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SEPTEMBER 2025

Living

MAGAZINE

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improvement

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ELLIS LAW OFFICES EXPANDS PROBATE PRACTICE

Ellis Law Offices is excited to announce the expansion of their probate practice! In light of this, we would like to provide a detailed overview of the probate process and what families can expect when a loved one passes away.

Determining if an Estate Must Be Opened

When someone passes away, it is often necessary to open an estate to pay debts, transfer assets and ensure everything is handled according to the law. In Iowa, an estate must be opened if the deceased:

- Owned more than \$50,000 in assets, OR
- Owned real estate in their individual name and not as joint tenants with another person.

Think of an estate as a small business: it has assets, bills to pay and property to distribute. The Executor (if there is a will) or Administrator (if there is not will) serves as the "manager" of that small business by overseeing the administration of the estate.

Opening the Estate

The first step is meeting with a licensed attorney. To make this meeting as productive as possible, it is helpful to bring:

- The Last Will and Testament of the deceased (if they had one)
- A list of all major assets owned by the deceased (real estate, bank/investment accounts, vehicles and other titled assets, life insurance, etc.)
- A Death Certificate, if available
- A list of all known creditors (mortgages, credit cards, personal debts, etc.)

The attorney for the estate will then prepare and file the necessary paperwork to officially open the estate and have an Executor or Administrator appointed.

Work Once the Estate is Opened

Once the Estate has been opened, several steps must take place, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Notifying all heirs and beneficiaries that the estate has been opened.
- Notice that an estate has been opened must be published

for two successive weeks in a local newspaper. The second publication begins a four-month claim period where creditors must file their claims.

- Within 90 days of the Estate being opened, a Report & Inventory must be filed with the Court. The Report & Inventory lists all assets of the deceased and their value on the date of the deceased's passing. Once it has been filed with the Court, the Report & Inventory will become a public record.

After the Four-Month Claim Period

Once the four-month claim period has expired, the following will take place:

- Creditor claims (if any) will be evaluated, and valid claims will be paid
- An Iowa 1041 (fiduciary tax return) is filed with the Iowa Department of Revenue; a Certificate of Acquittance must be obtained before closing the estate (this may take 2-3 months to obtain)
- A Final Report is filed with the Court, summarizing the estate's activities and proposing distribution of assets
- Assets are distributed to the appropriate individuals
- The estate is closed

On average, the probate process takes between 9-12 months, though this can vary depending on the complexity of the estate. While the process may feel overwhelming at times, having the right guidance and preparation makes it much more manageable.

At Ellis Law Offices, our goal is to provide families with clarity, peace of mind and support throughout the probate process. If you have questions about probate or whether an estate must be opened, we would be glad to help.

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WELCOME

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Sometimes, I drive by a remodeling project on a house and say to myself, "Wow, that is beautiful. Those folks really know what they are doing."

Other times, I drive by a project that is seemingly in the works for months (or years) and say to myself, "Wow, they are taking forever, and what they have done looks awful."

The difference usually has to do with having professionals do the work or relying on a handful of weekend amateurs.

Yes, some of you are quite skilled and can do quality DIY work. Others, like me, put forward a good effort but often end up with a less-than-satisfactory result. At some point, though, we all realize when we need to call in the experts.

This month's cover story will appeal to all sides, as we once again interview homeowners who have worked through the remodeling or construction process. They share their experiences, the lessons they learned, and how they might have done things differently.

Meanwhile, one of the common complaints we all hear is the challenge in lining up people to do the work. On occasion, that truly is a problem. More often, though, we simply don't want to pay the costs for quality workmanship — until, of course, we learn that we get what we pay for.

And then the people driving by say, "Wow, they are taking forever, and what they have done looks awful." We hope our efforts in this issue will help you avoid those comments.

Happy remodeling, and thanks for reading. ■

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ROOM FOR *improvement*

Residents share their home
renovation experiences

By Becky Kolosik

Live in a home for a while, and one is likely to start thinking, “If only....” If only the bathroom had a walk-in shower.... If only the kitchen had new cabinets.... If only the old flooring could be replaced.... If only the basement was finished.... If only a room could be added.... If only that longed-for home improvement project could be completed ... then the house would be just right. Residents who have taken the leap from thinking about it to tackling their dream projects share their experiences.

Brandan and Pamela Bruce’s home renovation combines beauty and function that not only enhances the overall flow but also creates family-friendly spaces.

BEFORE



AFTER



The Brewer's kitchen was transformed from dark, dull and brown to light, bright and modern white.

Saying "I do" to a kitchen redo

Eric and Laura Brewer's first home in Indianola was small. As their family grew, lack of space and having only one bathroom proved to be a challenge. When they started searching for their current home in 2011, location was a major factor when they made their offer.

"It also had more than one bathroom and room to spread out, so that definitely got all of us excited," Laura says.

Over the last 14 years, the family has completed several landscaping and yard projects but not much in the way of renovations inside. Flooring, as well as the kitchen, hadn't been changed since they moved in and were in need of an update.

The Brewers just needed a little motivation, and that came when their son, and now daughter-in-law, asked them to host the rehearsal dinner for their June 2025 wedding. It was the push they needed to start putting together a plan.

"The first step was removing carpet in the living room and deciding what to replace it with," Eric explains. "Since the kitchen already had wood floors that needed refinishing, we contacted Randy Glascock from Five G's Construction LLC."

Glascock suggested refinishing the "orange" looking kitchen floor with a more natural color and also extending the wood into the living room.

Eric and Laura also wanted to update the oak kitchen cabinets. Cost was a big factor in deciding whether or not they wanted to refinish or completely replace — especially since the

cabinets were still in good shape. They decided to replace the doors and refinish the cabinet boxes. That's when Sarah Duey of New Life Interiors stepped in.

"We weren't sure what we wanted in terms of color and finishes, but Sarah was excellent with offering ideas and recommendations," Laura explains. "She even suggested changing the crown molding above the cabinets. That was something we hadn't even thought about, but Sarah connected us with Ron Dalby."

Once the scope of work was determined, the Brewers had a tight timeline for getting the floors and cabinets done. Glascock and Duey worked together seamlessly to get their portions of the project complete.

The Brewers also had some work to do on their own. Eric installed a new backsplash and cabinet underlighting. He also replaced the outdated ceiling fan and updated the electrical outlets to ones that include USB charging ports. Laura tackled painting the walls and trim in the kitchen and living room.

The Brewers' kitchen and living room are now brighter and more welcoming. They were excited to host family and friends for the rehearsal dinner, noting the event was a great kick-off to the wedding weekend.

There are still other projects they would like to accomplish in the living room.

"Both Sarah and Randy suggested that we have a stopping point because it's easy for projects to get out of control or stall out," Laura says. "We plan to work on things as time allows. We're excited to see how even small changes can make a big difference."



Eric and Laura Brewer tackled a kitchen and living room renovation just in time to welcome family and friends for their son and daughter-in-law's June wedding rehearsal dinner.

