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MAGAZINE

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UPCOMING HOLIDAY EVENTS

HOLIDAY BINGO

Thursday, December 4
5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Jingle all the way to Bingo!
Celebrate the season with an evening of laughter, light bites, and friendly competition that's sure to make your spirits bright!

SOCIAL HOUR

Friday, December 19
3:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

Come together with family, friends and new faces over festive cocktails and handcrafted mocktails, and soak up the holiday cheer at CopperWood's Social Hour.

To learn more, schedule a visit or to RSVP for an event, call 515-800-7754
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WELCOME

GIVE Santa a hug

There he was. An overweight, old man dressed in red with an unkempt beard and a peculiar hat. He was a complete stranger who wanted me to sit on his lap and share my wishes. Creepy? You're darn right! At least he was to this young boy.

Keep in mind that I didn't even want hugs or kisses from my grandmothers, so there was no way on Earth, or anywhere else, that I was going to get close to the man whose real name is Kris Kringle. I would forgo any and all presents before I would share a single word with the guy who now proclaimed himself as Father Christmas.

Santa was welcome to park his sled on our roof and break into our home to leave presents, but that's where our relationship ended. From what I can see today, and from what I remember with our kids, I am not the only one who was uncomfortable with the Christmas tradition of sitting with Santa.

But, we keep doing it. Standing in line. Cameras in hand. Hoping for that memorable keepsake image but instead apologizing to Mr. and Mrs. Claus for a screaming kid who doesn't understand the process.

You have got to love Christmastime traditions. Despite those unsettling Santa Claus memories, I certainly do enjoy the season. The caroling of festive songs. The sleigh rides. The lighting of the Christmas tree. The hot chocolate and candy canes.

Keeping these holiday traditions going takes work by many people, and I am thankful to them for their efforts. With that in mind, I hope you will join me for the wonderful holiday celebrations in the area.

I might even give Santa a hug. Maybe. ■



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HOMETOWN *holidays*

Residents prepare to
enjoy the festivities.

By Ashley Rullestad

The calendar page has turned to November and thoughts to the holiday season. A chill is in the air, and the aroma of pies, cookies and turkey dinners waft from the kitchen. Halls are being decked, mantles decorated and mistletoe hung. Indeed, the holiday season is upon us, and how better to celebrate than with family gatherings and hometown festivities?

Santa and Mrs. Claus
will be attending
Dazzling in The District.

FEATURE

Uptown Wonderlights and Gingerbread Lane

During the holiday season, through Dec. 31, Uptown Ankeny, in partnership with the city of Ankeny, puts up more than 50 animated light displays in and around six blocks of S.W. Third Street and throughout the Ankeny Market and Pavilion park. This magical holiday light experience is free and open to the public and can be enjoyed on foot, by bicycle and by car each evening.

Gingerbread Lane consists of 31 houses on S.E. Richland Court, and the holiday tradition goes back more than 30 years. Richland homeowner Brooke McHose says the cul-de-sac members enjoy working together and giving back to the Ankeny community.

Aside from the décor, Gingerbread Lane also requests food donations for the Food Bank of Iowa. Last year, visitors donated 4,395 pounds of food and \$18,674.30 in cash donations.

"Every single donation was counted and appreciated and donated to the Food Bank of Iowa," McHose says. "We love seeing all our visitors, spreading cheer, and sharing our special street with you. We hope you made wonderful memories with your loved ones. Many thanks to our neighbors and all who helped spread the word this year."

Gingerbread Lane will run from Dec. 5-31 this year. As always, residents will be passing out candy canes and collecting cash and food donations for the Food Bank of Iowa on the weekends. This year, additional signage will make it easier to promote donations to the Food Bank of Iowa, helping to ensure no one goes hungry this holiday season.



Uptown Wonderlights features more than 50 animated light displays.

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Uptown Wonderlights sets a festive mood for shoppers and visitors to Uptown Ankeny.



Gingerbread Lane, a 30-year tradition, transforms S.E. Richland Court.

Dazzling in The District

Ankeny residents are also kicking off the holiday season with Dazzling in The District on Saturday, Dec. 6 from 2-6:30 p.m.

Spend the day checking off your gift list, meeting Santa at The Elements, playing games and entering to win some awesome prizes from The District businesses. Information regarding the scavenger hunt and a list of participating businesses can be picked up in the Town Square Park once Dazzling starts.

The tree lighting will be at 6:30 p.m. in Town Square Park followed by fireworks sponsored by the city of Ankeny.

There will be fun, festive activities for the whole family, and, of course, all the great things The District has to offer with dining, shopping and entertainment.

Holiday Ho Ho Home Tour

After you finish up at Dazzling in The District, check out the annual Holiday Ho Ho Home Tour from 5-9 p.m. Celebrating its 10th year, the Holiday Ho Ho Home Tour is a magical tour of several Ankeny homes decked out for the holidays. Each home has its own unique decorations, style and appetizers to share.

