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AUGUST 2025

Living

MAGAZINE



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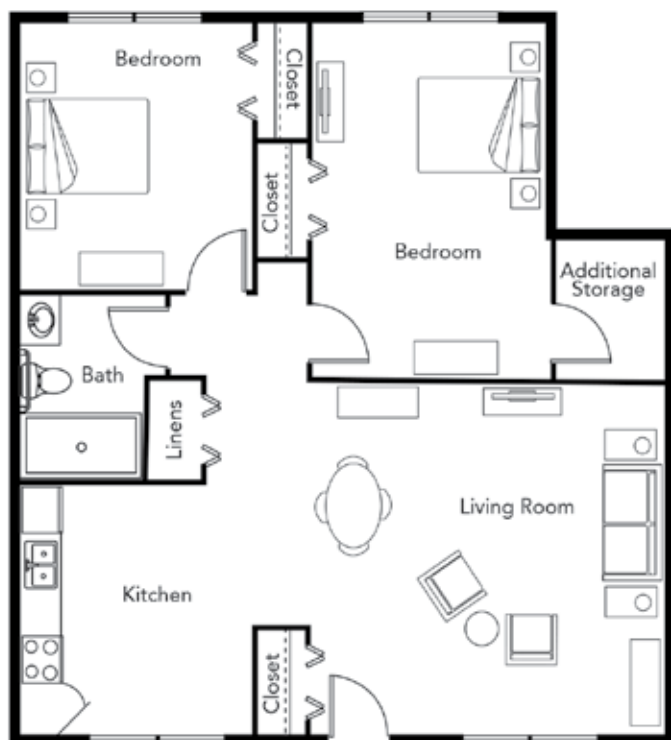
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WELCOME

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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CAMPING IN STYLE

Residents share the joy of traveling with the conveniences.



By Sean Dengler

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 — and 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.

Brant Anderson likes having all the space and amenities of his RV close by on trips and says it is spacious enough even with three daughters.

A family experience

For Jess Parsons, an RV creates a great family experience.

"When we went camping together as a family, we were all in the same place and didn't have to be in 20 other places," she says. "We also try and do different things that we would normally not do as in go to the Figure 8 races, visit restaurants that we would normally not get to go to, or visit places like the Maquoketa Caves."

A better experience is had with a camper than a tent, she asserts.

"Tents can be really hot, cold and/or wet," Parsons says. "With our fifth wheel, we are able to be comfortable no matter what weather we encounter. Plus, the kids are able to be in their own beds."

One also knows who has been in the camper compared to a hotel, she says.

"With our camper, it is ours, and we know who has been in it and slept in it, and we know that it has been cleaned."

Parsons is a major fan of her RV's features.

"I like being able to know that I have AC or heat if needed, pans, ice, a pantry for our food to be stored in. The bunkhouse for the kids."

Besides providing shelter on trips, their camper has impacted Jess and her family's life.

"We have made so many memories with our camper," she says. "From camping with family and friends to going to different places that we normally wouldn't have gone. One big benefit is that it is ours, and we can take it wherever we go and know that we are going to have a place to stay."

Unfortunately, this comes at a cost, according to Parsons.

"A big drawback is that we are unable to keep it at our house, so we have to keep it at a storage place," she says.

This RV-owning experience has been wonderful, but the family is entering a new stage, she says.

"Camping is so relaxing and fun. It is work, but it is fun work," Parsons says. "With all of that being said, we are actually selling our camper. With the season in life that we are all in with our kids getting older and getting jobs, it is just hard to find time to go camping or anywhere for that matter."

Creating memories

An RV offers versatility, Greg Gaul says.

"It is great to travel in and have some of the comforts of home with you," Gaul says.

"We also use it for quick weekend getaways at campgrounds within a couple of hours from



The Parsons appreciate the amenities of their RV and being able to enjoy being inside if the weather is uncooperative.



Greg Gaul says camping is a great family vacation, and his RV has plenty of room.

home."

Gaul also prefers sleeping in an RV.

"It is difficult for me to sleep in a tent. My wife is fine with tents, but my sleep quality is never good. Our camper has a nice comfy bed, and we have AC and a bathroom with a shower and full kitchen."

The camper is also better than being in a hotel, he says.

"Hotels are fine, but they tend to be more expensive than taking the camper, and the experience is much different," Gaul says. "With the camper, we can take our dog with little worries, and we tend to meet and talk to more people at campgrounds versus hotels."

The RV also has a variety of benefits.

"Our camper is large enough to be comfortable (27 feet) without being too big. It is easy to tow. We have a full kitchen, bath and sleeping for eight. We also have Wi-Fi in it and can watch TV and work just as if we were at home."

This RV experience has led to wonderful family time.

"We have many memories of camping trips with our three boys when they were younger," Gaul says.

They particularly enjoy a specific holiday.

"Every summer, over the Fourth of July,

we take the camper to Lowden State Park in northern Illinois, and there have been many good memories of the boys running around and catching fireflies and sitting around the campfire."

Owning an RV has physical and social paybacks.

"The benefits are just the experiences you create with the camper that you can't get any other way," Gaul says. "People at campgrounds are some of the nicest you will ever meet and are always eager to help one another out."

An RV camper does not come without a few downsides.

"Drawbacks are minimal, but it does cost money to store it when it isn't being used, and gas mileage when you tow it is not great."

This does not deter Gaul.

"The benefits far outweigh the drawbacks, however, and the drawbacks are not deal breakers by any means."

Gaul adds, it is nice to have a familiar place while traveling.

"I love the fact that our camper has become a second home for us and that our second home can go anywhere with us," he says. "It's nice to be in a town a few hundred miles away visiting local attractions and still come home to your own place at the end of the day."



Brant Anderson and his wife, Jen, took their three daughters on a trip of a lifetime when Jen was diagnosed with a terminal illness.

A special gift

Their RV holds special meaning for Brant Anderson and his three girls.

"We bought this specific camper to go to Alaska," Anderson says. "It's part of a larger story, but, when my wife, Jen, was terminally ill, she wanted us to do a trip of a lifetime. We have friends in Alaska, and

they and my wife had a connection with her cancer journey, so it was the logical place to go. The trip was two months and 12,000 miles."