Love where you live

When Brandan and Pamela Bruce moved into their one-and-a-half-story Indianola home in 2010, the couple was focused on raising their family.

"Our neighborhood is wonderful, and we couldn't imagine living anywhere else," Pamela says. "We were good friends with Clark and Betsy Raney, who lived across from us, and spent time in their house over the years. We loved where we lived, but there were several things about their property that interested us."

In the summer of 2024, the Bruces learned that the Raneys were planning a move out of state, so they made an offer on the home before it could even go on the market. Since

BEFORE



The Bruces removed a wall to expand their new kitchen, creating more open space for family gatherings.

welcoming five grandchildren, they say the ranch style was a good fit for their growing family. All the bedrooms were on one level, and they also saw a lot of potential for family gatherings both inside and outside. And the best part? They didn't have to leave the neighborhood they loved.

However, the layout needed a few tweaks. Renovations were necessary to get the semi-open concept the Bruces wanted for flow, as well as for creating the ideal spaces for when they had their family together.

AFTER



The Bruces repurposed some of the original kitchen cabinets, two built-in bookshelves and a chandelier, incorporating them into the new design.

"Our initial goal was to remove the red carpet that had been there for 40 years and replace it with hardwood," Brandan explains. "We also wanted to lighten up the walls with a consistent paint color throughout."

Bigger projects included getting laundry facilities on the main floor and removing a wall to expand the kitchen.

While the couple created much of the vision on their own, they relied on the expertise of several local contractors and businesses to bring the project to life. Zach from Circle B Home Center helped design the layout of the kitchen, Bendon Plumbing Heating and AC updated plumbing, Moni Freeman painted the interior and exterior of the house, and Paul Horton served as general contractor for the entire project.

Brandan was able to do a lot of the demolition himself, saving time and money. Pamela jumped in on some projects, too. They were even able to repurpose a couple of the original kitchen cabinets, as well as some built-in bookshelves to fit into the new design.

"Paul Horton kept us on track with what needed to get done during each phase, and he organized a lot of the crews who were coming in and out," Pamela says. "Once the ball got rolling, it moved quickly, but all the pieces had to fall in place."

When an issue with the original installer of the hardwood floors came up, Glascock Flooring stepped in and got things taken care of quickly with just days to spare before their move-in date.

The Bruces wanted to make sure it felt like their home and not one they used to visit. The renovations did just that.

"Even though it's not a completely open concept, we love how the kitchen and living room have great sight lines," Pamela says. "We were able to put our touches on it, and it fits our family's needs perfectly with room to grow."

The couple plans to renovate the basement in the future and will also build a workshop in the backyard for Brandan's hobbies and projects. This summer, they focused on the yard, transforming some areas so they can eventually trade maintenance for more peace and relaxation.

Pamela says, to love your space, you need to make it truly your own.

"I always tell people to decorate their home with what brings them joy because trends come and go," she continues. "Surround yourself with what makes you happy. Hire quality people and use local businesses as much as possible."



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FEATURE

Extreme exterior makeover

When Mike and Denise Moss purchased their home in the spring of 2016, there were several things that made it — and the community of Indianola — appealing.

“We were moving back to central Iowa from Council Bluffs to be closer to our families, and, after looking in several areas, we narrowed our choice to Indianola,” Denise says. “We knew we wanted a somewhat newer home in a good neighborhood, but we also preferred a ranch — especially as we thought about the future and what we might need as we got older. This home was a great fit.”

Since moving in, the home has been a work in progress. They completed a primary bath remodel, updated their kitchen floor, and replaced the large front window and basement windows. Outside, they tackled a few landscaping/garden projects and built a privacy fence. However, the couple knew that some bigger ticket items would eventually need to be addressed. A new roof, as well as siding and windows, would not only impact their home’s appearance but would also increase value and energy efficiency.

BEFORE



Mike and Denise Moss transformed their home’s exterior with siding and shakes, as well as some unique touches like keystones and vent accents that add visual interest and a custom feel.

“We started with the roof, but, a few years later, we started noticing several places where our composite siding was deteriorating,” Mike explains. “The gutters had also seen better days and, quite frankly, we were ready for a new,

updated look overall.”

They started looking online to get ideas on the types of siding available. Using a virtual reality program, Denise was able to upload a photo of their home and try out different styles

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and colors.

“It was great to be able to customize colors and visually see how our house might look,” Denise says. “Once we had a few ideas in mind, it was time to find a company to do the work.”

Mike and Denise consulted with a few different contractors and salespeople, but a friend recommended Superior Siding and Windows. After meeting with the owner, Jim, and checking out some of their work, the Mosses felt comfortable moving forward and selected the siding.

Their home in Council Bluffs was a gray-green, and since they still liked that color, it was an easy choice for their new house. They also decided to add shake siding accents on the front after seeing the treatment on a few homes, as well as some unique touches that Superior recommended such as keystones and accents around the vents.

The entire project took one month from start to finish. Superior removed a half-round window on the front of the house and a box accent above the main garage. They also replaced the windows in the single-car garage, installed new exterior doors (except the

AFTER



overhead garage doors) and added new gutters, soffits and trim.

Aside from a big dumpster taking up space in the driveway and some noise throughout the day, disruptions were minimal.

Today, the Mosses enjoy coming home to a much nicer looking house, and they no longer worry about their old siding getting shredded in

a thunderstorm. They also enjoy having a front door that is weatherproof and a patio door that opens and closes with just a finger.

“We couldn’t be happier with the end result,” Mike says. “It was a big undertaking but worth the time and investment knowing that we’ve made improvements to our home that will last for many years to come.” ■



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MEDIATION

The traditional way to resolve civil disputes is by trial to a jury or a judge. Trials can be expensive and can be emotionally taxing to the participants. Because of this, mediation is often used to settle disputes without having to go through the costly process of a trial.

Although mediation is a voluntary process, it may be a required step in conflict resolution, most notably in family law cases. In civil cases involving claims for damages or other relief, mediation has become a useful tool to achieve settlement.

Mediation can take place before suit is filed or during the pendency of the litigation. It is up to the parties to decide terms of mediation.

Chapter 11 of the Standards of Conduct for Mediators contains the general principles that the Iowa Supreme Court prescribes for mediators and participants in mediations. Paragraph (2) of the Preamble of the Standards provides that "Mediation is a process in which an impartial third party facilitates communication and negotiation and promotes voluntary decision making by the parties to the dispute." In Paragraph (3), it is observed that "Mediation serves various purposes, including providing the opportunity for parties to define and clarify issues, understand different perspectives, identify interests, explore and assess possible solutions, and reach mutually satisfactory agreements, when desired.

In addition to avoiding the cost and stress of a trial, other benefits of mediation may include a final resolution of the matter (instead of lengthy appeals), resolution founded on the parties' own terms and avoiding the possibility of an unexpected result at trial.

Self-determination: The Supreme Court in Rule 11.2 of the Standards provides that the mediator shall conduct the mediation based on the principle of party self-determination. This is the act of coming to a voluntary, uncoerced decision in which each party makes free and informed choices as to the process and outcome. Parties may exercise self-determination at any stage of the mediation, including mediator selection, process design, participation in or withdrawal from the process and outcomes.

