

URBANDALE

SEPTEMBER 2025

Living

MAGAZINE

ROOM FOR

improvement

Residents share their home renovation experiences

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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 Joe Baumgarten

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.

After renovating their unfinished basement, Joe and Gail Kotval remodeled much of the rest of their home.

BEFORE



AFTER



AFTER



Becci Miller's closet did not fit her needs, so she had it gutted and then customized. She now has designated spaces for clothes, as well as features such as jewelry drawers and storage for her 100 pairs of shoes..

A space of her own

When Becci Miller moved to Urbandale two years ago for her corporate job at Enterprise Rent-A-Car, she was looking for the perfect home for herself and her beloved dog, Remi. She found a great house in Urbandale in a nice neighborhood and, importantly, a fenced-in backyard to let Remi roam. It was perfect.

Well... almost.

She tackled the outside of the house first, adding a white rock border around the foundation and inserting plants and shrubs. She planted some trees along the back lot line and replaced all of the drapes with motorized blinds for increased privacy. She buried all of the downspouts to improve water run-off.

Once the outside of the house was done, she turned her attention to the inside. First on her list: her closet.

"I ripped it out. It was not functional for me. I have a lot of shoes," she says, smiling.

She found Closets By Design, and owner Arielle Blazek made sure there was room for the more than 100 pairs of shoes Miller owns.

In addition to a dedicated space for her shoes, she also wanted special hanging racks that would accommodate her dresses, blazers and dress suits. The closet also includes jewelry trays, "which I have never had before but absolutely love now," she says. And that's not all. The closet has scarf racks, valet rods and pull-out hampers tucked into the built-ins "to keep things tidy until laundry day."

The process of tearing out the old closet and putting in the new one left the walls a mess.

BEFORE



"I hired Mark Sloan to patch, prime and paint the walls. I also had him put up the wallpaper. I've always wanted wallpaper in my closet," she says.

With the closet redesign accomplished, Miller turned her attention to the lower floor.

"It was like a sports bar with a large projector and multiple TVs," she says. "There were custom shelves that displayed football jerseys and signed helmets. It was all very dark wood. It was not a usable space for me. I hired a carpenter to add more shelves into the existing built-in and match the stain to the existing color."

Her plans for the space?

"Books. I have hundreds and hundreds of books," she says.

Even with all of these improvements, the house still does not match Miller's final vision.

She still plans to install floating shelves and more wallpaper on the main wall by the fireplace.

"I will also have the kitchen redone with a new stove, new countertops and a new sink," she says.

"Then, I will be done," she says.

AFTER



When remodeling her basement, Becci Miller, pictured with her dog, Remi, had additional shelving installed so she would have plenty of room for her books.

A fresh start

After nearly three decades in their family home, Gail and Joe Kotval were ready for a fresh start — a place that promised comfort, simplicity and a new chapter in their retirement. But, as they scoured the market for the perfect ranch with single-floor living and less yard work, nothing seemed quite right. Just as they began to wonder if their dream home existed, fate intervened. Their real estate agent called with news of a potential fit. The moment Gail stepped through the door, she knew: This was the one.

FEATURE

BEFORE



AFTER



Joe and Gail Kotval's unfinished basement was long and in need of being divided to fit their needs.

"I could see us living here right away," she says.

The Kotvals quickly realized their new home, while promising, required significant renovations to meet their needs.

The first project they tackled was to finish the basement.

"It was nothing but four walls and a lot of concrete. We actually liked that because it gave us the ability to build it the way we wanted," Gail says.

Like most ranches, the space is twice as long as it is wide.

"We could have put in a bowling alley down here," she laughs.

They divided the space in half lengthwise with a new wall. Nothing needed to be done to the half that held the furnace, washer, dryer and other utilities. The area gave them a great space for out-of-sight storage.

On the other side, they added a spare bedroom that was the same size as the master

bedroom on the first floor. To this, they added closets, a full bath and a large egress window for some natural light.

"We have company a lot, and this is a great space for them," Gail says.

They also created a comfortable entertainment area with a full-sized couch and a large-screen television.

"The basement remodel was a four-month project, but it came out exactly how we wanted it," Gail says.

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An addition to their home gave the Starks additional space they used for a pantry.



The next winter, the remodeling work moved upstairs. The living room, bedroom and hallway all received new carpeting. The hall bathroom was updated except for the tub. All the walls were repainted a lighter color, and the fireplace was modernized. New drapes were installed, and ceiling fans were replaced with more modern light fixtures. The doors and trim were updated to a lighter color.

"I really wanted to brighten everything up; it was so dark," Gail says.

Both projects were managed by their contractor, Jesse Bryngelson, also from Urbandale.

The Kotvals enjoy entertaining and say their remodeled home is great for doing so. They often host holiday gatherings for their large extended families.

"Last Thanksgiving, we had 34 people here, and everyone fit," Gail says proudly.

The 20-year project

Rob and Carol Stark have lived in their current home for 23 years. With an extensive background in home construction, Rob built most of the house himself. He also built the large free-standing garage in the adjacent lot, which they also own. Once the house was framed in, Rob walked Carol through for a tour. He showed her the bedrooms, the living room, the basement and, finally, the kitchen.

"Where is the walk-in pantry?" she asked.

"Ummm...", was Rob's reply.

