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MAGAZINE

HOMETOWN

holidays

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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 Joe Baumgarten

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?

Miracle on 86th Street transforms Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park into a winter wonderland.

Miracle on 86th Street

Each winter, a corner of Urbandale comes alive with lights, laughter and community joy. As the chill settles over Iowa, the town brightens with twinkling lights, laughter and community spirit. It's called the Miracle on 86th Street, and, for four years now, it's been transforming Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park into a winter wonderland where families gather, neighbors reconnect and holiday memories are made.

What began as a simple idea to “get people outside in the winter,” as Parks and Recreation Assistant Director Scott Hock explains, has grown into a beloved local tradition.

“We were just looking for something to do — something that would bring people together,” he says. “Council supported it right away, and, every year since, it's just gotten bigger.”

At the heart of the event is the Mayor's Tree Lighting, when the mayor flips the giant switch to illuminate more than 100,000 sparkling lights throughout the park. From that moment on, the entire space glows: trees wrapped in color, joyful displays shining against the night



Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park is lit up as it invites the public to visit Miracle on 86th Street.

sky, and children running from one dazzling feature to the next.

Over the years, the display has grown with creative new “centerpieces” each season.

“The first year, our crew made a wooden train we call the Jolly Holly Trolley,” Hock says. “Then came a giant gingerbread house, last year the light-up JOY letters, and this year's new feature is a walk-through ornament.”

Each piece is designed not only to light up at night but to look beautiful in daylight, too.

“We wanted it to be something families could enjoy all day long, not just after dark,” he says.

Families have quickly embraced the tradition. Many come year after year to snap photos in the iconic holiday sleigh, lovingly built by a city crew member and glowing with festive lights.

“The goal,” Hock says, “is that people can take those pictures when their kids are little — and then come back years later with their



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Organizers want Miracle on 86th Street to become a tradition for families.

grandkids to do it again.”

The Miracle on 86th Street isn’t just about the lights, though. Throughout the season, visitors can enjoy special activities like visits from Santa, a candy cane hunt, and a family scavenger hunt. There is even an ice rink nearby for those who want to lace up their skates and make a full day of winter fun.

Unlike the drive-thru light shows found elsewhere, this one encourages everyone to bundle up and enjoy a stroll.

“We’re from Iowa,” Hock laughs. “We’re supposed to embrace the cold weather. You can

Miracle on 86th Street

Where: Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park (near the library and police station)

When: Lighting ceremony Nov. 25 at 5:30 p.m.

Lights on display: Through early January

Highlights: Mayor’s Tree Lighting, Santa visits, candy cane and scavenger hunts, photo sleigh, ice rink

Cost: Free

More information: Visit www.urbandale.org or follow the city of Urbandale Parks & Recreation on Facebook



see it from the road, but you can’t experience it unless you get out of the car.”

With its location near the library and police station, the display stays lively and safe — and, over the years, it has become the backdrop for countless family moments.

“We’ve had one marriage proposal that we

know of,” Hock says. “It’s just that kind of place.”

This year’s lighting ceremony will take place on Nov. 25 at 5:30 p.m., timed perfectly with sunset for that magical glow. The lights will shine through early January, giving everyone plenty of chances to visit, stroll and soak in the spirit of the season.

Whether you come for the photo ops, the nostalgia, or simply to feel that hometown holiday cheer, Miracle on 86th Street is proof that a little light — and a lot of community — can make even the coldest nights warm.

Santa’s Rockin’ Lights

Every holiday season, Living History Farms in Urbandale transforms into a mile-long tunnel of twinkling color, rhythm and joy. It’s called Santa’s Rockin’ Lights, and, for seven years, it’s been dazzling families with a drive-thru experience unlike anything else in central Iowa.

“This isn’t just a light show — it’s a tradition,” says Peter Starykowicz, the event’s organizer. “We want this to be something families do every year, something they come back to with their kids, and someday their kids

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bring their kids.”

That spirit of continuity runs through every flicker of light. Since its debut in 2019, Santa's Rockin' Lights has grown into one of the region's premier holiday attractions. Each year brings new displays, new music and new reasons to roll down the windows (or pop open the sunroof) and take in the glow.

What makes Santa's Rockin' Lights different? In a word: synchronization.

Every arch, tree, snowflake and Santa display is programmed to move and flash precisely in time with the music.

“If the beat goes bup-bup-bup-bup, the lights go bup-bup-bup-bup right along with it,” Starykowicz explains. Behind the scenes, more than 50 computerized control boxes and miles of Cat6 network cable bring hundreds of thousands of LED lights to life, creating a mesmerizing, mile-long show of motion and sound.

“It's not just plug-and-play,” he says. “It's hundreds of hours of programming. Every blink, every fade, every shimmer is choreographed. It's a labor of love.”

