the road before.

"We use a modern, very British/American garden style emphasizing lovely native plants that garden centers didn't typically carry when we started. I have been active in horticulture for a long time, but we had to be resourceful."

For instance, grasses weren't popular then, but they found prairie dropseed and really like it. It smells like popcorn in the summer sun. Now, it is easy to find plants like Virginia bluebells, Solomon seal, meadow rue, coneflowers, beardtongue, butterfly milkweed and many others. Robb's plants are not exclusively native, especially because she likes to grow her own annuals like zinnias, flowering tobacco, moonflower and others, which add to the appeal of the yard.

The Robbs live right next to Beaver Creek, and they knew early on that they would see a lot of wildlife, so they became a Backyard Wildlife Habitat garden through the National Wildlife Foundation early on. They have planted trees like serviceberry, a small tree with great fall color that has berries the birds can't resist.

"It's wonderful when you see a flock of cedar waxwings enjoying the fruit. To be a backyard habitat, it's important to have variety so we also have nannyberry, fragrant sumac, ninebark, bur oaks, Kentucky coffee tree,



The Robbs changed their front lawn to a mix of buffalo grass, blue grama and side oats grama.

redbuds, hazelnuts and more."

Hummingbirds love the columbine, beardtongue and wild false indigo. They also have a vegetable garden, rain garden/prairie, and compost bins for kitchen and garden leftovers.

"The deck looks out over the creek, and it's simply wonderful. When they were young, the children would climb and play in the creek and swales that lead to it."

They keep the typical lawn in back for games. The children are grown now, so it's not as active as it was, but they often had kids enjoying the expanse of the lawn in back.

Now, they use the yard for birdwatching, often seeing two kinds of orioles, indigo buntings, owls and, of course, the hummingbirds.

"We watched a blue jay ride on the back of a deer. Who knew?"

Their neighbors in Green Meadows West know what prairie burns are as the Robbs burn periodically for maintenance. They also use a weed torch, along with typical mowing and trimming.

"We are experimenting with our front lawn. We changed it to a lawn of buffalo grass, blue grama and side oats grama. These grasses like warm weather, just like the corn our state is so famous for. When it's hot in the summer, they stay green without extra water. When lawns turn brown in the summer, this one stays green with minimal water." ■

BROCCOLI and friends salad

Step aside, “Trees and Raisins.” It’s 2025, and there is a new salad in town. The Broccoli and Friends Salad is bursting with flavor and packed with nutrients, making it a fresh favorite you will want to hang on to.

Salads and slaws have come a long way in the past 75 years. I’ll admit, I wasn’t a fan growing up, but now they are the dishes I look forward to most at potlucks. Add some cubed chicken or a piece of salmon, and you have got a light, satisfying meal.

These days, salads are more versatile than ever, thanks to healthier, more creative dressing options ranging from various oils and vinegars to honey, mustard, maple syrup, Greek yogurt, fat-free sour cream and soy sauce. To lighten this recipe, try swapping the mayo for Greek yogurt and cutting the sugar to half a cup. You will still get all the flavor with fewer calories.

Whip up a batch this weekend. You will be glad you did. ■

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



Broccoli and friends salad

Recipe courtesy of “Cookin’ Savvy”

Servings: 4-6

Ingredients:

- 2 medium heads broccoli
- 2 apples
- lemon juice
- 1 carrot
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup sunflower seeds
- 1 cup pecans
- 1 package (2 1/2 ounces) real bacon pieces

Dressing:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1/3 cup milk
- 1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons poppy seeds

Directions

- Coarsely chop broccoli and place in large bowl.
- Coarsely chop apples and brush with

lemon juice to prevent browning; add to bowl.

- Shred carrot and add to bowl with blueberries, cranberries, sunflower seeds, pecans and bacon.
- To make dressing: Mix mayonnaise, milk, apple cider vinegar, sugar and poppy seeds. Pour over broccoli salad and mix well.



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GREEN Days

Johnston Green Days Celebration was held June 19-21.



The 2025 Green Days King and Queen of Green are Zach Grandon and Paula Bierle.



Johnston Charter Bank partaking in the 2025 Green Days parade.



Chiropractic Health & Wellness showing off their stilt walking skills at the 2025 Green Days Parade.



Lu Ann White, Chief Dennis McDaniel and Wayne Johnson manning the check-in tent at the 2025 Smokin' Heroes at Green Days.



Rachelle, Kenna, Zack and Taya Robinson enjoy a warm Saturday afternoon at 2025 Green Days.



Working hard in the 2025 Green Days beer tent are, front, Jenni Buchanan and Brenda Ballard, and, in back, Andrea Hodapp, Paula Bierle, Annie Mielke and Michael Tiffany.



2025 Green Days art competition winners are Scott Kruthoff; Dani Brinkmeyer, ninth grade at JMS; Maggie Clevenger, third grade at Beaver Creek; Victoria Tran, sixth grade at Summit; Jonah Kerr; fourth grade at Timber Ridge; and Samantha Howell. Three winners were not able to attend.