Every year after, Carol would ask Rob about the pantry she wanted.

"Maybe next year" was the usual answer. And, so it went for the next 20 years.

Fast forward to 2025. The time had finally arrived.

"We got the hole punched through the north kitchen wall where a window used to be," Rob says. "I got some friends to come over, and we framed in the room and extended the roof."

The final room is 12-feet by 8-feet.

Once the addition was framed in, Rob hand-built the shelves, drywalled and framed in a window.

"I did everything but the electrical," he says. "That's not my gig."

Having waited patiently for 20 years, Carol has already started moving items in, even though the project is not yet 100% finished.

"I got tired of the chaos in the kitchen" she says.

Eventually, items like small kitchen appliances, canned goods, baking supplies and paper towels will take up residence in the new space. The Starks also make a homemade salsa using ingredients grown in their own backyard. The pantry will be perfect for storing that, Rob says.

Carol offers some advice to anyone planning a home renovation.

"When you are in the middle of a project like this, everything else is a mess. You have to be able to handle it. But I'm pretty close to being over it," she laughs.

"She's been very patient," Rob adds.

Not being content to rest on his laurels, Rob has more plans.

"We will extend the deck in the backyard and add on to the shop," he says.

No word on whether or not Carol's patience meter will reset before he starts. ■

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URBANDALE Lions celebrate 80 years

Eight decades of “We Serve”

In the summer of 1945, Gary Lenhart, a WHO radio announcer and Lions Club member from West Des Moines, talked with Urbandale resident and co-worker Clay Rusk about the advantages of having a Lions Club in a community. He offered to help Rusk organize a club in Urbandale, and Rusk was easily convinced. Together, they went to work to start the new organization.

On Sept. 14, 1945, the Lions Club of Urbandale was officially chartered. That makes this year the club’s 80th anniversary.

Over the past eight decades, the Urbandale Lions Club has played a vital role in the community. The club has supported projects such as vision screenings, the development of the Urbandale library through book sales and donations, taking tickets at school events, filming football games and supporting Eagle Scout projects — along with countless other local causes.

Fundraising has been central to the club’s work. Members have sold lightbulbs, brooms and even seafood to raise money. For many years, they directed parking at events such as golf tournaments and the Living History Run. Their two largest and longest-running fundraisers, however, have been the annual Homecoming Pancake Dinner and their participation in the Urbandale Fourth of July celebration.

The Pancake Dinner, first held in 1953, originally lasted all day. Today, it continues as a hearty pre-game dinner that remains a beloved community tradition. The club has also been active in Urbandale’s Fourth of July festivities for decades, including entering floats in the parade for many years.

In May 1976, the Urbandale Lions Club sponsored the new Urbandale Breakfast Lions. That same year, the Urbandale Lioness Club was chartered. While the Lioness Club has since disbanded, many of its members later joined the main club.

Today, the Urbandale Lions continue to serve in the spirit of Lionism through Kidsight screenings, Tissue Transport, vision and hearing aid support, and a variety of community and school initiatives. Over its 80 years, the club is estimated to have contributed nearly half a million dollars to civic causes, along with countless hours of volunteer service.

Ultimately, one thing has remained constant: the organization’s mission, “We Serve.”

“Where there has been a need, the Urbandale Lions have been there to address it,” says longtime member Edward “Pat” Finnerty. “I think [our 80 years] says that we are part of a long line of people that wanted to make their community a better place to live and raise their families. We are part of a group that has, for more than 80 years, stepped up and rather than talk about what they wanted for their community, they simply did it.” ■



Lions Park has been one of the club’s contributions to the community.

The Urbandale Lions Club meets the fourth Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Lions Park Ralph Whitten Shelter House. More information is available at urbandalelionsclub.org or on Facebook.

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.



URBANDALE COUNCIL RECAP



Mayor Andrew Weg and Staff, National Library Card Sign-Up Month

September 2, 2025 - Council Meeting

The Mayor and City Council met on Tuesday, September 2, and began with a series of special presentations. Two Urbandale firefighters—Lieutenant Cook and Driver/Engineer Klenk—were formally sworn into their new roles. Family, friends, and colleagues joined to celebrate their promotions.

Mayor Andrew Weg also issued two proclamations. The first recognized National Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15–Oct. 15), highlighting the contributions of Hispanic and Latino residents and the second proclaimed September as National Library Card Sign-Up Month, with library staff sharing details

about contests, programs, and the broader role of the Urbandale Public Library in supporting education and community connection.

The Council also approved updating the council meeting schedule for 2025, including a new 5:30 PM start time beginning Wednesday, October 22, 2025. You can watch all the City Council meetings on YouTube and find council agendas here.

August 19, 2025 - Council Meeting

At the Tuesday, August 19 meeting, the Mayor and City Council met, focusing mostly on infrastructure, public safety facilities, and water supply resilience.

Council approved a \$200,000 contract for bank stabilization work along Walnut Creek. The project will help strengthen creek banks, reduce erosion, and protect nearby property and infrastructure from the effects of flooding.

The Council approved a \$40,000 agreement with SVPA Architects for design work for needed renovations. The updates will modernize the station to better support firefighters and staff, ensuring the facility continues to meet community safety needs as the city grows.