One hundred percent of the donations will benefit the Wiedenman Family Foundation, which undertakes projects that will enhance Ankeny and the surrounding community. By bringing together resources and vision, foundation members hope to create long-lasting changes that will have a positive impact on the people who call the community home.

Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased at www.hohohometour.org.



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Enjoy a variety of activities at Dazzling in The District, including photos in front of the Christmas tree.

Miracle On Third Street

Celebrate the season with holiday magic in Uptown Ankeny with Miracle On Third Street on Dec. 12 from 5-7:30 p.m. Holiday festivities will take place along Southwest Third Street, Walnut, Maple and Cherry streets in Uptown, surrounded by more than 50 animated Uptown Wonderlights displays, including the light tunnel and 25-foot show tree.

Event goers are welcome to enjoy visiting Santa's reindeer, sponsored by the city of Ankeny. Sit on Santa's lap and take a picture with the big guy, then make a holiday craft with The Ankeny Art Center in Santa's Workshop. Check out the live nativity put on by Ankeny First United Methodist Church, find the perfect gift in Uptown shops, ride through the lights on the Uptown Express, and jump your heart out in a Gingerbread bouncy house. Hot cocoa will be available at stops throughout the event area, and donations of new or gently used hats, scarves, gloves and mittens will be collected.

End the evening with a magical snowfall around Uptown's show tree. Check the Uptown Ankeny Facebook page for a list of Uptown businesses that will be open during the event.

The Great Ankeny Bake Off Winter Wonderland Contest

Friends of the Ankeny Library are looking for the best bakers in town. Holiday cakes and cookies will be judged on Sunday, Dec. 14 from 1-5 p.m. at Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library (1250 S.W. District Drive) as part of the Great Ankeny Bake Off Winter Wonderland Contest with special guest judge, Netflix's "Is It Cake?" season one winner Andrew Fuller.

Enter the contest for a chance to show off your creativity, win a sweet prize and claim Winter Wonderland Baking bragging rights. Event organizers are looking for treats that fit the "Winter Wonderland" theme. This can be interpreted in any way you choose. Snowflakes? Christmas? Hanukkah? Ice skating elves? They're excited to see it all, so show off your creativity.

For the adult cake contest, cakes must be at least 6 inches in diameter; there is no maximum size limitation. Multi-tier cakes are allowed. Cakes



The Miracle on Third Street includes a live nativity scene.

must be made from scratch; store-bought cake mixes are not permitted. Cakes can be presented on cardboard, a plate (disposable or otherwise), or a cake stand. Cakes can be any flavor, but be sure to include allergen information.

Participants must be present during judging. Cakes must be baked at home and brought to the event the day of. Judging will be based on criteria including flavor, presentation, texture, creativity, skill and overall appeal.

The youth cookie contest has two age categories: bakers ages 10 and younger and ages 11-17. A minimum of 12 cookies must be presented to the judges. Cookies can be any flavor, but be sure to include allergen information. Cookies can be presented on a plate (disposable or otherwise), or in another creative fashion. Participants must be present during judging. Cookies must be baked/decorated at home and brought to the event the day of. Judging will be based on criteria including flavor, presentation, texture, creativity, skill and overall appeal.

For more information and to register, visit www.friendsoftheankenylibrary.org. ■

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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! ■



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.



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

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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.

Super Bowl 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!

Elves Workshop Craft Show

Saturday, Nov. 29, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
St. Anne's by the Fields Episcopal Church, 2110 W. First St., Ankeny

Begin your holiday shopping at this unique shopping event. Several crafters and vendors will have products for sale. You will find something for everyone. Free admission and parking close by.

Siena Hills Monthly Movement and Wellness Series

Dec. 30, 1:15 p.m.

Edencrest at Siena Hills, 455 S.W. Ankeny Road, Ankeny

The public is invited to a Monthly Movement & Wellness Series with Dr. Jonah Knous - Elevation Chiropractic. Explore ways to move better, feel better and live better, one month at a time. Each month brings a new topic, practical tips, and a little inspiration to keep you moving all year long. RSVP to 515-850-6119.

Square Dance Lessons

Sunday nights starting Jan. 18, 6:30 p.m.

Douglas Avenue Presbyterian Church, 4601 Douglas Ave., Des Moines

Ankeny Square Dance Club is sponsoring square dance lessons. Cost is \$20 per person for the entire session accepted at the third lesson. Attend with or without a dance partner. You'll learn the calls, one at a time, taught by a caller (instructor) and volunteers. For more information, call Sandy Townsend, 515-294-2624, or visit www.ankenysquares.com.

'Miracle on 34th Street'

Dec. 5-14

Ankeny Community Theatre,
1932 S.W. Third St.