Jesse Honn is the 2025 Smokin' Heroes Winner held during Johnston Green Days on June 21. Jameson Honn, Josh Kennedy, Sgt. Zach Grandon, Jesse Honn and Capt. Steve Nore.



Winners of the 2025 Green Days Bags competition are Mike Martin and Michael Schinstock.



2025 Queen of Green Paula Bierle with Purple Poppy Boutique along with Allie Heintz, Taytum Heintz, Sam Heintz and Todd Bierle all ready for the 2025 Green Days parade.

PLAN AHEAD

By Sasha Mudlaff
and Holly Peterson Miller

THANK YOU, Mom and Dad

Our mother died a few years ago after struggling through the late stages of Alzheimer's disease. Honoring her during this stressful time was our family's ultimate goal. And, then again, when she died, we wanted to honor her life in the best way we could. Well, we can tell you firsthand that having her preplanned funeral in place was extremely valuable in helping us achieve our goal. All of the information surrounding her death, visitation, service and burial were organized in a preplanning file at the funeral home. Knowing her wishes, having merchandise selections already made, having the details about what would be in her obituary already written down and having the information for the death certificate already recorded all helped to make the process of funeral arrangements so much easier for our family.

Since that time, our dad has been "tweaking" his own preplan, which is currently in place at the funeral home — and for that we are so thankful. While we certainly don't wish for his death any time soon, we are grateful that his thoughts and wishes are safely in a file at the funeral home so that, when that time comes, and our heads are spinning with grief, we won't have to wonder or guess — we will know exactly how best to honor him.

Thank you, Mom and Dad, for this gift. With love from your daughters. ■

Information provided by Sasha Mudlaff and Holly Peterson Miller, family owners, Hamilton's Funeral Home, 605 Lyon St., Des Moines, IA 50309, 515-243-5221.



LIBRARY

TAKE your summer to the next level at JPL

Escape the summer heat at our cool programs. In July, you can meet zoo animals and send your stuffed critters to camp, train to be a dragon rider, watch movies and whip up treats, and race to put together puzzles. Read on for further details.

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www.johnstonlibrary.com

Monday - Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Friday - Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, 1-5 p.m.

Summer Reading programs for kids

- If you have animal lovers at your house, bring them to the library to meet some small animal friends at Zoo to You with the Blank Park Zoo on Friday, July 11 at 10 a.m. Then help them bring their own stuffed animal friends to Critter Camp at JPL. Kids can drop off their critters any time during open hours on Monday, July 14. After a fun-filled week at camp, you can pick them up on Friday, July 18, and find out what they did while away at camp.

- Do you have young dragon riders ready to escape a fiery lair? Then register them for Dragon Rider Training: Escape Room. In this dragon-filled adventure, kids will solve puzzles, discover secret clues, and prove they have what it takes to fly with dragons. There are two levels of training and multiple sessions offered July 22–24. Registration for a specific session is required.

Summer Reading programs for teens

- Teens can travel back in time to the 1990s Mario Movie Night: "So Bad It's Super" on Tuesday, July 8, from 4:30–6:15 p.m. Registered movie goers will check out the original Super Mario Bros. Movie, chat about it on-screen using MuVChat, and munch on Mario-themed snacks.

- Think your teens have what it takes to conquer the ultimate snack showdown? Then sign them up for Snack Boss Battle: Level Up Your Taste Buds on Tuesday, July 15, from 5-6 p.m. Participants will face off against a series of wild food challenges in this boss-level snack competition.

Summer Reading programs for adults and families

- Need a break from the chaos of summer? Then join us for Painted Pots on Wednesday, July 16, at 6 p.m. for a relaxing art program just for adults. Crafters will decorate their own terracotta flower pot and choose a succulent to plant in it. All supplies will be provided for registered participants. Just bring your imagination and a willingness to get a little messy.

- If you're looking for some easy summer desserts to impress your family, food expert Lois Carpenter will demonstrate three seasonal favorites at Sweet Summer Desserts on Saturday, July 19, from 10:30–11:30 a.m. Registration is required for this tasty event.

- Register your family or adult team to race against the clock (and other teams) to piece together a jigsaw puzzle at one of our Puzzle Competitions on Saturday, July 26. From 10:30 a.m. to noon, family teams will compete to put together a 400-piece puzzle, and, from 2–3:30 p.m., adult teams will face a 500-piece puzzle challenge. The first teams to finish take home a prize.

More information about all events and resources at Johnston Public Library can be found online at www.johnstonlibrary.com or by calling the library at 515-278-5233. ■

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CELEBRATE freedom — and secure your financial future

July is a month that stirs deep emotions for many of us. As we celebrate Independence Day, we reflect on the freedoms we enjoy, and, for those in your late 50s, 60s or early 70s, one of the most important freedoms we seek is financial independence.

Whether you're approaching retirement, newly retired, or well into your golden years, July is the perfect time to take stock of where you are financially and ensure that your retirement years are as rewarding and worry-free as possible.

