

WAUKEE

JULY 2025

Living

MAGAZINE

Dream YARDS

Residents share how they 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 Jackie Wilson

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. A few may even feature makeshift ballfields, sledding hills, playgrounds or ponds. And most all 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.

Michele and Todd Scharf have transformed their Waukee property into a backyard oasis. Photo by Jackie Wilson

FEATURE

Professional hole diggers

Tucked in the suburbs, one might be surprised to discover a prairie grass field just blocks from a busy Waukee strip mall. Michele and Todd Scharf's home is just far enough away from the bustle of a growing city, with their colorful backyard overlooking a grassy field.

Michele moved to Waukee in 2012 in a new development that included a slice of nature.

"I liked the field and the fact we don't have any neighbors in our backyard," she reflects.

The backyard is a work in progress and has evolved over the years. In 2020, Todd and Michele married, and the pair have created a backyard oasis.

The couple married during the pandemic and opted to hold their wedding in their backyard since venues were closed. With a gazebo and a colorful wedding arch, the backdrop to their ceremony was the prairie grass.

The pandemic also spurred more improvements to their backyard.

"We couldn't take vacations," Michele says. "I thought, if we're stuck here, why not put in a pond instead?"

They hired a company specializing in water features to assist with the pond. Once it was complete, Michele began planting flowers and shrubs, while Todd began constructing various backyard amenities.



The Scharf home consists of more than 100 colorful plants and flowers in their backyard, highlighting the water feature. Photo by Jackie Wilson



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They added concrete around the pond but noticed the pathway was too hot in the sun. Todd built a lean-to, plus added a privacy screen and outdoor curtains for adequate shade.

They have planted more than 100 colorful plants.

"I pick something I like and try not to have more than one of something," Michele explains.

"Both my wife and I have two college degrees and were professionals," Todd adds.

"Now we are professional hole diggers and trying to get things to grow."

They purchased a variety of unique solar lights, interspersed throughout the garden. At night, a cascade of colors light up the space, while the pond lights change colors.

Taking pictures at sunset is a favorite pastime.

"The best time back here is after 6 p.m., and it looks pretty. But trees are getting taller and starting to block the sunset," Michele says.

Todd knocked out a wall that was a former bedroom in the basement, so it opened up the indoors to overlook the pond. He also created a storage unit underneath the patio steps. He's constructed other structures and admits to being handy.

"I was an apprentice with my uncle, who was an electrician. My dad was great in the garden. I also palled around with a plumber buddy. My former father-in-law was great at woodworking," he explains.

The backyard includes an old windmill that belonged to Michele's great-grandpa and has been handed down over the generations and repainted dozens of times. An old Vikings Metrodome set of stadium chairs sits in the prairie grass.

Todd and Michele have hosted fellow choir members for a backyard garden party. When people see the backyard, they are surprised.

"When they see the front, it looks like nothing," Michele explains. "Then people are overwhelmed and can't believe what it looks like once they come around to the backside."

The couple spends nearly every day or evening in the backyard. They see wildlife, such as snakes, deer, birds, coyotes and frogs. A frequent visitor — a raccoon — is often seen drinking from their koi pond.

"I counted 17 types of birds at one time," Todd says.

They plan to keep on tweaking color in the garden, plus planting and rearranging seating areas.

"It's like we're in our own oasis," Michele reflects.



Raylee and Colin Melton's home in rural Dallas County resembles a park in their backyard. Photo by Jackie Wilson

Home is like being on vacation

In rural Dallas County, just outside of Waukee, Raylee and Colin Melton's backyard resembles a public park.

The couple formerly lived in West Des Moines and, during the pandemic, felt a longing to live out in the country.

"It was always our dream to get an acreage," Raylee says.

In 2021, the pair moved into the development, which included a pond in their backyard. The property also offered a densely wooded area, plus numerous plants cared for by the previous owners.

Yet when they moved in, they felt the constant weeding and upkeep was too much, and the weeds were taking over.

A prairie grass area in the front was retiled and replanted. They used colored mulch to separate areas. They planted plants native to Iowa, including black-eyed Susan and other colorful flowers.

"It looks less messy, and it's a combination

of native plants that match with the prairie look," Raylee explains.

During the spring, irises and wild daffodils dot the property.

"We have hundreds, if not thousands, that bloom in the spring," Colin says.