The result is a show that feels alive — like the lights themselves are dancing along with your favorite holiday songs.

Each season brings something new, but this year's centerpiece is a showstopper: a 120-foot-long animated train dubbed The Santa Express.

“It's massive. Fifteen feet high and the length of a city block,” Starykowicz says. “Each car is animated and synchronized to music. You'll see Santa waving from the locomotive, reindeer prancing in rhythm, and even a Santa rock band jamming along.”

The train's playful energy fits perfectly with the event's theme: holiday magic with a rock-and-roll twist. While it may conjure thoughts of The Polar Express, Starykowicz says it is its

own creation.

“We love the connection people make, but this is our own Santa Express. It's a tribute to that sense of wonder trains bring to the holidays.”

While Urbandale's “Miracle on 86th Street” is a outdoor immersive exhibit, Santa's Rockin' Lights lets guests experience the magic from the comfort of their car.

“That's the beauty of it,” Starykowicz says. “You can come in your pajamas, bring hot cocoa, stay warm and cozy, and still feel totally immersed in the lights.”

Visitors drive slowly — about 3 miles per hour — along the mile-long route, which takes about 20–25 minutes to complete. Along the way, you'll encounter towering snowflakes, glittering tunnels, playful reindeer, and yes, plenty of rockin' Santas.

There's even a 20-foot-tall 3D Mr. and Mrs. Claus, polar bears and — for a touch of whimsy — giant illuminated dinosaurs, which have become a crowd favorite.

“It's definitely family-friendly,” Starykowicz says.

Hosting the event at Living History Farms adds another layer of charm. The historic setting, nestled among wide-open fields, allows the lights to shine against a dark, peaceful backdrop.

“It's not like driving through a city,” Starykowicz notes. “You're surrounded by open space, so you can really focus on the experience.”

The partnership with Living History Farms feels fitting.

“They're a venue of tradition,” Starykowicz adds. “They're constantly improving, but they always honor their roots. That's exactly what we're trying to do — build something that lasts.”

Santa's Rockin' Lights

Where: Living History Farms, 11121 Hickman Road, Urbandale

When: Opens mid-November and runs nightly through the holiday season

Hours: Evenings, dusk to 10 p.m. (check website for exact dates)

Length: One mile, approximately 20–25 minutes to drive through

Cost: Typically \$30–\$40 per vehicle (up to six people); additional fee per person for larger vehicles or buses.

Tickets: Purchase online in advance for best pricing

Website: <https://santasrocknlights.com>.

Tip: Visit early in the season or on weekday evenings for lighter traffic, and don't forget to tune your radio to the show's synchronized music station for the full experience.

As the event enters its seventh season, Starykowicz and his team are already looking decades ahead.

“We want to be around for 25 years and beyond,” he says. “We're building memories that families will look forward to every holiday season.”

That vision — of lights, laughter and community spirit — has made Santa's Rockin' Lights more than just a drive-thru show. It's a place where Urbandale families can reconnect with the joy and wonder of the season, year after year.

So grab your loved ones, load up the car, and roll through a mile of dancing lights. You might just start a new tradition. ■

ABLE account changes help those with a disability

There are exciting new changes to the Iowa ABLE account program that help individuals with a disability make self-directed investments and purchases.

The Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE) is a way to save money for expenses related to a disability. It is similar to (and is part of the federal statute for) 529 college-savings plans. An ABLE account allows individuals with disabilities to fund accounts with their own resources. Others, such as family members, can also contribute to the account. The minimum contribution limit to an ABLE account was recently reduced to \$1, effective immediately, making it easier for eligible individuals to start saving.

The account can be used to supplement, but not supplant, benefits received through



other government programs like Medicaid and SSI. Money from an ABLE account can be used to pay for education, transportation, health services, and employment-related expenses. Additionally, unlike some Medicaid trusts, funds from an ABLE account can be used for housing and basic living expenses. The beneficiary is allowed to have direct access to the money.

Other Medicaid trusts, such as a Special Needs Trust, do not allow funds to pay for funeral or burial expenses after an individual dies. Money in an ABLE account can be used to pay for funeral and burial expenses.

Account owners and members of their support system now have the opportunity to transfer funds from a Medicaid SNT into an ABLE account. This allows more flexibility when it comes to how assets are used.

Another advantage of an ABLE account is that most Medicaid trusts contain mandatory provisions subjecting any money remaining

in the account after death to Medicaid recapture by the State. In Iowa, the Department of Health and Human Services is not permitted to recover money in an ABLE account and remaining funds can pass to a named beneficiary.

Currently, to be eligible for an ABLE account, an individual must be disabled, and the disability occurred before the age of 26. However, recent changes to the law will raise the age limit to individuals found disabled up to 46 years old. The new law goes into effect Jan. 1, 2026.