Jen wanted to use part of their life insurance to go on the trip as a gift from her. While Jen was a beach girl, a trip of a lifetime for Anderson meant going on a two-month trip with his girls to Alaska.

The RV has been wonderful, he says.

"We can visit a lot of places, and it's generally cheaper," Anderson says. "It allows us to be out in nature. It can be a slower pace just hanging out at the campsite or we can be faster paced doing an activity in town."

Tents are not as easy as an RV, he says.

"Tents are great, but they tend to be more work, especially with younger kids that might not be able to help out. Also, if it's hot or the storms roll in, you have to deal with that."

The camper provides more flexibility than a hotel.

"Our camper provides all the comforts of a hotel but is considerably cheaper," Anderson mentions. "We also bring our own food, so we are not spending a lot of money on dining out. Also, with a camper, we can walk out the door and the variety of things to do are endless. Swimming, hiking, biking, fishing, playing games at our campsite."

Their RV provides wonderful features for his family, Anderson says.

"We have a larger camper. The girls have their own bedroom and half bath. We cook most of our meals outside, so the outside kitchen is nice."

Besides saving money on hotels and food, the RV also provides other benefits.

"We can carry our own activities," Anderson says. "Or, they are right outside our door. It's not uncommon for my kids to meet other kids and hang out for the weekend."

A drawback is the initial cost.

"There is something to be said for the upfront cost. I spent \$70,000 on the camper itself. That's a lot of hotels and eating out. But the memories are priceless," he says, adding maintenance costs can be significant, too.

"If you are not someone that can fix things, repairs can be expensive." Having a camper provides wonderful opportunities.

"It's a great way to get into the outdoors and enjoy nature," Anderson says. "Iowa has really great state parks. Private campgrounds are also great if you want a more resort feeling with planned activities for the kids." ■

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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.

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THE IMPORTANCE of nutritious food

As we age, our bodies naturally go through changes that affect how we digest food, absorb nutrients and maintain muscle and bone health. For seniors, and those who care for them, paying close attention to nutrition becomes more than just helpful; it's essential. Eating nutrient-dense foods plays a key role in supporting vitality, independence and overall well-being in older adulthood.



So, what exactly are nutrient-dense foods? These are foods packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and other essential nutrients, but relatively low in calories. They provide a big nutritional benefit in a small package. Examples include colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, legumes, nuts and seeds. These foods can support immune function, boost cognitive health, and help maintain consistent energy

levels, all important factors in aging well.

Protein is especially important for aging adults. As we get older, we naturally lose muscle mass, which can lead to decreased strength, greater risk of falls, and slower recovery from illness or injury. Consuming adequate protein helps preserve muscle strength and supports healing. Seniors should aim to include high-quality protein sources in each meal. Good choices include eggs, poultry, fish, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, beans and lentils. Even small portions spread throughout the day can make a meaningful impact.

Fiber is another crucial component of a senior's diet. It promotes regular digestion, helps regulate blood sugar levels and supports heart health. Fiber-rich foods include whole grains like oats and brown rice; fruits such as apples, berries and pears; vegetables like broccoli, carrots and leafy greens; and legumes such as black beans and chickpeas. It's also essential to stay well-hydrated (especially when

increasing fiber intake) to help the digestive system function properly.

Caregivers play a critical role in encouraging healthy eating habits. Here are a few practical tips: keep balanced meals and snacks prepped and easy to access, make meals visually appealing and easy to chew, encourage shared mealtimes to improve appetite and mood, and consider working with a registered dietitian for individualized guidance.

Healthy eating doesn't have to be complicated. With an emphasis on nutrient-dense foods rich in protein and fiber, seniors can enjoy more energy, improved physical health, and a higher quality of life. It's never too late to nourish both body and spirit through thoughtful, wholesome meals.

"Healthy food is the only investment guaranteed to pay dividends for a lifetime." ■

Information provided by Stephanie Proper, executive director, Valley View Village, 2571 Guthrie Ave., Des Moines, 515-265-2571.

RECIPE

By Jolene Goodman

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.



SETTING the stage for success

How personalized tutoring can boost back-to-school readiness.

The start of a new school year brings excitement and the potential for fresh beginnings. However, it can also bring anxieties, especially if your child feels unprepared or needs extra support in certain subjects.



Starting the school year strong is crucial for building confidence and establishing positive learning habits, and tutoring, particularly at a personalized tutoring center, can play a significant role in achieving that.

Personalized tutoring programs are designed to address individual needs and learning styles. Unlike a crowded classroom setting, where it is difficult for one teacher to dedicate ample time to each student individually, tutors can provide focused, one-on-one or small group instruction. This individualized approach allows them to quickly pinpoint areas where a student might be struggling and develop strategies to bridge learning gaps before they become significant

obstacles and break down confidence. This proactive approach helps students build a strong foundation and avoid the “summer slide” — the loss of academic skills during summer break. It has been proven that students can lose up to three months of skills learned during the previous academic year if they do not keep practicing throughout the summer months.

One of the key benefits of an individualized tutoring program is its focus on not just improving grades but also developing critical thinking skills. Tutors help reinforce difficult concepts, prepare for exams, and encourage students to take ownership of their education. This can significantly impact a child’s academic journey, fostering a love for learning and equipping them with valuable skills that extend far beyond the classroom.

Another benefit of individual tutoring is building self-esteem. Students learn to approach problems systematically, fostering independence and a positive attitude towards learning. As they begin to experience success through their own efforts, their mindset shifts — they no

longer see learning as a challenge to avoid, but as an opportunity to grow. The positive rapport between tutor and student cultivates a supportive space where mistakes become stepping stones, not setbacks. When students feel empowered and encouraged, these uplifting interactions often lead to lasting, positive outcomes both academically and personally.

