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WELCOME

ADVENTURES in camping

"Sorry, folks. Park's closed. The moose out front should have told you."

Those lines from actor John Candy in the 1983 hit movie "National Lampoon's Vacation" were echoing in my brain as we pulled away from Mahoney State Park in Nebraska a few decades ago. Jolene and I drove about an hour to this campsite with our three young daughters, all packed in a minivan with a large tent, sleeping bags and more camping gear than any family could ever need.

But, I didn't make reservations, and the campsite was full. It was after 7 p.m. on a Friday night, and, one way or another, we were going camping. I asked the friendly guard at the gate if he could recommend another campground. He suggested one just down the road, and we immediately trucked the minivan to it.

We were in luck, as this campground had a few open spots. We all smiled as we pulled up to our site, only to open the doors and hear the deafening roar of stock car engines coming from a nearby race track. It wasn't the peaceful evening around the campfire we envisioned, but we made the best of it and pitched our tent, filled our air mattresses and rolled out the sleeping bags.

Eventually, the races ended — just in time for the rain to start. We huddled together as the wind whipped our tent around and the rain seeped inside. In time, we fell asleep, only to be awakened by the cold rain that flowed over our now-deflated air mattresses and into our sleeping bags. So, at midnight, I hastily packed up the family and our soaking-wet belongings and took the drive back home.

That was the end of our tent-camping adventures. Not too much later, we bought a pop-up camper. Then, we sold that and upgraded to a travel trailer. Then, we sold that and purchased a different travel trailer. Then, we sold that and dished out for a class C motorhome, which we still have today — along with that same aforementioned tent. With all the kids out of the house today, neither one gets used much now, but we still have many wonderful memories of RV camping and one not-so-wonderful memory in a tent.

In this month's magazine, we share the stories of local residents who are enjoying life in their RVs and creating camping adventures. You can bet that they make campground reservations in advance.

Thanks for reading. ■



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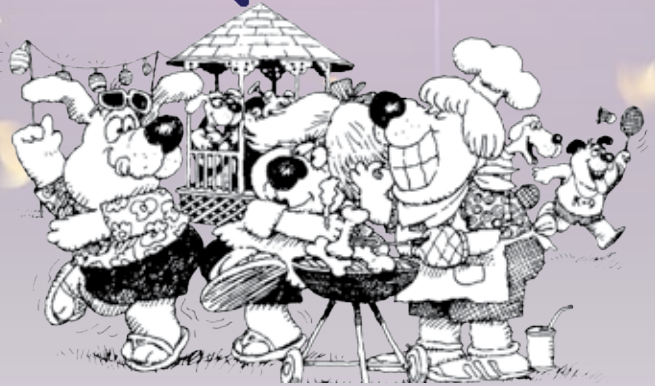


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CAMPING IN STYLE

Residents share the joy
of traveling with the
conveniences.

By Ashley Rullestad

Sitting around a campfire, toasting s'mores, telling stories and visiting with friends and family after a day of enjoying nature and exploring the big outdoors. Ah, the joys of camping! And you don't have to hike into the woods, covered in bug spray, to pitch a tent to partake in the fun. Those who prefer to make the trip with a camper share why they like to have some of the conveniences of home — bed, bathroom, air conditioner and more — on the trip with them.

Debbie and Floyd Lemke are glad they upgraded to a larger RV with even more amenities.

FEATURE

Unplug and unwind

Wes and Sara McDonald and her family are long-time campers. They used to pitch tents on their outings but stopped after a storm blew through on one of their trips, toppling trees near their campsite.

"We started to look at campers as soon as possible," Sara says. "Plus, the AC is very nice to sleep in."

The McDonalds' first camper was a single axle purchased in 2018. They upgraded in 2021 to a double axle camper. Their Rockwood Minilite has many features they appreciate: an outdoor kitchen, a slide-out, double-over-double bunks, storage for kayaks and bikes and a queen-size master bed.

For the family, it is all about the outdoors. They travel across Iowa and Missouri to many different campgrounds, sometimes with friends. They enjoy nature and getting away from the hectic city life.

"We put the cell phones down and fish, swim, hike, kayak, play games and meet lots of new people," Sara says. "We love the time with our two girls, Trinity, 15, and Halle, 11. Kids grow up too fast. We need to enjoy the time we get."

The family takes Fourth of July trips to Mark Twain Lake with their best friends from



The McDonald family enjoys traveling with their Rockwood Minilite.

Urbandale, and making new lifelong friends has been an amazing bonus of camping. They also enjoy traveling to northeastern Iowa for fly fishing and "breathtaking" kayak trips down the rivers. Briggs Woods and Lake Ahquabi are their favorite local campgrounds.

Sara says their most memorable experience was living in their camper for seven months while Wes



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FEATURE

built their new home. It was tight with two adults, two kids and two dogs, but she says it made them appreciate the little things.

Their advice for others looking for a recreational vehicle is simple.

“Do your homework at looking for the right camper for your needs and wants,” Sara says. “We were going to sell our first one right when COVID hit, but we kept it one more year, which gave us more time to find the right price and camper for our family.”

Fifth-wheel fun

Debbie Lemke has been going camping nearly her entire life — first, as a child in a pop-up camper, then in tents with her husband, Floyd, 20 years ago. The couple switched to a pop-up, then to a travel trailer, and eventually to a fifth wheel. They updated to their newest model about three years ago.

“We have always enjoyed camping. My husband liked the ease of setting this one up, it pulled nicer than a travel trailer, and there are more conveniences including a bigger refrigerator and bathroom, and furniture.”

They got their first fifth wheel about 10 years ago, but this one has been a great upgrade,



Debbie and Floyd Lemke enjoy the spaciousness of their RV, which has a larger refrigerator, bathroom and furniture than their last model.