The mid-year financial review: We're halfway through 2025 — a great time to revisit your financial goals. Ask yourself: Are my retirement income sources (Social Security, pensions, IRAs, investments) supporting my lifestyle? Do I need to adjust my withdrawal strategy? Have I reviewed my required minimum distributions (RMDs) and what its requirements do to my Medicare premiums in the future? Have I "protected" the plan adequately with proper health, long-term care, or life insurance? A mid-year financial review can reveal small tweaks that lead to greater peace of mind.

Rethink retirement spending: The early years of retirement can sometimes lead to overspending, especially as we enjoy more free time. If you've recently retired or adjusted your work schedule, it's important to monitor your spending to avoid dipping too heavily into your savings early on. Now is a good time to revisit your budget. Are there consistent expenses you no longer need — like commuting costs or work-related clothing? Are you planning for larger expenses like travel or home improvements later this year? A clear plan ensures you stay in control.

Tax planning — retirement style: For many retirees, taxes don't end with work. In fact, tax planning becomes more important than ever. If you're older than 59½ and withdrawing from IRAs or 401(k)s, be strategic to avoid pushing yourself into a higher tax bracket. Additionally, those age 73 and older must take RMDs. Make sure you understand the rules, and the timing, so you don't face avoidable penalties. July is a great month to meet with your financial advisor to ensure your plan remains tax efficient.

Reevaluate risk: Your investment portfolio should reflect your current lifestyle, risk tolerance and time horizon. July offers a great opportunity to ensure your mix of stocks, bonds and other assets is appropriate for your stage of life. If the recent market volatility has made you uneasy, it may be time to reallocate your investments for more stability — without sacrificing your long-term goals.

Celebrate your progress: Too often, we dwell only on what's left to do, instead of appreciating how far we've come. If you've reached a point of financial stability, paid off a mortgage, or comfortably entered retirement, pause and celebrate. These are major accomplishments.

The freedom you've earned: As we raise our flags and enjoy summer traditions, let us also honor the financial freedom we've worked so hard to achieve. Whether you are still planning or fully retired, July is a great reminder to live intentionally — and financially prepared.

Remember: Your financial independence is something worth celebrating every day. ■



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

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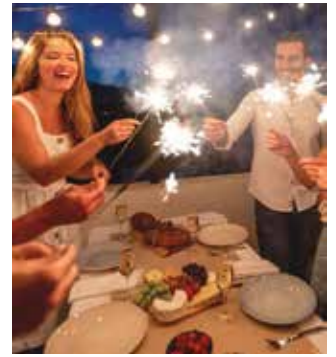
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THE PERFECT fit

Mielkes find what they need in Johnston.

When Annie Mielke and her husband began researching schools for their two oldest children on the autism spectrum, they consistently heard good things about the Johnston School District. Although they had a Des Moines address, they were located within the district. In 2016, they officially made the move to Johnston proper.

Now that the Mielkes are empty nesters, they've downsized to a smaller ranch-style home in town that keeps them close to work and their children.

What do they love about their home?

"Everything we need is on one level," Mielke says. "It's easier to clean than a three-level home. We spend a lot of time in our fenced-in backyard with our two Boston Terriers, Tess and Tempe."

The Mielkes also appreciate their quiet neighborhood, which features a walking trail just behind their home.

"We have great neighbors, and we can walk to Van Dee's (Ice Cream Shoppe) for ice cream in the summer," she adds.

For Mielke, Johnston feels familiar in the best way.

"It's around the same size town that I grew up in," she says. "I appreciate walking into the bank and receiving waves, smiles, and being greeted by name."

She also takes full advantage of summer live music events and the local dining scene.

Mielke stays active in the community as co-founder and executive director of Adventures in Social Development, a nonprofit located on Birchwood Court. The organization uses performance-based activities to teach and improve social skills for people of all ages and abilities. It's also a member of the Johnston Chamber of Commerce, where Mielke serves as a board member.

Ultimately, Johnston has everything the Mielkes need — and its central location makes it easy to access surrounding communities and enjoy all their activities, she says. ■



Tess and Tempe enjoy their Johnston home.

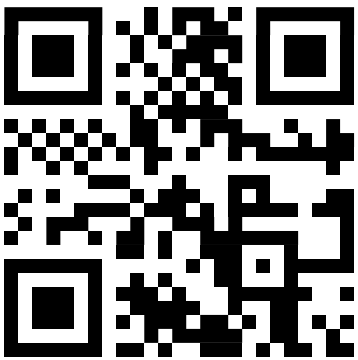


Annie Mielke. Johnston Chamber photo by Katie McDonald Photography

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Suresh Reddy
(515) 201-6236
sreddy@cityofjohnston.com

JOHNSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

6700 Merle Hay Road
(515) 278-5233

JOHNSTON POLICE & FIRE

6373 Merle Hay Road
(515) 278-2345 (24 hours)
Emergency: 9-1-1

JOHNSTON PUBLIC WORKS

6400 NW Beaver Drive
(515) 278-0822
FAX: (515) 727-8092

JOHNSTON PARKS DEPARTMENT

6300 Pioneer Parkway
(515) 727-8091
FAX: (515) 727-8092

CROWN POINT COMMUNITY CENTER AND SENIOR DINING CENTER

6300 Pioneer Parkway
(515) 251-3707

Sign up for the Mayor's Run for the Trails by July 11 to guarantee your shirt size

The Mayor's Run for the Trails 5K and Kids Fun Run is happening on Saturday, August 9, at Terra Park, located at 6400 Pioneer Parkway. You can sign up at www.cityofjohnston.com/Mayors5KRun. Keep in mind that registration prices will go up after July 18, and shirt sizes will not be guaranteed after July 11.