Choosing personalized tutoring means investing in your child’s long-term academic success. Programs based on proven research and designed to maximize a student’s learning experience will benefit your child for years to come. Personalized learning plans, combined with the guidance of certified teachers, will lead to noticeable improvements in grades and overall confidence, which sets the stage for a positive and productive school year. ■

Information provided by Angela Jones, Owner and Center Director of Sylvan Learning of Altoona, 301 Center Place, Suite C-1, Altoona, 515-957-2923, Angela.Jones@sylvanlearning.com.




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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.

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/academy-of-grief-and-loss.

MEET Madi McDowell

Finds joy in seeing students "graduate" from special education

Madi McDowell is originally from Mt. Pleasant but relocated to Altoona after graduating from Central College in May of 2020. In May of 2023, she also received a master's degree in administration in educational leadership from Northwest Missouri State. McDowell first taught in the Newton Community School District for four years before joining the Southeast Polk District in the 2024-2025 school year. She currently teaches special education at the Southeast Polk Middle School.



Madi McDowell was inspired by one of her teachers, who had a daughter with Down syndrome, to go into special education.

"When I was in seventh grade, my English language arts teacher, Mrs. Long, had a daughter with Down syndrome. I was able to see the importance of making sure all students feel valued, welcomed and appreciated, both inside and outside of the classroom. The passion and difference Mrs. Long made in my life inspired me to become a teacher," McDowell says.

McDowell likes working with the district because it offers multiple opportunities for teachers and students to succeed. One of her favorite things about teaching special education is that no two days look the same. McDowell enjoys the challenge that each day brings.

In her classroom, McDowell's students work on responsibility and empathy. To help with this lesson, her students participate in weekly rotations to help care for the class' two pet guinea pigs, Ginny and Ollie.

"Middle School is such a fun age to be a part of. Students are slowly starting to figure out their likes and dislikes. I have taught multiple ages, and I truly do not know if I can pick one age to be my favorite. My passion for teaching has taught me that helping shape students into kind humans is truly the best part, no matter what the age is," McDowell says.

Another unique project McDowell's students participate in is a group field trip at the end of the year. All of her students have long-term and short-term goals. Their long-term goal is to meet their behavior goal at least once during the year. When that goal is met, the students earn a ticket to go to an Iowa Cubs game.

"Some of the biggest rewards I have faced as an educator are seeing my students graduate from the special education program. It is so bittersweet. I love seeing them become successful and independent, but I truly miss seeing their sweet faces every day," McDowell says.

This fall, McDowell plans to teach courses on special education at Central College. This opportunity allows her to continue her education while teaching future educators. This will be McDowell's second year teaching at the college level, and it has quickly become one of her major passions. ■

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FLOWERS galore

Jansma sports one of the best floral displays in Altoona.

Some people call it a sickness. Toni Jansma just calls it love.

Jansma, who sports one of the more beautiful floral displays around, is the Altoona “flower woman” with an unbridled passion for all things plant.

“I just love to be outside with my flowers,” she says with smile.

Jansma and her husband, Andy, who owned a local lumberyard at the time, moved to Altoona more than a decade ago. They looked at 23 houses in two days.

“He would look at what was wrong with the house, and I would look at the backyard,” Jansma says.

The house they ended up buying had a lot of flower beds. A lot. It wasn’t a large property, but the beds were sizable. And there were many, all around the house.

At last count, Jansma, 78, has 140 flower pots filled with plants.

The pair had come from Rock Valley in northwest Iowa and first moved to an acreage on the edge of Altoona. They were models of self-sufficiency, growing the majority of their own vegetables, along with 35 trees, rose bushes, 1,200 gladiolas, and thousands of flowers. After their children graduated, the couple made the decision to downsize. Jansma also made a promise to her husband.

“I’d have only six flower pots,” she laughs.

Promises, promises. At the new place, the flowers and plants flowed like a river once again, their numbers growing larger and larger with each passing season.



Toni Jansma of Altoona takes great pride in her floral displays each season.

The couple was married for 52 years before Andy passed away three years ago. His memory lives on in many ways, the garden being one of the big ones. Jansma remembers the days with fondness. Like when Andy “came around” to realizing there was more to gardening than just vegetables.

“He told me once, ‘If you can’t eat it, don’t grow it.’ But he graduated. He got to the point where he took great pride in our flower beds, too,” she says.

The couple used to give thousands of flowers away when they had the large homestead in Rock Valley. Jansma still does give many away, but not to that extent. Things are different now in more ways than one.

Jansma’s favorite flowers are lillies. In fact, there are very few flowers she doesn’t like.

“Except flowering weeds,” she jokes.

Some people want to travel. Jansma simply loves being outdoors and taking care of stuff, she says. It helps her feel young.

“When you think about turning 78, you do a little thinking about your friends and your loved ones and those who have parted,” she says. “I’m very blessed by God.” ■



ROOTED in Altoona

Davenport raises family in hometown.

Taylor Davenport has called Altoona home for nearly her entire life, with the exception of her college years at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls.

“I chose to come back to Altoona because I wanted to be close to my family and raise my own family in a place that I know offers so much for children,” she says.

Today, the Davenports live in a home on a cul-de-sac, giving her kids a safe place to play outside in the driveway or stroll around the block.

“They can ride their bikes and play basketball in peace,” Davenport says.

The home also features a walk-out basement with easy access to the backyard, where the children enjoy the swing set, splash pad, sprinkler and soccer practice. Indoors, the family likes the open concept living space that allows them to spend plenty of time together. Over the years, they have added personal touches like accent board walls in the bedrooms and kitchen to make the space feel more unique and truly like “home.”

Around town, the Davenports make the most of Altoona’s many parks.

“However, being near Ironwood Park and the new pickleball courts is so great,” Davenport says. “My oldest daughter has really gotten into pickleball and had a pickleball birthday party this year. We took our entire extended family to the courts to play. We also really love the Enabling Garden and the outdoor events that are put on there.”

In addition, Davenport appreciates the abundance of trails and outdoor areas in close proximity.

“There is a lot of green space in Altoona and the surrounding areas that we love to visit in the summer and on weekends,” she says. “I also love that, even though Altoona has grown quite a bit from when I was younger, it maintains the small, suburban feel.”

Davenport points out how supportive area businesses are, too, like Prairie Meadows and Facebook offering scholarships and grants for local schools.