Debbie says. Other favorite features are the bigger windows, the fireplace and a king-size bed. She also is glad that the bed is in a bump-out, and the floor around it is flat, versus having a step around the bed.

Their favorite spot to camp is Acorn Valley in Polk City, which is part of Saylorville, but they have camped at several other places around Iowa. They have also pulled their fifth wheel to South Dakota, Colorado, and recently returned from a trip visiting family in Nebraska and Wyoming.

“We mostly enjoy sitting by the campfire, listening to, and watching, nature, and enjoying time with friends.”

Of course, not all memorable camping moments are idyllic ones, either. The Lemkes

recall camping with family several years ago at Backbone State Park. Their new puppy cried several nights, a raccoon unzipped the tent door where the grandchildren were sleeping and got into the dog food, someone had a reaction to medicine that necessitated a middle-of-the-night ambulance ride, the flies were horrible, and the truck broke down on the way home.

“We can laugh now, but we will never forget it,” Debbie says.

They also have tips for those in the market for a camper:

- Make sure your tow vehicle can pull what you buy.
- Do your own research.
- The bigger and longer the RV, the less

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options you have for campsites.

- Outside kitchens are not necessarily a plus. It is often difficult to use the stove when it is windy.

“Be very careful with the awning. They are expensive to replace. Don’t ask how we know,” Debbie says.

Camping close

Terry and Kaycee Schippers have good friends who have had a camper for several years. After spending the day at the campground with them and their nights in a hotel room, they decided it would be fun to go along for the whole experience.

“My husband heard about a friend of a friend who had a 2021 Keystone Hideout for sale. We went and looked at it, and the rest is history. Now we are thinking about upgrading to a fifth wheel.”

They bought the camper at the end of camping season in October 2023. They were able to take it out once before it was time to winterize it and store it.

“I love everything about our camper,” Kaycee says. “It has tons of storage space. My favorite thing is that the inside of our cabinets are backlit, so it’s easier to see inside. The knobs on our stove are also backlit with blue lights. I love that it has a slide-out, and we have plenty of space when we have visitors. There is a hidden pantry behind the entertainment center and a beautiful electric fireplace that is a great heat source in chilly weather.”

The Schippers have a membership at Cutty’s Camping Resort, and that is mostly where they go for weekend camping. They enjoy the campground because Cutty’s has two outdoor swimming pools, plenty of planned activities, and a cafe where you can get food and ice cream.

“We love spending holidays at Cutty’s with our family and friends,” Kaylee says. “The Halloween party is one of my favorite events at Cutty’s because I love Halloween. They have a camper decorating contest, and it’s a lot of fun to see how everyone decorates their campers and golf carts.”

They hope to plan camping trips in the future to places like Okoboji and Ledges State Park near Boone, as well as trips to farther away places like Tennessee and Colorado. Someday, Kaycee hopes to visit Yosemite National Park and Redwood National Forest.

The Schippers remind people that having a camper is a lot of work, so make sure you’re committed.

“It does get easier as you become more experienced and you learn how and what to pack and how to be efficient,” Kaycee says. “It can be helpful to follow camping groups on social media and YouTube. Be sure to do your research before you buy a camper so that you know what you’re getting into. But it’s a lot of fun.” ■



Terry and Kaycee Schippers like to camp at Cutty’s with their 2021 Keystone Hideout.

TYPES OF RVs

Class A motorhomes: Largest drivable RVs, often associated with luxury and comfort. Their large bus frames are built on a truck chassis, providing RV manufacturers with the flexibility to make heavier and more spacious RVs.

Class B motorhomes: Smallest drivable RVs on the market. Also called campervans, they are nimble enough to fit in standard parking spaces yet big enough to have small kitchens, a flexible living and sleeping area, and sometimes even toilets and showers.

Class C motorhomes: Built on a van chassis with the living space constructed around the cab. Usually, the signature cab-over bed serves as a secondary sleeping space. These small motorhomes transform into comfortable living spaces when parked at the campground — especially those that come with one or more slide outs.

Fifth wheels: The largest towable RVs. A fifth wheel connects a pin-box from the front of the trailer to a u-shaped coupling mounted in a truck bed. Amenities like multiple slide outs, an outdoor kitchen, extendable patio, reclining chairs, office space and a kitchen island help make fifth wheels some of the most comfortable and luxurious trailers.

Toy haulers: An RV type all their own because of their garages. Toy haulers have living areas and a multi-purpose utility

space designed to carry motorcycles, off-road utility vehicles, kayaks, dirt bikes, or other toys inside of the RV.

Travel trailers: The most popular RVs on the market because they are versatile and come in many different lengths and weights. Larger travel trailers may have slide outs and separate living and sleeping quarters and amenities like a bunkhouse or outdoor kitchen. To tow a travel trailer, you must have a tow vehicle with a sufficient tow rating and a hitch installed to connect the trailer.

Pop-up campers: Hybrid RV tents. When the pop-up camper is in camping mode, the tent section of the trailer extends to provide more headroom, sleeping space and zippable sides and windows. People often choose pop-up campers because they are lightweight and easy to tow.

Tiny travel trailers: Sometimes called micro trailers, these have small and flexible living spaces. Tiny travel trailers include teardrop, fiberglass, clamshell and some smaller pop-ups. They are lightweight, and smaller SUVs and trucks can tow them.

Truck campers: Sit in the bed of a pickup truck, and, because of weight, they almost always require a one-ton or a dually (dual rear-wheel) truck. They range from lightweight with pop-up roof to more luxurious models with slide outs.

Find additional information at www.rvezy.com/blog/rv-types.

HOW TO SET THE STAGE FOR A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL YEAR

As the school year begins, parents often find themselves juggling supply lists, new schedules, and the anticipation of how their child will adjust. Beyond the basics, one key factor often overlooked can make a significant difference in a student's success: establishing a strong academic routine early. The start of the school year is a critical time to build habits that can last all year long.