Impartiality: Rule 11.3 of the Standards provides that the mediator shall conduct a mediation in an impartial manner. This means freedom from favoritism, bias or prejudice. Similarly, Rule 11.4 requires mediators to avoid conflicts of interest.

Confidentiality: Rule 11.6 of the Standards requires that mediators maintain the confidentiality of all information the mediator obtains in mediation, unless the parties otherwise agree or as required by applicable law. The rule does allow for sharing information with the disclosing party's consent.

Conclusion: The above principles are a partial recitation of the Court's Standards concerning mediation in Iowa. The main point is that it is voluntary and often successful in resolving disputes which originally appear to have no solution. ■



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WEARING the crown

Koster wins Jr Preteen Miss Iowa title.

Prior to 2024, 10-year-old Madelinn Koster had exactly zero pageant experience.

None.

But she was intrigued enough to try competing in the National American Miss pageant that year. She had a great time, her mother, Heidi Koster, says, eventually taking a surprising fourth runner up as well as additional awards for other optional competitions.

The seed had been planted.

"After that, she decided she wanted to do it again and take it more seriously, so we were referred to pageant coach Katie Kenny with Elevation Pageant and Interview Consulting," Heidi says.

And change it did. One year later, Madelinn was not only competing once again, she was winning.

Madelinn checked another box off on her list of accomplishments, capping off a whirlwind year recently by being crowned the new Jr Preteen Miss Iowa at the National American Miss Pageant at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Omaha La Vista Hotel & Conference Center, July 24-26.

"It was a complete shock and felt like a dream," Heidi says. "At the 2024 pageant, she became friends with Landry McKinney, who was crowned queen. Madelinn was so happy for her, and, from that moment, she had this dream of her friend being the one to crown her next. She worked very hard and was so overjoyed the moment they called her name and that dream came true."

Heidi says her daughter's duties as Jr Preteen Miss Iowa will be many.

"She will be responsible to be an example of confidence, natural beauty and individuality to others, participate in interviews and public speaking, take part in a community service project to make a positive impact on others and utilize the program's focus on skill-building to become a leader for tomorrow," she says. "She will also need to be at the 2026 pageant to help with weekend activities and crown the next Jr Preteen Miss Iowa."

On top of being crowned National American Miss Iowa Jr Preteen, Madelinn also won two optional competitions at the pageant, including the actress competition in which she recited a Chick-Fil-A commercial script, and a casual wear competition where she did a model walk in a casual wear outfit of her choice.

Madelinn will now be going on to National competition in Orlando, Florida, in November to compete against the other state queens in her division. ■



Madelinn Koster, 10, recently was named Jr Preteen Miss Iowa at the National American Miss Pageant.

UNIQUE program offers senior living alternative

Michael has lived in his Ankeny house for more than 40 years. Now 79, he often thinks about what the next stage of life will bring — especially when it comes to his health and living arrangements.



Unlike some of his longtime friends who have relocated to senior living communities, Michael hopes to remain right where he is. He enjoys his neighborhood, his garden and the sense of independence his home provides him. Still, he worries about what will happen if he needs support in the future. His nearest family member lives several hours away, and he doesn't want to place unexpected burdens on her.

Michael's concerns are common. The idea of "aging in place" sounds appealing, but it can be complicated. Chronic health needs can make independent living unsafe, and 24/7 in-home care can become just as costly as moving to a senior living community.

So, what options exist for people who want to stay home but also want peace of mind about the future?

One solution is a Continuing Care at Home (CC@H) membership. These programs are designed to support older adults' well-being at home while also helping them plan financially for care needs that may arise later.

If you're exploring CC@H options, here are some important questions to keep in mind:

Do you know what's included? Strong programs provide not only health and wellness services to help you remain independent, but also financial coverage for potential long-term care.

Is personalized support available? Research shows that people who receive encouragement from a coach or advocate are more likely to maintain healthier habits and meet their goals.

What are the care pathways? A comprehensive program should cover both in-home care and access to care in a community setting if needed. Make sure you're comfortable with the provider's reputation and outcomes in both areas.

Choosing the right CC@H program should feel like choosing a plan that was created with your needs in mind. The right fit can help you protect both your health and your finances — and give you confidence about what's ahead. So, ask all your questions, and make sure you are satisfied with the answers. ■

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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ASSISTED living and long-term care in Iowa

When it comes to senior living options, many families in the Des Moines area are unsure about the differences between assisted living and long-term care. A common misconception is that assisted living is only for fully independent individuals, but, in Iowa, that's not the case.



services. This level of care is typically for those recovering from serious illness or surgery, or for those with chronic conditions that demand more intensive oversight.

What assisted living can provide in Iowa

Under Iowa's assisted living regulations, communities are licensed to provide support with activities of daily living (ADLs) — including bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting, mobility, and medication administration. Residents do not have to be fully independent in all ADLs to qualify for assisted living.

In fact, many assisted living residents need help with one or more daily tasks, and communities are staffed with trained caregivers to meet those needs. Services are typically delivered based on a customized care plan created with input from the resident, family and healthcare providers.

Key benefits of assisted living

For families navigating care decisions, assisted

living offers:

- Private apartments with safety features and emergency response systems
- 24/7 staff support
- Personalized care plans that adjust as needs change
- Nutritious meals and social dining
- Life enrichment programs that promote physical, mental and emotional wellness
- Housekeeping and laundry services
- Scheduled transportation for medical appointments and outings

Residents in assisted living communities enjoy a greater sense of independence, choice and dignity, while still receiving the support they need to live safely and comfortably.

If you have questions, don't hesitate to reach out to a local assisted living provider who can walk you through what is possible. ■

Information provided by Ashley Bergman, Addington Place of Des Moines, addingtonplaceofdesmoines.com. Written by Discovery Senior Living, 3461 Bonita Bay Blvd., Suite 100, Bonita Springs, FL 34134.

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HOW TO extend the service life of your auto

This month's topic is how to extend the service life of your auto. Regular maintenance is essential, but there are many ways to improve the longevity and value of your vehicle. Our driving habits and care routines also affect the condition and appearance of our cars.



Drive gently: Take it easy for the first few miles to allow your engine to warm up. An engine at normal operating temperature operates at peak efficiency. This is especially critical for import vehicles, particularly those with smaller, high-revving engines, to prevent premature wear. Driving at a conservative speed also reduces stress on your driveline and saves fuel. Avoid letting your car idle to warm up, as this allows excess cold-start fuel to dilute the oil, shortening engine life. For some modern imports with sophisticated direct injection systems, excessive idling can also cause carbon buildup on intake valves, which can affect performance over time.

Combine errands: Planning your driving will minimize the time your engine runs cold and maximize its operation at peak efficiency. A little foresight can significantly reduce fuel consumption and mileage, saving you money and reducing wear. This is particularly true for import vehicles, which are often engineered for efficiency and see significant benefits from optimized driving patterns.