If you have questions about how an ABLE account can complement your estate planning, contact an attorney who specializes in estate planning for individuals with disabilities. ■

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

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URBANDALE COUNCIL RECAP



Des Moines Christian School's plans for a new 102-acre campus.

October 22, 2025 - Council Meeting

The City Council met on Wednesday, October 22, and began with a proclamation recognizing Filipino American History Month. Endow Urbandale also presented their grant recipients for 2025.

The City Council approved the first reading of a rezoning from Agricultural Reserve District (A-1) to Planned Unit Development (PUD) for Des Moines Christian School's new 102-acre campus near Meredith Drive and Aurora Avenue.

The land was recently severed from Grimes and annexed into Urbandale, clearing the way for development. The campus would

include academic and athletic facilities plus an early education center.

The PUD establishes clear rules for how the site will be built and used, including traffic upgrades (turn lanes, potential signals, sidewalks/trails), landscaped buffers, and a 60-foot building-height cap.

ZIP Codes: The Council also approved hiring Van Scoyoc Associates for \$1,000/month for 12 months as part of a multi-city lobbying coalition related to ZIP Code issues. New residents are regularly reporting mail delivery problems with USPS-assigned ZIP Codes. Van Scoyoc will assist Urbandale and other cities in advocating for federal bills H.R. 672 and H.R. 3095 requiring USPS to assign single, unique ZIP Codes to listed communities.

October 8, 2025 - Council Meeting

The Mayor and the City Council met on Tuesday, October 8, and began with a proclamation recognizing National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The Urbandale Water Utility is working on plans for an Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) well in western Urbandale near the current 170th Street water tower—an infrastructure play to lock in safe, reliable drinking water for decades. ASR wells store treated water underground during low-demand months, then pulls it back when it's hot, dry, or demand spikes. The City Council approved a noise ordinance waiver for the project, setting the stage for the next steps which include designing the project (details like diameter, target aquifer, injection/recovery rates). Construction on the ASR well could likely begin in 2027. This ASR well is a long-horizon investment—quietly building a margin of safety into Urbandale's water system so households and businesses can count on clean, dependable water in dry spells, growth years, and everything in between.

Newsletter Sign-Up

You get plenty of e-mail already, that's why the City's official e-newsletter is delivered only once per month. It's your place to get a quick, streamlined, monthly update about all things Urbandale.

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INVESTMENT

By Daniel Rundahl

DON'T forget draw-down requirements



This time of year can bring plenty of change, whether it is the leaves on the trees, the seasonal sports schedules, or the considerations for who brings the turkey and eggnog. With all the hustle and bustle of the upcoming holiday season, you may not be focusing on the required draw down of some of your life savings.

Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs) were created in 1974, and Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) were required from the very beginning. RMDs are the minimum amounts that U.S. tax law requires one to withdraw annually from traditional IRAs and employer-sponsored retirement plans. The purpose of RMD rules is to ensure that people do not accumulate retirement accounts, defer taxation, and leave these funds as an inheritance. RMDs force the holder to withdraw at least some of the funds as taxable distributions while they are still alive.

The rules apply to all employer-sponsored retirement plans, including profit-sharing plans, 401K, 403(b), and 457(b) plans. The RMD rules also apply to traditional IRAs and IRA-based plans such as SEPs, SARSEPs and SIMPLE IRAs.

The age to start taking RMDs has changed over time. The current age to begin taking RMDs is 73 as of 2023, according to the SECURE 2.0 Act, which was an increase from the previous age of 72. For those of us born after 1960, we need to consider RMDs at age 75. Individuals are generally required to start taking withdrawals from their retirement accounts by April 1 of the year following the year they reach the required age.

There are penalties for failing to take RMDs or not taking a large enough distribution. The penalty is an excise tax of 25% of the amount not distributed as required, or 10% if the RMD is corrected within two years.

To some people, this requirement will not be as great of an issue if you are already drawing retirement needs regularly from your pre-tax savings; to others, it may cause an increase in taxable income that was not expected or needed.

This time of year, look at this future obligation. Maybe your required distribution is two to three years from now and you have room in your current tax bracket to explore other options. Many individuals consider ROTH IRA conversions to reduce the requirements at age 73. Others consider changing their annual tithing and donation expectations to have them come straight from the RMD qualified investments and go to the charities and churches of choice. Some may initiate a gifting effort to send this money in the direction of a loved one.

When it comes to retirement, you have worked hard the last 30-40 years. You have raised your family, given everything you can to save for your golden years, and now it is time for you to be able to live more like every day is a Saturday.