The Urbandale Water Utility provided an update on the Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) Well, a key investment in long-term water security. By storing treated drinking water in an underground aquifer during wet seasons and recovering it during dry periods, the ASR Well will help ensure a stable and reliable water supply for residents well into the future. The project strengthens Urbandale's long-term water security and ties directly to sustainability goals.

You can watch all the City Council meetings on YouTube and find council agendas online at Urbandale.org.

MAERTENS appointed to partner at Flynn Wright

In the season of summer interns, Kiersten Maertens, a long-time Urbandale resident, may just be the best example of them all. In 2006, she walked through the doors of Flynn Wright as a public relations intern. Fast forward nearly 20 years later, and she's the agency's newest partner. Now that's career trajectory.

Maertens, Flynn Wright's vice president of account services, was named an agency partner effective July 10. She joins local business leaders Aaron Kennedy, Paul Schleuter, Sarah DeKock, Kyle Prendergast, Bridget Proctor and Jeff White on the agency's executive leadership team.

Maertens joined Flynn Wright in 2006 as a summer intern. After earning her bachelor's degree in communications and public relations from the University of Northern Iowa in 2006, she officially began her career at the agency in public relations and moved into an account service role in 2009.

It was in account services where her servant leadership and relationship building shone; she progressed through a variety of promotions within the agency, most recently being named vice president of account services in November 2024. Over the course of her tenure, Flynn Wright has grown from a team of 30 to 100 and has expanded to open an office in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and most, recently, Portland, Oregon. Maertens' leadership style has been key to growing the talent and skills of dozens of employees, working side-by-side with her colleagues to problem solve to the very end. From high level strategy to hands-on detail, Maertens is well-known for her ability to dive into projects and solve complex challenges.

"My joy comes from helping others be successful and thrive," Maertens said. "For nearly 20 years, I've helped Flynn Wright, our clients, and my team achieve personal and professional goals. It's incredibly rewarding. As Flynn Wright continues to grow, my goal is to foster an exceptional service-minded culture that challenges the status quo. To lead in this organization is incredible, and I'm honored to be part of it."

Her contributions to clients and local organizations go far beyond the corridors of Flynn Wright, benefiting the greater Des Moines community her family calls home. Maertens was recognized in 2024 as a Des Moines Business Record Forty Under 40 Honoree, acknowledging her as not only a trusted colleague, but a respected individual by her peers throughout the metro. ■



TRUE worship

The way loyal football fans reveal their love for their team differs greatly. So too, does the way professing Christ followers' worship (acknowledging God's worth) vary significantly. But not everyone does so properly.

In John chapter 4, while responding to a woman's spiritual interest, Jesus gave everyone a clearer picture of what constitutes true worship.

True worship is NOT about the right place. The Samaritans worshipped at Mt. Gerazim and the Jews in Jerusalem. Jesus said, "an hour is coming" — when He inaugurated the New Covenant at Calvary — when it won't matter where "you worship the Father" (John 4:21). Believers can worship God anywhere and should worship everywhere.

True worship is towards the right person — the Father (4:21b).

True worship comes from the right people. Jesus is not a relativist who affirms everyone's truth as equally valid. "You (Samaritans) worship what you do not know..." (John 4:22). The Samaritans were sincere but engaged in false — and therefore futile — worship of a god unknown by them. By contrast, prior to the New Covenant, the Jews were correct in their worship of the one true God — "we (Jews) worship what we know..." Jesus is not a universalist teaching that all religious systems lead to God but declared, "...salvation is from the Jews." They were first entrusted with God's message of salvation from mankind's deserved punishment for our natural rebellion against God (Romans 3:1-2). Undeserved and unearned salvation available to all people comes "from the Jews" in the person of Jesus Christ, Abraham's descendant (Galatians 3:8).

True worship has the right parts. "But the hour...is now here" — with the arrival of the Messiah — to worship the Father in human spirit and in God's truth (John 4:23). True worship is not superficial external demonstration but sincere internal (spirit) devotion toward the Father (Psalm 51:16-17). "In truth" is worship consistent with God's character and written word.

"True worshipers" engage in sincere adoration of, and sacrificial action for, God, whose love in rescuing all who believe in Christ from eternal damnation controls our lives (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). In response to God's mercy, we give generously, share Christ boldly, serve in our church faithfully, pray sincerely and love others selflessly.

True worship is only possible through faith in the right person — Jesus Christ. The woman to whom Jesus spoke knew "that Messiah (Savior) is coming" (John 4:25). Jesus said, "I who speak to you am He" (John 4:26). Only if she or anyone else believes in Him sincerely will they be forgiven and live eternally (John 3:36) enabling them to worship God truly.

True worship matters because the Father seeks and requires it (John 4:23-24). ■



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RECENT legislation answers a huge estate planning question

The federal estate tax exclusion limit will be extended.

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

Federal estate tax is a tax on the transfer of property at death and is levied on the total value of assets in the estate. Federal estate tax is applied to estates that exceed the lifetime estate tax exemption, also called the “unified credit.” In 2017, legislation increased the federal estate tax exemption amount to \$10,000,000, adjusted for inflation.

The exemption amount for federal estate



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

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

This means that, in 2026, an individual can transfer \$15,000,000 (increased from \$13,990,000 in 2025) free of any federal estate, gift, or generation-skipping taxes. A married

couple can transfer a combined \$30,000,000, increased from \$27,980,000 in 2025. This amount is subject to an annual cost-of-living adjustment, so the \$15,000,000 limit may adjust upwards in the future.