Prioritize smooth handling: Avoid rough surfaces that can damage your vehicle. Slow down over railroad tracks, speed bumps or potholes, as these can strain your wheels, tires and suspension. Many imported cars, especially European sports sedans and coupes, have delicate suspension components and low-profile tires that are particularly susceptible to damage from rough roads. Smooth steering not only increases stability but also prolongs the life of your chassis components. Gentle braking extends the life of your brakes, and the same principle applies to steering.

Maintain safe distances: Keeping a safe distance from other vehicles protects your car from potential glass and paint damage caused

by flying rocks and debris. This is especially important for import vehicles, as replacement body panels and glass can be significantly more expensive and difficult to source than domestic parts.

Avoid parking outside: Continuously parking your vehicle outside dramatically shortens its service life. From UV paint damage and water freezing inside body seals in the winter to road salt, the elements are not kind to our cherished rides. Many older import vehicles, like JDM cars, are known to have less durable clear coats and thinner paint, making regular washing and protection even more vital.

If you'd like your auto to age gracefully, implementing these simple driving and care strategies can make a huge difference. Keep your car looking great and running smoothly, and don't forget about regular maintenance. ■

Information provided by Chris Werner, owner and lead technician, Werner's Elite Auto, 506 1/2 E. Euclid Ave., Indianola, 515-259-0122, www.wernerseliteauto.com.



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MAKING an Impact

100 Women Who Care celebrates 2 years.



Indianola's 100 Women Who Care will celebrate two years in October and look forward to continued growth in the future. At the July meeting, WeLift Job Search Center was presented with a check for \$10,800.

Indianola Living magazine first introduced readers to Indianola's 100 Women Who Care in February 2023. It was shortly after their second meeting held on the cold and windy night of Jan. 16. Despite the weather, more than 100 women stepped in and stepped up — to the tune of \$12,500.

Alysha Martin brought the idea of 100 Women to Indianola after hearing about a 100 Men group in Norwalk. After a little more research, she enlisted the help of Amanda Zwanziger in organizing a steering committee. The group took off and hasn't slowed down since their organizational meeting in the fall of 2022. Since then, the group has come together once a quarter and raised more than \$10,000 at each meeting and gifted a total of \$92,100 to deserving local non-profits:

- Indianola Preschool - \$12,500
- Warren County Helping Hand - \$13,100
- Indianola Hope Foundation - \$10,900
- Operation Christmas - \$10,800
- Dobbers Up - \$11,300
- WeLift Job Search Center - \$10,800
- Indianola Community Free Clinic - \$10,400

The organizations can use the funds as they choose. For example, Dobbers Up earmarked the money from 100 Women to help with the purchase of a golf cart to assist with transportation to and from the parking lots at local sporting events. Recent recipient Indianola Community Free Clinic is excited to use the funds to host health fairs as well as purchase vouchers that can be given out to those who need routine annual appointments such as mammograms and other preventative care services not offered at the free clinic.

Martin says there are still women in the community who have not heard of 100 Women Who Care.

"We'll continue to get the word out so that every woman knows who we are and what we do," she says. "The networking and friendships that have grown — not only from the steering committee but also the women who see one another each quarter at the meetings — is an added bonus."

Sponsors play a big role in the success of 100 Women because, without them, the group wouldn't be able to hold meetings. Sponsors' funds help pay for the rental of the space, food and refreshments as well as some of the administrative costs.

On Oct. 14 from 5:30-7 p.m. at Indianola Golf Club, Indianola's 100 Women Who Care will celebrate two years of making a difference in the community. Any and all women are invited to attend and contribute \$100. Three non-profits will be drawn at random to present and those in attendance will vote.

100 Women's work has not gone unnoticed. A 100 Men of Indianola has officially started, and Martin is excited to see how they continue to grow.

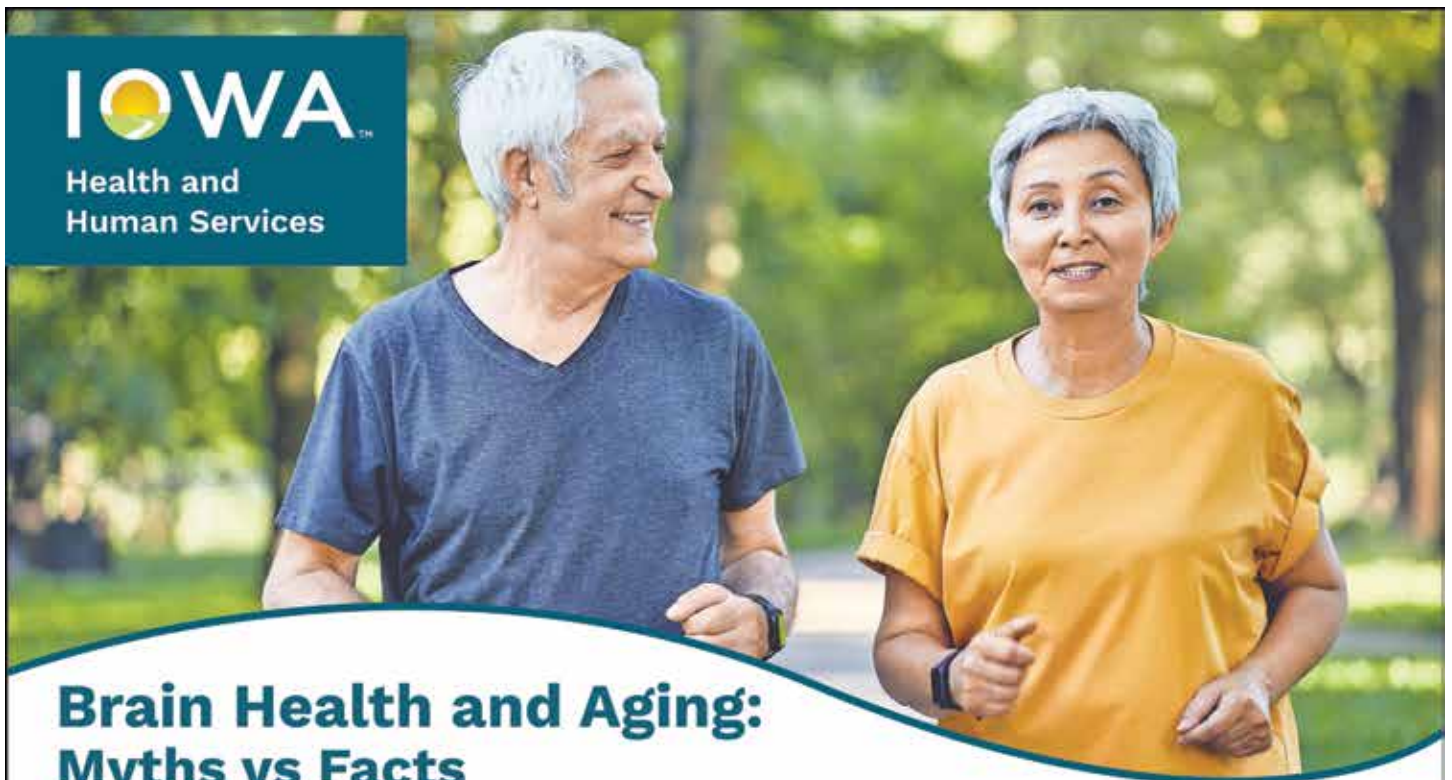
Visit Facebook at 100 Women Who Care Indianola or scan the QR code for more information on the October meeting. ■



Scan here to learn more about the 100 Women Who Care's October meeting.