This time of year, let us be thankful. Let us take pause to thank those who have served to provide for the rights that we hold so dear. Let us embrace the spirit of family and friends. Don't forget to reach out to your financial advisor to get some of these end of year "requirements" in order so there are no surprises and you can walk into the New Year with a fresh start. Happy Thanksgiving. ■

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



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MEET Casey Clark

Carries on a passion for science

As an alumnus of the University of Northern Iowa, Casey Clark recalls that, during his formative collegiate years, he had a passion for science. Making the decision to pursue a career around the subject was simple.

"I enjoyed science, and I liked talking about science," he shares. "I felt that being a science educator would be the best way to keep doing that."

Clark says, when he graduated from college, he applied to most of the Des Moines metro schools. Urbandale High School was the first to offer him a job, and he has spent the last 12 years investing in Urbandale students through science.

"I attended Des Moines' Hoover High School, just a couple of miles from Urbandale, and Urbandale High School seemed like a nice place to go. I've taught everything except biology here, including physics and earth science. For the last few years, I've taught chemistry," Clark explains.

No teacher seems to pass his or her career without one challenge or another. For Clark, the biggest challenges take the form of student engagement.

"We (teachers) are competing with everything in the students' lives, so the challenge is to find ways to encourage high schoolers to engage in the curriculum," he says. "I enjoy creating a fun and challenging environment where students can learn."

For example, in his regular chemistry classes, Clark ties the understanding of chemistry to real life environmental challenges.

"It helps them see how the chemistry affects the world around us and explaining what we see is a tough ask of any high schooler."

Clark especially enjoys seeing students conquer a challenging concept. The students enjoy the victory, and he, in turn, relishes watching it happen in real time.

"Three years ago, I started teaching AP Chemistry," he shares. "On the first group's AP exam day, most of the students walked out of the exam feeling like they did a good job and were prepared well. That helped me feel like I succeeded in getting them prepared."

For individuals who aspire to become a science educator, or an educator in general, Clark offers some advice to aid in the journey: "You really need to enjoy the art of communicating with other people. It is good to understand your content, but it is important to understand the art of communicating it. It all comes down to relationships, and building positive student-to-teacher relationships makes all the difference. Those relationships are critical to success."

Since taking the teaching job in Urbandale, Clark has valued all the lessons and advice he has received from fellow teachers and colleagues.

"We've had several science teachers come and go over the years within our school," he says. "Each of them has impacted me in one way or another. We can learn a lot from our colleagues."

Clark says he looks forward to seeing where the new regular chemistry curriculum, which he says encourages student engagement, takes him and his students by the end of the year. ■



Casey Clark has been teaching a variety of science classes at Urbandale High School for the last 12 years.

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HOME HEALTH

By Aaron Wheeler

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.

A PERSONAL connection

McKennie shares memories of Urbandale's Olmsted-Urban House with PEO.

Nestled in the heart of Urbandale stands a house that's more than just wood and brick — it's a vessel of family stories, quiet secrets and community legacy. Sherrie McKennie, a lifelong Iowan with deep family roots in the area, recently sat down to share her memories of the Urbandale Historical Society Olmsted-Urban House, which once belonged to her great grandparents. Though she never lived there herself, the house played a starring role in her childhood.

"I used to visit for dinners and just to look around," McKennie recalls. "My grandmother would sneak me coffee with sugar and cream when I was just 4. It was our little secret — I don't think my mother ever knew."

That mischievous ritual, shared between generations, paints a vivid picture of the warmth and closeness that defined McKennie's early years.

"I had a great childhood," she recalls.

Mary Knueven is in the same PEO Chapter as McKennie.

"Sharrie is the daughter of Ruth Olmsted of the Olmsted family of Urbandale, Knueven says.

Knueven and several other members of the local PEO Chapter thought it would be great if they could get McKennie to the house. It had

Urbandale Historical Society Olmsted-Urban Home

Location: 4010 70th St., Urbandale

Hours: Open for tours the first Sunday from 2-4 p.m. and by appointment. Visit urbandalehistoricalsociety.org for details

Tip: The first and second Sunday in December, the Urbandale Historical Society hosts its annual Christmas Open House with music, Santa Claus and refreshments. This is a wonderful time and chance to begin the celebration of the holidays.



Sherrie McKennie shared her memories during a recent return to the Olmsted-Urban House, which was owned by her great grandparents.

been many years since she had seen it, and many improvements had been made.

McKennie's great-grandparents, Leander and Charlotte Olmsted, built the house in 1904.

"I spent a lot of time here with my grandparents," she says. "My brother and I were the only grandchildren around, so we were always with them."

Her father, Clarence, was a refrigeration specialist — so skilled that even Omaha lacked someone with his expertise.

"They'd come get him to fix their refrigerators," Sherry says.

Her mother was a schoolteacher, and, in a twist of history, had to marry in secret because teachers weren't allowed to wed at the time.

"They ran off to Missouri and kept it quiet for a year or two," McKennie says.