As Raylee felt overwhelmed with caring for the plants, she sought assistance from the Dallas County Iowa State University Extension Program, where she learned more about how to care for prairies, woodland plants and their pond.

"Attending the class taught me to not kill everything," she says.

Colin has slowly been cleaning out invasive junk trees. They cut down 19 ash trees last spring due to the emerald ash borer.

"We're slowly cleaning out sections at a time, which gives more space for nature and trees to grow," he says.

They have added unique touches throughout their backyard. The name of the garden, Mae Woods Garden, honors Raylee's



A pond is one of the highlights of the Meltons' yard.

grandma. Colin has carved signage and a mushroom out of a stump. A fairy garden and other sitting areas provide space for reflection.

Colin created a trail for four-wheeled adventures. With a small steep hill, it's easy to get their exercise when they walk down to the pond area. They have numerous bullfrogs, leopard frogs and toads. Wildlife is viewed daily, as a mom and a baby deer make the trek across their backyard. Bald eagles, foxes, coyotes and wild turkeys make the rounds near their property.

As their bedroom is located on the top floor, their view is even with the tree lines.

"We look out and see owls," says Colin. "It feels like you're right in the trees."

Folks are surprised at the view when they come and visit.

"People have said it's so cool back here, and they didn't know this was way out here. People like coming here and relaxing. My family comes to sit. It's so peaceful. It's like being on

vacation," Raylee says.

The pair realizes there are endless tasks to maintaining and clearing out underbrush, so they have changed their language.

"We now say that we are going to 'go play' in the yard," Raylee explains. "You have to do it for fun, not because you have to."

Colin says they are trying to work with nature instead of trying to change it.

"We have weeds. There's too many native seeds and plants. There's a lot of bugs. It changes the way you garden. I've had to give up on perfection," he says.

One of the reasons they liked the location is that it's close to town.

"It only takes me 23 minutes to get downtown to go to work," Colin explains. "The reality is it's extremely close to town, but it feels like a million miles away. It feels like a vacation out here."

At night, there is no noise, except for the rustling of trees, the wind blowing or the



A path leads through a timber area down to the pond on the Melton property. Photo by Jackie Wilson

occasional nighttime animals calling.

"It's pitch black out here," Raylee says. "You can see all the stars when you're out here. It's peaceful." ■

WHEN a child with a disability turns 18

A child transitioning from a minor to a legal adult can be challenging for any parent. However, parents of children with a disability run into additional difficulties. A parent's ability to make decisions about services and medical cares end when the child turns 18. There are three major things to consider:



Is my child able to make their own decisions about health care, finances and independent living?

In January 2020, significant changes were made to the Iowa Code regarding guardianships. To establish a guardianship, there must be a finding of incapacity. This places restrictions on the rights of the individual under the guardianship. Under the new law, prior to establishing a guardianship, the court must

consider less restrictive alternatives. Children with minor impairments may be able to sign medical authorizations to release information to allow parents to continue to talk to providers. With more severe mental and cognitive disabilities, the adult child may be able to execute a power of attorney. If a guardianship is required, the law allows a petition to be filed when an individual is 17 ½ years old, instead of waiting until after the child turns 18. This prevents a potential gap in services.

How will my child support themselves?

A child receiving benefits does not automatically qualify for disability as an adult. The standards for disability differ from children to adults. If a child receives Supplemental Security Income, the Social Security Administration will do a review to determine if that child's disability continues. A minor who is not eligible for child benefits may still meet the criteria for adult disability. After 18, a claim for

Social Security disability should be filed.

Who will provide for my child when I die?

Parents of children with disabilities should review their own estate planning documents to ensure that, when they die, money can be set aside for the children without making them ineligible for government benefits. This can be done with a Supplemental Needs Trust, also known as a Third Party Trust. This is a specifically worded Medicaid-compliant trust that conforms to the regulations of the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and the Social Security Administration.

It is important to talk to an attorney who specializes in disability and is familiar with government benefits for your child and for yourself. ■

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

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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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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations.

Coming up in the Waukee 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.



Farmers Market Wednesdays through September, 4-7 p.m. Historic Downtown Triangle

Support local vendors at the Farmers Market and enjoy live music on July 30 by Cold Pizza & Day Old Bread. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/waukeefarmersmarket.