The event features 100-meter and 0.62-mile fun runs for kids, along with a 5K walk starting at 8:00 a.m. The 5K run will kick off at 8:15 a.m. Starting the walkers at 8:00 a.m. helps us ensure the awards can be presented after the runners complete their race.



Sundae in the Park is August 3

Community members and City Department Directors invite you to join them in welcoming students back for the upcoming 2025/2026 school year with a free ice cream event featuring a variety of delicious toppings.

The event will take place at Johnston Commons Park, located at 6050 Morningside Dr., from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.



Utility rate adjustments began July 1

The City of Johnston is raising its garbage and recycling rates, effective with your August bill. This adjustment aligns with the rates of neighboring communities. The additional revenue generated from these increases will help support the ongoing operational needs of our city. For more information about the new rates, please visit www.cityofjohnston.com/utilityrates.

	Old Rate	Rate on July 1
96-gallon Garbage	\$11.54	\$11.72 (second container is \$8.75)
48-gallon Garbage	\$10.91	\$11.06 (second container is \$8.20)
Recycling fee	\$4.58	\$4.64

City office buildings and Library closed on July 4

City office buildings, including the library, will be closed on Friday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day. The library will reopen on Saturday, during normal business hours.

For more information about the city, please visit www.cityofjohnston.com



CITY NEWSLETTER JULY 2025

Attend the Crown Point Community Center grand opening on July 7

Celebrate the grand opening of the newly renovated Crown Point Community Center on Monday, July 7. Stop by for an open house from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., followed by a ribbon cutting ceremony at 5:00 p.m. outside. Enjoy light refreshments and a chance to explore the space. Free and open to the public.

History of the building:

- Crown Point Community Center was originally built by Green Meadows Limited in 1981 as a community center.
- The facility was donated to the city in 1990.
- Today, the building has a dedicated office for Polk County staff to operate the senior meal program.
- Today, the space is used for city recreation and educational programming and is available for rent to community groups.



Enjoy a free morning of yoga by the lake

Join us for free yoga sessions at the Terra Lake amphitheater every Saturday morning from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. Experience the beauty of nature as you stretch and rejuvenate both your body and mind. Don't miss this chance to find balance and tranquility in the great outdoors!

For a list of free yoga dates, please visit www.cityofjohnston.com/YogabytheLake.



Save water during the warm summer days

As summer progresses, it's essential to be mindful of your watering habits. Landscape irrigation is a significant aspect of water consumption, especially during the warmer months.

Here are some guidelines to follow:

- Watering is not recommended on Mondays.
- If your address has an even number, please water on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, either before 10:00 a.m. or after 5:00 p.m.
- If your address has an odd number, please water on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, also before 10:00 a.m. or after 5:00 p.m.
- Avoid watering during the hottest part of the day, which is between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

For more information, visit www.cityofjohnston.com/SaveWater.

Enjoy 55+ activities this summer

Join us for a **card-making class** on **Thursday, July 10**, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Register by July 3.

Take a trip to the **Iowa State Fair** on **Wednesday, August 13**, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The cost is \$25, with registration due by August 6.

Visit www.cityofjohnston.com/RecDesk to learn more and register.

For more information about the city, please call 515.278.2344

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EDUCATION

By Lindsey Giardino

MEET Deb Easter

32 years of teaching in Johnston

Deb Easter has spent more than three decades in the same school district she herself attended.

"I love the Johnston community and have seen it change a whole lot since 1970," she says. "Both of my boys, who are now 25 and 23, went through Lawson Elementary."

That elementary is the same one where Easter has taught since it opened. Prior to that, she started working in Johnston in 1993 and was at Wallace Elementary until 1998. She even got to work alongside some of her own former teachers. Then Easter moved over to Lawson Elementary when it reopened.

In total, Easter has taught for 32 years — all in Johnston and all in third grade.

"In fact, the last 27 years in the same classroom," she says. "I think third graders are the perfect age as they are genuinely excited about learning and love working in groups to help each other meet their own individual goals. Best of all, we can joke around and share a lot of laughs together."

Easter was inspired to go into teaching because she's always enjoyed being around kids. She started babysitting at age 11, then worked at daycares starting in college. She was especially encouraged by a high school teacher who let her take over his freshman class for a week when she told him she wanted to become a teacher.

"It helped me know for sure that I wanted to teach," Easter says. "I love the challenge of keeping students engaged in their learning to help them realize what they are truly capable of."