And the house? It now serves as a museum, as well as a testament to the generations who lived, loved and laughed within its walls. ■

NEWS BRIEF

PEO welcomes state treasurer

PEO State Treasurer Jennifer Stalder visited PEO Chapter KT at its August meeting at Nancy Ball's Clive home. Jennifer, in her conversational style at her official state officer visit to this chapter organized in 1956, shared information about the responsibilities and duties of each office and fielded questions from members at their meeting.

As a legacy of PEO members is to uplift and support women, Chapter KT contributes to the philanthropic endeavors of Cottey College, International Peace, STAR Scholarships, Educational Loan Program, Sarah Porter Beckwith Friendship Fund, Dorothy's House, College Student Remembrance gift package and Goodwill Food Pantry.

Chapter members participate in a pre-meeting social hour and book club. Chapter KT members outreach their support to area PEO chapter events in Ankeny and Panora. PEO Chapter KT members reside in Clive, West Des Moines, Urbandale, Johnston, Des Moines, Ankeny and Indianola.

Contact membership chair Mary Richards at mrichards@netins.net or co-chair Mary Hunter at mary.hunter@dmgoodwill.org for information about PEO Chapter KT. ■



Front: Jennifer Stalder, Tamara Kenworthy, Dianne Chadwick and Mary Richards. Back: Mary Hunter, Nancy Ball, Cindy Carlson, Melanie Hopke, Lisa Northup, Aimee Fisher, Amanda Muller Pfeffer, Denise Harlan, Teresa Shaw and Jeanne Mullenbach. Inset: Megan Ball.

HONORING OUR LOCAL *Veterans*

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Bill Dane

Military branch: Iowa Army National Guard

Rank: First Sergeant

Served: 1975 to 1999

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"When you know you are talking to a veteran, thank them."



Phil McGrath

Military branch: U.S. Army

Rank: First Lieutenant

Served: 1966-1969

How can Americans best honor veterans?

"Give veterans better discounts and motels and business places."



Gregory J. McCabe

Military branch: U.S. Army

Rank: E-5, military police, company clerk

Served: Aug. 1, 1966 to Aug. 1, 1968

Stationed: The Presidio in San Francisco, Fort Polk in Louisiana, Fort Lewis near Seattle, Washington



Joe Malloy

Urbandale

Military branch: U.S. Army and Iowa National Guard

Rank: E9 in the U.S. Army, enlisted June 1967, served as tank commander in Vietnam.

Joined Iowa National Guard, MP in Desert Shield/Desert Storm 91. Retired Army with 30 years service.



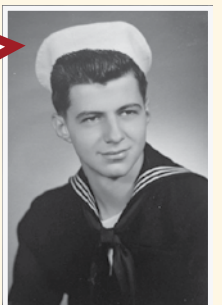
Roland Lee Huff

Urbandale

Military branch: U.S. Navy

Rank: E3

Served: September 1955-September 1969
Served aboard ship in the Marshall Islands in the South Pacific during the H-Bomb tests.



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Col. Robert C. King (Ret)

Urbandale

Service: Enlisted in the Iowa Army National Guard, November 1968 to September 1974, military policeman and supply sergeant. Full-time National Guard civil service, graduated State Officer Candidate School and commissioned Second Lieutenant, September 1974.

January 1994 to January 1999 - Commander, Headquarters, State Area Command, Iowa Army National Guard.

September 2004, retired as Colonel with a State of Iowa brevet promotion to Brigadier General. Jan 2004 to May 2012 - Special Projects Officer (civilian position), Headquarters, Iowa National Guard.

May 2012 to Sept. 2016 - Executive Director, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and Director of Iowa Veterans Cemetery.



Photo by Bill Schaefer



We salute these members of the Urbandale American Legion



Nicole McDowell	Army Guard	3 years
Peg Mullen	Navy	22 years
Ron Schooley	Navy	20 years
Zac McDowell	Army Guard	12 years
Stephen Smith	Army/Guard/Reserve	42 years
Nick H. Spasic	Army/Guard Reserve	
Bill Henry	Army	6 years
James Gastineau	Navy Reserve	16 years
Billy Foley	Army Guard	41 years
Bob Wortman	Army	7 years
Dean Ghendening	Army	2 years
Don Swan	Air National Guard	23 years
Don Cruikshank	U.S. Air Force	4 years
Jerry Robertson	Navy	4 years
Rob Stark	Iowa Army Guard	25 years

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



LIBRARY

By Staci Stanton, Programming and Outreach Manager

URBANDALE Public Library news

Sensory Spaces

The library is offering special hours for a sensory-friendly environment for the community on Sunday, Nov. 23 from noon to 1 p.m. Ear plugs, ear

coverings and more will be available, as well as reduced

lighting and areas designated for noise and quiet. Other options include a sensory-friendly storytime, visiting with an ARL TheraPet in the library's reading room, and meeting with community organizations who will share information about their services and resources.