Vibrant Music Hall 2938 Grand Prairie Parkway, Waukee www.vibrantmusichall.com

Thursday, July 24, 7:30 p.m.:
KJJY Presents: Wynonna Judd -
The Greatest Hits Tour

DMPA Free Outdoor Family Events

Aug. 13 and 23

Cowles Commons, 313 Walnut St., Des Moines

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. Aug. 13 enjoy Storytime Under the Green Umbrella, and, on Aug. 23, enjoy Dancing on Cowles Commons. For more information including times and park locations, visit www.desmoinesperformingarts.org/whats-on/series/free-outdoor-family-events.

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

Yoga in the Park

Second and fourth Saturdays through September, 9:30 a.m.

Windfield Park Open Air Shelter, 114 Windfield Parkway, Waukee

Join local, certified yoga instructors for Yoga in the Park. Bring a yoga mat or towel, water bottle and \$5 per person. For ages 12 and older.



Public Safety Day

Tuesday, Aug. 5, 5-7:30 p.m.

Waukee Public Safety Building,
1300 S.E. L.A. Grant Parkway

The Waukee Police and Fire departments join forces for Public Safety Day. Bounce on inflatables and get up close to fire trucks. Sit in a police car and meet police officers. Enjoy food and a fun night of public safety activities.

Bowling family fun

Various dates

Warrior Lanes, 190 S.E. Laurel St.,
Waukee

Warrior Lanes holds a variety of family-fun events. The glow-in-the-dark bowling includes a one-topping pizza and pitcher of soda for up to five bowlers. For more information and booking, visit www.warriorlanes.com. All are on Sundays from noon to 1:30 p.m. with registration deadline at 6 p.m. two days prior.

Aug. 17, Back to School Luau Party; **Sept. 7,** Festive Fall Fun Party; **Oct. 19,** Halloween Party; **Nov. 16,** Turkey Time Party; **Dec. 14,** Ugly Holiday Sweater Party. A special Countdown to Noon Year's Eve event is Wednesday, **Dec. 31,** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.



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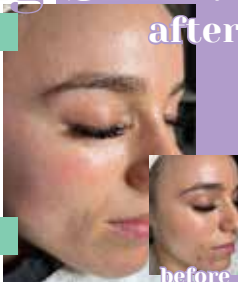
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The Music of John Williams

Various dates and locations

The Greater Des Moines Community Band announces the schedule for its 2025 summer

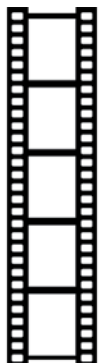
concert series, "The Music of John Williams."

- July 28, 7 p.m. Copper Shores Village, 1500 Edgewater Drive, Pleasant Hill
- Aug. 4, 6:30 p.m. Rieman Music, 6501 Douglas, Urbandale
- Aug. 9, 11 a.m. Iowa State Fair, Knapp Stage
- Aug. 17, 5 p.m. Trinity United Presbyterian Church, 200 S. Howard St., Indianola
- Aug. 18 TBA
- Aug. 25 TBA

EVENTS IN THE AREA

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

Be sure to check for cancellations.



Movies in the Park

Friday, Aug. 8

Centennial Park Open Air Shelter,
1255 Warrior Lane, Waukee

Enjoy Hollywood's biggest hits under the stars with Movies in the Park. Movies in the Park are free and provide an abundance of entertainment. Showtime is at dusk (approximately 8:45 p.m.) in Centennial Park. Bring lawn chairs, blankets and refreshments. The movie will be "The Wild Robot" (PG).

Edencrest at Kettlestone

Grand Community Fair

Friday, Aug. 15, 3 p.m.

Edencrest at Kettlestone,
805 S.E. Tallgrass Lane, Waukee

Join Edencrest at Kettlestone for a nostalgic fair experience. Enjoy your favorite fair games, your favorite fair foods, face painting, and a balloon artist while live entertainment takes you back in time.



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/>. ■

Back-to-School Family Resource Fair

Wednesday, Aug. 6, 4-7 p.m.

South Middle School, 2350
S.E. L.A. Grant Parkway

The 2025 Back-to-School Resource Fair is upcoming. You can find community and district resources, get assistance with school enrollment, complete forms and more. All families are welcome to attend this free event.



Music in the Garden Series

July 31 and Aug. 7

Greater Des Moines Botanical
Garden, 909 Robert D. Ray Drive,
Des Moines

www.dmbotanicalgarden.com

Enjoy live music in the beautiful setting of the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden. Upcoming concerts are: July 31: Mango Soul; Aug. 7: Diplomats of Solid Sound. Doors open at 6 p.m. and concerts start at 6:30 p.m.