ROUTINE IS EVERYTHING

Children thrive on consistency. Set regular times for homework, reading, screen use and bedtime. A predictable after-school routine helps minimize stress, improves focus, and promotes time management skills — essential for academic success. Even 15–20 minutes of quiet reading or skill-building exercises each evening can make a big difference.

COMMUNICATE WITH TEACHERS

Establishing a strong connection with your child's teachers early on is vital. Open communication allows you to stay ahead of any academic or social challenges. Don't be afraid to ask how your child is progressing and what you can do at home to reinforce learning.

MINDSET MATTERS

Encourage a growth mindset. Celebrate effort as much as outcomes, and remind your child that mistakes are part of learning. When children feel supported in taking academic risks, they are more likely to stay engaged and resilient.

DON'T WAIT TO CATCH UP

One of the most common mistakes families make is waiting until the first report card to take action. If your

child struggled last year or seemed disengaged, start the year with proactive support. Early assessment and tutoring can prevent learning gaps from widening.

LEARNING SHOULD BE A YEAR-ROUND JOURNEY

Think beyond the classroom. Learning can happen anywhere — through cooking, playing games, museum visits, or exploring interests outside of school. Make learning meaningful and fun, and your child will carry that enthusiasm into the classroom.

The beginning of the school year is more than just a return to books and backpacks. It's a fresh opportunity to set the tone for a successful, supported journey. With a few intentional steps, you can help your child start strong and stay strong. ■

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HOW TO **CHOOSE GARAGE DOORS**

Garage doors are often an afterthought to homeowners — but they shouldn't be. Garage doors are the first thing most notice about a home, so when it comes to choosing them for a new home or replacing them, significant thought and research should take place. If your garage faces the front of the house, a new door could dramatically improve your curb appeal and change the overall look of your home. If you're selling, worn, dated doors tend to say a lot about the condition of the rest of the home. A garage door is also an excellent security asset for your home, allowing you to secure your vehicle inside. If you're thinking about installing a new garage door, you may be surprised

at just how many options are on the market — and how affordably they can be installed.

THE LOOK

Garage doors have seen an explosion in styles, materials and colors that are designed to match the architecture of any home, from rural barns to craftsman bungalows or sleek urban getaways. So if you thought your choices were limited to simple sheet metal styles, think again. You should also pay close attention to the materials. Today's garage doors can be made from expensive hardwoods, textured vinyl, fiberglass or basic aluminum, all of which will have a big impact on the look

and longevity of your doors. Pay close attention to the maintenance needs of whatever material you choose. Some will hold their color longer than others, and real wood doors can require regular staining and sealing every few years to keep them looking spectacular.

INSULATION

Depending on climate, the insulation of your garage door can be an important factor to help reduce your energy bills. This is especially important in heated garages. But even an insulated door on unheated garages can make a positive impact on your energy usage if it can keep the hot and cold weather away from the interior of your house. ■

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HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT FALL ACTIVITY FOR YOUR CHILD

As routines return and cooler weather rolls in, many families are looking for the right activity to keep their kids active, learning and having fun this fall. But with options ranging from toddler music classes to team sports, how do you choose the one that fits? Here is how to find a fall program your child will actually enjoy, and stick with, no matter their age.

WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO LEARN

The best programs meet kids at their level and help them grow — whether that means building strength and coordination, preparing for school routines, or learning how to make friends. Look for activities that support real-life skills in a fun, age-appropriate way.

CHOOSE PROGRESS OVER PRESSURE

Not every child thrives in a competitive setting. Programs that emphasize personal growth and celebrate

effort over outcomes help kids build confidence, stay curious, and try new things without fear of failure.

MAKE FUN THE PRIORITY

If your child isn't having fun, it won't stick. The right activity should feel like the highlight of their week, not another thing to check off the list. Pay attention to the environment: Is it warm and welcoming? Do the teachers or coaches match your child's energy and bring out their best? Does your child ask when they get to go back?

CHOOSE SOMETHING THAT HELPS THEM CONNECT

Kids need more than exercise; they need connection. The right activity gives them a chance to make friends, practice kindness, take turns and be part of a group. Look for classes that foster real interaction with both peers and

positive adult role models. These early social experiences help kids feel seen, supported and part of something bigger.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK (AND A TEST RUN)

Before committing, ask other parents what their kids genuinely love and what they've outgrown or avoided. Read Google reviews, check local parent groups and, most importantly, try a class yourself. A trial session is the best way to see if the environment feels right, the instructors are engaged, and your child leaves smiling and asking to come back.

The best fall activity isn't just a way to fill time, it is something that helps your child grow, connect and feel genuinely excited to return each week. When you find the right fit, it shows in their smile, their stories on the car ride home, and the way they count down the days until they get to go back. ■



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HOW TO **SELL YOUR HOME FAST**

Everyone with a home on the market wants their property to sell fast and for the highest price possible. It not only means money in your pocket, but also speeds up the move into your new home — not to mention the relief of not having to keep your place in tip-top shape every day.

However, the quick sale doesn't always happen due to timing, market fluctuations and the condition and attractiveness of your home.

But there are some time-tested steps you can take that will make it much easier to see a "sold" sign in your front yard quickly.

PRICING: The most important step is to price your home correctly at the outset. Price it too low, and you'll leave money on the table. Price it too high, though, and your home will take longer to sell. To hit the pricing bull's eye, you've got to

know what is comparable in your market. An appraiser can pull data about recent comps, typically from the last six months, for sales of homes that are similar to yours. The closer your price is to homes that are actually selling, the more likely you are to get a quick sale.

STAGING: Staging your home is sometimes thought of as an elaborate process that involves redecorating and renting beautiful furniture to make your interior look its best, but it doesn't always have to be that intense. Staging is about presenting your home in the most appealing way possible. The goal is to get buyers to imagine putting their own things in your home, so basic steps like clearing out clutter and removing your personal photos can help their imagination go to work.

