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NOVEMBER 2025

Living

'Tis the season of

gratitude

Residents share stories
of thankfulness.

Honoring those who served
VETERANS SALUTE

Parmesan garlic focaccia bread
RECIPE

Miller finds meaning in giving back
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WELCOME

FOCUSING on gratitude

Gratitude. It's such a simple word with such a complex meaning. Defining it is difficult to do without using the words "thankful" or "grateful." It is a feeling of appreciation for someone or something.

The word gratitude comes from the Latin word "gratus," which means "pleasing" or "thankful."

As Thanksgiving time rolls around again this year, we often think of gratitude and what we are truly thankful for.

When asked, most of us would immediately respond with family, friends or good health. And, certainly, those are all things we should be grateful for.

Then, there are some things we too often take for granted that we should also be grateful for. A job that provides us with a steady income. Safety in our streets and in our communities. A quality education system. The freedom to practice the religion of our choice. Access to modern medicine. Clean water and clean air.

Yes, we strive to improve all these things, and we should. But, we sometimes need to slow down and reflect on how good we actually have it right now, too. We don't need our parents or grandparents to tell us how much easier things are today. If we are being honest, we already know.

Unfortunately, with all these modern improvements, we are also facing serious distractions that can take it all away. Drug and alcohol addictions. Excessive gambling. Overeating. Gluttony of all sorts. I have often quoted legendary Iowa high school wrestling coach Al DeLeon, who said, "A little bit of everything is good; too much of one thing is bad."

So, take a deep breath and look around you right now. Then show some appreciation to the people who created scenarios so you can truly enjoy all this world offers us. Think about the things in your life that you are grateful for. Observe the beauty of something you encounter every day. Thank some people for the positive influences they have had on you. Do something kind for another person. Meditate or pray with a focus on giving thanks. And, most importantly, pay attention to the smallest things in your life that bring you joy and peace.

Have a terrific Tuesday, and, as always, I thank you for reading. ■

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A photograph of four people standing in front of a decorated Christmas tree and a large American flag. From left to right: a man in a blue polo shirt and cap, a man in a black jacket and red shirt, a woman in a black jacket, and a man in a black jacket. They are all smiling. The Christmas tree is decorated with lights and ornaments. The American flag is draped in the background. Large, colorful balloons are on the floor in front of them.

'Tis the season of *gratitude*

Residents share stories
of thankfulness.

By Jackie Wilson

This time of year encourages us to be grateful for our blessings: family, friends, health, a warm home, festive meals and gatherings, and so much more. Some find ourselves thankful for an unexpected helping hand when we most need it. From a neighbor shoveling the sidewalk to a nonprofit offering supplies and hope, we often see the spirit of kindness around us. And, some are motivated by their gratefulness to pay it forward, spreading the holiday spirit even farther.

Eric Moorman (red shirt) with fellow veterans Randy Steig (left) and, far right, Wallace Dawkins, present gifts to an Orchard Place representative for needy children.

A word cloud shaped like a vinyl record. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with the largest words being 'HOPE', 'Heal', 'Learn', 'Hip Hop', 'Win', 'Thrive', 'Empower', and 'Communicate'. The center of the record features a logo for 'GIVING YOUTH A VOICE' and 'ARTICULATE'. The logo is a circular emblem with a microphone in the center, surrounded by the text 'GIVING YOUTH A VOICE' and 'ARTICULATE'. The words in the word cloud are in various sizes and orientations, creating a dynamic and energetic feel. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a vinyl record sleeve.

West Des Moines - Jordan Creek *Living* magazine 5

outreach.

"I'm grateful for the legacy we inherited and for everyone who is doing this type of work. If the stakes weren't so high, I wouldn't be doing it. My life is fabulous," he reflects. "We value everyone who is making the city a better place."

Grateful for the little things

When Gretchen Burch of West Des Moines was diagnosed in 2017 with breast cancer, she feared how it might affect her life.

After surviving and her recovery, she experienced gratitude for the little things. During her first round of chemotherapy, she felt winded and unable to walk down the block or go to the mall.

"Not to sound cliché, but I became grateful for the simple ability to go for a walk on a sunny day, enjoy the blue skies and smell the fresh-cut grass," she reflects.

Because of the gratitude Burch felt for Can Do Cancer, she gives back to others as a patient partner in similar situations. Can Do Cancer is an organization that supports breast cancer patients, providing support during a time of uncertainty.

"I remember receiving my blue welcome bag and thinking, 'This is all for me and my family? I don't even know who these folks are, but they are here supporting me,'" she explains. "It gave me a sense of comfort, showing that kindness is still present and comes when least expected."

After her cancer diagnosis, it is her mission to live in the moment.

"It's so easy to take everyday activities and people for granted. I'm grateful for time spent with family. Making memories is more important than ever. Tomorrow is never guaranteed."

She appreciates quality time with loved ones.

"Someone once told me at the beginning of my cancer journey to remove all of the negative people and things from my life and surround myself with positivity. At the time, I thought it was silly yet realized my time and energy is important. The energy goes much farther when it is spent in a positive way and with positive people. I am grateful for that piece of advice," she reflects. "I think that has made me a better and more productive human being."

Her motto is simple: Treat others the same way you would like to be treated.

"A simple thank you, a smile or taking the time to ask how they are doing can show that person that they matter and are important. An



As Gretchen Burch completed breast cancer treatments, she made a bucket list to motivate her. One thing she wanted to do was attend a NASCAR race to relive memories of her father taking her to races. Later, her son surprised her with a race experience at the Iowa Speedway.

act of kindness could turn that person's day around."

She suggests appreciating every moment.

"Make a bucket list and start checking the boxes. Work will always be there, your house will always need cleaning, but you only get this one life, so live it," she exclaims.

Veterans of Valley Junction

For veterans living in West Des Moines, a place dedicated to serving and providing veterans with resources has been a longtime goal for veteran Eric Moorman.

Moorman is the post commander for VFW Post 8879 in West Des Moines. He recently formed a nonprofit, Veterans of Valley Junction, Inc. The board consist of four veterans and three civilians.