This stage production is adapted by Mountain Community Theater from the novel by Valentine Davies and based on the Twentieth Century Fox motion picture, "Miracle on 34th Street." Single mother, Doris Walker, is on a mission to protect her young daughter, Susan, from fairy tales and make-believe. By chance, Susan meets and befriends Kris Kringle, the Macy's store Santa for the Christmas season, and everything starts to change. Doris is not impressed, but what if this Macy's Santa is, in fact, the real Kris Kringle? Filled with love and holiday cheer, this Christmas-time staple will warm your heart for the holiday season. Show times on Thursday, Friday and Saturday are 7:30 p.m. and, on Sunday, 2 p.m. Additional 2 p.m. matinees on Dec. 6 and 13. Order tickets at <https://tickets.midwestix.com/events/22086/tag/website>. ■

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The truth is, most of us entered this profession out of love and compassion, not for profit. But, like everything else, the cost of providing high-quality care has changed dramatically.

Rising operating expenses: Running a veterinary clinic is costly. On average, 80 to 85 cents of every dollar goes right back into operating expenses — medical equipment, medications, lab supplies, rent, insurance, education and licensing — all of which have increased with inflation and supply chain challenges. Nearly 60% of this supports staff wages. Our skilled teams of doctors, technicians, assistants and client service representatives

play vital roles in your pet's care and earn only a fraction of what their human-healthcare counterparts make.

No subsidies or insurance safety nets:

Unlike human medicine, veterinary care isn't supported by programs like Medicare or Medicaid. Pet owners pay the full cost of care directly. Even though veterinary care remains far less expensive than human healthcare, it can feel pricier because there's no insurance company or government program covering part of the bill.

Advances in medical care: Pets are family now, and expectations for their care have grown. Modern veterinary medicine includes digital imaging, ultrasound, advanced dental care and improved anesthesia and pain control — all of which enhance safety and comfort. Our pets are also living longer, meaning more long-term care for chronic conditions. These advances are wonderful but do add to costs.

What you can do: Keep up with preventive care. Skipping exams may seem like a way to save money, but regular wellness visits help

detect issues early, when they're easier and less expensive to treat.

Ask about wellness plans. Wellness plans bundle routine services at a discounted rate and spread costs into manageable monthly payments over the entire year. Check what's included so you know exactly what to expect.

Consider pet insurance or a savings account. Pet insurance helps cover unexpected illness or injury. Alternatively, setting aside a small monthly amount in a dedicated savings account can make emergencies less stressful.

Speak up. If you have cost concerns, let us know. A good veterinary team will always discuss options and help you find a plan that fits your family. Our goal is simple: To keep your pet healthy, happy, and with you for as long as possible. ■

Information provided by Dr. Amanda Gigler, Ankeny Animal & Avian Clinic, 742 S. Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny, 515-964-7387, amandagigler@ankenyanimal.com



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INVESTMENT

By Tam Le

INVESTING with heart

Find a financial advisor who shares your values.

When managing your money, there's more to consider than just the bottom line. Investing can be more than building wealth or reaching goals — you can also make your dollars support charitable causes and principles in line with closely held values.

Whether your focus is protecting the planet, aligning with your faith or giving back to your community, a financial advisor who understands your values can help you build a portfolio that reflects what matters to you. Here's how to help find a good fit.



Know what you stand for: Before searching for a financial advisor, reflect on your own values. Are you passionate about sustainability? Do you want to avoid companies that conflict with your faith? Do you want to incorporate charitable giving into your financial strategy?

Make a list of your top priorities. Understanding what drives you can help you find a financial advisor who shares and respects your vision.

Do your homework: After clarifying your goals, look for financial advisors who focus on values-based investing. Terms like “socially responsible investing” (SRI), “faith-based investing,” “impact investing” or “ESG” (which stands for environmental, social and governance) are keywords to use during your search.

Check financial advisors' credentials on their websites. Some may highlight experience with sustainable funds or philanthropic planning. Look for signs that they're comfortable helping clients invest with a conscience.

Ask the right questions: After narrowing your list, schedule introductory discussions, in person or remotely. These chats allow you to learn about how the financial advisor works and whether they'll be a good fit.

Ask about their investment approach: Do they offer portfolios focused on ESG or faith-based filters? Have they worked with clients with similar values to yours? How do they assess charitable giving strategies or donor-advised funds? Do they know the tax rules associated with charitable giving?

Listen closely to the questions they ask. Are they interested in what matters to you? Do they understand your values and priorities?

Consider their communication style. Will they update you regularly? Are they open to collaboration when you want to adjust your plan?

Trust your instincts: Choosing a financial advisor is a personal decision. Beyond their professional qualifications, you want someone who listens well and respects your goals. You can meet with several financial advisors before making your choice. The right person will make you feel understood and supported, both financially and personally.

Ideally, you and your financial advisor will forge a long-term relationship that spans the changes and milestones in your life. As the details of your financial strategy may change, you'll want to maintain your values in your investments.

Investing with purpose: Whether you hope to reduce your carbon footprint, stay true to your faith or make the world a better place through giving, you don't have to choose between your values and your financial future. Many financial advisors can help you do both.

Finding someone who shares your vision can help you feel confident that your investment strategy can align with your personal beliefs. ■

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Member SIPC. Information provided by Tam Le, Financial Advisor, 303 S.W. Walnut St., Ankeny, IA 50023, 515-964-2323.