National Balloon Classic

July 25 to Aug. 2

Memorial Balloon Field, 1136 150th Ave., Indianola

Beautifully colored hot air balloons dot the skies over Indianola at this annual event. Watch the competition as well as special night shows and enjoy entertainment at the Balloon Field. For more information, visit www.nationalballoonclassic.com.

Earlham concert series

Every Sunday until Aug. 10, 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 and include: **July 27:** Blame Not the Bard, Day's Live Music; **Aug. 3:** Larry & Joe, Sun Centauri; **Aug. 10:** Dessa and The 29:11 South African Choir, Nella Thomas.

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FRONT porch views

Lewis finds perfect spot in Waukee.



Drive by Casey Lewis' house in Waukee, and chances are you might spot her sitting on her front porch. It's her favorite spot of the house, after all.

"I have a lilac bush for privacy and trees for shade," she shares. "Plus, I get to watch all the action of the kids in the neighborhood doing kid things."

And if she's not outside, Lewis enjoys spending time in her living room because "it's darling, and I get to look out at the backyard with all the trees."



Casey Lewis says her family's home is ideally located near her kids' school and amenities.

Lewis and her family have been Waukee residents since March 2016. At the time, her oldest was in kindergarten, and they were searching the Des Moines area for the best schools. They looked at homes in Waukee, Johnston and Ankeny.

"After touring our home, we made the offer on the spot because we were one block from Waukee Elementary, and that meant walking distance to school for our three kids," Lewis shares. "We didn't know anything else about the town, except that the school district was one of the best in the metro."

Over the years, Lewis has taken advantage of the fact the house is just blocks from the Waukee Triangle, so trips to the ice cream shop are frequent. She also enjoys having several ponds within walking distance where her kids can fish, and the bike trailhead is also close by.

"I'm literally in the most perfect spot," Lewis says.

In the almost 10 years of living in Waukee, Lewis has also witnessed the town explode with new developments.

"When we first moved here, we didn't even have a Hy-Vee, and it's incredible to be present for the expansion," she says. "I have a child that will be in the first class at North Middle next year. It's really neat to be a part of the history of the growth of the town."

Lewis is making her own mark on the community as a member of the Dallas County Moms for Liberty, a charter member of the Waukee PEO chapter, a volunteer for many student field trips, and a volunteer moderator for the unofficial Waukee Facebook page, Walkee Talkee. ■



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JOHNSON gains more than she gives

Finding purpose in service to others

Kathy Johnson has been a Waukee resident most of her life. She grew up along the main drag, Ashworth Drive, back when the city's

population hovered around 3,000. After college and marriage, she and her husband spent several years in Texas before returning to Iowa to raise their children closer to family.

No matter where she has lived, Johnson has found time to volunteer, whether in schools, churches, hospitals, food pantries, or for political causes. Today, she gives her time at WayPoint Resources in the Food Pantry, helping clients with their shopping needs and stocking shelves. She occasionally serves as a floater, stepping in wherever help is needed.

Johnson has made many meaningful memories during her time with WayPoint. One that sticks with her is helping an elderly woman who shopped with humility and concern for others.

"Such an inspiration she was to me and made me proud to be assisting her," Johnson says. "And there was the young mother with several children who continually thanked WayPoint for our services. She carefully chose the food and pantry staples with her children's likes in mind, saying she wasn't sure how she would have gotten through the week without us."

Moments like those have deeply enriched her experience, knowing she and WayPoint are truly helping people in need.

"The staff at WayPoint Resources do a spectacular job of showing gratitude to the volunteers on a regular basis," Johnson adds. "It makes a difference to know you are appreciated."

For Johnson, the reason she continues to show up is simple.

"It feels good to help others and be involved," she says.

"Volunteering is good for the soul, as they say. And, I must admit, I have enjoyed meeting so many wonderful people volunteering in this organization. I look forward to seeing them weekly as we go about our tasks for the day."

She encourages others to volunteer as well because the rewards go beyond just giving time.

"In the end, you receive so much more from it than you give," she says. "And, if for no other reason, loneliness is so prevalent in the population today, whether it be in the young or the old or the in-between. Volunteer and make some new friends who are all focused on the same mission — serving others." ■



Travis Gaule with TrustBridge Wealth Advisors presents the Neighbor Spotlight certificate to Kathy Johnson.