PHOTOGRAPHY: For most buyers, the first impression of your house won't be

made in person. It will be made through photos of your home they see online or in print ads. That's why it's critical to have good, quality photographs of your home. In some markets, that might mean having a professional photographer shoot images of your home when it's staged at its best. The more clear, well-lit pictures that show off the beauty and features of your home, the more buyers are likely to take the next step and schedule a showing.

FIX IT UP: Finally, you have to pay attention to details to make sure your home is in top shape cosmetically. You'll want to make sure the gardens, flower beds and other landscaping are neat, clean and free of weeds.

You should also make a checklist of simple handyman tasks to complete, like replacing burnedout light bulbs, making sure doors and hinges shut properly, and removing stains from your carpet. ■

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MOM'S Chicken Salad

Lately, I've been hooked on chicken salad — making a fresh batch every week for quick, satisfying lunches and the occasional no-fuss dinner. It is incredibly convenient to have a flavorful, ready-to-eat meal waiting in the fridge. I love its versatility, too, as it is perfect to pile on toast, toss over greens, or simply enjoy by the spoonful.



This version (I can't really call it a recipe) is more of a method passed down from my mother. She never measured anything, but just added a bit of this and a scoop of that, adjusting as she tasted. I have kept that spirit but added a few of my own touches along the way. I sometimes swap out the mayo for Greek yogurt, skip the onions (some family members are not fans), and change up the nuts depending on what I have on hand. I also ditched the sugar in favor of honey or a splash of lemon juice for brightness. Personally, I leave out mustard — but if you love that tangy kick, try stirring in a tablespoon of Dijon for a bold, earthy note.

It's a flexible formula that can be adjusted to your tastes — and your family's. Enjoy! ■

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

Lois' Chicken Salad

Ingredients:

- 3 cups chicken, diced
- ½-1 cup celery, diced
- ¼-½ cup onion, minced (optional)
- ½-1 cup of red grapes, cut in half (or use mandarin oranges)
- ¼-¾ cup pecans, chopped (or use walnuts or almonds)
- 2 tablespoons honey (or a splash of lemon juice)
- 1-1¼ cup mayonnaise (or low-fat Greek yogurt), add more if needed
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt

Directions

- Add first five ingredients to a medium-sized bowl. In a smaller bowl, combine the last 5 ingredients and add to the first bowl. Mix. Chill for one to two hours so flavors blend. Enjoy on bread, toast, bed of greens or on its own. Makes six to eight servings.



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As summer comes to a close, and the kids head back to school, the library has a wealth of resources and opportunities to support you. Read on for further details.

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Do you have a teen who wants to have fun, hang out with peers, and make a difference at the library? If so, JPL's **Teen Advisory Board** might be the perfect fit. TAB meets on the third Tuesday of each month from 5-6 p.m. and is open to students in grades 6-12. During meetings, members suggest services, materials and programs that will make the library a better place for teens. Meetings also include social activities and snacks. Applications are available at the library and on our website.

Retired seniors, or those nearing retirement, can go back to school as well at **Retirement University: Social Security, Retirement Income & Tax Planning**. At this workshop, presented by the Society of Financial Awareness (SOFA), participants will learn important financial information, including 2025 Social Security changes, accounts and investments that can reduce tax burden, and smart tax strategies for maximizing retirement income. This educational program will be offered twice: Wednesday, Aug. 20, and Thursday, Aug. 28, from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Register for the session of your choice.

Have you ever seen a librarian pop a wheelie? Our **Book Bike** brings the library to you — dropping by parks, events and neighborhoods across Johnston so staff can hand out free books, make library cards, and check out and return materials. One of the bike's most popular stops is the Johnston Farmers Market, where we grow minds through books. The book bike is funded by donations to the Johnston Public Library Foundation. You can help stock the bike by donating gently used children's, teen, or adult books anytime. Every dollar or book you give helps us pedal the joy of reading throughout our community.

For those who like to ride their own bikes or scooters to the library, we have locks available for patrons free of charge. Riders can stop by the circulation desk to pick up a lock and return it when they leave.

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. ■

ANTICIPATORY grief

Anticipatory grief is the kind of grief that occurs before a death. While this is our body's way of preparing for the loss, it does not necessarily mean that the grief experienced when the death does occur will be easier. For some, it might still feel surreal or even shocking when the death finally occurs because it has been long-anticipated. That long period of anticipation may lead to heightened anxiety for some. For others, the time to prepare makes the death feel less impactful when it does occur.



It is important to remember that grief reactions are highly individual and vary for each loss experienced. Feelings that may be more pronounced include anxiety and guilt. There may be additional layers added to grief, like the emotional toll of being a caretaker. And there are many secondary losses grieved along the way, like changes in abilities and cognition.

A few tips for coping with anticipatory grief: Give yourself permission to feel whatever you are feeling, especially contradictory feelings. Take care of yourself and find adaptive coping strategies that work for you. Seek out support and respite when you need it. Be as present as possible with the person who is dying and utilize this time for memory making and reminiscing.

Perspective: It is easy to forget that dying is actually very hard work. Being present to someone doing the hard work of dying can be a powerful experience. ■

Information provided by Buffy Peters, Director of Hamilton's Academy of Grief & Loss, 3601 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-697-3666. For more information, resources or support visit: www.HamiltonsFuneralHome.com.

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rhondamartiniowanative@gmail.com

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Last chance to register: Mayor's Run for the Trails

Join us for the Mayor's Run for the Trails, a wonderful family event! Put on your running shoes and take part on Saturday, August 9 at Terra Park. The kids' runs (100-meter and 0.62 (around the Terra Lake)) and 5K walk will begin promptly at 8:00 a.m., followed by the 5K run at 8:15 a.m. After the race, there will be post-race food for finishers and prizes for the top men and women in each age group. If running isn't your preference, you can still get involved by participating in the 5K walk. The entry fee is \$40 for the 5K and \$15 for the Kids' Runs. It's a fantastic opportunity to show your support for the trails and have some fun!