THANKSGIVING

perspective

Just a few weeks ago, I was riding in a bus with a few members of our church when we made a right hand turn that would reshape my “perspective” about thanksgiving... hopefully forever. Passing through fences and gates, driving down tight and awkward corridors, moving carefully around a mixture of mud and brick buildings, tires splashing through small streams of water and sewage and garbage combined, just short of an extremely busy borehole providing clean water...we arrived at a church — inside a refugee camp — in a country called Malawi.



One of the statistically poorest countries on the African continent, Malawi welcomes refugees seeking escape and safety from nearby war-torn countries. Things are very difficult inside this refugee camp. Food and other resources are scarce. At least 60,000 people find themselves crowded into an area originally “designed” to hold around 10,000 people.

I stepped toward the church, beckoned by the sound of drums and songs of praise. The members of the church were singing boldly about salvation, deliverance and hope...songs of thanksgiving. As I sang and danced with them, I couldn't shake the realization that these songs were set inside and surrounded by a type of poverty I had never seen. I was overwhelmed by the obvious truth that these people were RICH in something I sorely lacked. They expressed to us that the joy of the Lord was their strength and that, with God's help, they would be able to endure.

Some of these church members had been at the refugee camp for many years. Some will never be able to return “home.” As our team drove away from the camp — “free” to move on to a new place — I found myself trying to wrap my mind around saying words like “thanks.” It felt so trite to even form the word “thanksgiving” in my mouth. It's not because I'm not grateful. It's because I'd been reminded of a purer form of thanksgiving and gratitude.

I can't possibly express enough gratitude this year at Thanksgiving. I will do my best to remember how blessed I truly am and how little I have done to deserve it. I'll work on saying “THANK YOU GOD” more boldly and intentionally in every season — not just the seasons when I have more than enough or when the calendar tells me it's time to say thanks. I'll try harder to remember that true gratitude has less to do with what I have and more to do with trusting that God has what I need and that God will provide.

I'll work on being more generous so that others might have their own songs of thanksgiving to share with God. A mentor of mine once shared with me words like this, “In this season, I have been blessed by God to be able to give. So, I give.” As you are able, I encourage you to consider the same. This thanksgiving, I will give — and then I will give thanks. ■

Information provided by John Wagner, campus pastor,
Christian Life Center, Ankeny First United Methodist Church,
john.wagner@ankenyfirst.org.

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Robert "Bob" Wrobel

Ankeny

Military branch: U.S. Air Force

Rank: Sergeant

Served: February 1971 to February 1975

"If I had to do it all over again, I would!"



Zachary Wright

Ankeny

Military branch: U.S. Navy

Rank: Boatswain's Mate Petty Officer First Class

Served: Operation Enduring Freedom, June 2011- present



Dave Hembry

Ankeny

Military branch: U.S. Army

Rank: Spec. 5

Served: 1965-1968

"My army days in Germany were at the time of the Vietnam War. That era is now recorded in history books, as well as preserved in the memories of soldiers."



Edmund Claussen

Ankeny

Military branch: U.S. Army

Rank: PFC

Served: Feb. 18, 1951 through Feb. 14, 1953

"Serving my country has been an honor. There's fulfillment in knowing that your efforts played a part in protecting the freedoms and opportunities that define our country."



Taylor Comer and Jordan Patterson

SPC Taylor Comer (Patterson), Iowa's first female infantry soldier, and her brother, SPC Jordan Patterson 15T (Blackhawk mechanic), are serving together in the Iowa National Guard.

"It's a life of discipline, sacrifice, and purpose. We serve together and we are stronger for it."



Eleanor Fiser

Ankeny

Military branch: U.S. Navy

Rank: SK2

Served: 1989-1999

"I served on two submarine tenders, Seabee logistics support, and special warfare group 2."



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

Glenda Brady

Ankeny

Military branch: U.S. Air Force

Rank: Airman Second Class

Served: Oct. 2, 1955 to Oct. 2, 1958

"I was proud every day I was in, and I've been proud of my service every day since then. I'm a member of the American Legion."



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Chris Klink

Military branch: Army National Guard

Rank: O-4 Major

Served: Dec. 1993 to Dec. 2016

"Serving in the military and deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan as well as performing State Active Duty to assist with disasters across the state is one of the proudest accomplishments I have had the honor to be a part of."



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Larry Adams

Ankeny

Military branch: Navy – worked in the boiler room on the ship.

Served: 1957-1961

"Teach kids in schools how to honor what the flag represents. The flag means something to me – it means freedom."



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Military branch: Marine Corps

Rank: Captain

Served: 2010-2014

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Steven Tupe

Ankeny

Military branch: U.S. Navy

Rank: Hull Technician Petty Officer Second Class

Served: Operation Desert Storm, 1989-1994



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LIBRARY

By Library Staff

THE GREAT Ankeny Bake Off: Winter Wonderland Contest

The Friends of the Ankeny Library celebrates 20 years of supporting the library's "extra but essential" services. The Friends group is an independent, philanthropic organization dedicated to enhancing the library through fundraising and advocacy efforts. Proceeds from its book sale, fundraisers and donations are used to support library programs, events and special projects.