Moorman formed the organization to better serve veterans. Currently, the VFW owns a building in Valley Junction and rents it out to G. Migs 5th Street Pub, making income from the rent.

The proposed building would serve all military veterans, including Legion members and others. Moorman, who is a Marine Gulf War disabled veteran, says having a dedicated spot for veterans is important.

"It's all about camaraderie and respect.

Some veterans don't have time to belong to a club such as the VFW or Legion. This gives

them a different way to associate with other veterans and be part of a group," he explains.

Spending time with other veterans is comforting and healing.

"We have like experiences that are different than civilians. A lot of veterans saw a lot of bad things and experienced near death. They struggle with PTSD," he explains.

Veterans can feel less alone if they are around supportive people.

"We don't call it therapy, but just talking over a cup of coffee or beer can make their anxiety level go down," he explains. "They realize they aren't the only ones who feel this way."

They are currently searching for an existing building in the Valley Junction area. The space will be open to the public, and it will offer veteran-based programs, workshops, meals and support for veterans in need.

Last year, VFW Post 8879 provided 22 holiday meals and gift baskets for veterans. Their poppy donations and other fundraising efforts assist numerous veteran and community needs.

Moorman, who was a Des Moines police officer for 30 years, is passionate about helping his fellow veterans.

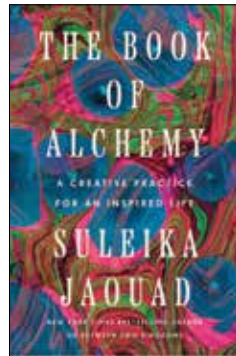
"I'm a doer. A lot of veterans need extra camaraderie and support," he says. "We're hoping the new place can provide that." ■

'The Book of Alchemy: A Creative Practice for an Inspired Life'

I would love to tell you that I'm a lifelong journaler and that I have reams of my thoughts ready to burn at my funeral. Alas, instead I have boxes of journals I've started but never could maintain the habit for more than a week or two. This time, though, I think I've found the secret ingredient.

During the pandemic, the author began to work through her isolation by starting a journaling group that quickly grew into this lovely book of creative joy, encouragement and insight. From this social media phenomenon, Jaouad has taken 100 prompts/essays from the likes of Hanif Abdurraqib, Salman Rushdie, George Saunders, Gloria Steinem, Jia Tolentino and many more and turned them into a collection for even the most scattered of creatives to use as a spark.

Here I am, nearly 100 days later, and I can't stop recommending this book to anyone feeling stifled, broken, lonely or disengaged. There is a lot of humanity in these pages and a lot of hope that doesn't read like saccharine self-help. This is easily my most recommended book of the year. ■ — Review by Julie Goodrich



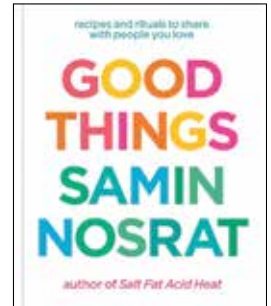
By Suleika Jaouad
4/25/25
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Random House

'Good Things: Recipes and Rituals to Share with People You Love'

The photos, the recipes, the remarkably lovely and thoughtful musings on life and the power of eating with loved ones. This is a gorgeous book from cover to cover. I think it is my favorite in a long list of excellent modern cookbooks. It is testament to the value of trusting your instincts and tastes while also providing real recipes that I've not found in any other general cookbook.

There is an obvious cadence to the recipes and stories in this book. The author talks about her wildly popular first book, "Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat," and the creative burnout she experienced after her fame rose. In this book, she leans into the comfort of family and the familiar, including the Persian recipes she grew up on. I learned a great deal from her first book about cooking as a whole. In this book, it feels more like I learned about the value good food adds to our lives.

This would be an ideal gift for anyone just starting out in their cooking journey, or even a connoisseur of great recipes. It has a little something for everyone, especially if, like me, cooking for friends is your love language. ■ — Review by Julie Goodrich



By Samin Nosrat
9/16/25
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FINDING balance in caregiving

Discover the benefits of adult day services.

Caring for a loved one is deeply meaningful, yet it can also be one of life's greatest challenges. Between work, appointments and home responsibilities, many caregivers find themselves running on empty. Adult day services can help, offering daytime support for loved ones and welcome relief for caregivers.



What are adult day services?

Adult day services provide care, structure and connection for adults who need assistance with daily activities, face safety risks when left alone, or simply enjoy being around others. Attendance can range from one day a week to daily participation, depending on family needs. While many participants live with dementia, a diagnosis isn't required.

Safe, engaging and reassuring

Adult day programs are built on safety and engagement. Participants enjoy supervised activities in a secure, welcoming setting, and families gain peace of mind knowing their loved one is thriving.

One daughter shared, "My mom was becoming isolated at home while I tried to balance caring for her and working full-time. Once she started adult day, her mood lifted, and I finally felt like I had some breathing room."

More than "something to do"

Quality adult day programs support the whole person through:

- Social opportunities that encourage connection and purpose
- Nutritious meals and snacks
- Cognitive and physical activities that foster well-being
- A caring, secure environment

Why families choose adult day

Many families discover adult day services only after experiencing burnout. But exploring early can prevent insurmountable stress and strengthen relationships. Participants enjoy engagement and connection, while caregivers gain time, balance, and confidence their loved one is cared for.

Take the first step

If you're navigating the challenges of caregiving, consider adult day services in your area. These programs provide the support your loved one deserves as well and the reassurance you need to be at your best. ■

Aaron Wheeler is Vice President of Home and Community-Based Services for WesleyLife, which provides health and well-being services for older adults — including adult day services in Des Moines and Newton. To learn more, visit wesleylife.org.

