

INDIANOLA

DECEMBER 2025

Living

MAGAZINE

Handmade FOR THE holidays

Residents share the joy
of gifts from the heart.

Apple cinnamon muffins
RECIPE

Roose likes to reuse and repurpose
GARAGE

Strabala enjoys her bird companions
NEIGHBOR

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ECRWS EDDM
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On a cold winter day, back in 2009, our founder, Ryan J. Ellis, was on his way to court in Marion County when he passed by Indianola Middle School. He was shocked when he noticed the number of students walking to school with no hats or gloves. Unable to shake the sight, Ryan did not return to work after court was finished. Instead, he stopped by the school to investigate if this was a common issue that kids were facing. He quickly learned the school was desperate for hats & gloves, so his next stop was Walmart where he purchased 30 of each to donate to the school. This sparked the idea of raising awareness of the community's need and turned into the very first Hat & Glove Drive at Ellis Law Offices.

Over the years, the Hat & Glove Drive has become a cherished ELO tradition. Each November, we kick off the holiday season by collecting donations and encouraging our community to join us in giving back. What began with one school soon expanded to all Warren County community schools, ensuring that local children stay warm throughout the winter.

Our Annual Open House has become the heart of the event. It provides an opportunity for the community to come together to donate, enjoy food and drinks,

and cheer on the Iowa vs Iowa State Basketball game. In 2020, the event took on even more meaning when we began hosting it in honor of our dear friend, Janine Jensen, and her passing. We also introduced a new charitable component: for every hat or pair of gloves donated, Ellis Law contributes \$1.00 to Unravel Iowa, an organization dedicated to pediatric cancer research and family support. This year, we're aiming higher than ever, with a goal of collecting 2,000 donations.

Our 15th Annual Hat & Glove Drive and Open House will be held on **December 11th, 2025, from 4:00–8:00 PM at our new office, located at 2007 N 6th Street in Indianola**. Donations are open now through December 22nd, and we encourage the community to drop off new hats and gloves to support local students.

We are grateful for the generosity our community shows year after year. When we come together, we truly can make a difference—one warm head and one warm pair of hands at a time.



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"We pride ourselves on making a difference in the lives of our clients and the community."

WELCOME

MADE by hand

There was a time in my life when I may have viewed a homemade Christmas gift as a cheap way out for the giver. If I am being honest, I didn't truly appreciate the time and work that a person would put into creating such a gift. Today, I view it differently.

Now, don't get me wrong. I don't need another horse painting from Aunt Velma or a CD of self-recorded polka music from my neighbor Bill. In fact, I have a few to offer, if you are interested.

When my brother Steve and I were young, Mom made us each a homemade quilt, created with fabric from various pieces of clothing we no longer used. They were warm and fuzzy scrapbooks of sorts. We used them so much, we wore them out. Years later, to our surprise, Mom repaired and recrafted them. Decades later, mine is showing its age again, but it still warms me up on those cold winter evenings. In fact, I laugh because I sometimes find a needle tucked away in it. I guess that is Mom's way of still poking me from time to time. That quilt brings more smiles than any store-bought present ever could.

I also smile each year when we put the ornaments on our Christmas tree, as we recount the times when we bought or received each one. I have known our editor, Tammy Pearson, for many years, and she has been kind enough to give us handmade ornaments many times. Most are ones she created with her kids, and that makes them even more special. Some years, she didn't give any. I am not sure what that means.

Of course, some of the best homemade gifts are the edible ones. You simply can't go wrong with candies and cookies. My favorite is the chocolate fudge, and I can go through a tray of it faster than I want to admit. One year, my 16-year-old daughter, Sara, thought it would be nice to take a plate of cookies and candies out to some of the folks who were working on Christmas day. So, she loaded up several boxes and drove around to stores, dropping off the goodies and wishing them a merry Christmas. She said she got some strange looks, which was unfortunate. Even so, I bet — after a bit of testing — they eventually ate them. Especially the fudge.

In this issue of your Living magazine, we share the stories of homemade gifts and the smiles they put on the givers and the receivers. Merry Christmas to you all, and thanks for reading. ■

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Handmade FOR THE holidays

Residents share
the joy of gifts
from the heart.

By Rachel Harrington

The quilt from a beloved aunt. Knitted sweaters from Grandma. A child's table and chairs crafted in a relative's workshop. A personalized ornament. Handmade gifts are unique, but, more than that, they are gifts of time spent in the crafting, imagination in their design and love in their giving.