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

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

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STATE FAIR is over... back to the books

Once the State Fair has ended, and the animals have left the barn, we prepare for the routine of going back to school, preparing the boat for winter and organizing our life for the holidays. As the leaves begin to change and temperatures drop, fall is the perfect time to evaluate your financial situation and plan ahead. Now is a key window to make smart decisions that can reduce tax burdens, improve savings, and prepare for the upcoming holiday season. Here are some practical financial tips to be considering.



1. Review your retirement accounts: This year has been one filled with volatility, and your lifelines most certainly were affected. Have you reviewed your investment design? Your investment portfolios should have transitioned away from treasuries and bonds earlier this year, and with the FED meeting in September, we are likely to see another round of market changes due to interest rate considerations. Also, consider whether a ROTH IRA contribution may be best. The tax environment in retirement is still something to be aware of. If you're already retired and drawing from your retirement accounts, be sure to calculate your Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs). Missing an RMD can result in hefty penalties, so it's important to stay on track, especially if you have multiple accounts. One of the most common errors we have experienced is someone pulling the correct amount out of their accounts...but from the wrong account number.

2. Assess health care and Medicare plans: Open enrollment for Medicare typically runs from Oct. 15 to Dec. 7. This period is crucial for evaluating whether your current plan still meets your needs. Review your health care coverage, including prescription drug plans, to see if any changes are necessary. Even if you're satisfied with your current plan, comparing options could help you find better coverage or save money. Approaching 65? Make sure you have initiated the conversation with your financial advisor on these health insurance needs.

3. Plan for holiday spending: The holidays can be a joyful — and expensive — time of year. Creating a holiday budget now can help you avoid overspending. Make a list of expected expenses, including gifts, travel, food and decorations. Consider using cash or a debit card to avoid racking up credit card debt that can follow you into the new year. I know that many of our clients earmark their RMDs for assisting with this expense at this time of year.

4. Evaluate your estate and legal documents: Fall is a good reminder to revisit your estate planning documents. Do you have a will, power of attorney, and health care directive in place? Have there been any major life changes that might affect your beneficiaries or plans? Keeping these documents up to date ensures your wishes are clear and legally protected.

Consider meeting with your financial advisor or attorney to ensure everything is in order, especially if it has been a few years since your last review.

By taking proactive steps this fall, you can strengthen your financial well-being and enjoy the season with peace of mind. A little planning now can lead to a more secure and stress-free winter. ■

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

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Your Retirement, Right on Schedule

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SEPTEMBER



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MEET DJ Barker

For the joy of impacting students

DJ Barker began his journey into education when he was a teenager. In middle school and high school, his desire to have a positive impact on the lives of young people led him to volunteer at Sunday school at his church and at youth camps. When the time came to consider his future career, one that would continue to make positive impacts on the lives of kids, teaching seemed like the natural choice.

Now in his 12th year of teaching second grade at Des Moines Christian School, Barker reflects on the path that led him to that role.

"I student taught at Des Moines Christian School, and I fell in love with the school community, the staff and the teachers there," he recalls. "I looked for a position there when I graduated, but there weren't any prospects. I spent the following summer volunteering at a camp in the wilderness where there wasn't much cell phone or technological access. I put finding a teaching job in God's hands."

On the weekends, Barker would be able to check his emails, and, at the end of the summer, his cooperating teacher from his time student-teaching moved to another position, and Barker received an email with an offer and chance for the position of second grade teacher at Des Moines Christian School.

"It was neat to see the timing of it," Barker shares.

Barker appreciates teaching second graders because they are old enough to be a bit independent but are young enough to still be excited about being at school and learning.

"I try to take the energy of 7-year-olds learning and throw it in to my teaching," Barker says.

To make the classroom a fun place to learn, he incorporates dressing up like characters which he refers to as his "cousins" about once a week to teach the content lesson for that day. As a Minion, he challenges his students with academic escape rooms. As a spy, he sends his students on math spy missions. He shows up as a sheriff that catches grammar criminals, and as a scientist to teach science lessons. On May 4 each year, he comes as a Jedi.

The journey to education almost ended before it began for Barker, but the influence and encouragement from a fellow educator kept him on that path.

"When I was in my first year of college at my very first observation in a classroom, I was told I wouldn't be a good teacher because of the level of investment I sought to make," Barker shares. "I was told teachers were just there to give information to students. I almost dropped out altogether but was encouraged to give it one more chance. I went to Ankeny Christian Academy to observe. Before I left, Jason Parmerlee, a fellow teacher, told me he saw the impact I sought to make and that I'd make a great teacher one day. It was almost verbatim the opposite of what I was told at the other school."

Over the years, other peers have noticed Barker and his desire to positively impact students. Last year, he was awarded Teacher of the Year at his school, a peer-nominated award for being outstanding among his peers.

"Nothing is more fulfilling or that I'd rather do than help students understand things like basic math, learn to read better, and, because I teach at a Christian school, learn more about faith." ■



About once a week, DJ Barker dresses up as a character to add a twist to his second-grade lessons.