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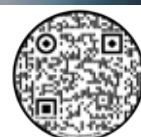
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PARMESAN garlic focaccia bread is a slice of comfort

This month, I share another recipe from my daughter, Samantha. She loves to make all kinds of bread. Few things make a kitchen feel more welcoming than the aroma of freshly baked bread, and parmesan garlic focaccia delivers that comfort in every bite. Golden and crisp on the outside yet soft and airy inside, this Italian favorite is elevated with the irresistible pairing of roasted garlic and nutty parmesan cheese. It is the kind of bread that feels special but is surprisingly simple to make at home. Serve as a side with soups and pastas, cut into squares for an appetizer board, or enjoy warm right out of the pan. Focaccia is versatile and crowd pleasing. The drizzle of olive oil, a sprinkling of herbs and the cheesy finish give it that bakery-style touch you will love sharing — or keeping all to yourself. Enjoy! ■



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

Parmesan Garlic Focaccia Bread

Ingredients:

- 1½ cups warm water (about 110°F)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2¼ teaspoons instant yeast (1 packet)
- 4 cups flour
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil, plus more for greasing
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon dried Italian herbs or chopped rosemary
- Flaky sea salt

Directions

- Combine warm water, sugar and yeast. Let sit for 5 minutes until foamy. Add flour and salt. Mix until dough forms. (It will be sticky.) With a mixer, knead for 5-7 minutes or by hand for 8-10 minutes until smooth. Brush dough with olive oil and cover.
- Let rise 1-1.5 hours in a warm spot until dough has doubled.
- Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil with minced garlic until fragrant (about 1 minute) in a pan. Keep for later.
- Place dough in greased 9-inch by 13-inch pan. Gently press to corners. Let rest 10 minutes, then stretch. Cover and rise 30-45 minutes.



- Preheat oven to 425 F. With your fingers, dimple the dough all over. Brush with garlic oil. Then sprinkle parmesan cheese, herbs and sea salt on top of dough.
- Bake 20-25 minutes until golden brown. Cool 10 minutes in pan, then transfer to wire rack.
- Slice and serve warm. Store bread for two days at room temperature or freeze up to three months.
- **For the best results, follow these additional steps:** Make sure your water is warm (110 F), not hot. For the best texture, let the dough rise completely. Use plenty of oil in your pan, as this will give your bread a crisp crust.

THANKSGIVING table trouble

Keeping pets safe this holiday

Thanksgiving is a time for family, food and gratitude — but, for many pet owners, it can also bring an unexpected trip to the emergency hospital. Each year around the holidays, emergency pet hospitals see a surge of emergency cases linked to well-meaning sharing, unattended leftovers, and the general chaos of holiday gatherings.

The feast factor

While it's tempting to let pets join the feast, rich or fatty foods like turkey skin, gravy, stuffing and buttery sides can trigger pancreatitis, a painful and sometimes life-threatening inflammation of the pancreas. Even small portions can lead to vomiting, abdominal pain or lethargy.

Bones — especially cooked turkey bones —



are another common culprit. They can splinter, causing choking, intestinal blockage or internal injuries. Keep bones and scraps well out of reach and remind guests not to sneak your pet a treat from the table.

Hidden hazards in the kitchen

A few ingredients that make our recipes delicious can be toxic to pets:

- Onions, garlic, leeks and chives can damage red blood cells.
- Raisins and grapes — often found in stuffing or desserts — can cause kidney failure.
- Chocolate and xylitol (in sugar-free baked goods) can be deadly even in small amounts.

If your pet ingests any of these, call your veterinarian or local emergency pet hospital immediately. Early treatment is key.

Guests, doors and stress

Thanksgiving gatherings mean extra visitors, noise and open doors — all of which can be

stressful for pets. Many of our emergency visits involve anxious animals who escape through an open door or react out of fear. Give your pet a quiet, secure space to retreat and make sure collars and microchips are up to date.

A thankful reminder

This Thanksgiving, the best gift you can give your pet is safety. Avoid sharing human food, dispose of leftovers promptly, and remind guests not to feed pets from their plates. A small slip can turn into a big emergency.

If a pet emergency does occur this holiday season, remember that emergency veterinary care is available 24/7 — even on holidays. Quick action can make all the difference in ensuring your pet's safety and recovery. ■

Information provided by Sam Patterson, Operations Director, Iowa Veterinary Specialties, 24/7 emergency hospital for pets, 6110 Creston Ave., Des Moines, 515-280-3100.

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A new library catalog is coming soon.

We are getting ready to launch a whole new online catalog experience, and we can't wait to share it with you. We are introducing Vega Discover, our upcoming catalog system designed to make finding your next great read (or watch or listen) easier than ever. Our staff will be learning this new system alongside you, so we appreciate your patience and understanding as we transition.

We will need a little time to get everything ready for the big switch. Here is our timeline so you can plan ahead:

- Nov. 10: Due dates for checked-out materials will extend to Dec. 17.
- Nov. 30 at noon: Last chance to place holds in our old Encore system before the switch.
- Dec. 1-10: Checkouts will be available at the main desk only (self-checkout machines will be down during this time). New holds will be paused during this period, but you'll still be able to pick up items you have placed on hold before Nov. 30.

We will not be making new library cards during this time. Please bring your physical card, library card number or library app with your digital card in order to check out. There may be a delay in processing new December releases. Help us out by keeping your materials during this timeframe. We won't be able to check the items back in, anyway.

- Dec. 11: The library will be closed for system updates.
- Dec. 12: We'll reopen with our brand-new catalog system, Vega Discover. We're so excited for this upgrade and the new opportunities it will bring to explore our collection.

UPCOMING EVENTS Register at wdmlibrary.org/events.

Reminder that the library will have Thanksgiving hours. We will close at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 26, and will be closed all day on Thursday and Friday of Thanksgiving. We reopen with regular hours on Saturday.

- In the Stacks with Carol Roh Spaulding, Monday, Nov. 17, 6:30-7:30 p.m. (Adults)
- Carol Roh Spaulding is a novelist and researcher. She will discuss her novel "Helen Button," a dual-time story exploring wartime experiences and how ordinary people respond to conflict and injustice. No registration required.
- Family Night at the Library: Catapults! Monday, Nov. 24, 6:30-7:30 p.m. (All ages)
- Explore forces, motion and energy with hands-on catapult fun. Families will build mini catapults and watch a full-size catapult launch fake snowballs. Register each attendee. ■

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SKINCARE for fall and winter

The transition from summer to fall and winter presents unique challenges for skin health, often leading to dryness, dullness and uneven texture due to colder temperatures, lower humidity and indoor heating. To combat these effects, a proactive skincare approach incorporating professional treatments and a consistent at-home regimen is crucial.