Tabitha Wiese enjoys
crocheting gifts for others.

Returning love by crafting

Tabatha Graham began making handmade Christmas gifts for her mother and others about three years ago, but she has been developing her crafting skills since her mother, Carol Hartgrave, started teaching her as a young girl around age 5.

"I've always enjoyed making things, and we did it together when Tabatha was growing up," Hartgrave remembers. "It gave us something to do inside and together. She seems to have a real flair for it. I could make things, but she adds some elegance to it. She can take what you give her and make something beautiful with it."

A few years ago, Hargrave mentioned to Graham that she really wanted a wreath made. Since Hartgrave cannot do the crafts like she used to, Graham decided to gift time and skills back to her mother to bring her joy.

"We went shopping together for supplies for a wreath for her and for me," Graham says. "We went to several places like Walmart, Dollar Tree, Dollar General and some Amazon shopping, but we mostly went to Hobby Lobby. The wreaths took me about a month to complete since I worked on them after work each day. Mom was so pleased, thrilled and over the moon, saying it was even more special because I made it for her."

Graham didn't use any special instructions but decided to wing the wreath's construction. When it was finished, she felt like it looked great.

"Hot glue and pipe cleaners can do wonders on things," she quips.

Items like tinsel, ribbon and small ball ornaments were used to create the wreath. The colors red and silver were incorporated into the wreath since red is Hartgrave's favorite color, and she wanted to personalize it as much as possible. A ribbon bow was created and attached at the bottom of the wreath.

"I don't know how she does it, but Tabatha makes the bows big, light and fluffy," Hartgrave says.

The wreaths were such a hit that Graham ended up making and gifting several others to friends.

The next year, Hartgrave saw a picture on Facebook of a decorative snow globe, though it was not made exactly the way she would have liked. She told Graham how she would like one.

Graham got to work once again to bring joy to her mother. Utilizing the same stores, she and her mother collected items to put in the snow globes.

"I started buying little things I thought would be cute in it," Hartgrave says. "We had puppy dogs, snowmen, Santa Clauses, candy canes, little houses, kittens... anything you can find in a little ornament. I even found some of the old red pickup trucks that are used in Christmas decorations."

Now, the finished snow globes adorn Hartgrave's



Carol Hartgrave and Tabatha Graham with the handmade wreaths Tabatha made.

house every Christmas season.

Since those first Christmas gifts, Graham has created quite a few more for her mother. Hartgrave says her daughter has created at least eight to 10 snow globes and a few wreaths.

"The first year, I just left the wreath up for a long time so I could enjoy it," she says, stating that it is quite large and a bit challenging to put up and take down.

"She did so well on all of it. It makes me proud to be her mama."

The joy of crafting gifts

Thirteen years ago, Tabitha Wiese received a gift of crochet materials and supplies from her husband and best friend. She had wanted to learn to crochet, but she hadn't learned the skill when growing up. Once she received her gift of crochet material and tools, she decided to teach herself.

"It was probably a couple of years before I started



Besides wreaths, Tabatha Graham has made numerous snow globes for her mom.

gifting things I crocheted,” Wiese recalls. “It took me a while to get comfortable with it before I gave finished projects to others.”

At first, Wiese began making projects just because she wanted to. After a couple of years learning the craft of crochet, four babies were born between Wiese’s family and friends. She used the crochet skills she had been developing to craft baby blankets as gifts for them. The joy she felt in giving her handmade gifts encouraged her to take on more projects. As time progressed, so did the difficulty level of her projects. She made a complicated “Star Wars” blanket that she deems a labor of love for her cousin, who is a big fan of “Star Wars.”

“It took me so long,” she exclaims. “He lives on the east coast, and we don’t get to see each other much, but he was so appreciative of it.”

Wiese also made a complex Transformer blanket for a friend’s son.

“My friend was a newborn photographer at the time, and I had gotten started making photography props,” Wiese explains. “She let me include my stuff in the pictures, and it was so cool to be a part of something the parents would treasure forever.”

Wiese also took on a unicorn project. Her daughter was in dance classes, and their theme that year was “Space Unicorns.” She made each dancer a stuffed unicorn. Another complicated project was a “Harry Potter”-themed blanket for her first nephew.

“It is always a labor of love,” Wiese says. “Sometimes there is a stigma around things that are handcrafted, but so much time and energy go into handmade gifts, and what is more precious and priceless than your time?”