“And local businesses contribute so much to the community as well, including one of my kids’ favorite events: the business trick or treat by Hy-Vee,” she says.

Davenport has given back by coaching



Taylor Davenport enjoyed growing up in Altoona and says it has many amenities her family can enjoy.

soccer at Spring Creek for several of her daughters’ teams over the years. She’s also a familiar face in the classroom as a science teacher at Southeast Polk High School.

For her family, Altoona offers endless opportunities for fun and connection.

“Altoona has an amazing public library that my girls are in love with,” she says. “We love

using our Adventureland passes in the summer and watching for events put on all over town. The proximity to Des Moines also opens the doors to so many other experiences like the Blank Park Zoo, Science Center of Iowa, and events happening all over the city.”

It’s no wonder Davenport made her hometown her lifelong home. ■



AUGUST 2025

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Building Department/ Code Enforcement

515-967-5138

Building Official

515-967-5138

Planning & Zoning Department

515-967-5136

Public Works Director

515-967-5136

DRAINING YOUR POOL

It's time to plan for fall and cooler weather. If you have a pool you need to drain at summer's end, please:

- Discontinue adding salt and chlorine a few weeks before you drain your pool or spa. Chlorine levels need to be reduced to 0.1 mg/L before you drain because salt and chlorine are deadly to freshwater aquatic life.
- Discharge all salt water into a sanitary sewer through a drain in your home.
- For non-saltwater draining,
- Please drain directly into the sanitary sewer via a drain in your home, or
- Slowly discharge the water across at least 15-feet of a flat, vegetated area before it gets to the street or storm sewers.
- Do not flood your neighbors' yards.
- For more information, contact Altoona's Stormwater Department or visit iowastormwater.org.



CITY OFFICES CLOSED FOR LABOR DAY

Please remember that City offices and the Altoona Public Library will be closed in observance of the Labor Day holiday on Monday, Sept. 1. Trash pickup will be delayed by one day due to the holiday on Sept. 2 and 3.



SPECIAL CENSUS

Very soon, the City of Altoona will conduct a special census to update our current population.

Your response may help us qualify for additional funds for important services we depend on every single day. This may include services like street repair, schools, hospitals, public safety, or programs for our seniors. Thank YOU for being part of this important civic activity. Look for the first mailings to come in late September.



BRUSH DROP SITE OPEN ON SEPT. 6

The city's brush drop site is open for fall drop off on Saturday, Sept. 6th and Saturday, Oct. 4th. These will be the final days that the site is open this year. Residents can access the site from 8 a.m. – Noon both days by entering the Utilities Department service road from 8th St SW. Continue south on the road, past the Utilities Department buildings and continue up the hill, brush drop-off will be on your left.

Please have information identifying you as a City of Altoona resident ready when you drop off brush. No loose or bagged leaves or bushes are allowed.





SE

IOWA
Living
MAGAZINES

V. FOOTBALL

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 29	7:00PM	Ankeny Centennial	Southeast Polk High School
Sept 5	7:00PM	Iowa City Liberty	Southeast Polk High School
Sept 12	7:00PM	Norwalk	Norwalk Warrior Stadium
Sept 19	7:00PM	Dowling Catholic	Valley Stadium
Sept 26	7:00PM	Ottumwa	Southeast Polk High School
Oct 3	7:00PM	Iowa City High	Iowa City High Bates Field
Oct 10	7:00PM	Waukee Northwest	Southeast Polk High School
Oct 17	7:00PM	Johnston	Southeast Polk High School
Oct 24	7:00PM	Des Moines East	DM East Williams Stadium

V. BOYS GOLF

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 28	10:00AM	Northwest Inv.	The Legacy Golf Club
Sept 3	9:00AM	Ankeny Boys Golf Invite	Otter Creek Golf Course
Sept 8	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Willow Creek Golf Course
Sept 10	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Otter Creek Golf Course
Sept 15	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	Veenker Memorial Golf Course
Sept 16	10:00AM	Men's Golf Warrior Inv.	Cedar Rapids Country Club
Sept 18	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	Elmwood Country Club
Sept 22	10:30AM	2025 Steve Spray Inv.	Indianola Country Club
Sept 24	9:00AM	SEP Invitational	Copper Creek Golf Club & Events Center

V. VOLLEYBALL

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 28	5:00PM	Norwalk	Southeast Polk High School
Aug 28	5:00PM	Multiple Schools	Southeast Polk High School
Sept 2	7:30PM	Johnston	Southeast Polk High School
Sept 4	7:30PM	Valley	Valley High School
Sept 9	7:30PM	Bondurant-Farrar	Southeast Polk High School
Sept 13	8:00AM	Multiple Schools	Southeast Polk High School
Sept 16	7:30PM	Waukee	Waukee High School
Sept 18	7:30PM	Waukee Northwest	Northwest High School
Sept 23	7:30PM	Ankeny	Southeast Polk High School
Sept 27	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Carlisle High School
Sept 30	7:30PM	Urbandale	Urbandale High School
Oct 4	8:00AM	Multiple Schools	Urbandale High School
Oct 7	7:30PM	Dowling Catholic	Southeast Polk High School
Oct 14	7:30PM	Ankeny Centennial	Southeast Polk High School

V. GIRLS TENNIS

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 28	4:00PM	Ankeny	Prairie Ridge Sports Complex
Sept 8	4:00PM	Dowling Catholic	Dowling Catholic High School
Sept 11	4:00PM	Ankeny Centennial	Prairie Ridge MS Tennis Courts



FOR ALL RAMS SCHEDULES

Schedules are subject to change. Scan for most up-to-date schedules.