HydraFacials and dermaplaning are highly effective treatments for maintaining radiant skin during the colder months, often yielding superior results when combined. A HydraFacial is a multi-step, non-invasive procedure that cleanses, exfoliates, extracts impurities and hydrates the skin using patented Vortex-Fusion technology. It infuses the skin with hyaluronic acid, antioxidants and peptides, addressing concerns like fine lines, wrinkles and hyperpigmentation, and is suitable for all skin types. Dermaplaning is a physical exfoliation technique that uses a sterile scalpel to gently remove dead skin cells and peach fuzz (vellus hair) from the skin's surface. This process immediately brightens the complexion, smooths skin texture, and enhances the absorption of skincare products.

When these two treatments are combined, dermaplaning acts as an excellent preparatory step, creating a smooth canvas that allows the HydraFacial's serums and hydrating agents to penetrate more deeply and effectively. Regular monthly treatments are recommended to maintain optimal results. ■

Information provided by Lauren Conway and Traci Frantzen, estheticians, 4 Ever Young, 1180 S.E. University Ave., Waukeez, 515-304-2324, www.4everyoungantiaging.com



MEET Jana Edwards

Champion for students awarded VHS Hall of Honor.

At a hallway in Valley High School, a long wall is lined with awards and recognitions featuring the "best of the best" students, teachers and staff in athletics, academics and more. One person who was recently honored was Jana Edwards.

Edwards was honored on Oct. 4 in the Valley Hall of Honor, along with former staff Steve Mohr and Pam Wymer. Edwards is an advanced math teacher and National Honor Society advisor with 36 years of teaching experience, with the last 13 years at VHS.

The committee that nominated her said she was honored because of her dedication to students, as she's a "champion for all students" and a positive role model who provides "unconditional love" for her students and the teaching profession.

Edwards was overwhelmed with gratitude for the honor.

"It was with great humility to receive a prestigious award. I'm honored and grateful. There were tears of joy," she reflects.

Edwards says that Valley has given her the opportunity to teach the most amazing students at the best high school in the state.

"I get to identify and nurture students' interests, provide mentorship and cultivate a positive, encouraging atmosphere. I have been so fortunate to teach and learn from our community," she explains. "They have taught me about the importance of equity, belonging, justice, accessibility and unity."

As a youth, Edwards grew up on a farm and was raised by hardworking parents. She depended on school coaches and staff for mentorship and encouragement.

"I relied on the coaches," she recalls. "They knew how important it was to be in my life. It's my way of giving back."

Her first teaching job was at Des Moines North, where she taught advanced math, such as AP calculus and statistics. She also was the former head track coach at North and taught 23 years.

Teaching roles have evolved over the years, she says.

"We used to depend on parents to be an advocate," she explains. "Now, it takes a village. I talk to and teach them as if they are my own kids."

She says many students often need an adult to advocate for them.

"It goes beyond the school. Some kids need another adult in their life to bounce things off of. You can't always pick your parents," she explains. "Kids need a smile and someone to ask how they are doing — it helps them focus on the day."

Not only is Edwards passionate about teaching, she says her fellow teachers go above and beyond.

"We spend a lot of time outside of the classroom. Our job doesn't stop at 3:30," she reflects. "We continue to care and worry about our students."

She says teaching is her way of being a public servant.

"It's a very noble job we get to do," she says. ■



Jana Edwards says it is important to advocate for students in her teaching role.

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PLAN AHEAD

By Dave Cortner

HEADING south for the winter or traveling for the holidays?

Are you traveling over the holidays to visit family? Are you a snowbird, and will you be heading south for the winter?

Have you ever thought about what you would do if something unfortunate happened during the time you were away and you needed the services of a funeral home?

We don't like to think about these things, but, the truth is, they can happen. And when they do, having a plan in place can make a world of difference.

Perhaps a Travel Plan is something for you to consider — a plan that would take care of everything and bring your loved one back home, if such an unfortunate situation occurred.

These plans can be very cost effective and provide a great deal of peace of mind for those traveling or heading to their winter retreat.

Visit with your funeral home of choice and ask them if they offer a Travel Plan.

Better to have a plan in place and not need it than to wish you had done something to prepare. ■

Information provided by Dave Cortner, Hamilton's on Westtown Parkway, 3601 Westtown Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-697-3681.



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WELLNESS

By Mary Doherty, LISW

CONNECTING with your body

Fall in Iowa. It is typically a whirlwind, ranging in temperatures and storms. As we are in fall and entering winter (I know, I said it), we start to lose our connection with nature. When it is getting dark earlier and earlier, it is challenging to get out and really enjoy the outside. Seasonal Depression might be creeping in, maybe a lack of motivation in doing things outside of work. Here is a challenge for you: connecting with your body again.

Wherever you are right now in this moment, wiggle your toes. What can you feel? Check in with your shoulders. How do they feel? Pull your shoulders up like you are shrugging, take a deep breath in, then, when you breathe out, release your shoulders back down. Now take one more deep breath, but leave your shoulders down.

I have a challenge for you this month: Do a check-in with your body daily. It can be 30 seconds where you intentionally check in with how you feel in your body. Not sure? Go back through these exercises. It can be while you are lying in bed, sitting on the couch, at work or in the car. This check in can help bring awareness when your body is showing signs of stress or even sickness. We are always on the go and sometimes forget how important it is to check in with our bodies. ■



Information provide by Mary Doherty, LISW, Renewed Strength Counseling, 2910 Westtown Parkway, Suite 314, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-809-2419.

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Veterans

AND THOSE ACTIVELY SERVING.

Alfred "Nokey" Mireles

West Des Moines

Military branch: Air Force

Rank: Staff Sergeant

Served: April 22, 1968 - April 22, 1972

"I think, to me, it meant to keep our country's rights and freedoms intact."