Health and
Human Services



Brain Health and Aging: Myths vs Facts

MYTH

I have to see a specialist to
get diagnosed with Alzheimer's

FACT

Most primary care doctors can assess whether a person might have Alzheimer's disease or related dementias (ADRD). They can do cognitive screenings, some even offer biomarker testing. They may refer you to a specialist or a diagnostic clinic, but starting with your family doctor is always a great first step.

You can also get a screening done at your free Annual Medicare Wellness Visit.

MYTH

I can't prevent or treat Alzheimer's

FACT

Research shows that up to 45% of dementia cases can be avoided by making positive lifestyle changes. These include managing your blood pressure, exercising, eating right, keeping your brain active and staying social. And now there are new medications that can slow Alzheimer's disease if caught in the early stages.

MYTH

There are no resources near me to
help with dementia caregiving

FACT

The Iowa HHS ADRD Program has a wealth of resources online from partner organizations all around Iowa. There is a thorough Dementia Resource Guide, a State Strategic Plan, options for caregiver support, the latest on research, local programs, training for professional workers and more.

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or other dementias, you are not alone. The ADRD Program at Iowa HHS wants to help get you connected to the resources you need.

Scan the QR code to visit
our website and get the
latest information.



HIGHLIGHTS of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) introduces major updates that impact nearly everyone. The law makes permanent updates to key provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act while adding new ways to save for education, retirement and long-term financial security. Some key takeaways are:

Tax provisions from TCJA made permanent: Without the OBBBA, the following would have expired in tax year 2025: Lower individual income tax rates — extended with no expiration. Increased standard deductions.

For families and education: Child Tax Credit: Permanently extended with a maximum of \$2,200 per child beginning in 2025. Child & Dependent Care Credit: Expanded from 35% to 50% of qualifying expenses with a floor of 20%. Starter IRAs for children (under 18 and not working): \$1,000 government contribution at birth (born in 2025); up to



\$5,000 in annual contributions allowed; withdrawals restricted until age 18, then follow Traditional IRA rules. 529 Education Savings Plans: Expanded to cover up to \$20,000 from \$10,000 per year in K-12 expenses, apprenticeship programs, educational therapy and post-secondary certifications.

For retirees and older adults: Enhanced standard deduction in addition to existing standard deduction through 2029 for those 65-plus: \$6,000 for single filers and \$12,000 for joint filers.

For working adults: Temporary deductions for tax years 2025- 2028 for tipped workers and those eligible for overtime pay. May deduct qualified tips received in occupations that are listed by the IRS as “customarily and regularly receiving tips.” May deduct the overtime pay that exceeds their regular rate of pay. Deductions are subject to income phaseouts and caps: deduction cap: \$12,500 (single) or \$25,000 (married), phaseout: \$150,000 (single) or \$300,000 (married).

For all taxpayers: SALT (state and local tax) deduction increased from \$10,000 to

\$40,000 through 2029. Estate and gift tax exclusions rise in 2026 to \$15 million per individual/\$30 million per couple.

The OBBBA creates new opportunities to reduce taxes, save more effectively for education and retirement, and distribute wealth to future generations. Whether you are a parent looking to invest in your child’s future, a retiree planning for financial security, or a worker looking to maximize deductions, these changes can have a direct impact on you.

You bank can guide you through these updates, ensuring that your financial plan is structured to support your long-term goals. ■

For more information, please contact Kourtne Klocko with City State Bank Trust & Investments at 515-981-1400. Not FDIC insured. Not deposits or other obligations of the bank and are not guaranteed by the bank. Are subject to investment risk, including possible loss of principal. City State Bank does not provide tax or legal advice. Each taxpayer should seek independent advice from a tax professional. These materials are based upon publicly available information that may change at any time without notice.

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CRACK corn dip

There's something special about recipes that come from family, and my daughter, Samantha, has a corn dip that fits the bill, especially when made with fresh Iowa sweet corn. There is nothing quite like the flavor of corn picked at its peak — crisp, juicy and naturally sweet.



Every summer, when the corn stands start popping up around town, we know it is time to whip up a big bowl of her famous dip. It is creamy and a little cheesy with just the right amount of spice, and that fresh sweet corn takes it to the next level. Whether we are hosting friends, heading to a potluck or just craving a snack on a hot afternoon, this dip is a hit. Served with tortilla chips or fresh veggies, it disappears quickly. I like that it has become part of our summer tradition, and now we're sharing it with you, straight from our kitchen and Iowa's golden fields. ■

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

Crack corn dip

Ingredients:

- 5.25 cups of fresh corn plus 1/2 each red and green pepper, finely diced (for the off-season use 3-15 oz cans fiesta corn or Mexicorn, drained)
- 1 can Rotel, 10 oz (reg or hot), drained
- 1 can jalapenos, 6 oz, drained and diced
- 1/2 cup green onions, sliced (5 stalks), optional
- 2 cups cheddar, shredded
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Pinch of sugar
- Handful fresh cilantro leaves, chopped



Directions

- Mix all the ingredients excluding bell peppers in a bowl. Refrigerator for 3-4 hours before serving. The dip will thicken as it sits in the fridge. Add peppers right before serving. Enjoy!

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Check for cancellations

Note about calendar events: This magazine is delivered the second Thursday of each month. Calendar items included are events happening after the delivery date and extend into the following month. If you receive and read your magazine upon delivery, you will not miss out on any calendar items.

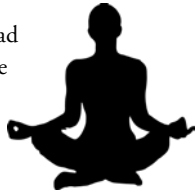
Upcoming in Indianola Living magazine:

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.

Yoga in the Park

Saturdays through Sept. 27, 9 a.m.
Buxton Park, 705 N. Buxton St.,
Indianola

Volunteer instructors lead yoga each week in the serene beauty of Buxton Park. This is a free program thanks to volunteer instructors. Sign up for the text group in case of weather cancellations at www.tinyurl.com/IPRTexts.



Tuesday Tunes & Treats: Beggars' Bargain

Tuesday, Sept. 16, 1 p.m.
Indianola Activity Center,
2204 W. Second Ave.

Beggars' Bargain, a folk-Americana duo from Des Moines, blends rich harmonies, gritty emotion, and heartfelt storytelling. Inspired by artists like Shakey Graves and Nathaniel Rateliff, their intimate performances explore resilience, nature and joy. Free concert, thanks to MercyOne Health Plan and Oak St. Health. Refreshments provided by Indianola Hy-Vee.