Do you think you've got what it takes to win The Great Ankeny Bake Off? Enter this Friends of the Ankeny Library contest for a chance to show off your creativity, win a sweet prize and claim Winter Wonderland Baking bragging rights.

The public is invited to the Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library, along with special guest judge Andrew Fuller, winner of Netflix's "Is it Cake?" season one. Bakers will be judged on Sunday, Dec. 14, and may enter in one of two categories: Adult Cake Contest (baker must be 18-plus) and Youth Cookie Contest (baker must be 17 or younger). Judges are looking for cakes and cookies that fit the "Winter Wonderland" theme. This can be interpreted in any way you choose. Snowflakes? Christmas? Hanukkah? Sparkly winter sprinkles? 3D Snowmen? They are excited to see it all.

More details can be found at: www.ankenylibraryfriends.org/the-great-ankeny-bake-off.

Each registered baker will receive an email with more information closer to the event. ■

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MORE than a secretary

Sarchet builds connections at North Polk High.

Laura Sarchet has a “teacher’s heart” and wanted to work with kids. She went to college for elementary education with a special education endorsement, but, after graduating, she began a career in finance until she and her husband, Rob, decided she would stay home while their three girls were young.



Laura Sarchet with her husband and daughters.

When her daughters started school at North Polk, Sarchet volunteered in their classrooms and began subbing as a paraeducator at the elementary level.

“I just loved being with the kids but also having the freedom and opportunity to be with my girls during those early years of development,” she explains.

After nine years as a stay-at-home mom, Sarchet was ready to reenter the workforce. She spent three years as office coordinator at North Polk Family Medicine before taking a position at North Polk High School as an administrative assistant — a role that initially appealed to her because it allowed her to work in the same schools her children attended.

“I am starting my third school year this fall and love interacting with all the staff, students and families,” Sarchet shares. “I love that my days are never the same. This role is fast-paced with a variety of responsibilities, and I get to use my problem-solving and communication skills daily to, hopefully, make a meaningful impact with our students and staff.”

As administrative assistant, Sarchet manages attendance, fields phone calls, greets and assists students, and prepares and distributes school-wide communications. In addition to these responsibilities, she supports administrators and teachers with scheduling, communication and documentation.

“Although not specifically in my job description, I love to step in and help with our activities department and support school events, special programs and extracurricular activities,” she adds.

And while Sarchet enjoys keeping things organized and running smoothly, what she truly appreciates are the social interactions.

“I love seeing the kids come through each morning, being able to congratulate them on accomplishments they have had through school activities or connecting on a more personal level and being able to follow up on a family member in the hospital or being the first to notice their new haircut or color,” she says. “I look at this job as my mission field — a way to share God’s love to the community through personal connections.”

Sarchet often finds herself looking at the high school students through a mother’s lens.

“I am not their mother, I am just a secretary in their eyes, but I want them to know that I truly care for each and every one of them,” she says.

Outside of work, Sarchet stays busy running her daughters to their various activities. If they aren’t at the ballfields or on the pitch, they are usually at home or spending time with friends and family. ■

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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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BERES wins national pageant

Appreciates the experience and opportunities

Meyah Beres of Ankeny brought home a coveted title by winning the American Royal Beauties National Preteen Competition July 28 - Aug. 4 in Cincinnati, Ohio, besting a host of other girls from across the United States.

The fun didn't end there, either. Beres, 12, not only won the title, she also captured the coveted Top Model award.

Naturally, Beres is elated.

"It was so exciting," she says of the experience. "Standing on stage when I was called into the final two was so nerve-racking. When they called my name as the new National Preteen Queen, I couldn't believe it at first. I was filled with so many emotions. It felt like all of my hard work and dedication truly paid off."

Getting ready for a national competition took many months of preparation. There was getting her outfits and gowns ready and making sure everything fit just right, to start.

"I don't think people understand how much work goes into getting ready for the scholarship competitions," Beres says. "I practiced interview questions so I'd feel confident on stage, I worked on my modeling and stage walks with my coaches from Elevation Pageant Consulting, and I also prepared and practiced my spokesmodel speech."

Through it all, her ultimate goal was simple: have fun.

"I reminded myself to stay positive, work hard, and have fun no matter what the outcome was," she says.

The competition consisted of several categories, such as interviewing in front of a panel of judges, introduction, evening gown and community service. Beres also competed in optionals like spokesmodel, print model, casual wear, runway, role model and photogenic.

"Each part gave me a chance to show different sides of myself, from speaking about my platform in an interview, showing my personality in spokesmodel, and showing confidence and grace in evening gown," she says.

The sky is the limit now for the youthful Beres, and she is looking forward to seeing what the future brings.