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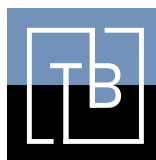


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City of Waukee Bulletin

JULY 2025

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School starts Monday, August 25, which means changes to traffic patterns in Waukee. Whether you're a parent, student, or commuter, please stay alert and allow extra time as everyone gets used to new routines.

Here are a few important reminders to help keep everyone safe:

1. Watch for kids walking, biking or using scooters, especially near crosswalks, parking lots and school entrances.
2. Don't block intersections during slow-moving traffic. This reduces back-ups and keeps traffic flowing.
3. Use only the designated drop-off and pick-up areas. If you can, park and walk your child in. Never stop in the street or in the middle of a roundabout to drop your student off—this creates unsafe conditions.
4. Keep entrances to school lots and crosswalks clear. Emergency vehicles must be able to reach schools at all times.

A few other things to know:

- Waukee Community School District has new start and end times this year: Elementary schools are 8:50 a.m.–3:40 p.m. North Middle, Timberline, Waukee Middle and South Middle run 8 a.m.–3 p.m. Prairieview and Trailridge are 7:40 a.m.–2:40 p.m. The high schools run 7:50 a.m.–2:50 p.m.
- Plan ahead for heavier traffic near the schools during the district-wide Open House on Thursday, August 21 from 4–8 p.m.
- The new Hands-Free Driving law for Iowa took effect in July. Stay off your phone when you're behind the wheel and keep your eyes on the road to keep everyone safe.

Thanks for your patience as we all adjust. Wishing everyone a fun and safe school year!

Dates to Know

Bingo

Friday, August 1, 1 p.m.
Waukee Public Library

City Council Meetings

August 4 and 18 at 5:30 p.m.
City Hall and Zoom
[Waukee.org/CityCouncil](https://www.waukee.org/CityCouncil)

Public Safety Day Open House

Tuesday, August 5, 5–7 p.m.
New Public Safety Building (815 NW 20th Street)
Free



Sign Up for Fall Fun

Registration for Waukee Parks & Recreation fall and winter programs opens Tuesday, September 2 at 8 a.m. There's something for everyone—youth basketball, adult volleyball, art classes, karate, cooking parties and more. Check out all the activities at Waukee.org/ParksandRec.



Pick the Right Watering Day

Thanks for doing your part to save water this summer as we battled high nitrate levels. After the irrigation ban is over, please follow the odd-even watering schedule:

- Odd house numbers: Water on Tuesdays, Thursdays or Saturdays
- Even house numbers: Water on Sundays, Wednesdays or Fridays



Avoid watering between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. when it's hottest—more water will soak in if you water early or late in the day. Update your irrigation system timing to match the schedule, and don't forget to turn off sprinklers when it rains!

Save the Date for Public Safety Day

Join us for Public Safety Day on Tuesday, August 5 from 5–7 p.m. at the new Waukee Public Safety Building (815 NW 20th Street). Meet Waukee's police officers, firefighters, paramedics and staff. Check out emergency vehicles, tour the building, enjoy free food and take part in fun family activities.



City Council Sets FY2026 Priorities

Each year, the City Council, mayor and department directors go through a strategic planning process to set priorities that decide how to use resources wisely. The City will focus on the future Civic Campus project, affordable housing initiatives, an update to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, drawing businesses to Waukee and more. Read more at Waukee.org/StrategicPriorities.



Free Battery Recycling

Batteries can be dangerous in your garbage or recycling bin. Instead, drop them in the new battery recycling box at Waukee City Hall. You can bring household batteries (like AA, AAA, 9V and button types), tool batteries and small electronics like phones or tablets. Bag each battery in the provided bags and drop them in the labeled slot. Metro Waste Authority will handle the rest.

Congratulations, Mayor Clarke

Mayor Courtney Clarke was recognized in the 2025 Women of Influence awards by the Des Moines Business Record! In addition to regular duties as mayor, she serves on many boards and committees that are setting up not only Waukee, but also the Des Moines metro, for long-term success on everything from water infrastructure to resident engagement with their government.



Independence Day Celebration Thanks

Thank you to everyone who helped make Waukee's Independence Day Celebration a success! From the 80+ parade participants to the community members who came to enjoy the fun—your support made the day special. Want to relive the memories? Watch our aerial recap video at Waukee.org/IndependenceDay or on the City's YouTube channel.