Anthony Powers

West Des Moines

Military branch: Army, Ninth Infantry

Rank: Staff Sergeant

Served: 1967-1969. Wounded in action near Dong Tam, Vietnam. Received a Bronze Star for Valor in combat.

"Please thank every veteran you meet with a 'thank you' for their service and sacrifice. They truly appreciate it. It doesn't cost a penny."



Eric Moorman

Carlisle

Military branch: U.S. Marine Corps Military Police

Served: 1986-1992; Gulf War Veteran

Current VFW Post 8879 Commander for WDM Veterans of Valley Junction

"We, as veterans, served our country to protect the U.S. and the citizens. Veterans served because we felt the duty to our country. Less than 4% of the U.S. population will have served in the U.S. military. Less than .04% have served as U.S. Marine Corps. We veterans did not expect anything more than America be free and prosperous."



What would you like others to know about serving your country?

Darrian Schwenke

West Des Moines

Military branch: Army 75th Ranger Regiment First Battalion

Rank: E4

Served: March 2018 - March 2023

"Many of today's freedoms were built on the sacrifices of those who served. Service is about something bigger than yourself. It's about protecting the people and values that matter."



Jeff Verrant

Des Moines

Military branch: U.S. Marine Corps

Rank: Colonel

Served: 1987-2022. Multiple deployments/operations

"As is sometimes stated, serve your God, your country, your Corps and your fellow Marines. For young people looking at options, now is a perfect time to elect to serve your country. Serving in any branch is incredibly gratifying. You are part of a large team, you'll serve under the best leadership in the world, the educational and career opportunities are endless and you truly answer to a higher calling. It is the highest honor and privilege to serve your country. But don't forget, our military exists for a reason. Many have gone before us. There is a sacrifice for the servicemember and family."



Perry Baker

West Des Moines

Military branch: Army

Rank: Corporal

Served: 1954-1956

"When I entered the draft, I'd already graduated college, as I delayed my draft. The Korean War was just ending, so they didn't send me overseas. I could determine 'true north' so I was assigned to the weather section. There, I determined wind information and gave it to them to determine how it affected shells (bombs in the sky). I ended up using my Army training for my future career. I was a lead forecaster and a meteorologist for the National Weather Service."



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AS AN ambassador, David spreads awareness

Food Bank provides critical assistance.



Teresa David serves as an ambassador for the Food Bank of Iowa, making presentations at schools and other locations.

During the pandemic, Teresa David and her West Des Moines neighbors gathered in their driveways to socialize. When her neighbor asked her if she wanted to help at the Food Bank of Iowa, she eagerly agreed.

"I wanted to get out of the house," she recalls.

Yet, once she began volunteering on a regular basis, it wasn't just to pass the time.

"I loved the people and what was going on. I kept going back," she explains.

David, a former teacher, was asked to talk to students at St. Francis of Assisi about volunteer ideas for the Food Bank. As she did more presentations, the Food Bank of Iowa asked her to be an ambassador.

In her role as ambassador, she makes presentations to various organizations and businesses, educating people about the Food Bank. She touts the three "Fs" — food, funds and friends.

The Food Bank of Iowa is a food distribution center that assembles and delivers

food to local food pantries and other partner sites across 55 Iowa counties. The organization delivers to 700 food pantries, daycare sites, meal sites, schools and more.

According to Annette Hacker, Food Bank of Iowa spokesperson, the group relies on 44,000 hours of service every year by volunteers doing the work of 21 full-time employees. The Food Bank is not federally funded, yet some food comes from the USDA. Formerly, 25% came from the USDA. However, because of cutbacks, Hacker says it is now about 10%. Additionally, because of the recent government shutdown affecting SNAP benefits, more people need assistance.

"If you have it in you, we need help more than ever," Hacker says. "Nobody can do everything, but each one of us can do something. Everything matters."

David says there is a "massive need" for food to feed Iowans.

"I keep shaking my head. We live right here in the food belt. It's scary to see the numbers



Besides being an ambassador for the Food Bank of Iowa, Teresa David also volunteers at the pantry sorting and boxing food and helping with the inspiration cards.

of hungry Iowans, especially kids. Kids can't do anything about it. It's heartbreaking," she reflects.

David has made presentations to the entire school at St. Francis of Assisi. Students made inspiration cards for backpack programs for school kids in need.

"Last year, we made 13,000 inspiration cards, and students gave a \$5,000 check to the Food Bank. I'm pleased to see it grow from a group of 25 kids to an entire school. I'm thrilled with their passion," she says.

Besides serving as ambassador, she also volunteers at the Food Bank weekly to help sort food, a simple need.

"It's basic. Their mission is to simply provide food. People need to eat," she says. "I'm a firm believer in giving back to your community."

The Food Bank needs volunteers who can sort, repack food and pack mobile boxes. Volunteers can also assist with data entry, office work, writing thank you notes, picking up rescue food from various businesses or organizing a food drive. If people cannot donate their time, monetary funds are best. The Food Bank can buy wholesale, which feeds a person for less than \$2 a day.

For more information or to donate, visit <https://foodbankiowa.org>. ■



IT'S BACK!

Who will be voted favorite in Dallas County?

We all have our favorite local people, places and things. And now it's time to share your choices and honor those who deserve the recognition.

Make your voice be heard and cast your votes in the 2025 Dallas County Residents' Choice Poll. This contest is being hosted by Iowa Living magazines, and the results will publish January in Waukee, and February in Adel and West Des Moines - Jordan Creek editions. You can vote in one or every category, or anywhere in between.

SCAN HERE TO
VOTE TODAY!



HURRY! POLL CLOSES DEC. 19, 2025

See rules and vote at www.iowalivingmagazines.com/residentpoll.

One vote per resident, please.