**Schedule reflects games not yet played this season when published*



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POLK RAMS

SPORTS SCHEDULE

FALL 2025

GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Aug 30	8:00AM	Johnston Sunrise Inv.	Johnston High School
Sept 6	9:30AM	Lynx Cross Country Inv.	Iowa Western Community College
Sept 11	4:00PM	Bobcat Invite	Marshalltown Community College
Sept 20	9:00AM	Heartland Classic	Central College
Oct 2	5:30PM	Multiple Schools	Southeast Polk Cross Country Course
Oct 9	5:25PM	Fort Dodge Inv.	Lakeside Municipal Golf Course

BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Sept 4	4:00PM	Kirk Schmaltz Inv.	ISU Cross Country Course
Sept 11	4:00PM	Bobcat Invite	Marshalltown Community College
Sept 20	9:00AM	Heartland Classic	Central College
Sept 25	4:30PM	Indianola Cross Country Inv.	Pickard Park
Oct 2	6:00PM	Multiple Schools	Southeast Polk Cross Country Course
Oct 9	5:55PM	Fort Dodge Inv.	Lakeside Municipal Golf Course

V. GIRLS SWIM/DIVE

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Sept 2	5:30PM	Dowling Catholic	Southeast Polk High School
Sept 9	5:30PM	Waukee	Southeast Polk High School
Sept 13	9:00AM	Linn-Mar Girls Inv.	Linn-Mar Aquatic Center
Sept 16	5:30PM	Johnston	Summit Middle School
Sept 20	9:00AM	Waukee Girls Invite	Waukee CSD Natatorium
Sept 23	7:00PM	Grinnell Meet	Grinnell College Natatorium
Sept 27	9:00AM	Cougar Inv.	Kennedy High School Cougar Pool
Sept 30	5:30PM	Valley	Southeast Polk High School
10/7	5:30PM	Waukee Northwest	Waukee CSD Natatorium
10/11	8:30AM	Johnston Inv.	Summit Middle School
10/14	5:30PM	Ankeny	Trail Point Aquatics & Wellness

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Be sure to check for cancelations.

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

Coming up in the Altoona Living magazine:

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.

Costume Creations: Halloween fun is quickly approaching! If you forgo the off-the-rack costumes for something more creative, we want to hear from you. Tell us about your costume creations and the fun you had making them. Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com with your stories.

Healing Hearts Grief Support

Meets every second and fourth Tuesday of each month
Edencrest at Tuscany, 1600 Eighth St. S.E., Altoona, lower east entrance

A supportive gathering for residents and community members to share their experiences, connect with others, and find comfort during their grief journey. Light snacks and beverages are offered. This event will create a safe space for healing and connection within the community.



Martini Fest

Friday, Sept. 19, 5-9 p.m.
West Glen Town Center

CITYVIEW is bringing Martini Fest back to West Glen Town Center. For a ticket price of \$25 (tickets will be \$35 at the event), attendees will receive 10 tickets that can be redeemed at each participating martini stop for a sample-size martini. Locations include nightclubs and restaurants at West Glen Town Center. Reserve your tickets at www.eventbrite.com/e/cityview-martini-fest-2025-tickets-1291852588869 now so you can avoid registration lines at the event.

Family Fun Night at Edencrest Siena Hills

Aug. 29, Sept. 26, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
Edencrest at Siena Hills, 455 S.W. Ankeny Road, Ankeny

Join Family Fun Night. Enjoy hanging out, food, live entertainment, kids' activities and ice cream.

Vendor Market at Outlets of DSM

Saturdays, Sept. 20 and Oct. 18,
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
801 Bass Pro Drive N.W., Suite 315

Each show has a variety of vendors with items such as honey, freeze-dried foods, skin care, makeup, bath and body, 3D items, essential oils, and a variety of crafts. Each event has different vendors. No two shows the same. Come check out the vendors and buy local.

'Blithe Spirit'

Oct. 3-12
Ankeny Community Theatre,
1932 S.W. Third St., Ankeny

"Blithe Spirit," by Noël Coward, will be presented by Ankeny Community Theatre. This comedy is perfect for the Halloween season. When a group of friends hosts a seance that goes wrong, Charles' first wife comes back to haunt him and his new wife with hysterical results. Tickets available at ankenycommunitytheatre.com.

Confluence Brewing Summer Concert Series

Thursdays and Fridays through September, 6-8:30 p.m.
1235 Thomas Beck Road, Des Moines

Enjoy live music every Thursday and Friday. Performances are held outside, weather permitting, and moved inside in case of poor weather. A food truck is also available. Entertainment includes: David Watson Aug. 28, Nathan Thiessen Band Aug. 29, Sean Sullivan Sept. 4, Drama Kings Sept. 5, Patresa Hartmen Sept. 11, Black Dirt Ramblers Sept. 12, Kris Karr Sept. 18, Velvet Trio Sept. 19, Chris Falcon Sept. 25, and TBD Sept. 26.

No Slackin' - Yoga in the Plaza

Every Saturday in September,
9-10 a.m.

Civic Plaza, 360 Center Place, Altoona

Free for all. Bring your yoga mats or blankets. Hosted by Sarah Slack, Realtor.



Medicare 101 with Edencrest at the Tuscany

Thursday, Sept. 25, 3-4 p.m.
Edencrest at The Tuscany, 1690 8th St. S.E., Altoona

Join McKenzie Wedig and Payton Brown, licensed insurance agents with Heartland Retirement Group, an Integrity Company, for an informative and easy-to-understand session: Medicare 101. This free session is perfect for anyone who is about to enroll in Medicare or currently on Medicare and wants to understand it better or are unsure what Medicare plan is best for them. Light refreshments and treats provided. Attend for a chance to win a raffle prize.

RSVP by Monday, Sept. 22. Call or text: Tuscany: 515-850-6119; McKenzie: 515-864-8711; Payton: 515-210-5409.



Halfway to St. Pat's Charity Car Show

Sunday, Sept. 14
Charlie's Filling Station, 305 Grand Ave., West Des Moines
www.friendlysonsiowa.com

The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick are holding a fundraising car show to benefit the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Bring your classic or unique vehicle. Registration is 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. Trophies will be awarded at 3 p.m. Vendors and food will be available. ■

ALTOONA Public Library news

You don't have to go back to school to expand your mind. Visit the library this month to try a new hobby, learn something new, or simply pick up an enlightening read. Find out more at altoonalibrary.com.

Altoona Public Library

700 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona
515-967-3881
www.altoonalibrary.com
Monday - Thursday: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Friday - Saturday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday: 2-5 p.m.