Pay Utility Bills by Text

Easily pay your utility bill on the go with our new option to pay by text message. When your bill is ready, you'll get a text. Just reply "Pay" and your saved card will be charged. To sign up, call 877-847-8583 (option 4) or enroll online at Waukee.org/UtilityPayment. Have your account number, mobile number and payment card ready.



Movies in the Park, "The Wild Robot" (PG)

Friday, August 8 at dusk
Centennial Park
Free

Yoga in the Park

August 9 and 23 at 8:30 a.m.
Windfield Park
\$5, ages 12 and up

Waukee Area Seniors and Police (WASP)

Wednesday, August 27, 9 a.m.
New Public Safety Building (815 NW 20th Street)
Free

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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.

SENIOR

By **Jay Heaton**

STAY COOL this summer: tips for older adults

Summer is here. While the sunshine is welcome, the heat can be tough, especially as we get older. Our bodies don't handle high temperatures the way they used to, which means a little extra care can go a long way in staying safe and comfortable.

First and foremost, don't forget to drink water, even if you're not feeling thirsty. Try keeping a water bottle nearby or enjoy water-rich snacks like watermelon or cucumber. And if you can, skip the caffeine and alcohol; they can actually make you feel more dehydrated.

When it comes to getting dressed, go for light, loose clothing in breathable fabrics. A wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses are also great.

Try to stay indoors between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. — those are the hottest hours. Use air conditioning, fans or even spend time in places like libraries or community centers. A cool shower or even soaking your feet in cold water can be a refreshing way to beat the heat.

Keep meals light and avoid heating up the kitchen with the stove. If your space gets a lot of sun, keep the curtains closed.

Most importantly, listen to your body. If you're feeling dizzy, tired or unwell, don't wait, reach out for help. And don't be shy about checking in with neighbors or loved ones, too. ■



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

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CANCER survivor

Mammogram saves Beverly White's life.

Cancer. Hearing that diagnosis from a doctor is scary and filled with uncertainty regarding treatment and recovery. Yet, if detected early, chances of survival increase. For Beverly White, early cancer screening saved her life.

White, of Waukee, worked as a nurse and understood the importance of yearly mammograms, which screen for breast cancer. A routine mammogram 25 years ago revealed a suspicious area.

Doctors used a needle to remove a sample of the tissue in her breast. She was relieved when she got the call saying the report came back negative.

"They said, you're fine. You don't have cancer," she recalls.

Yet, the doctor called back later and asked her to come in the office.

She was puzzled, since the test was negative. She was shocked when the doctor said, "Sorry, you were misinformed. It could possibly be cancer."

They explained that the tissue they removed did not show abnormal cells; however, the spot was most likely cancerous.

"He didn't want to take any chances," she says.

After having a mastectomy, she found the cancer cells had spread into her lymph nodes. Doctors removed 32 lymph nodes in total.

When she told her husband she was having a mastectomy, he said, "I don't care if you don't have breasts. I can't replace you as my wife."

She began a treatment of Tamoxifen, a common medication used to treat breast cancer. She also had a hysterectomy so the hormones wouldn't fuel the breast cancer. The doctors felt she had a good chance of recovery and the breast cancer not returning.

During the treatment, she didn't lose her hair, but she developed blood clots in her leg.

As a nurse, she generally sought her own medical advice and understood medical terms; however, this medical situation was unique.

"I knew a lot of what was going on, but I needed small words. I couldn't concentrate on the medical (terminology) of it. I needed someone else to tell me what to do."

The treatment made her feel tired and worn out. Since her surgery and breast reconstruction, she's been cancer free. One side effect after the removal of her lymph nodes is that her arm swells frequently. She wears a compression sleeve daily to deal with it.

White says that regular mammograms saved her life. She remembered to have screenings by having them in her birth month. She recommends other women have yearly screenings and check out any lumps that might appear.

"If I hadn't done that (a mammogram), I wouldn't be here today," she reflects. ■



Beverly White credits having regular mammograms for saving her life when she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

BENEFITS of optimal testosterone levels

Understanding optimal levels involves recognizing the distinction between "normal" and "optimal" ranges. While a "normal" testosterone level is often defined by a broad range, the optimal level is what allows a man to feel his best and achieve peak health and vitality.