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URBANDALE Public Library news

September is Library Card Sign-Up Month

Show us how you use the library for a chance to win some library swag and a gift card. Share a selfie with your library card, book, T-shirt, or recent visit to the library and email uploutreach@urbandale.org or tag us on social media @UrbandaleLibrary.

Urbandale Public Library

3520 86th St., Urbandale
515-278-3945
www.urbandalelibrary.org
Monday – Thursday: 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Friday – Saturday: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Sunday: noon to 6 p.m.

Community Mosaic

Check out collaborative artwork on display near the front desk showcasing the community's creativity in honor of Urbandale's 70th Fourth of July celebration. Residents of all ages were invited to design and decorate popsicle sticks — each one a unique expression of identity, imagination and pride. When joined together, these individual pieces form a colorful mosaic surrounding Urbandale's City flag emblem, symbolizing the unity of friends, families and neighbors. Just as each stick contributes to the whole, each person helps shape the spirit of Urbandale — 70 years strong and still growing together.

Library T-shirts

Buy an official Raygun T-shirt to show your support of the library. A portion of the proceeds are donated to the Urbandale Public Library Foundation. You can view the four available options on our website under Library Foundation in the "About Us" section.

Banned Books Week

Banned Books Week will take place in libraries across the country from Oct. 5-11. With the escalation in attempts to ban books in libraries, schools and bookstores around the country, George Orwell's cautionary tale "1984" serves a prescient warning about the dangers of censorship. This year's theme "Censorship Is So 1984. Read for Your Rights" reminds us that the right to read belongs to all of us, that censorship has no place in contemporary society, and that we must defend our rights.

"Banned Together" Film Screening and Discussion

Join us for a film screening of "Banned Together" on Thursday, Oct. 2 at 6 p.m. This documentary highlights the power of organizing against book bans and follows three students and their adult allies as they fight to reinstate 97 books suddenly pulled from their school libraries. As they evolve from local to national activists — meeting with bestselling/banned authors, politicians, Constitutional experts, and more — the film reveals the dark forces behind the accelerating wave of book bans in the U.S. A discussion will follow the conclusion of the screening. ■

GET your funeral arrangements done now

The fair is over, and the kids and grandkids are back to school. Life is back on schedule, and it feels good. Now that things are "back to normal," it is time to get those things done that you have put off these past few months. One of those things might be addressing your final arrangements.



We hear it all the time: "I am so glad to have this taken care of." I can certainly tell you that no one ever regrets that their loved one planned ahead when the time comes that the services of a funeral home are needed.

Planning your final arrangements begins with a simple conversation and can be a pleasant process. Planning ahead also allows you time to give the thoughtful consideration that these important decisions deserve.

There are many options to think about when addressing your final arrangements, and there are even prepayment options available to those who wish to have their final financial obligations handled in advance.

An advanced planning consultant can walk you through these choices and options.

Make it a goal to get this off your "to-do" list before the snow flies... or you fly south for the winter. Reach out to your funeral home of choice and schedule a meeting to get your prearrangements in place. You will be glad you did. ■

Information provided by Scott Eriksen, Director of Hamilton's Advanced Planning, Hamilton's Funeral Home, 605 Lyon St., Des Moines, 515-697-3670, www.HamiltonsFuneralHome.com.

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LOCAL efforts respond to high nitrate levels

Lawn watering ban raised awareness of water quality.

In August, 600 Iowans gathered at Drake University, concerned about high nitrate levels in their water. Following a two-year study for Polk County, 16 scientists reported on the health of the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers, the sources of much of the water used in central Iowa. They found the rivers had one of the highest nitrate levels in the nation, often exceeding the EPA's 1992 limit of 10 milligrams per liter, with 80% of the contamination attributed to agricultural sources. Nitrates above 10 mg/L are considered hazardous to pregnant women and newborns.

Central Iowa Water Works (CIWW) processes river water to keep nitrates below the EPA standard. Heavy rain raised levels beyond the limit, leading to a summer lawn watering ban. The ban allowed CIWW time to lower nitrate levels, meeting the region's essential water needs. To prepare for the future, it will invest \$344 million in system upgrades, despite already having the world's largest nitrate removal system.

Professor Jerald Schnoor from the University of Iowa suggested rising cancer rates in Iowa could warrant lowering the allowable nitrate level, emphasizing that "the current standard is somewhat outdated," citing health concerns at levels as low as 3 to 5 mg/L.

To minimize lawn watering bans, the Urbandale Water Utility plans to build an aquifer storage and recovery well. Urbandale will purchase treated water from CIWW when demand is low and store it for use in peak usage times. Neil Weiss, general manager for Urbandale Water, hopes this will enhance distribution reliability and drought resilience.

Local businesses are also affected by the nitrate issue. Aaron Graff from Culligan Home Water reported an increase in reverse osmosis systems since the water ban was implemented. Graff noted, "Reverse osmosis reduces nitrates in residential water by as much as 80%."

Conversely, sales for A+ Lawn and Landscape's irrigation systems have fallen by more than 50%. Specialist Ethan Dykstra recommends adding Wi-Fi smart controllers and rain sensors to irrigation systems to reduce water usage by up to 40%.

Urbandale residents Bruce and Anne Hoffmaster have adopted a natural approach,



Bruce and Anne Hoffmaster at their home on Patricia Drive in Urbandale.