Adult programming – Ages 18 and older

Trash Bash! Saturday, Sept. 6 from 10 a.m. to noon. Help us keep nature looking beautiful. Bring your family and friends, we'll provide bags and gloves, and together we can pick up trash in the area around the library. No registration required.

Sheep to Sweater: Fiber Spinning, Wednesday, Sept. 24 at 6 p.m. Join us for part one of a three-part Fiber Arts series about all the work it takes to go from raw material to finished project. This month, we're talking about the art of spinning, the history behind it, and how to get raw fiber ready to spin into yarn — from sheep to sweater. Registration required.

E-Waste Drive, Saturday, Sept. 27 from 1-3 p.m. Empty that drawer of old electronics you've been hoarding. Stop by the library, and we'll recycle your old and non-working e-waste for you. If you have any questions about what we can accept, feel free to reach out for clarification. No registration required.

Children's programming

How to Crochet, Saturday, Sept. 11 from 10 a.m. to noon. Join us to learn the basics of crochet and begin your own blanket or scarf! Grades 4-6. Registration required.

Glow STEM, Wednesday, Sept. 17 from 3:30-4:30 p.m. STEM in the dark? Test your skills with some illuminating challenges and experiments under the blacklights. Grades K-6. Registration required.

Electric Exploration, Tuesday, Sept. 23 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. How does electricity light up a lightbulb? Join us for some hands-on electrical experiments. Grades K-6. Registration required.

Teen programming – Grades 6-12

Air Dry Clay Creations, Thursday, Sept. 4 from 6-7 p.m. Create cute creatures and characters with us from air dry clay. We'll have all the tools you need along with some inspiration for what you make ready to go. Just bring your imagination. No registration required.

Will It Waffle? Thursday, Sept. 11 from 6-7 p.m. Come make waffle creations and see what yummy concoctions you can come up with. We'll have the mini waffle makers warmed up and ready for some unusual waffled treats. No registration required.

Crochet Club, Monday, Sept. 22 from 6-7 p.m. Join us as we crochet, chat and work on our projects. New to crochet? Stop by to learn how and where to start. No registration required.

To find a complete list of events and to register, visit our website at altoonalibrary.com. Click on the Upcoming Events tab. ■

PAST meets the present

Fick's home and career tie back to the town that raised her.

Anne Fick grew up in Altoona, east of town in the countryside — a place where quiet roads and open space shaped her early years.

So, when it came time to choose where to plant roots later in life, returning to her hometown felt not just natural, but right.

"My house was built in 1890, and I love the history behind it," Fick says.

And that history is still unfolding.

"I taught at Southeast Polk for 13 years, and one of my former students has sent me old photos of my house," Fick says. "Her grandparents lived here, and it had beautiful barns and a one-room schoolhouse that was taken down before I bought it."

Living in the country echoes the setting of her childhood with its wide-open spaces and room to breathe. While the homes aren't as close together as they are in town, the sense of community is still strong.

"The neighbors I do have are friendly, and I can always call on them if I need anything," Fick says.

During her years teaching in the Southeast Polk School District, Fick developed a genuine pride in the community. She valued the opportunity to connect with students and families and appreciated the character of those around her.

"I loved getting to know so many amazing people through teaching," she says.

These days, she still enjoys the small-town joy of running into former students and coworkers around town.

Although she's no longer in the classroom, Fick continues to pour into students' lives. She helps lead a Christian club at the high school called Fellowship of Christ Followers, which welcomes students in grades 8-12 and is part of the worldwide organization Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

"Our goal is to share hope of Jesus," Fick says. "The entire club is student led with adult volunteers. I love being a part of this group."

She also runs a photography business that allows her to use her creativity and connect with people in a different way. Her favorite sessions are with high school seniors.

Through it all, Fick's affection for Altoona has never wavered. It is home, and not just because of where she lives, but because of the spirit of the people around her.

"I love seeing the community come together to support people going through difficult times, and I especially saw this within the schools," she shares. ■



Anne Fick and her husband enjoy country living.

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WELLNESS

By Teresa Sieck

TOP 5 MYTHS about fillers

Botox and dermal fillers are among the most popular treatments for refreshing and rejuvenating your appearance, but they are also surrounded by misconceptions. Let us set the record straight:

Myth 1: You will look "frozen" or fake. With an experienced injector, results are natural and subtle. You'll look refreshed, not overdone.

Myth 2: Botox and fillers are the same. Botox relaxes muscles to smooth lines caused by expression, while fillers restore lost volume, smooth lines and enhance features. They work differently but complement each other beautifully.

Myth 3: Treatments are painful. Most clients describe only minor discomfort. Numbing agents and advanced techniques make the process quick and easy.

Myth 4: Only older people need them. Many younger clients use Botox and fillers preventatively or to enhance natural features. Treatments are customizable for all ages.

Myth 5: Results last forever. Both Botox and fillers are temporary. Botox typically lasts three to four months, while fillers can last six to 18 months depending on the type and area.

When performed by trained professionals, Botox and fillers are safe, effective and tailored to your unique goals, leaving you looking like the best version of yourself. Find an aesthetic professional near you for a medical consultation to see what services may be right for you. ■

Information provided by Teresa Sieck, Luxe Medical Spa and Aesthetics, 88 Paine Circle, Suite 7, Bondurant, 515-630-8637.



HEALTH

By Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich

SUPPORT an active lifestyle

Sports are an excellent way to stay active and socially connected, but stress, strain and trauma to the body occur when the it isn't given the tools it needs to repair and restore. Often, minor injuries go unnoticed or untreated, and the accumulation of these traumas over time become more complex, adversely affecting health and mobility. As kids and teens grow and develop, they are more susceptible to injury. Injuries to children's spines are not unique to contact sports but are also seen in non-contact sports, including cheerleading, gymnastics, track, cycling and golf.

• **Proper movement and function.** Chiropractic adjustments restore motion to the spine and balance the hips and pelvis.

• **Prevent injury.** When the spine is in alignment, balance and proprioception is increased. Biomechanically, there is less chance of injury when the spine is aligned and movement is not restricted.