Sign up at www.cityofjohnston.com/Mayors5KRun.



Grant program helps improve stormwater management

The Stormwater Homeowner Grant Program is here to help property owners make their homes better for handling rainwater. By using special techniques called Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs), you can really help improve the quality of water around you and lessen the effects of rain runoff.

What Can You Get from the Program?

We're excited to provide financial help to local residents through this program! You can get up to 50% of the costs covered for the BMPs you put on your property, with a maximum reimbursement of \$1,250. This means you can make important upgrades and receive a lot of financial support to do so.

We also know how useful rain barrels are for saving water and managing stormwater. That's why we're happy to offer funds for rain barrels at a max of \$75 for each household. Just keep in mind that each address can only get one rain barrel.

How Can You Participate?

The Stormwater Homeowner Grant Program makes it easy to participate! If you want to use BMPs or install a rain barrel on your property, just visit our program website at www.cityofjohnston.com/homeownergrants. Join us in the ongoing effort to protect our water resources for future generations!



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



Special Census Responses Needed To Ensure Residents Are Counted

The City of Johnston is conducting a Special Census, and residents should respond to the questionnaire using the postcard mailers from the U.S. Census Bureau. Online responses are open until August 11, after which Bureau representatives will visit households that haven't responded.

If the census shows an increase of 2,400 residents since 2020, Johnston could gain an additional \$320,000 each year for projects like pothole repairs and road improvements. For more details, visit www.cityofjohnston.com/Census.

Responding to the Special Census

Once you receive your invitation to respond, go to www.portal.census.gov/specialcensus to complete your Special Census questionnaire online. You will need the 12-digit Census ID found on the letter or postcard.



If you do not receive the mailed materials, a Census Bureau interviewer will visit your home to collect your answers in person.

U.S. Census Bureau

Take advantage of the Senior programs

Older Iowans Day at the Iowa State Fair | \$25

Wednesday, August 13, 2025 | 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. | Register by Wednesday, August 6

Come join us on a fun trip to the Iowa State Fair! We will depart from the Crown Point Community Center at 8:00 a.m. and return by 4:00 p.m. You will get dropped off and picked up at the front gate--you don't have to worry about driving in the crowds! Register by visiting www.cityofjohnston.com/RecDesk.

Mindfulness Workshop | \$1

Thursday, August 21 | 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. | Register by Thursday, August 14

Learn about mental health and how the simple act of mindfulness can help. Mindfulness helps us feel grounded and allows us to better tackle what life throws at us. In this lecture, we will discuss topics such as breathing techniques, ways to feel grounded, and the benefits of practicing mental health techniques. Register by visiting www.cityofjohnston.com/RecDesk.

Book Club | FREE

Monday, August 18 | 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. | No Registration Required

Grab a copy of *The Secret of Sunflowers* by Marta Molner and join us for the discussion! This book tells the story of Johanna Bonger and her path to preserve and promote Vincent Van Gogh's art after he passed, transforming him into one of the most celebrated artists around the world.

Senior Tailgate | \$10

Thursday, September 4 | 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. | Register by Thursday, August 28

Come tailgate with us in anticipation of the famous CyHawk game. Burgers, fixings, sides, and all your favorite snacks included! Register by visiting www.cityofjohnston.com/RecDesk.

Farmers Market sales begin at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesdays

We're excited to see you at the Farmers Market at 6245 Merle Hay Road on Tuesdays from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Please remember that sales begin at 4:00 p.m. for everyone's safety, ensuring vendors are set up and the area is clear. A bell will ring at 4:00 p.m. to signal the start of shopping, and another bell will ring at 7:00 p.m. as a reminder to wrap up. Thank you for your cooperation, and we hope to see you there!



For more information about the city, please call 515.278.2344

MEET Andy Lind

Lifelong learner is inspired by her students every day.

Andy Lind knows all too well how teaching is like a daily rollercoaster ride.

"There's no way to adequately prepare for what the day may hold, but this keeps it exciting, and I remind myself that even through my challenging days, I am growing, too," Lind says. "Being a teacher means you're a lifelong student."

Lind started her teaching journey in 2012 while earning her degree from the University of Northern Iowa. During that time, she student taught at Lawson Elementary in Johnston. After graduating, she taught for a year in a high school severe and profound special education classroom before finding her way back to Lawson. She's been happily teaching third grade there ever since. Lind knew she wanted to be a teacher, inspired by the wonder, excitement and outlook children possess — qualities she sees in her students every day.

"I value relationships above everything else, as an educator and an individual," she says. "I love that teaching allows me to form relationships with my students and their families. I love staying connected to my current and former students and their families. There's something so special about getting to continue relationships with families by teaching siblings."

Some of Lind's former students are now babysitting her own two kids, which is a full-circle moment she treasures.

One of her favorite memories? When her first third-grade class attended her wedding.

She also enjoys the school's Seniors Come Home event each May, when former students return to reflect on their elementary years.

"Hearing former students say how much they loved our time together makes all of those challenging days completely worthwhile," Lind says.

A highlight from this past year was watching her entire class come together to learn sign language so they could communicate with a classmate.

"The bond we all got to share because of this student is one I know we will all cherish forever," Lind says.

Now entering her 14th year of teaching, Lind can't imagine being anywhere else.

"I knew, even as a student teacher, Lawson was a special place to be," she says. "The community among staff, students and our families is truly special. The way the entire building can come together to support our students and staff in any capacity makes me so proud to work alongside such dedicated educators and kind, genuine people.