"Winning the National Preteen title has given me so many exciting opportunities," she says. "I feel so lucky to have this title and all the ways it allows me to serve and make a difference. I now have the chance to volunteer even more in my community, emcee public events, and take part in internships that will help me grow as a leader."

Anyone interested in speaking with Beres about an appearance and/or community event, can reach out to her at lberes05@gmail.com. ■



Meyah Beres, 12, recently won the American Royal Beauties National Preteen Competition held in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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 while 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 Westown Parkway, 3601 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-697-3681.

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WHAT IS spinal stenosis?

Canal narrowing causes pain.

Spinal stenosis occurs when the channels through which your spinal cord and nerve roots travel become narrowed, thus squeezing the spinal cord and nerve roots. Spinal stenosis can lead to pain in your lower back, legs, neck, arms or hands, depending on where in your spine your spinal cord and/or nerves are getting squeezed. Spinal stenosis can happen anywhere in your spine, but it's most likely to happen in your low back (lumbar spine) or in your neck (cervical spine).

Symptoms of spinal stenosis

To get the best treatment for your spinal stenosis, it is important to recognize and understand the symptoms. Since spinal stenosis can gradually develop as you age, the symptoms can also gradually develop — and gradually worsen. Also, symptoms can vary a great deal. You may have no symptoms at all, since narrowing of the spinal canal or other channels does not always compress the spinal cord or nerves.

Spinal stenosis in your lumbar spine can cause pain or cramping in your legs when you stand for long periods of time or when you walk. The discomfort usually eases if you bend forward or sit down but comes back when you stand upright. Pain that eases when you bend forward is typical of lumbar spinal stenosis. Other symptoms of lumbar spinal stenosis may include numbness, weakness or tingling in the leg or foot.

Spinal stenosis in your cervical spine can cause pain in the neck and shoulders. It may radiate down your arm or hand. Cervical spinal stenosis can also cause headaches, numbness or muscle weakness. It can also affect the nerves that control your balance, which can lead to clumsiness or a tendency to fall. The pain from cervical spinal stenosis may be occasional or chronic, and it can range from mild to severe.

Treatment for spinal stenosis

From my experience, many cases of spinal stenosis respond more favorably when a multidisciplinary approach is taken. A qualified chiropractor can significantly improve the function of the spinal joints, while, at the same time, a medical doctor can address the biochemical inflammatory components. When chiropractic physicians and medical physicians work together, the patient benefits.

If you or someone you know is suffering from spinal stenosis and have not found the relief for which you are looking, consider chiropractic. They may be able to help. ■

Information provided by Christopher M. Renze, D.C., D.I.B.C.N., of Renze Chiropractic Clinic, P.C. For more information, visit www.renzechiro.com or call the office at 965-3844.

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WHOLENESS in the brokenness

Finding peace as life changes

No one makes it through life without change. Some of it is expected, yet some of it comes suddenly. Much of it, if we are honest, is harder than we thought it would be.



Getting older brings losses we never used to think about. We slow down, we stop doing things we used to do without effort. People we love move away or pass on. Our routines shift and our roles change. We begin to ask questions we never asked before: What now? What do I still have to give? What does peace look like in this chapter?

It can be easy to feel like something is missing. Like we are somehow less whole because we cannot do what we once did. The truth is, brokenness does not have to mean emptiness. In fact, some of the most meaningful peace we experience comes not despite change,

but because of it.

We were not created to stay the same. We were designed to grow, to be refined, and to become more aware of what really matters. As the Psalms remind us, "The righteous will still bear fruit in old age." Growth does not expire with age; it simply matures. It is often the very things that slow us down that teach us how to be present: how to listen more, how to appreciate quiet mornings, and how to be grateful for a conversation that doesn't feel rushed. Wholeness often looks different than we expected, but it is no less real.

I have met people in their 70s, 80s and 90s who carry a kind of peace that younger people are still chasing. It did not come easily. It came through loss, through letting go, and through learning to embrace a new kind of strength. That strength does not come from independence but from surrender. And, while relying on others may not feel like strength at first, it is not weakness. It is part of how we were designed. We were never meant to walk through life

alone. Accepting help allows others to grow in compassion, patience and love. There is purpose in being served, just as there is purpose in serving. Both are part of what it means to be in true community. When we allow others to care for us, we create space for their gifts to grow and for our own hearts to be softened in the process. That kind of peace comes from knowing you are still loved, still needed and still here for a reason.

So, if you find yourself grieving what was, or unsure about what comes next, know this: Peace is still possible. Wholeness is not the absence of pain. It is the presence of purpose, even amid it.

You are not behind. You are not forgotten. You are still becoming. Even now, in this season of change, something beautiful is being formed in you. ■

Information provided by Erik Ofloy, Sales and Marketing Director at CopperWood at Prairie Trail, 2855 S.W. Vintage Parkway, Ankeny, IA 50023, 515-425-3262, eofloy@copperwoodsl.com.