Support the Library Foundation

The Urbandale Public Library Foundation is asking for your support for its annual fundraising campaign to ensure the library grows, adapts and serves our community with excellence. The Foundation works to ensure that the library has the resources to thrive, and members are proud to share the impact of your support this past year. The Foundation contributed \$250,000 to the library's interior space redesign project, which includes updating the children's area with new furniture and play items, while also adding more study rooms. The Foundation also supported an AmeriCorps internship to strengthen the library's Community Fridge initiative to help reduce food waste and insecurity. The Foundation also supports the library's Summer Reading and All Urbandale Reads programs.

With your support, the library can continue to sustain these vital projects and create opportunities in the years to come. Donations can be made on our website or stop in and fill out a form at the front desk.

Winter Book Sale

Check out the library book sale from Friday, Dec. 5, until Sunday, Dec. 8, during library hours. Whether you are looking to find sustainable options for holiday shopping or add to your own personal collection, the book sale will have something for everyone.

Urbandale Community Adult Band Holiday Concert

Members of the Urbandale Community Adult Band will play a variety of Christmas tunes as well as some contemporary numbers. Join us Monday, Dec. 15 at 6:30 p.m. for a concert guaranteed to get everyone in the holiday spirit.

Mitten Tree

Give the gift of warmth this season by donating new gloves/mittens, hats or scarves to the library's mitten tree. Items will be distributed by the Urbandale Food Pantry to those in need throughout the community. Items can be donated through the month of December.

Holiday Hours

The library is closing at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 26, and will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 27, and Friday, Nov. 28, for the Thanksgiving holiday. ■

Urbandale Public Library

3520 86th St., Urbandale

515-278-3945

www.urbandalelibrary.org

Monday – Thursday: 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Friday – Saturday: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Sunday: noon to 6 p.m.

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STEWART keeps busy helping others

No better time than today to “dive in,” he says.

“If you want anything done, ask a busy man to do it.”

— Elbert Hubbard, 1856-1915



Bob Stewart is a busy guy.

But, when you meet him, you’ll quickly see that he’s busy helping others, not himself. Hang around, and you’re likely to get “Bobbed,” which is what his friends call being asked by Stewart to lend a hand in one of his many service projects. They also say it is almost impossible to say no.

Part of Stewart’s success comes from his warm and engaging personality. He’s like a magnet, drawing people to him because you just want to help him. He’s also a master organizer. Once he spots a need, he will create the necessary infrastructure to fill it, whether it’s a location, a sponsor, a donor, or an inside contact. In true “if you build it, they will come” style, Bob has volunteers lined up to support his projects.

When multiple hip surgeries made it impossible for Stewart to do overseas missions, he turned his attention to needs closer to home. One of the first programs he got involved with was Freedom for Youth. This is an after-school program for at-risk children in Des Moines. Stewart



Ryan Mehalovich of Edward Jones presents the Neighbor Spotlight certificate to Bob Stewart.


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formed a team of 12 people to prepare and serve a monthly dinner for the elementary and high school students.

“They were mostly grandmothers,” Stewart says of the volunteers. “They enjoyed preparing and serving the meals — and the happy chatter of the kids as they enjoyed the meal.”

Stewart is also involved in Meals from the Heartland. This organization prepares meal kits containing items like rice, beans and vitamins. The meals are hermetically sealed, loaded on pallets, and shipped all over the world. Bob organizes a group of 60 people to work once every six months to package more than 25,000 meals.

As if this were not enough, Stewart is also passionate about helping Central Iowa Shelter and Services, which takes in up to 300 homeless folks every day. They are always looking for help getting meals ready and served to them three times a day. Stewart has been using his connections with local businesses like Chick-fil-A and Friedrichs Coffee in Urbandale to donate sandwiches, coffee and even an industrial coffee machine to make a real difference.

Stewart likes to ask people he meets a thought-provoking question: “At what point in your life do you move from success to significance?”

His answer? “Today!”

“Why wait?” he asks. “There’s always a need; find what you’re passionate about and dive in.” ■

Do you know a neighbor who deserves recognition?

Nominate by emailing tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.

VIOLENCE and Christian teaching

Violence between people who hold different beliefs is a tragedy that calls for deep reflection in light of Christian teaching. Christians uphold the inherent dignity of every human being, created in the image and likeness of God. Violence against others because of differences in belief or worldview is a grave sin, as it disregards the sanctity of life and undermines the mutual respect to which all people are entitled.