Most medical professionals consider a testosterone level between 300-1,000 as "normal" for adult men. However, this range doesn't necessarily equate to optimal health. The optimal level may be far higher. Men with testosterone levels below 600 have a greater risk of death from all causes.

Several factors influence optimal testosterone levels, including age, overall health and individual goals. Maintaining optimal levels can lead to increased vitality, improved mental clarity, enhanced physical performance, and a revitalized sense of well-being.

For men experiencing symptoms of low testosterone, testosterone replacement therapy (TRT) may be considered. The decision to start TRT depends on the outcome of an assessment, including blood tests, with a medical professional.

TRT isn't a one-size-fits-all solution, and ongoing monitoring is crucial. Blood tests are essential to ensure treatment is optimized to keep you as free as possible from symptoms and side effects of "low T." ■



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EDUCATION

By T.K. West

MEET Nicole Ledden

Kindergarteners marvel at hatching eggs.

After attending Iowa State University, where she met her husband, Nicole Ledden taught in Mason City for two years before settling in West Des Moines. She then taught in the Norwalk Community School District for 10 years and moved into the Waukee Community School District after their second child was born in 2021.

“As an educator, you become very close with your teammates. They know your students as their own, plan fun activities with you and help you through any challenges each year. As I’ve moved districts and/or buildings, one of the biggest challenges is leaving coworkers who have become more like family,” Ledden says.

Ledden has just finished her first year as a kindergarten teacher at Waterford Elementary School and says she enjoys being a part of the school district her children will attend. She looks forward to making connections with her children’s teachers and says she will understand decisions being made. She also feels more connected with her children while they are at school.

“I also love the way Waukee prioritizes teachers by encouraging getting advanced degrees and offering wellness programs,” Ledden says.

Ledden says she enjoys teaching students in kindergarten because of their desire to learn and the growth they make each school year. She says her students truly enjoy being at school and learning new things.

One activity Ledden’s students participated in last year was learning the chicken life cycle with seven eggs they hoped would hatch at the school. Her students learned about the growth of a chicken, candled the eggs to see which were developing, and watched the chicks hatch. Her students also learned what chicks eat, how to choose a safe space for them, and how they interact.

“The students were cheering and so excited. They had so many questions about the process and have learned so much. They’ve now learned how taking care of the hatched chicks is different than taking care of the eggs and how the chick will continue to grow and change into an adult,” Ledden says.

During the summer, Ledden is looking forward to spending more time with her family, including her 7-year-old and 4-year-old children. Together, they enjoy playing outdoors and being active. She is looking forward to their summer adventures. ■



Nicole Ledden says she enjoys teaching young learners because they are enthusiastic about learning.

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WHY THE right insurance matters: our recent accident

Not long ago, my wife and I were in a serious car accident. We were driving at highway speed when an uninsured driver ran a stop sign. We hit him broadside. The impact totaled our vehicle, and while we are incredibly grateful to have walked away from it, the experience reinforced the importance of having proper auto insurance coverage.



Since the at-fault driver had no insurance, our own policy had to step in. First, our collision coverage, which has a \$1,000 deductible, will pay us the actual cash value of our car — not what it would cost to replace it, but what it was worth right before the crash.

That deductible, by the way, is our responsibility unless our insurance company is able to recover money from the at-fault driver's assets, which isn't likely, but it's possible. If they do recover anything, we may be reimbursed for that amount.

The real financial protection came from our uninsured motorist (UM) coverage. This coverage is what helps pay for our medical expenses, lost wages, any pain and suffering, etc. It's something many people don't think about until they need it — and, by then, it's too late to change.

We also have Medical Payments Coverage (MedPay), which provides up to \$5,000 for immediate medical expenses, such as emergency care and follow-ups. This kicked in right away and helped cover some of the out-of-pocket costs.

Our health insurance will handle the rest of our medical bills, and once those are processed, our uninsured motorist coverage may reimburse us for things like co-pays, deductibles and other uncovered medical-related expenses.

This accident reminded us how quickly life can change — and how vital it is to be financially prepared. If we hadn't had the right coverage in place, the situation could have been far worse.

If it's been a while since you looked at your auto insurance policy, I strongly recommend reviewing it — especially your uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage. It may be the most important protection you hope you never need. ■

Information provided by Eric Johnson, IFG Insurance, 224 E. Highway 92, Suite B, Winterset, 515-462-4553.