FOOD AND DRINK

- Restaurant
- Restaurant for Breakfast
- Restaurant for Lunch
- Restaurant for Dinner
- Restaurant for Dessert
- Place for Ice Cream
- Pizza Establishment
- Bar
- Coffee Shop
- Catering Company
- Server/Bartender

AUTOMOTIVE

- Auto Service
- Auto Body Shop
- Car Dealership

COMMUNITY

- Preschool/Daycare
- Nonprofit
- School (name of building)
- Park
- Community Festival or Event
- Church
- Pastor
- Chamber of Commerce
- Library
- Camping Spot

SHOPPING

- Grocery Store
- Boutique
- Retail Store
- Thrift Store
- Home Improvement Retail Store
- Liquor Store
- Nursery or Garden Center
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Man
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Woman
- Bakery
- Florist

ENTERTAINMENT

- Dad/Child Date Spot
- Mom/Child Date Spot
- Place to Take Your Mom and Dad
- Place to Take Your Kids or Grandkids
- Place for Child's Birthday Party
- Golf Course
- Bowling Alley

HEALTH/BEAUTY

- Hair Salon
- Physicians Clinic
- Dental Office
- Orthodontist Office
- Mental Health Service
- Chiropractic Office
- Audiologist/Hearing Clinic
- Vision Care

HEALTH/BEAUTY

- Health Club or Gym
- CBD Store
- Pharmacy
- Cosmetic Service
- Physical Therapy
- Dance Studio
- Gymnastics/Tumbling Studio

OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- Financial Planner
- Law Firm
- Accounting Firm
- Veterinarian
- Dog Groomer
- Pet Care
- Lawn Care Business
- Landscaping Company
- Heating and Cooling Business
- Electrical Business
- Plumbing Company
- Senior Living Establishment
- Insurance Agency
- Realtor
- Bank/Credit Union
- Photographer
- Place for Guests to Stay
- Home Builder/Remodeling
- Outdoor Lawn Equipment Store
- Pest Control



Upcoming in the West Des Moines / Jordan Creek Living magazine:

Handmade gifts: If you have made or received a cherished handmade gift, we would like to share your story for the December issue. Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.

Football parties: Do you have a tradition of holding a Super Bowl party? Share your party plans, recipes and other ideas! Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com to share your story!

The Iowa Files: A History Series

Various dates, 3 p.m.
Community Room of the West Des Moines Public Library, 4000 Mills Civic Parkway

The Iowa Files, an educational history lecture series, returns for its seventh year in 2025/2026. This joint West Des Moines Historical Society and West Des Moines Public Library program is free and open to the public, thanks to the generosity of West Des Moines Historical Society members, Bravo Greater Des Moines and the Friends Foundation of the West Des Moines Library. All programs are streamed on the WDMHS Facebook page and YouTube channel.

• **Nov. 16: Over the Hill to the Poor Farm.** Poor farms were residential institutions, often operated by counties, that provided basic social services and housing for the poor, disabled and elderly during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Gayla Harkin was a long time administrator of the poor farm in Boone and will share her stories about the programs and residents.

• **Jan. 11: Iowans in Andersonville Prison.** Andersonville Prison (also known as Camp Sumter), was a Confederate prisoner-of-war camp during the final 14 months of the American Civil War. The prison was overcrowded to four times its capacity and had an inadequate water supply, inadequate food and unsanitary conditions. Historian, teacher and all around fascinating storyteller Kent Halstad will share the stories of the Iowans who experienced Andersonville.

Jordan House Tours

Fridays and Sundays, 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.
Jordan House Museum, 2001 Fuller Road, West Des Moines

Weekly guided tours are offered at the Jordan House. The cut off for purchasing tickets is noon Thursday for Friday tours and noon Friday for Sunday tours. If you have missed that cutoff, call 515-225-1286 to find out if walk-up tickets are available. To reserve a ticket, see the schedule and links at www.wdmhs.org/openhousevisit/. All tours will be guided by a docent. Arrive at the Jordan House Museum at least 10 minutes before the tour begins. The tour will involve taking stairs to the basement and the second floor, as well as walking and standing for at least one hour. If you have a group of eight or more, call to schedule a private tour.



Des Moines Community Orchestra Concert

• **Sing Messiah!: Sunday, Dec. 7, 2 p.m.,** Grace United Methodist Church, 3700 Cottage Grove Ave., Des Moines.
Guest Conductor: Dr. Marion Scott

The Christkindlmarket

The weekends of Dec. 4-7 and 11-14

Principal Park, 1 Line Drive, Des Moines

www.christkindlmarketdsm.com

Experience a German-inspired Christmas Market. Enjoy the sights, sounds, smells and flavors of the holidays as you participate in a 750-year-old tradition. Shop regional vendors selling old-world, hand-crafted products from wooden vendor stalls; enjoy lively performances of polka music, traditional dance and choirs in Yuletide Hall; participate in children's activities; sip Glühwein (warm, mulled wine) and savor European beer.

Life Line Screening Event

Saturday, Dec. 13
Valley United Methodist Church, 4201 Ashworth Road, West Des Moines

Life Line Screening is the nation's leader in stroke and cardiovascular disease risk screenings and will be offering carotid artery disease screening, atrial fibrillation screening, abdominal aortic aneurysm screening and peripheral artery disease screening. Book an appointment by calling 800-324-9458 and use promo code HABC001 or text the word "circle" to 216-279-1607.

ART EXHIBITS

Mainframe Studios First Fridays

900 Keosauqua Way, Des Moines
www.mainframestudios.org

Mainframe Studios hosts "First Fridays" every first Friday of the month, featuring a changing theme, with the artist's works on display alongside live music and food.

- Dec. 5: Daulities

Olson-Larsen Galleries

542 Fifth St., West Des Moines

- Through Nov. 29: The Female Gaze
- Dec. 4 to Jan. 31: The Animal Show 2025

Polk County Heritage Gallery

Polk County Administration Building, 111 Court Ave., Des Moines

www.polkcountyheritagegallery.org

- Nov. 20 to Dec. 31: The Invitational: Curated Show

Ankeny Art Center

1520 S.W. Ordinance Road, Ankeny
www.ankenyartcenter.org

- Through Nov. 26: Iowa Watercolor Society - Susan Moore
- Dec. 3 to Jan. 14: Members Show

Tinseltown in the Park

Nov. 22 - Dec. 20

Water Works Park, 2201 George Flagg Parkway, Des Moines

Mark your calendars for Tinseltown in the Park, featuring live Christmas tree sales, biergarten specials, food trucks, entertainers, unique visits from holiday A-listers, photo opportunities, and more to celebrate the holiday season in the park.