"I'm biased," she adds, "but I also think there is a magical transformation in third grade as kids discover who they are and really settle into themselves." ■



Andy Lind, pictured with her family, is inspired by the wonder, excitement and outlook children possess.

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INVESTMENT

By Tim Hanstad

YOU HAVE an estate plan, whether you know it or not

Think estate planning is only for the wealthy or elderly? Think again. If you own anything — a home, a car, a savings account, even a pet — you already have an estate plan. The only question is: Did you create it or will your state do it for you?

When someone passes away without an estate plan, state laws take over, deciding who gets what and when. This legal process may not reflect your wishes. That is why taking control of your assets through a personal estate plan should be a top priority.

At its core, estate planning is about clarifying your wishes and making things easier for your heirs. It ensures your assets are distributed according to your preferences, designates who will make decisions on your behalf if you can't, and provides guidance for your care in a medical crisis. Most plans include four key components:

A will: This document outlines how your assets should be distributed after your death and names an executor to oversee the process in probate court. It can also designate guardians for minor children. Keep in mind that a will doesn't cover everything — certain transfer on death (TOD) accounts and jointly held property may bypass your will entirely.

Power of attorney: If you become incapacitated, you will want someone you trust to be able to make decisions on your behalf. A durable power of attorney designates such a person, helping to ensure your bills are paid, your business continues (if you have one) and your wishes are honored.

Health care directive: Sometimes called a living will, this document spells out your preferences for medical treatment if you're unable to speak for yourself. It can also designate someone to make health care decisions for you.

Beneficiary designations: Accounts like 401(k)s, IRAs and life insurance policies transfer directly to the people you name, regardless of what your will says. It's essential to review these beneficiary designations regularly, especially after significant life events such as marriage, divorce, death of a spouse or the birth of a child.

One common myth is that a will is all you need. But wills only take effect after death; they don't help if you're alive but unable to make decisions. Another misconception is that estate planning is only for the wealthy. In truth, planning is about more than money — it's about making things easier for the people you love during difficult times.

An effective estate plan can prevent costly legal battles, reduce confusion and give your loved ones a clear roadmap to follow. It also allows you to leave a legacy that reflects your values and priorities.

As your life changes, your estate plan should change along with it. Review your documents every few years or after major life events. It's often a good idea to seek help with such reviews. Your financial advisor or attorney can guide you through the process, ensuring your plan fits your unique circumstances.

In the end, estate planning isn't just about planning for what happens when you are gone. It's about feeling confident, knowing that what matters most — your family, your purpose, your legacy — is protected. ■



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age, health-related and other restrictions may apply.

HOSPICE care focuses on quality of time spent together

For James' family, early fall had always meant tradition — a time to slow down, take in the changing colors, and gather for their annual apple orchard trip.

But last year was different. James's health was declining after a long journey with heart failure and COPD. Though he still looked forward to time with his family, he and his wife, Denise, weren't sure how he could fully take part in the outings they had always enjoyed.

Support from an in-home hospice team helped shift the focus from what James couldn't do to what he still could, giving the family space to create meaningful moments in a season they all cherished.

"Hospice began caring for James in late August," Denise recalls. "They helped manage his symptoms, and he was able to join us at the orchard one last time. That afternoon was



something special — peaceful, joyful. A real memory."

When you're exploring hospice care for someone you love, it may feel difficult 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, on a dedicated hospice campus, or as part of a blended approach — and the right option depends on your family's unique situation.

Whatever model you consider, an important question to ask is: "How can the care I'm looking for help my loved one live more fully during this time?"

Many people are surprised to learn that hospice can begin earlier than they think — as soon as a person is diagnosed with a life-limiting illness. Studies show that individuals who receive hospice care early experience greater comfort and improved quality of life. In fact, 80% of Americans say they would prefer to die at home, yet only about 30% do — and hospice can help

close that gap.

If you're supporting a loved one through serious illness, think about how you want the two of you to spend time together. Hospice providers often deliver care right in the home, helping preserve daily routines while supporting the person and their family.

Reaching out to a hospice team can feel daunting, but please keep in mind that compassionate, expert care can ease the burden and help families create moments of connection — especially during cherished seasonal traditions.

"Once hospice was involved, we could focus on the time we had," Denise says. "We didn't know how much we were holding until we could let go of the stress. That fall 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.

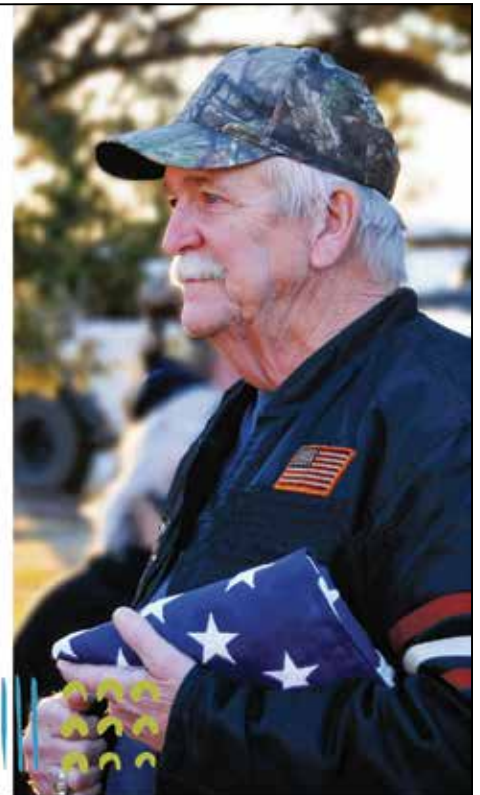
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FEDERAL estate tax exemption increased

Recent legislation answers a huge estate planning question: The federal estate tax exclusion limit will be extended.

When an individual dies, the owned assets are generally referred to as the “estate.” Settling the estate — either through the court-supervised probate process or by distribution through a trust — raises potential tax issues. Every estate is liable for different types of taxes, including federal estate tax.