The Church consistently emphasizes that dialogue and understanding must guide our relationships with people of different philosophies, religions and backgrounds. The Church encourages us to approach those with different ways of thinking with respect and openness, affirming that truth and goodness can be found beyond the Church's visible borders. Violence silences these possibilities for dialogue and runs directly contrary to Christ's call to love not only our neighbors but even our enemies.

Our Church reminds us that peace is not merely the absence of conflict but the fruit of justice and charity. Therefore, Christians are called to be peacemakers who resist hatred with compassion and work toward reconciliation.

As Christians, our response to this violence must be both prayer and action: prayer for the victims, the perpetrators, and all who suffer, and action to build a culture where differences are encountered with dialogue rather than division, and where every human life is cherished as sacred. ■

Information provided by Deacon Dan Maxcy, Saint Mary of Nazareth Catholic Church, 4600 Meredith Drive, Des Moines, 515-276-7589, Deacondan@stmarysdsm.org.



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7 PM & 10 PM

Thursday, December 25
9 AM Mass

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Upcoming in Urbandale Living magazine

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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!



Mayor's Lighting Celebration - Miracle on 86th Street

Tuesday, Nov. 25, 5:30-6:30 p.m.
Charles Gabus Memorial Tree
Park and Gardens, 3400 86th St.,
Urbandale

Join the Mayor and City Council as they flip the switch and light up the Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park for the holiday season. There will be hot cocoa and cookies for attendees to enjoy as they walk around the beautifully decorated park.

The Urbandale Historical Society annual Christmas Open House

Sundays, Dec. 7 and 14, 2-4 p.m.
Urbandale Historical Society,
4010 70th St., Urbandale

Enjoy tours of the Olmsted-Urban House and refreshments both Sundays. On Dec. 14, the Historical Society's second annual Cookie Walk will be held, along with a visit from Santa Claus, children's crafts, face painting and "Santa's Gift Bag" for a \$20 donation. Win a \$25 or more gift card from local businesses.

Urbandale Public Library Events

3520 86th St., Urbandale

• **Cool Cash Scavenger Hunt:** Through Monday, Dec. 1. Drop into the library to find some "Cool Cash" as you hunt down nine pictures of interesting and unique money designs from all around the world. Don't forget to sign the champion's log after you've found them all.

• **Storytime Explorers:** Friday, Nov. 21, 10-11 a.m.

• **Adult Recreational Chess:** Saturdays, Nov. 22 and 29, 1-4 p.m.

• **Afterschool Fun STEM - Ribbon Rocket:** Tuesday, Nov. 25, 4:15-5:15 p.m. Observe three of the four forces of flight as participants make ribbon rockets. The library will provide the cardboard tubes, ribbons, paper and crayons; participants will provide the thrust (balanced with drag and gravity) to make this rocket "fly" (aka glide) along its ribbon tracks. "Blast off" with hands-on learning at the library.

• **Adult DIY - Weep, Wail, Write:** Tuesday, Nov. 25, 6-7:30 p.m. Claudine Cheatem will share how writing and journaling can be powerful tools for processing grief and other emotions. Journals and pens will be provided, but you are welcome to bring your own. Claudine Cheatem is a self-published novelist, playwright and poet. She believes the arts have been, and always will be, a conduit to change.

'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>.

Urbandale Historical Society Programs at the Library

Urbandale Public Library,
3520 86th St., Urbandale

- Dec. 14, 2 p.m. Christmas Open House at the Olmsted-Urban House
- Jan. 11, 2 p.m. Living History Farm and The Flynns by Elizabeth Keest Sedrel
- Feb. 8, 2 p.m. History of the Urbandale Golf and Country Club by Todd Carberry
- March 8, 2 p.m. Fraud and Courage with Urbandale's Terry Rich
- April 12, 2 p.m. The Story of Merle Hay Mall with Liz Holland



Parade of Trees

Dec. 1-31
Edencrest at Timberline, 14001
Douglas Parkway, Urbandale

The public is invited to the second annual Parade of Trees at Edencrest at Timberline. Step into the magic of the season. The senior living community will be transformed into a winter wonderland, filled with beautifully themed and decorated Christmas trees. Trees are provided by families, organizations or local businesses, and many are dedicated to loved ones, uniquely designed to capture the joy, sparkle and spirit of the holidays. For more information or for assistance with providing a tree display, email Marti at marti.mcmahon@edencrestliving.com or call 515-601-2948.

Des Moines Community Orchestra Concerts

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



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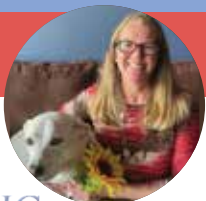
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WELLNESS

By Dr. Jody England

WHY choose nutritional wellness?