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

STAGE AND THEATER

Actors, Inc. - Ames Community Theater

120 Abraham Drive, Ames

www.actorsinc.org

- Nov. 14-16: "Next to Normal"

Ankeny Community Theater

1932 S.W. Third St., Ankeny

www.ankenycommunitytheatre.com

- Dec. 5-14: "Miracle on 34th Street, the play"

Des Moines Performing Arts

Des Moines Civic Center, Cowles Commons,

Stoner Theater, Temple Theatre, 221 Walnut

St., Des Moines

www.dmpa.org

- Nov. 12-16: "Les Misérables"
- Nov. 18: "Earth After Dark"
- Nov. 18-23, 25-26, 30, Dec. 3-7: "Triple Espresso"
- Nov. 25: "A Drag Queen Christmas"
- Dec. 2-7: "The Notebook"
- Dec. 16-21: "Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical"

Des Moines Community Playhouse

831 42nd St., Des Moines

www.dmplayhouse.com

- Dec. 5-27: "Frozen"

DMACC Ankeny Campus Theatre

2006 S. Ankeny Boulevard., Ankeny

www.dmacc.edu/theatre/ankeny/Pages/welcome.aspx

- Nov. 14-16, 20-23: "Kate and Sam Are Not Breaking Up"

Iowa Stage Theatre Company

Stoner Theatre, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines

www.iowastage.org

- Dec. 5-21: "A Christmas Carol"

Tallgrass Theatre Company

2019 Grand Ave., Suite 100, West Des Moines

www.tallgrasstheatre.org

- Nov. 7 to Nov. 23: "The Boxcar Children"
- Dec. 19-21: "The A Sisters & Friends at The Velvet Lounge"



Holiday Shopping Extravaganza

Friday, Nov. 21, and Saturday, Nov. 22, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Union Park United Methodist Church, 2305 E. 12th St., Des Moines

Many crafters with a variety of creative items that are perfect for the holidays. Free admission. Close-up parking, lunch available to purchase. ■

ATTENTION BUSINESSES GET THE VOTES!

Advertise to the Living magazine readers in Dallas County now!

The Dallas County Residents' Choice results will publish in the February issues of Adel, Waukee & Jordan Creek Living magazines.

The Dallas County Residents' Choice poll closes on Dec. 19.

HURRY!
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SOCIAL Security basics

When it is time to begin receiving Social Security benefits, you have a range of options. You can begin receiving benefits anytime between ages 62 and 70. Your full retirement age is the age at which you can begin receiving 100% of your primary insurance amount (PIA), also known as your full retirement age benefit. Your full retirement age depends on your year of birth. For example, for those born in 1960 or later, the full retirement age is 67.

If you file at an age other than your full retirement age, your benefit amount will be reduced or increased. Filing earlier gives you a reduced benefit. Filing later gives you an increased benefit.

Should you take benefits earlier or later?

Everyone's situation is unique, so it's important to look closely at the trade-offs before making your decision. Here are some reasons you might want to claim benefits earlier:

- You need the money to help pay living expenses



- You cannot work longer due to health reasons

- You have caregiving responsibilities for a family member

- You have been laid off or lost your job through downsizing or other action

Here are some reasons you might want to claim benefits later:

- You don't need the money right now, or have income from other sources to tide you over (such as a pension or 401(k) plan)

- You believe you have a longer life expectancy, during which higher payments would be helpful

- You plan to work at some level during retirement

- You like the idea of getting higher benefits over the long term

Here are some tips:

- Keep a big picture perspective: According to the Social Security Administration, Social Security benefits will replace about 40% of an average employee's pre-retirement income after retirement. This replacement percentage will be lower for people in upper income brackets and higher for people in lower income brackets.

In addition, most financial advisors say that a typical person will need about 75-80% of their pre-retirement earnings to comfortably maintain their pre-retirement standard of living. How can you make up the difference?

- Make sure you are saving as much as you can in any 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan available to you. Aim to save at least enough to receive the maximum employer matching contribution (if available).

- If you are self-employed, save as much as you can in a SEP IRA account.

Social Security is a vital piece of the retirement puzzle, but it's just one piece. To bridge the gap between what Social Security provides and what you'll need to live comfortably, proactive saving is essential. The earlier and more consistently you save, the better positioned you will be to enjoy financial freedom in your golden years. Your future self will thank you. ■

Information provided by Travis Gaule, founding partner/financial advisor, Trust Bridge Wealth Advisors, 4090 Westown Parkway, Suite 108, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-207-4346.

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Travis Gaule

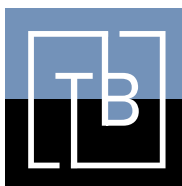
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FEDERAL estate tax exclusion limit extended

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

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SERVING with heart

Miller finds meaning in giving back.

For almost 40 years, Joan Miller has called West Des Moines home. And, in recent years, Miller has given her time to benefit those who do not have a place to call home.



She volunteers with Joppa, an organization that helps homeless individuals survive, find housing and rebuild their lives. The organization relies heavily on volunteers like Miller to meet this mission. Miller currently serves at the Joppa Resource Center, where clients can receive mail, use a computer and get help with next steps toward getting off the streets.

“Joppa works hard to provide hope to each person who enters the doors,” Miller says. “It’s a place where they may find unconditional love and support.”

Miller first learned about Joppa through her husband, Steve, who has been organizing volunteers to deliver heat (gas tanks) to the homeless with Joppa every Saturday throughout the winter months.

One memory that stands out is a recent one, when a young man came to the resource center looking for more work clothes. He had a new job



Ryan Mahalovich of Edward Jones presents the Neighbor Spotlight certificate to Joan Miller.

and was eager to do well.