Easter says she is fortunate to have worked with amazing teams over the years and to have developed life-long friendships with her colleagues.

"We have become a support system to each other, both professionally and personally, who work hard each day to give our students the best experience they can have in their elementary years," she says.

Even though Easter finds it challenging to turn off her brain after school and on the weekends, she's grateful for all the joy that teaching has brought to her life.

Some of her favorite memories are from the building assemblies when all 600 kids are singing their hearts out.

"I wish everyone could experience the innocence of those moments," she says.

Field Day, Cocoa Club, talent shows, and class celebration days stand out in Easter's mind as well.

"When I was younger, I loved to shoot baskets and play 500 with me throwing the football to a group of students when I had recess duty," she adds. "I've also shed many tears over the years in little moments when a student achieved something that was really hard for them, just being so proud of their efforts." ■



Deb Easter has taught third grade during her 32-year career — the last 27 in the same classroom.

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BLAST off

Johnston trio fares well at national rocketry competition



Gavin Scott, Yash Menon and Eli Pittman competed in the American Rocketry Challenge May 17 in The Plains, Virginia.

A team of three Summit Middle School students in Johnston put their rocketry prowess on display at the American Rocketry Challenge May 17 in The Plains, Virginia, just outside Washington, DC.

Yash Menon, Gavin Scott and Eli Pittman, aka Bird the Builder team, showed the rest of the nation that interest in exploration of the stars is alive and well in central Iowa, as the trio placed in the top two-thirds of 100 teams in the final round. Overall, the event featured 1,001 middle school and high school teams from 46 states. Each team was required to design, build and launch model rockets and safely carry two raw eggs to an altitude of exactly 790 feet, stay airborne for between 41 and 44 seconds, and return the rocket to the ground safely.

Impressive results from humble beginnings. This was the team's first year of competition, and the team's rocket itself was built from scratch, Pittman says.

"We started with some cardboard, balsa wood and some plastic and turned it into a rocket that met all the requirements of the competition," he says. "We started by modeling the rocket and determining which motors and fin designs would perform best."

The team then purchased the necessary parts and began construction. Hundreds of hours later, they were ready for flight. But, as with many things, there was a learning curve which included a rather "meaty" hurdle.

One week before the qualifying flights were due, the rocket's parachute failed to deploy during a test run. The team's much-beloved creation quickly turned into nothing more than an expensive lawn dart, Menon says.

"Our first launch had some issues," Scott says. "The parachute was singed from the ejection charge, and the whole rocket smelled like bacon — which is my favorite food," Scott jokes.

The team showed their tenacity, though, recovering from the unfortunate mishap in fine fashion, eventually putting things back together to field a rocket that reached 793 feet in 41.8 seconds.

It was truly a team effort, too. Scott designed the team logo, Menon wrote the press release and Pittman took the lead on learning RockSim and flight simulations. Scott Storey is the team's rocket mentor, while Friends of Johnston ELP sponsored the team.

With a successful launch-and-land under their collective belt, the trio is looking forward to building on the success and going to additional competitions to test their mettle.

"For us, it is about learning that the sky is not the limit, it is just the beginning," says Menon. ■



2025 Annual Golf Outing

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Shotgun Start: 11 AM

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HOSPICE care may be a gift to your family

For Linda's family, summer had always meant joy — a season of togetherness, with loved ones traveling from near and far to reconnect and celebrate.

But last year was different. Linda's health was steadily declining due to several chronic conditions, and although she still cherished the idea of seeing her family, she and her husband, Tom, weren't sure how they could fully take part in the usual reunion activities.

Support from an in-home hospice team helped shift the focus from what they couldn't do to what was still possible — allowing the family to create lasting memories during a meaningful summer.

"Hospice began caring for Linda just after Easter," Tom recalls. "They gave her the support she needed to enjoy a few very good months, and she was able to take part in our June family gathering. It might sound unusual, but that



summer felt full of life."

When you're exploring hospice care for someone you love, it may feel difficult — even paradoxical — to associate it with the idea of living. But that's exactly what hospice is meant to support: living well, with dignity and comfort, even as health declines.

Hospice care isn't one-size-fits-all. It can be provided at home, in a dedicated hospice facility, or in a blended care model — and the right choice depends on your family's unique situation and needs.

Whatever form of care you consider, one of the most important questions to ask is: "How can this help my loved one live fully during this stage of life?"

Many people are surprised to learn that hospice can begin earlier than they think — as soon as a person has received a diagnosis of a life-limiting condition. Early access to hospice can improve comfort and quality of life for weeks or even months, providing space and peace to focus on what matters most.

If you're navigating a loved one's illness this summer, consider how you want to spend that time together. Hospice providers can often deliver care in a person's home, helping preserve familiar surroundings while supporting both the individual and their family.

While reaching out to a hospice team can feel daunting, having compassionate, expert care in place can ease stress and allow for more meaningful moments — especially during treasured family traditions.