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BENEFITS of a trust protector

A trust is a fantastic estate planning tool for managing assets and ensuring that your family is cared for after you die. If you are concerned about changes to the law or family dynamics in the future, you may want to consider naming a trust protector.

You can change a trust while you are alive to adapt to evolving circumstances. But after you die, your trust becomes irrevocable. A trust protector can ensure the trust continues to reflect your original goals and wishes.

A trust protector is a third party who is given the authority to interpret and modify the terms of a trust to comply with your initial intent. The trust protector has the ability to change parts of the trust document, give instructions to the trustee, and monitor the use of trust assets.

A trust protector is different from the trustee. A trustee has a fiduciary duty to follow the directions outlined in the trust. As fiduciaries, trustees are strictly bound by the terms of the trust and are required to carry out the terms exactly as written. A trust protector doesn't owe a duty to the beneficiary; the trust protector is in place to



extend your oversight after death.

Trust protectors can monitor the trustee's actions to ensure they are managing the trust correctly. They can intervene if a trustee engages in misconduct, removing and replacing the trustee to protect trust assets.

A trust protector can help safeguard inheritance from creditors, lawsuits, or divorce. A trust protector can adjust trust provisions to adapt to changes in the law, such as Medicaid rules or federal estate tax updates.

A trust protector can interpret trust provisions to react to unforeseen changes in beneficiaries' lives — such as special needs requirements — that were not anticipated when the trust was established. Benefit programs like Title XIX and Social Security change frequently and a trust protector can help respond to new laws.

A trust protector can act as a liaison between a corporate fiduciary trustee (like a bank) and the beneficiaries. A trust protector can be your voice, telling the trustee what the beneficiary needs.

A trust protector can prevent or solve a multitude of problems. To save money, preserve your assets, and prevent family conflict, consult with an attorney to see if your trust needs a trust protector. ■

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

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TIPS to keep your inbox safe this holiday season

During the holidays, your inbox is likely overflowing with promotional emails and “limited time offers.” While these can be exciting, they can also open the door to fraud. Fraudsters often disguise malicious emails as legitimate promotions, hoping to catch you off guard.

Here are six security tips to help you keep your inbox safe this holiday season:

1. Be cautious with promotional emails:

Fraudsters often mimic popular brands to send fake promotional emails that contain harmful links or attachments. Before clicking:

- Check the sender's email address for misspellings or odd domains.
- Check for promotional deals by accessing the company's website using a trusted URL.

Avoid downloading attachments from unknown senders.

2. Unsubscribe wisely: During the holidays, you may find yourself subscribed to dozens of retail newsletters. While unsubscribing can help



declutter your inbox, be sure to:

- Unsubscribe directly from the website rather than through an email link.
- If an email looks suspicious, avoid clicking “unsubscribe” as it could be a phishing attempt.
- Use your email provider's built-in unsubscribe feature when available.

3. Shop directly from trusted websites:

Instead of clicking through email links, go directly to the retailer's website by typing the URL into your browser. This ensures you're not redirected to a fraudulent site pretending to be the real thing. Look for:

- A lock icon in the browser's address bar.
- URLs that begin with “https” (the “s” stands for secure).

4. Use unique passwords: If you create accounts while shopping online, use unique passwords for each one. This helps prevent hackers from accessing multiple accounts if one is compromised. Consider using a password manager to securely keep track of your information.

5. Shop safely online: Avoid making online purchases while using public Wi-Fi because

network access can be intercepted, and fraudsters can steal your personal information. Instead, use your secure home Wi-Fi or personal VPN. When shopping online, even using secure home Wi-Fi or personal VPN, use a virtual credit card number or services such as Apple Pay or Google Pay whenever possible.

6. Monitor your inbox and bank

statements: Keep an eye on your inbox for order confirmations and shipping updates. If something looks off, like a confirmation for a purchase you didn't make, act quickly. Be sure to:

- Review your bank statements for unauthorized charges.
- Match receipts with transactions.
- Report suspicious activity immediately.

By staying alert and following these tips, you can enjoy the convenience of online shopping without falling victim to scams. ■

Information provided by Peyton Husmann, AVP, Ankeny Assistant Branch Manager, Bankers Trust, 1925 N. Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny, 515-245-5639.



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UGLY Sweater PARTY

Foot & Ankle Center of Iowa

DECEMBER THURSDAY 11 4:00 - 5:30 PM
1200 NW 36th Street | Suite 100
COME KICK BACK IN YOUR UGLY SWEATER

There Will Be A Drawing For A \$50 GIFT CARD!



Caffes & Leads

Frosty Mornings, Warm Connections
Come Deposit Connections & Withdraw Success

Tuesday, December 16th
7:30 - 9:00 AM
1925 N. Ankeny Blvd.

There Will Be A Drawing For A \$50 GIFT CARD!

INVESTOR MEMBERS







PREMIER MEMBERS



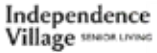















This holiday season, let's make shopping feel like an experience again. We have all heard the statistics: shopping local keeps more money in our community — and it's all true. Local businesses are the ones sponsoring your sports teams, high school activities and community events year-round. But let us be honest: Shopping local isn't just about doing the "right thing"... it's about having a great time while you check off your holiday list.