Lawn watering ban in Urbandale was lifted on Aug. 7.

replacing their lawn with pollinator plants and native species that require less water. They collect rainwater in barrels and have never needed to water their lawn. Bruce stated, "Our goal is to work with nature, not against it."

Reducing nitrates in Iowa's water is a challenging task. Despite growing concerns, Iowa plans to reduce the number of nitrate monitoring stations from 80 to 20. In August, the federal government removed the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers from the list of impaired waterways, thereby eliminating funding for cleanup. Elliot Anderson, a scientist



Bruce and Anne Hoffmaster continue to replant their lawn with native species and pollinator plants.

on the Polk County water report, said, "This is a step in the wrong direction, but there are many steps we can take" to make water safe. ■

Wayne Bruns is a resident of Urbandale and a volunteer with www.sustainableurbandale.org.

SCHNOTALA embodies giving spirit

Serving casseroles with love

“To show great love for God and our neighbor, we need not do great things. It is how much love we put in the doing that makes our offering something beautiful for God.” — Mother Teresa



Sharon Schnotala would, no doubt, shake off any attempt at comparing her to Mother Teresa. Yet, those who know her, and those she so lovingly serves, would nod their heads in agreement: She embodies the loving and giving spirit that Mother Teresa exemplified.

Sharon is a member of the St. Pius X Outreach Committee. Once every other month, the committee organizes the parish to bake egg casseroles for the Salvation Army outreach program. They collect almost 50 casseroles and put them into the Salvation Army’s freezer. Each morning, the Salvation Army heats up the casseroles and loads them into its delivery truck. They make five stops around the Des Moines area, where the homeless live in tents. Sharon accompanies the truck and delivers the meal to each person with a warm word and a loving smile.

“At first, I was unsure that I could do this, but I immediately fell in love with the people,” Sharon says. “This will be the only warm meal that some of them will get all week.”

Over the years, Sharon has gotten to know some of the people she serves.

“One lady on my first stop loves blueberry muffins. One man on another stop gets meals for others in his camp that cannot come to the truck in person.”

The dish is always the same: eggs, Bisquick, milk, cheese and either hamburger or sausage baked into a casserole.

“But the greatest ingredient is love,” Sharon adds.

After a few times serving the meals, Sharon came to an amazing discovery: many of the homeless had dogs and cats living with them in their tents.

“At first, I thought, ‘Now why in the world would a homeless person want a pet?’ “

After asking a few questions, she discovered that the animals were unwanted pets that were abandoned in the woods. The homeless find them and take them in.

“Sadly, I learned that some of the people would take the food that we had given them and give half of it to their hungry pets. When I discovered this, I reached out to the local Animal Rescue League for help. Soon, we had cat and dog food to offer as well. It was a win-win for both the people and the pets.”

The ARL also provides free veterinary care for the animals.

While the homeless patrons feel the love that Sharon serves with the



Ryan Mehalovich of Edward Jones presents the Neighbor Spotlight certificate to Sharon Schnotala.

meal, they are quick to return that love.

“They are always polite. They say thank you, and often a ‘God bless you.’ Some of them even take the time to ask how I am doing and how my day is going so far.” ■



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HOW TO CHOOSE KITCHEN AND BATH DESIGN

Trends in home design come and go, but the basic look of modern kitchens and baths tends to remain consistent, with some variations to complement the style of the home. Granite or quartz countertops, stainless steel and hardwood floors retain their popularity.

Any builder or real estate agent will tell you that upgraded, stylish kitchens and bathrooms are the most in-demand areas of a home to remodel for your own comfort and pleasure or to sell your home.

Kitchen and bath remodeling can improve your home's value and increase its charm. This is especially true if your current kitchen and baths are dated and showing their age. And while remodeling can be costly, these are areas where you don't want to cut corners. After all, you use your kitchen and bath every day you are in your home.

If it's time for some updates in your home, here are some things to consider with regard to kitchen and bath remodeling.

FUNCTION

Functionality is paramount. What exactly will you be doing in this room? Do you eat in your kitchen or in a dining room? Some people get dressed in their bathroom, while others put on clothing in their bedrooms.

DÉCOR

Look for inspiration. Leaf through home design magazines to find appealing designs. Make notes on what you like most about each design scheme. Neutral paint may open up opportunities for a variety of decorating options. It could make it easier to change the decor in the future. If you sell your home, it allows

potential buyers to visualize their own preferences in that space. Of course, any room you design must be coordinated with the design of other rooms in your home. If your house has a contemporary, modern or traditional design, you will want the kitchen and bath to blend with that decor.

BUDGET

Remodeling can be expensive. Experts recommend you spend up to 20% of your home's value on remodeling the kitchen and less than that on remodeling the bath. Working with a company that specializes in kitchen and bath remodeling can save money in the long run. They will have designers who can assist with design and product selection. Many times, they will also have carpenters who are employees to handle all the tear out and installation. ■

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HOW TO CHOOSE GARAGE DOORS

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

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

THE LOOK

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

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

INSULATION

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

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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

Note about calendar events:

This magazine is delivered the third 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.