"Once we had hospice involved and a plan in place, it lifted a huge burden," Tom says. "We could concentrate on celebrating the season with Linda, knowing she was comfortable and cared for. We'll never forget that summer — it was a gift." ■

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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DISABILITY or early 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 by Gail Barnett, Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm, 2560 73rd St., Urbandale, 515-278-0623, www.ARPCLaw.com.

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PREPARING for Medicare

Preparing for Medicare enrollment is an important milestone that involves understanding your options, timing and responsibilities. As you approach age 65, taking steps early can help ensure a smooth transition into Medicare with no gaps in coverage or unexpected costs. Here's what you need to do to get ready.



1. Know your enrollment timeline: Most people become eligible for Medicare at age 65. Your Initial Enrollment Period (IEP) begins three months before the month of your 65th birthday and continues for three months afterward — a total of seven months. Enrolling during this window is critical to avoid late enrollment penalties, especially for Part B (medical insurance) and Part D (prescription drug coverage).

2. Understand the parts of Medicare: Medicare is divided into different parts:

Part A covers hospital stays and is typically premium-free if you or your spouse paid Medicare taxes while working.

Part B covers outpatient care and doctor visits and comes with a monthly premium.

Part C (Medicare Advantage) offers an alternative to Original Medicare through private insurers, often bundling Part A, B and sometimes D.

Part D covers prescription drugs.

Learn what each part includes and decide whether Original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan suits your health needs and lifestyle.

3. Review your current coverage: If you're still working or covered under a spouse's employer plan, you may be able to delay Medicare Part B without penalty. Check with your HR department or benefits administrator to coordinate benefits and avoid overlap or lapses.

4. Estimate your healthcare costs: Medicare is not free. In addition to premiums, you'll face deductibles, copayments and possible gaps in coverage. Research Medigap (Medicare Supplement Insurance) policies if you're going with Original Medicare. These help cover out-of-pocket costs not paid by Medicare.

5. Gather necessary documents: To enroll, you'll need personal documents like your Social Security card, birth certificate and tax records. If you're already receiving Social Security benefits, you'll be enrolled automatically in Part A and Part B. If not, you'll need to apply through the Social Security Administration.

6. Compare plan options: Use the Medicare Plan Finder on Medicare.gov to compare drug plans, Advantage plans, and Medigap policies based on cost, coverage and provider networks. Your choice will affect your out-of-pocket expenses and which doctors or pharmacies you can use.

Preparing for Medicare means staying informed and proactive. Thoughtful planning with a trusted health insurance advisor will assure you coverage that you understand and are comfortable having. ■

Information provided by Janis Van Ahn, Health Insurance Advisor LLC, 5870 Merle Hay Road, Suite A, Johnston, 515-225-9994, jvanahn@health-insadvisor.com.

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Who will be voted favorite in the Northwest Metro?

Includes Grimes, Dallas Center, Johnston, Clive and Urbandale

We all have our favorite local people, places and things. And now it's time to share your choices and honor those who deserve the recognition.



Make your voice be heard and cast your votes in the 2025 Northwest Metro Residents' Choice Poll. This contest is being hosted by Iowa Living magazines, and the results will publish in our Grimes/Dallas Center, Johnston, Clive and Urbandale October editions. You can vote in one or every category, or anywhere in between.

HURRY! POLL CLOSES AUG. 29, 2025.

See rules and vote at www.iowalivingmagazines.com/residentpoll. One vote per resident, please.

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FOOD AND DRINK

- Restaurant
- Restaurant for Breakfast
- Restaurant for Lunch
- Restaurant for Dinner
- Restaurant for Dessert
- Place for Ice Cream
- Pizza Establishment
- Bar
- Coffee Shop
- Catering Company
- Server/Bartender

AUTOMOTIVE

- Auto Service
- Auto Body Shop
- Car Dealership
- Auto Parts Store

COMMUNITY

- Preschool/Daycare
- Nonprofit
- School (name of building)
- Park
- Community Festival or Event
- Church
- Pastor
- Chamber of Commerce

SHOPPING

- Grocery Store
- Boutique
- Retail Store
- Thrift Store
- Home Improvement Retail Store
- Liquor Store
- Nursery or Garden Center
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Man
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Woman

ENTERTAINMENT

- Dad/Child Date Spot
- Mom/Child Date Spot
- Place to Take Your Mom and Dad
- Place to Take Your Kids or Grandkids
- Place for Children's Birthday Parties
- Golf Course

HEALTH/BEAUTY

- Hair Salon
- Health Clinic
- Dental Office
- Orthodontist Office
- Mental Health Services
- Chiropractic Office
- Vision Care
- Health Club or Gym
- Pharmacy

HEALTH/BEAUTY

- Cosmetic Services
- Physical Therapy
- Dance Studio
- Gymnastics Studio
- Tumbling Studio

OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- Financial Planner
- Law Firm
- Accounting Firm
- Veterinarian
- Dog Groomer
- Pet Care
- Lawn Care Business
- Landscaping Company
- Heating and Cooling Business
- Electrical Business
- Plumbing Company
- Senior Living Establishment
- Insurance Company
- Realtor
- Bank/Credit Union
- Photographer
- Place for Guests to Stay
- Home Building/Remodeling Contractor
- Exterior Contractor (siding, roofing, windows, doors)
- Pest Control
- Tree Service

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations

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

Upcoming in Johnston Living magazine

RV Camping: Do you enjoy packing up the RV and heading out on the open road for vacation? Share with us why you think RVing is the way to go and the adventures you've discovered. Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com with your stories.