• **Maximize performance.** The nervous system controls the communication between the brain and the body. Spinal subluxations cause interference to the nervous system and inhibit communication between the brain and the body, resulting in slower reaction times and less accurate movements.

• **Increase respiratory function.** Nerve interference disrupts cardiovascular and respiratory function resulting in inefficient oxygenation and added fatigue.

• **Promote self-healing.** By keeping the body in a state of optimal health and nervous system function, healing occurs faster and more completely. ■

Information provided by Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich, Swain Chiropractic, 410 Center Place S.W., Altoona, 515-967-9300.

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HEALTH

By Ashley Powell

GETTING started with THC and CBD

Summer can be a whirlwind — travel, long days, changing routines and the back-to-school hustle. Hemp-derived products offer a natural way to stay balanced and feel your best, no matter what the season brings.

THC and CBD come in convenient forms like gummies, chocolates and seltzers, making it easy to find something that fits your lifestyle. Whether you are managing daily stress, body discomfort or restless nights, there is a product tailored to help. Many options offer low, consistent doses so you can ease in and find what works for you.

Online shopping can be hit or miss when it comes to quality, dosing and guidance. That is why visiting a local CBD store makes such a difference. You will get access to lab-tested products, real-time answers, and personalized recommendations based on your needs and experience level.

For daytime support, CBD-dominant products may promote calm focus without any high. Need help winding down or sleeping better? Try blends that include THC, CBN or a balanced 1:1 ratio of CBD and THC.

Most hemp products are travel-friendly and discreet — perfect for road trips, lake days or simply relaxing at home. But the best way to start? Visit a trusted local CBD store and talk with a certified hemp consultant. They will help guide you toward products that fit your goals — no guesswork, no pressure. ■

Information provided by Ashley Powell, CBD American Shaman, 800 S. 50th St., No. 106, West Des Moines, 515-380-5251, and 3418 Eighth St. S.W., No. 3, Altoona, 515-967-4036.



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WELLNESS

By Nikki Morgan

BEAUTY that supports your skin

For many middle-age and older women, makeup can feel more like a compromise than a confidence booster. Foundations settle into fine lines, powders highlight dryness, and traditional formulas often exacerbate the very concerns we're trying to minimize — like dullness, sensitivity or uneven tone. But what if your makeup didn't just sit on your skin... what if it actually supported it?

The key is shifting away from conventional, heavy cosmetics and choosing products that nurture your skin while enhancing your natural beauty. Look for formulas made with pure, skin-loving minerals and botanicals — ones that are free from synthetic fragrances, harsh preservatives and pore-clogging fillers. These types of ingredients not only offer natural-looking coverage but also calm irritation, promote hydration, and support skin integrity over time.

The right makeup should feel like an extension of your skincare — breathable, weightless and nourishing. Choose products that focus on function as much as aesthetics, like a multitasking foundation with SPF or a lipstick infused with antioxidant-rich oils. And always favor makeup that enhances your features without masking who you are.

As we age, less is often more. Your makeup should reflect your inner glow, not hide it. When you choose products with intention — those rooted in clean, supportive beauty — you'll find makeup that truly respects your skin, your health and your timeless confidence. ■



Information provided by Nikki Morgan, DNP, ARNP, SkinFusion, 200 Second St. S.E., Altoona, 515-967-0587, www.skinfusionfx.com, nikki.skinfusionfx@gmail.com

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11 FAQs when buying your first home

Buying your first home is an exciting milestone, but it can feel overwhelming. If you are unfamiliar with the process, doing some research is a great place to start. Here are answers to common questions first-time buyers often ask.



Do I need a Realtor® to buy a home? A Realtor® isn't required but can be very helpful. They guide you through searching, inspections, negotiations and closing.

How do I determine my home buying budget? Lenders assess your income, down payment and debt. A good starting point is your debt-to-income (DTI) ratio — calculated by dividing your monthly mortgage by your pre-tax income.

Are there hidden costs when buying a home? Yes. Once you own a home, you're responsible for maintenance, property taxes and potential HOA fees. Factor these into your

budget.

How do I choose the right mortgage lender? Choose a lender who communicates clearly, offers personalized service, and helps you find the best financing options.

What's covered in a mortgage prequalification meeting? A lender will review your credit, income sources, loan options and rates. Most sellers require a prequalification letter before accepting an offer.

What's the difference between a 15-year and 30-year mortgage? A 15-year mortgage is paid off faster and typically has lower interest rates but higher monthly payments. A 30-year mortgage spreads payments out, making them more affordable each month.

Fixed-rate vs. adjustable-rate mortgage? A fixed-rate loan has the same interest rate for the life of the loan. An adjustable-rate loan's rate changes over time. Fixed rates are often preferred in volatile or low-rate markets.

What is an escrow account and escrow analysis? An escrow account helps ensure

timely payment of property taxes and homeowners insurance. An annual escrow analysis adjusts for changes in these costs.

What is a homestead credit, and do I qualify? This tax credit reduces your property taxes. Eligibility varies by state, but many have minimal requirements to qualify.

Should I waive a home inspection to strengthen my offer? Skipping the inspection can be risky. While it may make your offer more competitive, it exposes you to hidden repair costs. A Realtor® can suggest safer ways to strengthen your offer.

Can I build my dream home instead of buying? Yes. In tight markets, many buyers choose to build to get exactly what they want.

Buying a home is a big step, but help is available. Contact a mortgage loan originator to begin your journey. ■

Information provided by Lori Slings, Bankers Trust, NMLS ID: 406021, 3820 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-245-5624, lslings@bankerstrust.com, BankersTrust.com/LSlings, Bankers Trust NMLS ID: 440379.

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Could Food Sensitivity Be Affecting Your Daily Routine?

Do you often deal with headaches, insomnia, upset stomach, sore joints, and no treatment seems to help for long? Have you visited doctor after doctor for chronic, unexplained symptoms, only to be left without answers or lasting relief? You're not alone.