“As we looked for clothes together, he praised God for this goodness,” Miller shares. “I was humbled to realize that, although he has a job, he would still sleep on the street tonight. He still has a way to go to getting his own place, but in the midst of the struggle, he was praising God.”

Another memorable moment for Miller came when a mom arrived with her 10-year-old son. They were newly homeless and living out of their car.

“There was great fear and anxiety,” Miller shares. “Joppa doesn’t erase the problem, but after meeting with an advocate and receiving information and some essential needs, she left feeling hopeful. She had a plan for keeping her son and herself safe. We all need someone to listen to us and to cheer us on. It was beautiful to witness this sorrow turned to hopefulness.”

Outside of Joppa, Miller also volunteers at Mary’s Helping Hands, which serves mothers in need of items for their babies. Both nonprofits, she notes, help share the generosity of community donors with those in need.

For Miller, volunteering is a way to extend her parents’ legacy.

“They placed God in the center of our family,” she says. “I did nothing to be born into this family of love. I feel called by God to return what I myself did not earn. I love seeing the change on a person’s face when they know someone has taken time to see them and care for them.”

Every time Miller serves at Joppa, she leaves more thankful for life’s simplest blessings — a cup of black coffee, a hot meal, a pillow and a bed.

“Volunteering truly helps my heart grow,” she says. “I am more understanding and generous when I give my time to others. Walking alongside another’s life journey is humbling. It gives me a new vision to be less judgmental and more thankful for the very smallest of things.” ■


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CITY receives \$5 million Destination Iowa Grant for new event center at the RecPlex

The city of West Des Moines has been awarded a \$5 million Destination Iowa Grant from the Iowa Economic Development Authority to support the development of the city of West Des Moines Event Center at the MidAmerican Energy Center RecPlex, a major expansion that will bring new opportunities for sports, entertainment and community gatherings to the region.

The new event center, connected to the RecPlex, will add a versatile space designed to host a wide variety of events, from regional and national sporting competitions to concerts, conventions and community celebrations. With this expansion, West Des Moines strengthens its position as a premier destination for tourism, recreation and economic development in Iowa.

“This grant is a tremendous investment in the future of West Des Moines and our region,” said City Manager Tom Hadden. “The Event Center will not only attract visitors from across the state and Midwest, but it will also provide new amenities and opportunities for our residents. We’re grateful to Governor Reynolds and the Iowa Economic Development Authority for supporting this transformative project.”

The Event Center is expected to enhance the already strong economic impact of the RecPlex, which has

quickly become a hub for youth and adult sports tournaments, recreational programming and special events since opening in 2021. The addition will bring new vibrancy to the community, generate tourism revenue and create lasting benefits for local businesses and residents.

Construction on the event center is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2025 with completion projected for early 2027. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$40 million, with the city of West Des Moines contributing \$26 million in future Local Option Sales and Service Tax (LOSST) revenue.

To date, \$9.4 million has been pledged toward the \$15 million fundraising goal. “The initial RecPlex project demonstrated the power of a successful public-private partnership, and the Event Center Expansion will be no different,” said Ryan Penning, director of Parks and Recreation. “With several naming rights opportunities available, this project provides a unique way for local businesses to showcase their brand while supporting a facility that benefits the entire community. It’s truly a win-win for both our business partners and the RecPlex.”

For more information about the RecPlex and the Event Center expansion, visit www.TheRecPlex.com/Expansion. ■

JORGENSEN joins DMU Clinic - Physical Therapy

Sarina (Lily) Jorgensen, P.T., D.P.T., has joined the providers at the Des Moines University Clinic - Physical Therapy. Jorgensen will bring a wealth of experience to the clinic, located at 3200 Grand Ave. at the DMU32 Health and Business Complex in Des Moines.



Jorgensen earned a doctor of physical therapy degree from Des Moines University Medicine and Health Sciences in 2021, following a bachelor of arts degree in exercise science from Hope College in Holland, Michigan, in 2016. She is a certified brain injury specialist specializing in pelvic health and neurological disorders. In 2020, she received her Lee Silverman Voice Treatment BIG certification, an evidence-based, intensive training that better equips physical and occupational therapists to treat individuals with Parkinson’s disease and other neurological conditions.

Jorgensen recently worked as a physical therapist at On With Life, a rehabilitation facility in Ankeny. There, she treated patients with a wide range of neurological disorders, many of whom suffered from diverse pelvic floor disorders including urinary/fecal incontinence, urinary urgency/frequency, constipation, pelvic organ prolapse, pelvic pain and dyspareunia. She previously worked at Breathe Physical Therapy & Wellness in Des Moines.

Jorgensen has a holistic approach to patient care and is equally passionate about treating men and women. “I treat each person as an individual. I’m always trying to work toward the goals that my patients have set and not just doing the same thing based on what I see. I’m focused on their goals and improving their quality of life.” ■

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RIBBON cutting

The West Des Moines Chamber hosted a ribbon cutting for A Child's World on Oct. 14.



Mike Torrez and Dustin Lambert



AJ Anderson and Ryan Cooley



Mikayla Oxford and Jessica Krause



Charity Baird, Allison Barns and Connie Blodgett



Katie Amador and Shaeyla Rye



Charity Baird and Rob Reinard



David Zanders, Lauren Watson and Brendon Shaw



Mike Torrez and Melissa McCoy



Amber Edwards and Janice Frank

RUSH Hour

West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce Rush Hour was hosted by Buena Vista University at Central Bank on Oct. 23.



Lauren Watson, Buford T. Beaver, Tricia Even and Jean Bral



Henry Lee, Mike Sunclades, Jacob Wisel and Kris Klabunde



Everett C. Mullican and Laura Todd



Aaron Weringa, Brooke Chesmore and Katherine Harrington



Elise Hill and Mary Doherty



John Crouthamel and Jared Galligan



Robin Wissink and Angie Chaplin



Alex Shcharansky, Dustin Lindsey and Ringo Kienitz



Cameron Schreier and Aaron Burns



Ashley Carapella and Jamie Adams



Tanner Gribben and Cole Bruening

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