Home Improvement: Our annual Home Improvement issue in which we share residents' stories about their remodeling projects is coming up. Please share your stories about the work you have done on your home and how it has changed your use of the space and enjoyment of your home. Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com with your stories.

Tunes at Twilight Thursday Concert Series

Thursdays, July 10, Aug. 7 and Sept. 11, 7:30-9 p.m.

The Yard, 6245 Merle Hay Road

Performances will be by Jordan Beem July 10, The Sons of Gladys Kravitz Aug. 7 and Damon Dotson Sept. 11.

Movies on the Yard

Fridays, July 18, Aug. 29, Sept. 18, beginning at dusk
The Yard, 6245 Merle Hay Road

Movies will be "How to Train Your Dragon" July 18, "Wicked" Aug. 29, and TBD Sept. 18.

Farmers Market

Tuesdays, until Sept. 30, 4-7 p.m.
Johnston Town Center, 6245 Merle Hay Road

Enjoy a variety of vendors, live music and food trucks.

Sounds of Summer

Saturday Concert Series

July 26, Aug. 23 and Sept. 27, 7-10 p.m.
The Yard, 6245 Merle Hay Road

Tickets, which include one drink, are \$6, or \$22 for four tickets. Performing are The Trip July 26, Not Quite Brothers Aug. 23, and The Pork Tornadoes Sept. 27.

The Dancer's Theatre Summer Camps

Various dates from June to August
The Dancer's Theatre, 5860 Merle Hay Road, Johnston

The Dancer's Theatre is a nonprofit youth performing arts center located in Johnston. Themed camps are offered throughout the summer for students in preschool through middle school. TDT's mission is to provide a safe, inclusive, educational and nurturing environment for young artists to create and thrive. Detailed information can be found at thedancerstheatre.org/camps

- July 7-9: Wonderfully Wicked!
- July 10-11: Lilo & Stitch
- July 14-17: Fairy Tail Fun
- July 14-17: Dinos & Dragons
- July 22-23: Broadway Bootcamp
- July 24-25: Wonderfully Wicked!
- July 28-31: Intro to Dance and Theatre
- Aug. 7-8: Level Up! (Gamers)
- Aug. 11-15: C.A.M.P. (Create a Musical Play)
- Aug. 18-20: Wild Robot

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Mayor's Run for the Trails 5K + Kids Fun Runs

Saturday, Aug. 9, 8 a.m. kids runs at 8:15 a.m.

Terra Park, 6400 Pioneer Parkway

To register and for more information, visit www.cityofjohnston.com/Mayors5kRun.

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.

- **July 21-22:** Dupont Brass, parks across the metro
- **July 9, Aug. 13:** Storytime Under the Green Umbrella, Cowles Commons
- **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.

Urbandale Fourth of July Celebration

July 2-4

Lions Park, 72nd Street and N.W. Aurora Ave., Urbandale

Enjoy one of the area's largest Fourth of July parades, a carnival, and much more at Urbandale's Fourth of July Celebration. The parade is July 4 at 10 a.m. The carnival is each day of the celebration. Enjoy live music and a beverage garden, as well as many games for adults and children. For a complete schedule of all events, visit <https://urbandale4thofjuly.org/>.



Waukee Independence Day Celebration

Thursday, July 3, and Friday, July 4

Centennial Park Open Air Shelter, 1255 Warrior Lane, Waukee

Visit Centennial Park on July 3 and 4 for inflatables, live music, tournaments, fireworks and more. July 3 activities wrap up with a Movie in the Park. "Captain America: Brave New World" begins at dusk, around 8:45 p.m. Friday features events all day starting with the Waukee Freedom 5K, Rotary Pancake Breakfast at the basketball court, followed by the parade at 10:30 a.m. starting at the intersection of S.E. Westown Parkway and S.E. LA Grant Parkway near South Middle School and heading north to Waukee Stadium. Then enjoy vendors; inflatables, Wipeout Game and Climbing Wall from 1-8 p.m. (wristband purchase required); live music from 4-9:30 p.m.; the Des Moines Skydivers at 8 p.m.; and a 9:30 p.m. fireworks show. For more celebration details and schedule, visit www.waukee.org/777/Independence-Day-Celebration.



Earlham concert series

Every Sunday until Aug. 10, except July 6, 6 p.m.

Earlham City Park, Earlham

The Levitt Amp Earlham Music Series starts with an opening act around 6 p.m. and a headliner around 7:15 p.m. Lots of kids activities and food trucks will be offered as well. The concerts are free.

- **July 13:** Summer Dean, 10 Watt Robot
- **July 20:** Mae Simpson, Yubu
- **July 27:** Blame Not the Bard, Day's Live Music

CITYVIEW Summer Stir

Friday, July 25, 5-9 p.m.