Imagine this: a Saturday spent strolling through your favorite Ankeny shopping area with a handcrafted latte in hand, ducking into cozy shops decked out for the holidays and full of curated treasures you won't find on a screen. You laugh with a friend, discover unique gifts you can actually touch, and chat with shop owners who genuinely care about helping you find something special. Compare that to clicking "Add to Cart" and waiting for a plain brown box of mass-produced junk to land on your porch. Which one feels more like the holidays?

Giving your hard-earned dollars to faceless online giants won't bring the holiday magic you are looking for. Choosing gifts from Ankeny's local shops (wrapped with care and selected with love) means you will be just as excited to give them as your loved ones will be to open them.

So, here's my challenge to you: Before you finish your gift list online, set aside a day (or two) to explore our local businesses. Make it a festive outing. Grab lunch with friends, sip something seasonal, laugh a little louder and shop with heart. You will be making memories, not just purchases. And that is what the holidays are really all about.

Don't miss Shop Small Saturday the Saturday following Thanksgiving. Our community is home to many small businesses that would appreciate your support. Giving Tuesday is Tuesday, Dec. 2, and Ankeny is home to dozens of non-profits doing amazing work for the community.

Holiday events and charitable giving opportunities will occur all over Ankeny this season. Uptown Ankeny will be lively with the twinkling lights of our Uptown Wonderlights attraction, lit each evening through Dec. 31, along with festive window displays and holiday activities throughout the season. Dazzling in The District will be on Dec. 6 for everyone to enjoy, and Uptown Ankeny's Miracle On Third Street event will take place on Dec. 12. Ankeny is the best place to spend the holidays.

Let's bring the joy back to holiday shopping — together. This community is built on connection, neighbors helping neighbors, local faces supporting one another. When you shop small, you're not just buying a product, you're part of a story, a dream, and a future that keeps Ankeny vibrant and welcoming for everyone. ■

Information provided by Alexa Middleton, Uptown Ankeny Director, 601 S.W. Third St., Ankeny, IA 50023, www.uptownankeny.org. She can be reached at 515-681-5347 or alexa.m@uptownankeny.org.



Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for Tooth Haven Pediatric Dentistry on Sept. 25.



Dr. Chris Stevenson, Jenny and family at the ribbon cutting for Tooth Haven Pediatric Dentistry.



Ashley and Nick Herold at the ribbon cutting for Tooth Haven Pediatric Dentistry.



Sam Miller, Amy Benge, Andrea Torres, Ashley Herold, Stephanie Wadsworth, Eva Larson and Dr. Chris Stevenson at the ribbon cutting for Tooth Haven Pediatric Dentistry.



Harris Warren, Megan Parker, Remi Warren and Joella Warren at the Wild Things Pet Shop grand opening at their new location, 317 E. First, Ankeny, on Nov. 2.



Michael, Evelyn, Tanya, Ryker and Anika Wathen at the Wild Things Pet Shop grand opening.



Emmett, Sydney, Ruthie and Troy Sjaardema at the Wild Things Pet Shop grand opening.



Luke Middleton and Briar Kane at the Wild Things Pet Shop grand opening.



Ben, Amy and Grace Tomkins at the Wild Things Pet Shop grand opening.



Audra and Cassius Bennett at the Wild Things Pet Shop grand opening.

OUT & ABOUT



Joe Bethel and Shannon Winkie at the Lattes & Leads hosted by Anani Salon & Spa, 2505 S.W. White Birch Drive, on Oct. 28.



Sara Schweitzer, Gabrielle Osterson and Devonda Cropp at the Lattes & Leads hosted by Anani Salon & Spa.



Crystal Wright and Sara Wilson at the Lattes & Leads hosted by Anani Salon & Spa.



Ryan Cooley, Kami Brandt and Josh Craighead at the Lattes & Leads hosted by Anani Salon & Spa.



Brett Haun, Henry Lee, Connor Hehli, Landen Buchman and Sue Hudson at the Lattes & Leads hosted by Anani Salon & Spa.



Jimmy Becker and Abbey Lytle at the Lattes & Leads hosted by Anani Salon & Spa.



Brett Haun, Danielle Wilkinson, Beth Barclay, Christen Nicoll and Andy Robinson at the Lattes & Leads hosted by Anani Salon & Spa.



Karen and Gary Schramm at "What Makes Ankeny Great" at Discover Ankeny, held at the FFA Enrichment Center on the DMACC campus on Nov. 6.



Merron Hart, Sharon Mayer and Larry Stevens at "What Makes Ankeny Great" at Discover Ankeny.



Stacey and Jeff Sporrer at "What Makes Ankeny Great" at Discover Ankeny.



Linda and Steve Odson at "What Makes Ankeny Great" at Discover Ankeny.



Nate Burnham and Brandon Converse at "What Makes Ankeny Great" at Discover Ankeny.



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