Oktoberfest

Friday, Sept. 19, 4-8 p.m.
The Groggy Dog, 116 W. Ashland Ave., Indianola

The Groggy Dog is throwing its second annual Oktoberfest — an evening full of German beers, delicious German food and fun and games. A boot chugging contest and live music are planned. The menu includes schnitzel with sweet and sour cabbage and mashed potatoes and gravy, fresh Bavarian pretzel with a housemade beer cheese, and classic beer brats with all the fixings. Come for the food and stay for the party.

Indianola Public Library Events

207 N. B. St., Indianola

KIDS

- After School Bingo: Monday, Sept. 15, 3:30-4:30 p.m.
- Kids Create: Saturday, Sept. 20, 2-3 p.m.
- Chess Club: Second and third Thursdays of the month, 6-7 p.m.

STORYTIME

- Storytime with Janis: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30-11 a.m.
- Saturday Storytime: Saturdays, 10:30-11:15 a.m.

TEENS

- Teen Hangout: Wednesdays, 2:30-4:30 p.m.
- Teen Art Cart: Saturdays, all day

ADULTS

- Morning Book Club: Friday, Sept. 12, 10-11 a.m.
- Puzzle Competition: Thursday, Sept. 18, 6-8 p.m. Register at <https://indianola.librarycalendar.com/event/puzzle-competition-7034>.
- TBR Book Club: Monday, Sept. 22, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
- Evening Book Club: Tuesday, Sept. 23, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

An Evening with Dayton Duncan

Tuesday, Sept. 16, 6:30 p.m.
Hubbell Hall, Kent Campus
Center, Simpson College

Friends of the Indianola Public Library, Dunn Library and Simpson College present An Evening with Dayton Duncan, Indianola native and Emmy award and Writers Guild of America award winner, writer and producer of documentary films. Duncan will take questions after his presentation. This program is free and open to the public.

Cookie Walk and Vendor Fair

Free Admission

Saturday, Dec. 6, 8-11 a.m.

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church,
210 S. Wesley St., Indianola

Looking for special handmade Christmas gifts? Enjoy a morning of holiday shopping and Christmas spirit. Admission is free. Purchase festive holiday treats and unique, local handmade gifts. Enjoy the holiday cafe with fresh giant cinnamon rolls, coffee and cider. Meet special guest Jolly Old St. Nick.

Sweet Creations: Double Chocolate Chip Cookies

Saturday, Sept. 13, 9-10:30 a.m.
Activity Center, 2204 W. Second Ave.,
Indianola

Join The Cookie Lady in this class where creativity meets deliciousness. The class will make classic double chocolate chip cookies using real butter and both semi-sweet and milk chocolate chips.



Students will make a small batch, bake one sheet of cookies, and also have dough to take home and bake. Class will be taught by Anna Smith, who has been baking for 10-plus years as "The Cookie Lady." For ages 10-16, \$27 registration cost. Register online at https://apm.activecommunities.com/cityofindianola/Activity_Search/2389 or call 515-961-9420

Log Cabin Festival

Saturday, Sept. 27, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Historical Society Museum,
1300 W. Second Ave., Indianola

The 2025 Warren County 55th Log Cabin Festival is a county-wide celebration that began more than 50 years ago. The Warren County Historical Society was given a log cabin which was moved to the museum site. To celebrate this gift and the beginning of the Heritage Village, a celebration was set up for the last full weekend of September. Through the years, the village has gained a one-room schoolhouse, a country store, a church, a meeting house, a gazebo, an outhouse, George Washington Carver museum and a machine shed. There will be a parade at 10 a.m. and activities and lunch at the Museum. Check the website for more information: warrencountyhistory.org. ■

FALL is a great time for planting

Fall is here, and it is time to start planning for next spring. We always think spring is the time to plant, but fall is a great time to plant trees, conifers, shrubs, perennials and, of course, those bulbs for early spring color. Planting now will give these a great start on being ready to show off in spring and summer of 2026.

Peonies are typically planted in fall (though they are offered in spring), so find bareroot and potted plants to add to your garden now. Hostas and daylilies can be split and replanted. Divide and give to family, friends and neighbors. Check out local nurseries for unique hostas and daylilies to add to your garden as they are getting ready to put inventory to bed for the winter. Don't forget to look for other perennials while visiting the local nursery. There are fall blooming perennials that will be blooming now, so give them a chance in your garden. Consider looking for banana and elephant ear plants. These can be kept as indoor plants through the winter, and you will have impressive specimens for the landscape or containers next spring.

Trees and shrubs are beginning to go dormant, and now is the time to plant them. With cooler temps, they will not be stressed as when planted in spring and then possibly declining with summer heat. They will root in and become stronger for spring budding out and summer blooming and growth. Think about that shrub border or Japanese maple or tree for your landscape that you would like to be a focal point next spring in your garden while visiting the nursery this fall.

Who could forget about fall bulbs for spring blooms that are available now: tulips, daffodils, alliums and other cool bulbs. Nurseries are full of great selections of bulbs for color and drama. These are so easy to plant; think "dig, drop, done." You can dig individual holes in your established gardens, but another great technique is to dig a large area, as deep as twice the height of the largest bulb, drop them, and then begin filling in, nestling the smaller bulbs in as you fill the hole.

Are you looking for dramatic height in your late spring and early summer garden? Now is the time to plant foxtail lily roots to add that dramatic look to your garden. These fall-planted flowers will grow from 4 feet to a towering 7 feet or more and add that height to the garden. In addition, they are great for pollinators and hummingbirds and can be cut for dramatic floral arrangements of white, orange, pink, yellow and apricot.

Visit local nurseries for bulbs and unique offerings. Box stores get in industry seconds; nurseries and better garden centers get in prime, top-quality bulbs for planting. And, who better to get information about your tree, shrub or perennial purchases than from those who live, breathe and love trees and shrubs? Have a great time looking for and planting those cool additions to your garden for spring 2026. ■

Information provided by Barry Laws, co-owner, Quilted Gardens Nursery and Landscaping, 19635 130th Ave., Indianola, 515-720-3089, www.quiltedgardens.com.



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REGULARLY wearing hearing aids may help you live longer

Want more time to enjoy the good things in life? According to a new study, hearing aids could boost your longevity — if you wear them consistently to treat hearing loss.

The study found that regular hearing aid users may experience a 24% lower mortality risk than those who never use them. It also revealed no significant differences in the mortality rates of people who never wear hearing aids and those who wear them sporadically.¹

Details about the study

Led by Dr. Janet Choi, an otolaryngologist from Keck Medicine of USC, the study utilized National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey data from 1999–2012 to identify 10,000 adults who had hearing evaluations and



completed questionnaires about their hearing aid use. Researchers tracked their mortality status for 10 years.

Of the 1,863 adults with hearing loss, 237 wore hearing aids regularly (defined as using them at least once a week, at least five hours a week or at least half the time), while 1,483 never used them. Individuals who wore their hearing aids once a month or less were considered non-regular users.