Dr. Anthony Meyer

Experts estimate that 45%-60% of people experience persistent symptoms without a clear cause. You might be one of them. But don't give up. In many cases, these symptoms point to something hiding in plain sight: a food you're eating might be making you sick.

Finding the root cause isn't always easy. Pinpointing the exact food or the natural or artificial compound in it that's triggering your symptoms can feel impossible. Food sensitivities come in many forms and can cause a wide range of health issues. Until recently, testing methods have been basic and unreliable.

The good news? Advances in blood testing now make it possible to detect hidden food triggers. With your results in hand, we can take clear steps to eliminate problem foods from your diet and finally start feeling better.

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MADE for more

At some point in life, we all ask the question: Now what?

It can come at many moments — graduating from school, starting a career, becoming a parent, facing an empty nest, changing jobs, moving to a new city, stepping into retirement, or navigating an unexpected loss. Each of these transitions can leave us wondering what's next and whether we still have something meaningful to offer.

Here's the good news: No matter your age or stage, you are here for a reason. The skills you've learned, the experiences you've had, and even the challenges you've faced are part of a bigger story — yours and God's.

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). That invitation isn't limited to one season of life. It's for students figuring out their path, parents juggling responsibilities, professionals pursuing goals, and retirees redefining their days. A full life is about living with purpose, not merely filling time.

The Bible says, "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). This means you were created intentionally — with unique gifts, passions and opportunities that only you can bring to the world.

Being "made for more" means:

Recognizing your design — Your personality, skills and life experiences are clues to your purpose.

Following your burden — Pay attention to what troubles you most in your world or community. Your calling is often found in what stirs your heart.

Taking the next step — You discover purpose not by waiting for perfect clarity but by moving forward in faith.

For some, "more" might mean mentoring a younger generation, fighting food insecurity, or building community in your neighborhood. For others, it could mean serving at church, launching a nonprofit, sharing your faith story or simply showing up consistently for people who need you.

The "now what?" moments in life can feel unsettling — but they can also be the beginning of something powerful. They are invitations to reimagine, realign and rediscover how your life can make an impact right where you are.

Whether you're 18 or 88, starting fresh or starting over, you are not done — because God is not done with you.

After all, you were made for more. ■



Information provided by Pastor Nathan Anenson, Lutheran Church of the Cross, 1701 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-967-4818.



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TIME to 'reset,' refresh and reestablish

August often feels like the unofficial "reset" button. Summer winds down, and the focus shifts to structure: back-to-school prep, earlier mornings, organized schedules and setting intentions for the fall. Whether you're a student, parent, or just syncing back into post-summer routines, it's a great time to refresh your goals and reestablish good habits.



Re-establish routines

Ease back into structure by gradually shifting sleep and wake times. Build consistent morning and evening routines to reduce stress and create smoother transitions. Designate spaces for homework or quiet reading — a physical reset that supports a mental one.

Get organized

Start fresh by reviewing school calendars and syncing key dates. Organize supplies, clean out closets and update tech. Help kids feel empowered by involving them in organizing their space. Open communication with teachers early on — whether through email, apps or meet-the-teacher events — sets a collaborative tone for the year.

Prioritize mental health and wellness

Returning to school brings mixed emotions. Whether it is excitement or anxiety, make space for open conversations. Encourage breaks, social time and emotional check-ins. Simple habits like journaling, stretching or creating "unplugged" zones can support a balanced mindset.

Be community-oriented

Schools are stronger when families engage. Attend back-to-school nights, offer time to help with events or donate to supply drives. Get to know fellow parents, teachers and neighbors — these relationships form a support system that benefits everyone, especially students.

Build positive school-community partnerships

Stay involved beyond the first week. Follow school newsletters or join family groups online. Volunteer for a classroom or community event. Advocate for inclusive practices and celebrate cultural heritage events. When students see adults involved and united, it sends a message: Education is a shared priority.

Back to school is more than a new backpack — it's a strong start that includes not just academics, but a sense of belonging, support and community. Let this season be one of growth, connection and positive engagement — for you, your family and your neighborhood. ■

Information provided by Amy Ferguson, 2025 President of the Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

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Be Well Pediatrics' ground-breaking ceremony was held on July 16 at 1210 First Ave. N., Altoona.



Dr. Kari Swain, Leticia Belcher and Kennedy Wilson at Perk Before Work at Meyer Chiropractic on Aug. 5.



Richard Kroeger and Chad Quick at Perk Before Work at Meyer Chiropractic on Aug. 5.



Rusty McCuen and Linda Lawson at Perk Before Work at Meyer Chiropractic on Aug. 5.



Pennie Carroll and Lori Slings at Perk Before Work at Meyer Chiropractic on Aug. 5.



Heather Sievers and Dr. Anthony Meyer at Perk Before Work at Meyer Chiropractic on Aug. 5.



Kyle Lee and Tim Guiter at Perk Before Work at Meyer Chiropractic on Aug. 5.



Terry Swanson, Jeff Stearns, Bill Stearns and Jim Giardino at the retirement party for Bill Stearns at the Altoona Fareway on July 31.



John Stearns and Reynolds W. Cramer at the retirement party for Bill Stearns at the Altoona Fareway on July 31.



Dr. Kari Swain, Dennis Langholdt and Bill Stearns at the retirement party for Bill Stearns at the Altoona Fareway on July 31.



Bill and Deb Stearns at the retirement party for Bill Stearns at the Altoona Fareway on July 31.

NATIONAL Night Out

National Night Out was hosted by the Altoona Police and Fire departments on Aug. 5 at the Sam Wise Youth Complex.



Spiderman, Batman and Thor with Danny George



Payton Brown with Saylee and Slade



Anna Feller with Chance, Jeff Spencer with Abby and Dixie Walker with Nala



Tyler Rowe, Alyssa Pike, Bill Gustoff, Blaine Lefler and Dakota Timmins



Andrea Meader with her daughter



Austin Denning and Officer Aaliyah Moore



Courtney Thompson, Jenny Nalevanko, Kelsi McCuen and Harper Nalevanko



Nic and Angela Jones



Carly Andeson, Megan and Owen Barr



Snow White and Anna with Emmy George

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