Credit: Auto-Owners Blog

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Wednesday - Thursday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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

Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday, closed

The Waukee Public Library's Level Up at Your Library Summer Challenge wraps up on July 31, but the adventure does not end there. August's Bonus Bingo is here to keep the fun going.

Stop by the library to pick up a bingo sheet and complete a bingo in any direction to win a prize from the treasure chest. It is a quick and easy way to celebrate the final days of summer while exploring all the library has to offer.

Participants of all ages can enjoy simple, engaging activities, many of which tie into this year's video game-inspired theme, "Level Up at Your Library."

Bingo activities include: read a fantasy book, visit a city park, make a craft from a Creativebug tutorial, read outside for 20 minutes and much more.

Wherever August takes you, do not forget to take the library along for the ride. With digital resources available anytime, anywhere, it is easy to keep learning, exploring and leveling up through the end of summer.

Stay connected: your library, always in your pocket

Take the library with you anytime, anywhere. Available on both Android and iOS, the Waukee Public Library app puts everything you need at your fingertips. Browse the catalog, place holds, renew items, access digital content, register for programs, and more — all in one place.

Turn on push notifications for helpful reminders about closures and important announcements so you're always in the loop. Whether you're traveling, relaxing at home, or reading on the go, the app keeps you connected. Download it today by searching "Waukee Public Library" in your app store.

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Explore our new STEAM kits

We have added new STEAM Kits to our collection, now available for three-week checkouts. These hands-on kits are designed to spark curiosity and support learning through play. Each library card may check out one kit at a time.

New additions include:

- Ozobot – Learn coding and robotics with this fun, interactive mini robot.
- PicassoTiles – Build and create with colorful magnetic tiles that encourage open-ended exploration.

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

UPCOMING CLOSURES

- Sunday, Aug. 31
- Monday, Sept. 1
- Friday, Sept. 19, open at 1:30 p.m.

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

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

Art Gallery Exhibit: "Waukee Community Tiny Art Show" featuring the works of teen artists, Aug. 1-31.

Kids: Stuffed Animal Sleepover, Friday, Aug. 15, 6:15 p.m.

Bring a toy, (but not the one you need to fall asleep) and wear your PJs for a special bedtime storytime. Afterward, you'll go home, but your toy will stay at the library. Come back Saturday morning to collect your toy, see what they did overnight, and enjoy donuts, fruit and juice.

Adults: Snacks and Facts: Stroke Prevention, Friday, Aug. 1, 11:30 a.m.

Terri Hamm, Stroke Team coordinator for MercyOne in Des Moines, will share information that might just save a life. Come ready to learn, and we'll provide the snacks. Stick around afterward for Waukee Parks & Recreation's bingo at 1 p.m. for \$1 per play.

Multi-age: Friends and Family Board Games, Monday, Aug. 4, 6 p.m.

Join us for a fun evening of playing board games with your family and friends. We will have an assortment of board games available to play. Come for an evening filled with joy, laughter and a little competition. Snacks will be provided. ■

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INVESTMENT

By Daniel Rundahl

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.

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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GOLF Outing

Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce held its annual golf outing on June 12 at Beaver Creek Golf Course.



Colby Dawes and Jake Bemis



Lindsay Baessier and Dani Patterson



Jason Olson and Chris Stohs



Andrew West and Nick Prenger



Ryan Davis and Tim Royer



Michael Bartos and DJ Soultz



Michael McVey and Kevin Troxel



Jamie Adams and Karen Benecke-Renken



Stacy Hendrickson and Heidi Swanson



Ken Oetjen and Nate Keenan



Brooke Smejkal and Drew Hauschen



Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for Willard Garage on July 7.



Peggy and Brian Willard at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Willard Garage on July 7.



Don Frazer and Melissa Stimple at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Willard Garage on July 7.



Vern and Barb Uitdeflesch at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Willard Garage on July 7.



Colby Edel and Justin Brown at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Willard Garage on July 7.



Taera Mulder, Thom Hoffman, Vera Hoffman and Jenna Torgerson at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Willard Garage on July 7.



Terry Snyder, Megan Watt and Jenna Torgerson at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Willard Garage on July 7.



A ribbon cutting for the new Waukee Public Safety Building was held on July 7.



John Johnston and David and Sheryl Shields at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Willard Garage on July 7.

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