“We found that adults with hearing loss who regularly used hearing aids had a 24% lower risk of mortality than those who never wore them,” said Dr. Choi. “These results are exciting because they suggest that hearing aids may play a protective role in people’s health and prevent early death.”¹

The link between regular hearing aid use and reduced mortality risk persisted even when adjusting for hearing loss severity, age, education, ethnicity and other factors.

The research isn’t clear on how hearing aids may lead to greater longevity, but other studies have found that wearing hearing aids can contribute to more socializing and decrease the risk of depression and dementia, allowing people to live healthier lives.

As this study shows, consistent hearing aid use is best. Have hearing aids you aren’t wearing because they don’t help you hear well? For more information or to schedule an appointment, call your local audiologist today. ■

Information provided by Dr. Kelly Cook, Audiologist, Iowa Hearing Center, 1228 Sunset Drive, Suite B, Norwalk, 515-416-5990, www.IowaHearingCenter.com. 1. Strom, K. (2024). Regular hearing aid use is associated with reduced mortality, says new study. Hearing Tracker. https://www.hearingtracker.com/news/regular-hearing-aid-use-may-help-you-live-longer-says-new-study?utm_source=hearingtracker.com.

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TREATING seasonal neck and shoulder pain with Asian Medicine

Every spring and fall, health care providers see a number of patients with symptoms of a stiff neck that begins suddenly, sometimes with difficulty turning their head or with an earache and even a stuffy nose along with their neck pain.

In Western Medicine, this may be called “wry neck syndrome” or “torticollis syndrome.” It is that kind of neck pain that feels like your neck has seized up and is very painful.

From an Asian Medicine perspective, this type of neck pain is often diagnosed as Wind Cold invading the channels, or Wind Cold Damp invading the channels, depending on the symptoms and the diagnostic evaluation. This “pattern” can occur after a person has been



outside on a nice day when the wind is chilly and brisk, as we often see here in Iowa in both the spring and fall. Have you ever had this after being outside in the wind and come inside with a headache, clear runny nose and earache, then later develop neck pain? This can also happen with a cold draft on the back of the neck that can occur while sitting in an air conditioning draft.

In Asian Medicine, we treat this in several ways. After an evaluation of listening to the pulses, discussing history and palpation of the area, we decide what treatment to apply and may even use moxibustion (an herbal technique) to add qi and warmth to the local area. Sometimes, we will use “ashi” points in the local area with a gentle needle technique to move the Qi (energy). Sometimes this can be cleared up in one treatment, and sometimes it can take several treatments to resolve.

Asian Medicine practitioners can also recommend a Chinese Herbal formula based on your symptoms and pattern to help resolve this Wind Cold/Wind Damp Cold pattern. The king herb used in this formula is cinnamon, formulated with several other herbs that make up the specific formula.

Ways to avoid this type of pattern are to wear a scarf and make sure your ears and neck are covered on those sunny, windy days. When you come inside, drink a cup or two of cinnamon tea to help warm the meridians. You can also use a heat pad on the upper back/neck to warm the area. ■

Information provided by Dr. Renee Dalrymple, LAc, SEED Meditation Instructor, Soaring Crane Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, 14849 130th Ave., Indianola, 515-808-1548, call or text.

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WELLNESS

By Chelsea Taggart

FALL skincare refresh

As the seasons change, so do our skincare needs. Fall is the perfect time to repair summer sun damage, refresh dull skin and prepare for the colder months ahead. Professional treatments like chemical peels, laser hair removal and IPL (intense pulsed light) therapy can help restore your skin's glow and keep it looking healthy year-round.



Chemical peels are a popular choice for addressing uneven skin tone, fine lines and lingering sunspots. By gently exfoliating the top layer of skin, chemical peels reveal a smoother, brighter complexion underneath. Reduced sun exposure allows skin to heal more effectively.

Laser hair removal is another treatment best scheduled during the cooler months. With less sun exposure, the risk of irritation and hyperpigmentation is minimized. Starting sessions in the fall means you can complete multiple treatments before spring and summer.

For those dealing with stubborn sun damage or pigmentation, IPL therapy is an excellent solution. This light-based treatment targets discoloration, broken capillaries and redness, leaving skin clearer and more radiant. Since IPL requires patients to avoid tanning and sun exposure, fall provides the perfect window to begin treatments.

Investing in professional skincare services during the fall not only helps repair summer damage but also lays the foundation for healthier, more resilient skin. ■

Information provided by Chelsea Taggart, L.E., Vivid Life Spa, 1951 E. 18th St., Suite 105, Norwalk, 515-850-7848, vividlifespa.com.



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For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. - Ephesians 2:10

FAITH

By Tom Vanderbilt

WISDOM protection program

"For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it" (Ecclesiastes 7:12).



How much money would it take for you to feel safe? How large would your bank account have to be to feel like you could weather any storm? I have no doubt that the number in your mind is in the millions of dollars. And I'm also pretty sure that the number in your mind is bigger than what you have now. When it comes to the protection of money, there often isn't enough for us.

Do we feel the same way about wisdom? How much wisdom and knowledge would it take for you to feel safe? How much education would you need to feel like you could tackle any challenge? I think this is a harder concept for us to consider because education and wisdom are not as measurable as money.

But are we seeking after wisdom as much as we are money? As we see school buses back on the roads and children scurrying into schools, let's not be too thankful that we're not in school anymore. Every day is a chance for us to gain the protection of wisdom and thereby preserve our life. ■

Article provided by Pastor Tom Vanderbilt, Mount Calvary Church, Indianola.

PADDLING along

Lawson's collection is a reminder of life's adventures.



While Blair Lawson doesn't get out on the water as much these days, collecting paddles and oars has been a fun and interesting hobby for him.

Blair Lawson moved to Indianola in 1971 when his parents retired here to care for his grandmother Nellie Lester, who owned and operated a farm in rural Warren County.

"I had just finished up tours in Pakistan and Germany with the U.S. Air Force," Lawson explains. "Since I no longer had a home in Detroit, I followed my parents here and lived with them until I met and married my first wife, Margaret."

Today, a portion of his grandmother's farmland is home to the Warren County Conservation Board and Annett Nature Center. It's no surprise that Lawson has a connection to the outdoors. He and Margaret enjoyed many years together before she passed away from melanoma in 2000. Their home just east of Indianola, where Lawson still lives, had room for a piano studio where Margaret could teach lessons, as well as some land with a barn and space for gardening, growing wildflowers and even raising goats.

"We started with two Nubians and two Saanens and eventually added a billy goat for each breed," he says. "It didn't take long before our herd grew to 28."

While Lawson no longer raises goats, he has a collection of goat-related knick-knacks, figurines, books and other items.

Lawson also enjoys canoeing and kayaking. He started collecting paddles in 2002, first bringing one back from Belize after visiting a friend working there in the Peace Corp. After marrying his second wife, Marilyn, in 2005, the couple set off on a five-week adventure to Alaska. Their Ford Taurus had a "rocket box" on top to carry their camping gear.