**Halloween -
Trick or Treat**
Friday, Oct. 31
Urbandale
celebrates Beggars'
Night on Oct. 31.



5-cent redeemable cans and bottles drop off

St. Pius Parish Center, 3663 66th St., Urbandale

Five-cent redeemable cans and bottles can be dropped off from 9-11 a.m., the collections are the second Saturday every month through December.

Self-Defense Class

Tuesday, Oct. 7, 6 p.m.

West Des Moines Elks Lodge, 2060 N.W. 94th St., Clive

The West Des Moines Elks Lodge in Clive is hosting a self-defense class taught by Blackbelt Hall of Fame inductee Ray Boyer. This event is free and open to the public. This class will help participants focus on what to look for in terms of their surroundings so they can get themselves out of a potentially threatening situation. Boyer says learning the signs that something is not quite right and avoiding a situation altogether is key to self-defense. He will also teach participants some simple self-defense techniques to help get out of a situation if they are attacked.

Urbandale Historical Society Programs at the Library

Various dates

Urbandale Public Library, 3520 86th St., Urbandale

- Oct. 12, 2 p.m. History of St. Pius X and St. Gabriel Monastery by Joanne Kuster and Msgr. Beeson.
- Nov. 9, 2 p.m. Open
- Dec. 14, 2 p.m. Christmas Open House at Olmsted/Urban House

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. Reserve your tickets at martinifest.dmcityview.com now so you can avoid registration lines at the event. ■



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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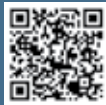
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WELLNESS

By Dr. Jody England

WHY choose nutritional wellness?

The mind is a powerful tool that can work for or against you. Whole food supplements and homeopathic remedies fill in nutrient gaps to allow the mind to function optimally. In addition to supplements, it is important to learn about foods and toxins, which empowers the patient to avoid future downfalls.



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Just like driving a car extremely fast burns more fuel, high stresses in the body burn more nutrients (fuel). If you don't have enough nutrients, your body will take them from other body parts, like bones, muscles and teeth, making them weaker unless the nutrients are replenished. Deficiencies may lead to disease over time. Nutritional biofeedback determines what nutrients would be beneficial to the body at that time of need to keep it from becoming depleted.

Choose to be well for a lifetime. ■

Information provided by Dr. Jody England, DC, Urbandale Chiropractic, 10437 Hickman Road, 515-278-4594, www.urbandalechiro.com.

HEALTH

By Annette Smith

FALLS aren't a concern just for seniors

When most people hear the word "falls," they immediately think of older adults. While it is true that fall risk increases with age, balance issues can affect people at any stage of life. Even younger, active individuals may notice moments of unsteadiness — like tripping on uneven ground, feeling off-balance in dim lighting, or experiencing sudden dizziness or vertigo. These are all signs that your body's balance system may need some extra care.



Our ability to stay steady depends on three main systems working together: vision, the inner ear (vestibular system) and the strength and coordination of our muscles and joints. If one of these systems is impaired, your balance can suffer. For example, vision changes, ear infections or even weak core and leg muscles may increase your risk of stumbling or falling.

The good news is that balance can be improved with practice, just like strength or flexibility. Simple exercises — such as standing on one foot, walking heel-to-toe, or practicing gentle head movements — can strengthen your stability. These activities train your body to respond better in daily situations, helping to reduce fall risk. By paying attention to your balance now, you'll be investing in your safety and confidence for the future. ■

Information provided by Annette Smith, Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy, 10888 Hickman Road, Suite 2B, Clive, Iowa, 50325, 515-520-8037, mountainlaurelpt.com.



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How to Ease Back-to-school Anxiety



1. Provide a safe space for children to share feelings.

Create regular one on one times with little distraction. Creative activities like playing and drawing in a low-key environment will encourage children to express their feelings to you.

2. Listen, listen, listen.

Let your child lead conversations. Resist the urge to do all the talking. When it is your turn to talk, remain calm and speak kindly and reassuringly.

3. Recognize that anxiety is normal.

Let your child know that being anxious or nervous is something that everyone goes through from time to time. Remind children that when they have a problem you are there to help.

4. Encourage kids to pace themselves.

Some teenagers particularly can become overextended. Encourage them to slow down and teach time management skills at an early age.

5. Maintain a normal daily routine.

Aim for your children to wake up and go to bed at the same time each day. Stay hydrated and keep up with a healthy diet. Encourage daily physical activity outside of school.

Consult your pediatrician if your child shows any of the following behaviors:

1. Has a significant change in sleep or eating habits.
2. Has repetitive, self-destructive behaviors such as hair-pulling or skin-pinning.
3. Withdraws from family, friends or activities.
4. Shows excessive worry about the future or needs constant reassurance.
5. Talks about self-harm or suicide.



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AM Exchange

Urbandale Chamber AM
Exchange was held Aug. 26
at Hungry Boyz.



Mark Courter and Jayden Moore



LeAnn Thongvanh and Pat Pithan



Meg Knapper and Keith Piscitello



Melisha Pals and Cameron Hansen



Kyle Lee and Josh Larson



Tim Gootee and Chris Jones



Allison Peet, Rachel Reavis and Julie Deutmeyer



Suzanne Ryan and Jay Bowen



Tony Ekman and Sandee Cook



Steve Doughty and Robert Seaberg



Anne Triplett and Kelly Troxel

OUT & ABOUT



Jeff Harder and Shane Brinx at the West Metro Golf Par Tee Aug. 28 at Beaver Creek Golf Course.