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



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HEALTH

By Annette Smith

THE CONNECTION between stress and chronic pain

Stress isn't just an emotional experience — it can have a profound impact on the body. When stress levels rise, the body releases hormones like cortisol and adrenaline that prepare us for “fight or flight.” Over time, this constant state of alertness can lead to muscle tension, shallow breathing and changes in posture. The neck, shoulders and back often bear the brunt of this tension, which may contribute to headaches, jaw pain or chronic discomfort.

Persistent stress can also heighten the body's sensitivity to pain by influencing how the brain processes pain signals. This means that even minor aches can start to feel more intense when stress is ongoing. It's a cycle: Pain increases stress, and stress, in turn, worsens pain.

Breaking this cycle often starts with awareness. Incorporating brief moments of movement throughout the day — like stretching or walking — can help release tension. Slow, deep breathing or mindfulness practices can calm the nervous system and lower muscle tone. Gentle manual therapies, massage and relaxation techniques may also assist the body in returning to a more balanced state. By addressing both the mind and body, it is possible to reduce discomfort and improve overall well-being. ■

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





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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, kneed 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.



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AM Exchange

Urbandale Chamber AM Exchange was held Sept. 30 at Vision Park Family Eye Care.



Bryan Larson and McKenzie Friedman



Carla Ruble and Jenny Blankenship



Anna Ito and Kyle Lee



Marty Trepp and Logan Floyd



Aaron Colyer and Kaylee Tanner



Dominick Carapella, Ashley Carapella and Meg Knapper



Karen Hall, Sandee Cook and Sherrie Nelson



Jay Mathes and Keri Weidmaier



Allison Peet and Pat Pithan



Kevin McGuire and Barry Hesse



The Urbandale Chamber held a ribbon cutting for Oxygen Yoga & Fitness Urbandale on Oct. 22.



Amy and Pete Johannsen, owners of Oxygen Yoga & Fitness Urbandale, at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for the business.



Kelly Troxel, Meg Knapper, Shane Hoffman and Kelli Close at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Oxygen Yoga & Fitness Urbandale on Oct. 22.



Casee Woodley, Ryan Cooley and Kari Swain at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Oxygen Yoga & Fitness Urbandale on Oct. 22.



Fareway is the winner for favorite grocery store and runner-up for favorite liquor store. Pictured are Store Manager Jeff McElvain and Meat Manager Tyler Rosa.



Ann M. Hartz CPA & Associates is a runner up for favorite accounting firm. Pictured is owner Ann Hartz.



Bark Shop is a runner-up for favorite dog groomer. Pictured are Miranda Stacey, Emily Davis, Caroline Hughes and Kaylee Swift.



The Urban Grill is a runner-up for favorite restaurant and favorite restaurant for dinner. Pictured are Andrew Clarkwilt and Antonio Quinn.



Right Roofing is a runner-up for favorite exterior contractor. Front row: Nick Andersen, Tristen Duncan and Christian Markuson; and, back row: Travis Hagen, Ryan Johnson, Charlie Nicklaus and Gauge Van Haalen.



Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm is runner up for favorite law firm. Pictured are Ross Barnett, Charlotte Sucik, Gail Barnett and Gordita, the office dog.

WHY FAMILIES CHOOSE WAGGONER PEDIATRICS

Choosing a pediatrician is about more than finding somewhere to get shots or sick visits — it's about having a doctor who knows your child, your family, and your values. At our private, family-owned clinic, your child is cared for by a small, consistent team — pediatrician Dr. Brian Waggoner and nurse practitioner Julie Waggoner — a husband-and-wife team who have served Central Iowa families for more than 25 years.

That's why families have trusted us for decades — and why we've been voted Des Moines' Best Local Pediatric Clinic 10+ times.

1. Continuity of Care — From Birth Through Adolescence

Your child sees the same providers every visit. No rotating faces. No corporate care handoffs. We believe true pediatric care is rooted in long-term relationships.

2. Real After-Hours Access to Your Pediatrician

Our families don't rely on call centers or urgent care after 5 PM. When you need help after hours, Dr. Waggoner personally returns the call.

3. Hospital Newborn Visits — Not Hospitalists

Dr. Waggoner is one of the few Des Moines pediatricians who still rounds in the hospital to see his newborn patients personally. We believe your baby's first doctor should be someone you already know and trust — not a hospitalist you've never met.

4. Same-Day Sick Appointments — Guaranteed

When your child wakes up sick, we make sure they're seen that day. You shouldn't have to wait a week or settle for urgent care.

5. Independent. Local. Family-Run.

We are not owned by a hospital system, corporate group, or out-of-state investors. Every decision is made by a family who lives in this community — and is committed to it.

READY FOR PEDIATRIC CARE THAT PUTS YOUR FAMILY FIRST?

Call 515-987-0051 to schedule a meet-and-greet or your first appointment. Most families are seen within a few days.



Waggoner Pediatrics of Central Iowa

Call today to schedule your child's appointment!

515-987-0051

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