East Village, Des Moines

This event is a relaxed opportunity to visit many great establishments in the early evening and sample their signature Summer Stir drinks. For \$25 (prepaid online), participants will receive 10 tickets to use to sample drinks at any of the participating venues. Tickets may also be purchased at the event for \$35. All of the establishments will be within walking distance. For more information, list of participating businesses and to order tickets, visit <https://summerstirs.dmcityview.com/>.



The Music of John Williams

Various dates and locations

The Greater Des Moines Community Band announces the schedule for its 2025 summer concert series, "The Music of John Williams."

- **July 7,** 7 p.m. First Baptist Church, 8250 N.W. 62nd St., Johnston
- **July 14,** 7 p.m. Holland Farms, 2800 Sunset Drive, Norwalk
- **July 21,** 7 p.m. Woodlands Creek, 12675 Woodlands Parkway, Clive
- **July 28,** 7 p.m. Copper Shores Village, 1500 Edgewater Drive, Pleasant Hill



Clive Festival

Friday, July 18 to Saturday, July 19

Mark your calendars for Clive's biggest (and best) community event. Enjoy free live music, Thunder Over Clive Fireworks, the Giant Slip-N' Slide, bounce houses, activities for kids, food trucks, Kids Art Expo, the Clive Running Festival, Clive Lions Club Pancake Breakfast, Touch a Truck, Cardboard Boat Regatta at Clive Aquatic Center, and more. Check the Clive Festival Facebook page for details.

Waukee Arts Festival

July 18-19

Centennial Park, 1255 Warrior Lane, Waukee

Visit 140 vendor booths at the largest Waukee Arts Festival to date. Food and beverage trucks, The Waukee Fine Arts Footrace and numerous live bands are planned. For a full schedule of events, list of artists and festival updates, visit www.waukeeartsfestival.org.

Urbandale Summer Concert Series

Various dates, 6:30-8 p.m.

Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park, next to the Urbandale Public Library

Enjoy free, high-quality music in a family-friendly setting. Bring your lawn chair or blanket, and feel free to pack a cooler.

- Thursday, July 10: Brass Blast Brass Band
- Tuesday, July 29: June Bugs DSM ■

OUT & ABOUT



Annie Mielke and Ryan Stellner with Adventures in Social Development at Jammin in Johnston at 2025 Green Days.



Kara Roghair and Light James with Athletico Physical Therapy at Jammin in Johnston at 2025 Green Days.



Mary Maher, Dylan Baker and Kaitlyn Osborn at Jammin in Johnston at 2025 Green Days.



Julia Bradshaw and Paula Bierle at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart June 12 at Terra Park.



Jenni Buchanan and Brenda Ballard at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart June 12 at Terra Park.



Stacey Shuurmann and Chris Jones at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart June 12 at Terra Park.



Tiffany Nielsen and Samantha Howell at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart June 12 at Terra Park.



Ryan Rohlf and Mistene Nugent at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart June 12 at Terra Park.



Dan Fitzgerald and Sharm Sisler at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart June 12 at Terra Park.



Sharon Vickery and Dylan Baker at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart June 12 at Terra Park.



The Johnston Chamber got a sneak peak tour of the newly renovated Crown Point at their June JumpStart event. Pictured are attendees standing on the new deck that looks out to the Terra Park lake. To rent the space, visit the City of Johnston website, www.cityofjohnston.com/Facilities/Facility/Details/Crown-Point-Community-Center-1.

OUT & ABOUT



Sidney and Theo Calease trying out the inflatables at 2025 Green Days.



Avery and Piper Calease taking a break from shooting hoops at 2025 Green Days.



Catherine Goranson with Artfull at Jammin in Johnston at 2025 Green Days.



Zoey Killion, Josie Killion, Aubriel Salah and Kizzie Foulks at Family Fest, held June 7 at the Yard at Johnston Town Center.



Luca DiSabato, Timothy Morrical and Graham Harris with Pack 629 at Family Fest, held June 7 at the Yard at Johnston Town Center.



Sabastian, Amber, Lyric and Alex Welsh at Family Fest, held June 7 at the Yard at Johnston Town Center.



Dylan Baker and Chris Jones at the Johnston Chamber After Hours June 4 at Cheba Hut.



Ryan Anderson and Jenni Buchanan at the Johnston Chamber After Hours June 4 at Cheba Hut.



Julia Bradshaw and Paula Bierle at the Johnston Chamber After Hours June 4 at Cheba Hut.



Dan Fitzgerald and Leann Culver at the Johnston Chamber After Hours June 4 at Cheba Hut.



Andrea Hodapp and Sharm Sisler at the Johnston Chamber After Hours June 4 at Cheba Hut.



Mistene Nugent (Cheba Hut owner) and Nancy Brown at the Johnston Chamber After Hours June 4 at Cheba Hut.

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MISCELLANEOUS

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MISCELLANEOUS

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TRIVIA

with Joleen Roskamp!

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