Federal estate tax is a tax on the transfer of property at death and is levied on the total value of assets in the estate. Federal estate tax is applied to estates that exceed the lifetime estate tax exemption, also called the “unified credit.” In 2017, legislation increased the federal



estate tax exemption amount to \$10,000,000, adjusted for inflation.

The exemption amount for federal estate tax in 2025 is \$13,990,000. If the estate is less than \$14 million, no federal estate tax is due and no return has to be filed. However, this increase was set to end — and roll back to \$5,000,000 — at the end of 2025.

New legislation extends the exclusion amount. Effective Jan. 1, 2026, the federal estate tax exemption will increase to \$15,000,000 per person. The enactment of this legislation has prevented a decrease in the basic exclusion amount that would have automatically occurred on Jan. 1, 2026, if this legislation had not been passed because of an automatic sunset (expiration) date that was inserted into Code section 2010(c) in 2017, when the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was enacted.

This means that, in 2026 an individual can transfer \$15,000,000 (increased from

\$13,990,000 in 2025) free of any federal estate, gift or generation-skipping taxes. A married couple can transfer a combined \$30,000,000, increased from \$27,980,000 in 2025. This amount is subject to an annual cost-of-living adjustment, so the \$15,000,000 limit may adjust upward in the future.

This extension of the federal estate tax exclusion will prevent individuals from having to radically re-think their estate plans before the end of the year. It also offers an opportunity for better planning for individuals and couples who want to ensure that their family will inherit a legacy that they can preserve for the future. Consult with an attorney who is experienced in estate planning to determine how these changes can benefit you. ■

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

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INSURANCE

By Ciri Quirk

PREVENTATIVE care and the role of sports physicals in kids health

Preventative care is a cornerstone of pediatric health, focusing on early detection, routine screenings and ongoing wellness. Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), many preventative services for children — such as immunizations, annual wellness exams, developmental screenings and vision checks — are covered by most insurance plans at no cost to families. These services are designed to monitor growth and development and to identify any potential concerns before they become more serious.



One area that often brings up questions for families is the coverage of sports physicals, also known as pre-participation physical evaluations (PPEs). These physicals are typically required by schools or sports leagues before a child can participate in athletic programs. They are designed to assess a child's overall fitness, identify any underlying medical conditions, and ensure it is safe for them to engage in physical activity.

While sports physicals serve a preventative function, they are usually not categorized as preventative care under most insurance plans. This is primarily because they are considered purpose-specific exams, requested by an external organization rather than based on a medical diagnosis or general health recommendation. As a result, sports physicals may not be fully covered and might require a separate appointment or fee outside of what's included in a routine wellness visit.

However, many pediatricians and healthcare providers offer the option of combining a sports physical with a child's annual wellness exam, which is typically covered as preventative care. This approach allows healthcare providers to meet both the general health needs of the child and the specific requirements of the sports organization in a single visit, often reducing or eliminating additional costs.

It is always a good idea for families to check with their insurance provider to understand what's covered under their plan and how sports physicals are handled. Some plans may provide partial coverage or allow reimbursement if the exam occurs during an annual physical.

As youth sports remain a key part of physical and social development, sports physicals continue to play an important role in keeping children safe and active. While coverage varies, understanding how these exams fit into the broader picture of preventative care can help families make informed decisions and ensure their children are prepared — both on and off the field. ■

Information provided by Ciri Quirk, Health Insurance Advisor LLC, 5870 Merle Hay Road, Suite A, Johnston, 515-225-9994, cquirk@health-insadvisor.com.

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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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- 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
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Aug. 14, Sept. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 13,
6-8 p.m.

Lions Club, 6501 Merle Hay Road

Join the Lions Club for bingo with prizes on the second Thursday of August, September, October and November.

Johnston Community School Foundation Golf Outing

Friday, Sept 5, 8 a.m.
Jester Park Golf Course, 11949
N.W. 118th Ave., Granger

The Johnston Community School Foundation's 26th annual Golf Outing is upcoming. The event supports JCSF's mission to fund grants to support classrooms and programs within the Johnston Community School District. Register online by Aug. 25 at www.wearejohnston.com/register-golf-outing.

JHS Women's Cross Country Alumnae and Family Reunion

Aug. 30

Johnston High School Stadium, 6500 N.W. 100th St.

The Johnston High School Girls Cross Country program will be hosting its first annual JHS Women's Alumnae and Family Reunion. This event aims to highlight notable accomplishments of Johnston athletes during their time as Dragons and celebrate the community of women who have been a part of the program. All alumnae, family and friends of the program are welcome to join for breakfast and fellowship at the JHS Cafeteria following the awards ceremony at the Dragon Sunrise Invitational. The girls race at the meet starts at 8 a.m., and the boys start at 8:45 a.m. with awards at 9:30 a.m. RSVP using the form at the following link. More details will be provided to individuals who RSVP. <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSczQteF26s9110g1r9-eQPzRJs1HktLHBAWVFQHGd712AcWeQ/viewform?usp=dialog>



Movies on the Yard

Friday, Aug. 18, and Thursday, Sept. 18, 8:45 p.m.

The Yard, 6245 Merle Hay Road

Enjoy a summer night under the stars at Movies on the Yard. The movie will begin at dusk (approximately 8:45 p.m.), so bring a blanket or lawn chair, round up your favorite people, and settle in for a fun, family-friendly evening. Admission is free, and all are welcome.



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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations

Yoga by the Lake

Various Saturdays, Aug. 23 through Oct. 11, 8 a.m.

Terra Lake, by the amphitheater, 6400 Pioneer Parkway

Enjoy a refreshing hour of yoga led by Ignit Yoga Instructor Natalie Henricksen. Experience the tranquility of the lake as you enhance your well-being in a serene outdoor setting. Bring a yoga mat, water bottle, and any additional items to ensure your comfort during the class. This event is free and open to all levels. Dates are Aug. 23, 30; Sept. 6, 13, 20, 27; Oct. 4, 11.