Kenny Vanderpol and Jeff Weeks at the West Metro Golf Par Tee Aug. 28 at Beaver Creek Golf Course.



Beverly Sherlock and Cathy West at the West Metro Golf Par Tee Aug. 28 at Beaver Creek Golf Course.



Jill Havick and Linda Winget at the West Metro Golf Par Tee Aug. 28 at Beaver Creek Golf Course.



Mark Courter, David Russell, Laura Todd, Kris Howard and Debborah Harp at the West Metro Golf Par Tee Aug. 28 at Beaver Creek Golf Course.



Daniel Timmons and Jeff Lohmeier at the West Metro Golf Par Tee Aug. 28 at Beaver Creek Golf Course.



Jenna Jensen, Kristin Coggeshall and Megan Cowden at the Urbandale Chamber AM Exchange, held Aug. 26 at Hungry Boyz.



Josie McTaggart and Sarah Ingles at the Urbandale Chamber AM Exchange, held Aug. 26 at Hungry Boyz.



David Russell and Nicole Berger at the Urbandale Chamber AM Exchange, held Aug. 26 at Hungry Boyz.



Jay Mathes and Bryan Moon at the Urbandale Chamber AM Exchange, held Aug. 26 at Hungry Boyz.



Tom Triplett and Keith Riden at the Urbandale Chamber AM Exchange, held Aug. 26 at Hungry Boyz.



Hannah Schau and Mandi Godfredsen at the Urbandale Chamber AM Exchange, held Aug. 26 at Hungry Boyz.

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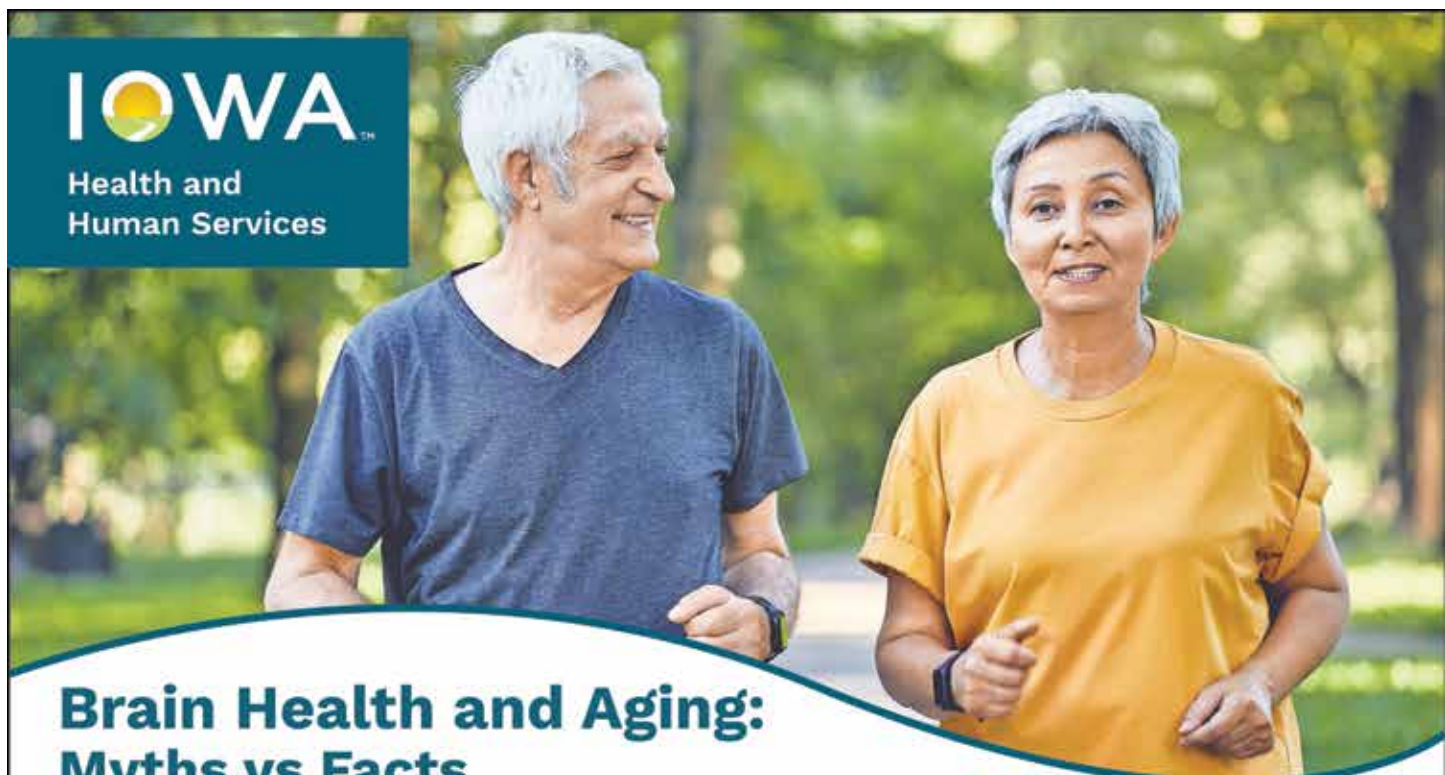
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Health and
Human Services



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.

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