With extra time to explore, they stopped at some garage sales. Lawson found paddles at reasonable prices and quickly snatched them up, thinking he could surely find something to do with them when he got home.

"All but the long oars fit inside the rocket box, so I strapped them to the rack," he says.

"Many people were curious what type of 'boat' we had on top of the car that required those long paddles. We also found other bargains including a large painting of Puffins and a pair of moose antlers."

Lawson has picked up a few paddles at local garage sales and has six on the wall in his basement, including a cricket bat he brought back from a Rotary Friendship Exchange trip to England. Eleven paddles hang on the outside of the barn. Beth McGeough, a local artist and owner of Edge of the Woods Berry Farm, painted each one with prairie plants that represent the plants growing around the barn and in their backyard.

These days, Lawson has picked up another type of paddle — pickleball. He plays several times a week, both in Des Moines and in Indianola at the Activity Center and Wellness Campus. He and Marilyn also enjoy their e-bikes and ride trails in and around Warren County. ■

OUT & ABOUT

RIBBON cutting

A ribbon cutting was held at Kwik Star on Aug. 28.



Police Captain Rob Hawkins accepts Kwik Star's donation.



Ben Kessler, Andrea Keller and Nikki Lloyd



Brooke Boden, Brian Sher and Vicki Jansen



Troy Roberts, Steve Richardson and Nicholas Andersen



Scott Zietlow, Kacie Bonjour and Gregory Olson



Kollin Kirby, Alexa Ortiz and Emily Smith



Indianola Fire Chief Aaron Hurt accepts Kwik Star's donation.



Kerri Morrison and Megan Vajgrt



Jill Zietlow and Paige Tiano



Becky McNew and Jessica Kinney



The staff at Werner Elite Automotive: Kayla Madsen, Ryan Werner, Chris Werner, Brandy Werner, Christian Bird and Ethan Speltz



Werner Elite Automotive celebrated a ribbon cutting on Aug. 27.



Ryan Ellis and Breanna Berry of Ellis Law Offices on Aug. 27.



Katy O'Meara and Bethany Wilson at The Outside Scoop on Aug. 27.



Kamie Haynes, Sara Sayasane, Winn Sayasane and Gary Haynes at the Indianola Main Street Annual Dinner fundraiser at Simpson College on Aug. 21.



Leigh Mjlodogic, Sue Stuebner and Chelsea Greiner at the Indianola Main Street Annual Dinner fundraiser at Simpson College on Aug. 21.



Chelsea Greiner and Kamie Haynes at the Indianola Main Street Annual Dinner fundraiser at Simpson College on Aug. 21.



Randy and Jodi Eubank at the Indianola Main Street Annual Dinner fundraiser at Simpson College on Aug. 21.



Matthew Lepke and Bill Horihan at the ribbon cutting held at Kwik Star on Aug. 28.



Eileen and Stan Thompson at the ribbon cutting held at Kwik Star on Aug. 28.



Stephanie Marvelli, Gina Piper and Dawn Barnes at the Indianola Main Street Annual Dinner fundraiser at Simpson College on Aug. 21.

MEET Kyle Bloom

Taking his students to new heights.

When the 2025 National Balloon Classic lifted off in Indianola, Kyle Bloom brought the excitement of the event into his second-grade classroom at Irving Elementary. Growing up in a family that has been involved in the sport for generations, Bloom showed his students how to turn a traditional balloonist ring toss into a fun mental math challenge. The students enjoyed every minute.

Bloom grew up in Indianola and, after graduating from Indianola High School, started his studies in criminal justice with a sociology minor at Simpson College. However, an internship at Orchard Place changed his perspective. Working closely with children facing significant challenges, he was drawn to the idea of being a consistent, positive presence in their lives. He felt that the classroom was where he could have the most impact.

"Teaching has always been a passion of mine, and I love being able to give back to the same district that helped shape me," he says. "We are a community that cares — especially in our schools where relationships matter and students are more than just a data point or number."

In the classroom, Bloom is enthusiastic, determined and highly motivated. He's also committed to helping students grow socially, emotionally and academically, and he strives to create inclusive and dynamic classrooms that support student success.

"You will see my students using ball chairs, wobble seats, stools, mats or laying on the carpet," he explains. "I have even had couches because I know not all kids can learn by sitting in a desk all day."

Bloom believes in building positive, trusting relationships with both his students and families. It is something he experienced as a student — particularly with three teachers and a counselor. Pam Zimmerman, Deb Dittmer, Linda Dittmer and Pat Cooper all listened, encouraged, challenged and genuinely cared for Bloom in ways that helped him thrive personally and academically. He says those connections are the foundation for a supportive learning environment where every student feels valued, respected and empowered.

"A good day isn't perfect, but rather full of small wins, loud laughs and maybe a little dancing," he says, laughing. "It's great when my students try something new, help each other out, and say, 'This was the best day ever,' even if it's just because of extra recess."

In his free time, Bloom stays active with his husband and three boys, whether playing soccer, running, swimming, spending time outdoors, cooking together, hot air ballooning or traveling to new places. They also never turn down the opportunity to try new ice cream shops and donuts. ■



Kyle Bloom is inspired by elementary students' curiosity, sense of wonder, and how they approach each day eager to learn, ready to ask questions and enthused about exploring the world around them.

HOPEFULLY devoted

A classic line from the movie "The Princess Bride" comes after Vizzini keeps using the word "inconceivable" to mean pretty much anything he wants it to mean. Inigo Montoya finally has enough of it and replies, "You keep on using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."

There is a word used regularly in church settings that at times looks like this. It's "fellowship." When I was a kid, my family was regularly involved in a church, and I pretty much got the impression from how the adults talked that fellowship meant eating ice cream together. Even now, I could probably list a handful of ways the word gets tossed around. Fellowship is eating a meal together. Fellowship is laughing and enjoying ourselves together, either following a service or in a small group. Anytime we are in the same room with another person who believes as we do, that's fellowship, right? "We keep on using that word. I do not think it means what we think it means."

This really is not meant to be a rant at all, though I do have a passion for precision in language. The fact is, if you are a Christian, then coming to an understanding of the meaning of this word can have a great impact on your spiritual walk. It can lead you and those around you to live differently.

In the Bible, there is a passage early in the book of Acts which describes the early church not long after the ascension of Christ. Amid explosive growth in their numbers, we're told, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer." (Acts 2:42) Here, fellowship is the relationship, the partnership, the "we're united with one another because of this common belief" mindset. It wasn't something they did, it was something they were devoted to. This means they were devoted to the concerns and needs of one another. Burdens were shared. Necessities were collectively met. Joys were celebrated. No one was ever really on their own.

It is a great way to live. Do you take part in fellowship somewhere? Perhaps you attend a church but wouldn't describe your relationship with the others in that fellowship as a devoted one. Commit to this month adding one of the opportunities offered outside of the worship service to your schedule for the fall. ■



Information provided by Kevin Mayer, New Heights Church, 200 E. First Ave., Indianola, 515-442-5111.

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