Tunes at Twilight Thursday Concert Series

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

The Yard, 6245 Merle Hay Road

Performances will be by The Sons of Gladys Kravitz Aug. 7 and Damon Dotson Sept. 11.

Johnston Basketball Club 2025 Tryouts

Sunday, Aug. 10

Johnston High School Gym, 6500 N.W. 100th St.

The Johnston Basketball Club girls and boys tryouts are scheduled on Sunday, Aug. 10, at Johnston High School. Grades eligible for tryouts are first through eighth grade (the grade they will be attending in the fall of 2025). Check the Johnston Basketball Club website, johnstonbasketballclub.com, to register for tryouts. Specific times for tryouts per grade will be on the website in August.

Backpocket Beer Mile and Fun Run

Friday, Sept. 19, 5:30 p.m.

The Yard at Johnston Town Center, 6245 Merle Hay Road

Whether you're a seasoned runner looking to test your limits or simply seeking an entertaining way to spend an evening, the Backpocket Beer Mile promises an unforgettable time. Timing will be via chip. A Fun Wave will be at 6:20 p.m. for less competitive friends. Relay teams of two may register for the Fun Wave, but both participants must register. You can pick up your packet on Thursday, Sept. 18, at Fleet Feet, 521 E. Locust St., from 3-6 p.m., or Friday, Sept. 19, from 3-5 p.m. at Backpocket Pin & Pixel, Johnston. For more information and to register, visit <https://runsignup.com/Race/IA/Johnston/BackpocketBeerMile>.

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

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 Not Quite Brothers on Aug. 23 and The Pork Tornadoes on Sept. 27. ■

COMMUNITY

A LEGACY of success

Johnston High School Cross Country program celebrates.

The roots of Johnston's Girls Cross Country trace back to Craig Oldham and Rick Rynning, the founders respectively of the high school and junior high programs. The tradition established by coaches Oldham and Rynning provided a deep foundation that was inherited by Patrick Hennes, first as an assistant varsity coach in 2002 and then as head varsity coach in the fall of 2003. Chris Siewert joined Coach Hennes as assistant varsity coach in 2003.

This fall will mark the 23rd year of their coaching journey, a partnership that has led to 22 IGHSAU Class 4A State Meet appearances, 10 podium finishes (Top 3), six State Championships and one Nike Team Nationals appearance (2024). In addition to their proud history at the Iowa State Meet, the Dragons have 14 State Qualifying Meet and nine CIML Conference Championships. Moving beyond their team accolades, the Dragons have had one individual State Champion (Paige Horner - 2017), four individual runners-up and a total of 32 individual 1st Team All-State (Top 15) finishers.

"I think that each generation of athletes has built on the success and the culture that was gifted to them by the athletes who came before them," Hennes said. "You have to have a group of athletes who are willing to challenge themselves and to come together as a TEAM to raise the bar that they have set for themselves."

Alumnae of the award-winning Johnston girls cross country program are still reaping the benefits from participating during their high school years.

Bella Heikes graduated from Johnston in 2021 and is now in graduate school at Iowa State University, where she also runs on the cross country and track teams. Heikes ran for the high school girls cross country team from 2017 to 2020 and was a leading member of three state championship teams.

"When I got to college, I quickly realized how rare the Johnston cross country team is, and I felt so grateful to have been a part of the program," Heikes said. "The healthy perspective that I learned in high school, that the team comes first, that this sport is meant to be fun, and that one race doesn't define you, eased my transition to college running."

"The great conversations and laughs I had with my teammates made the miles pass by so fast," Heikes said. "It was so special to have such a supportive and fun group of girls to train with. The team goals were always understood and respected. We knew the most important goal was supporting each other so we could be great together. We recognized that winning a state championship was just the cherry on top of a season full of amazing memories with lifelong friends."

For past and present members of the team, it's more than just titles that make being a part of this team something special.

These athletes wouldn't be as successful without the help of their supportive coaches. Hennes and Siewert are joined by Madison Buckley, Morgan Casey and Tori Starcevic on the girls cross country current high school coaching staff. Also integral to the support and success of the team have been coaches such as Jodi Buchan, Charlie Fitzgerald and Michele Poss.

"Our goal is to provide our athletes with a team culture that is welcoming to everyone who wants to become the best possible version of themselves and is willing to contribute to an environment where everyone can experience success," Hennes said.

See the calendar page for details about the Aug. 30 JHS Women's Cross Country Alumnae and Family Reunion. ■



The Johnston Chamber held a ribbon cutting June 27 for The Little Gym of Johnston, 5260 Merle Hay Road.



The Johnston Chamber held a ribbon cutting July 1 for Beisser Lumber Company, 7901 Birchwood Court.



The Johnston Chamber held a ribbon cutting July 18 for Heartland Roofing, Siding & Solar at their renovated space at 2519 N.W. 66th Ave., Des Moines.



Johnston-Grimes Metropolitan Fire District Chief Jim Clark retired after more than eight years of service in the role and 42 years in fire service. A retirement party was held at Crown Point on Thursday, June 26, to honor him.



Beth Schaefer and Pete Jones at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart July 17 at the Johnston Public Library.



Nick Reggio and Sam Howell at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart July 17 at the Johnston Public Library.



Chief Jim Clark and Johnston Police Chief Dennis McDaniel at Clark's retirement reception.



Colin Priest and Chris Jones at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart July 17 at the Johnston Public Library.



Suzanne Ryan and Carrie Blackburn at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart July 17 at the Johnston Public Library.



Andrea Hodapp and Brenda Ballard at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart July 17 at the Johnston Public Library.

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Congrats to last month's winner, Ray!

June Answer: 33

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