Her favorite projects tend to be the more complicated ones. Though sometimes she has felt like the process is a nightmare, she is proud of herself and of the finished project when it is complete.

Currently, Wiese is working on a set of baby blankets for twins due in February. Though their pattern is simpler than the “Harry Potter,” “Transformer” and “Star Wars” blankets, they are just as precious to Wiese, and love is poured into them just the same.

“I’ve been working on them for about a month. One is halfway finished, and the other is a bit closer to being done. I love doing handcrafted things,” she shares. “They are my favorite gifts, and they are one of a kind since you can’t get them anywhere else. Crafting brings me peace and happiness, and, at the end of it, I have something I can give to someone else.”



Tabitha Wiese has crocheted a variety of blanket patterns for gifts as well as other items such as unicorns.

Giving the heart

Over the past six months, Dawn Braden has learned the art of creating with resin and found a niche she enjoys making and giving. Her desire to begin crafting stemmed from heartache.

“In 2017, I lost my father,” she recalls. “I started struggling with anxiety and depression, and I became numb to death. I sought help with a therapist. Then in 2019, all in one year, I found out I had several health issues. I couldn’t work anymore and became like a hermit. I started crafting to help draw me out of depression.”

After working with T-shirts and other crafts, she started learning about working with resin. At first, she did small resin projects to see if she enjoyed it.

“I started by making dominos,” Braden says. “I fell in love with doing it. While browsing Facebook, I kept seeing other people making these resin hearts and liked it, so I found a heart mold on Facebook Marketplace and bought it.”

Braden began making resin hearts for others. Some are in memory of a loved one, some are fun, some are for a special occasion such as a birthday, and some are just because she wants to give it. One of her good friends lost her brother a few years ago. He liked Harley Davidson, so she created a heart with that theme. Braden’s mom and two aunts came from a family of 11 children, and only three remain living. She made each of them a heart. She made another aunt who lost two sons of her four children a couple of resin hearts to remember them. Braden also made her cousin, a big L.A. Dodgers fan,



Dawn Braden makes resin hearts as gifts.

an L.A. Dodgers-themed resin heart for her birthday. For her father-in-law, Braden made a Green Bay Packers heart and a Green Bay Packers set of dominos.

“When I first started making resin projects, I gave so many things away,” Braden says. “Later, some of those same recipients wanted other resin creations and wouldn’t let me just gift the projects to them. They gave back to me by paying for them.”

Making the resin hearts takes a full day. After pouring a resin mixture colored for the specific project into the heart mold, it must sit for a full day to harden. Then, Braden takes vinyl sticker paper and lettering to create the wording for the heart on her Cricut machine. Once the wording is verified with the recipient, she places it and a chosen photo on the heart. A clear coat of resin is then poured on the heart that must harden for another four hours.

“Though it wouldn’t come off, the clear coat protects the lettering and the picture,” she says. “It also makes it look nicer.”

Finally, Braden uses tools to smooth and file down any areas that need it, completing the project.

Braden says creating projects like the resin dominos and hearts makes her feel just as good as the recipients feel.

“Making the resin hearts brings a smile to my face, and it has helped me tremendously,” she shares. “It’s something I really like doing. My motto is ‘Creating a smile one piece at a time.’ If I can make someone smile, that’s most meaningful to me.” ■

FRIEND'S apples create a perfect fall treat

When Cheryl Castile shared a bag of freshly picked apples with me, I knew exactly what to do — turn them into something warm, comforting and perfect for sharing. I love to bake, and these apple cinnamon muffins are the result: soft, fragrant and filled with cozy autumn flavor in every bite. There is something special about baking with fruit that comes straight from someone's tree.



As they bake, the kitchen fills with the irresistible scent of cinnamon and caramelizing apples, promising a treat that is both nostalgic and homemade. These muffins strike the right balance — tender on the inside with just a hint of golden crispness on top. They are wonderful for breakfast, a mid-morning snack or an afternoon pick-me-up with coffee or tea.

Simple to make and even better to share, these muffins are a sweet way to say thank you or to celebrate the small gestures of kindness that brighten an ordinary day. So, if you have a handful of apples and a little time, this recipe transforms them into something truly special — a batch of warm, cinnamon-kissed gratitude. ■

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

Apple cinnamon muffins

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
- 1 large apple, Granny Smith works well
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 pinch salt
- 1/2 cup milk (can use soy, almond or other varieties)

Directions

- Combine cinnamon and brown sugar and set aside. Peel apple, dice into small pieces and set aside.
- Mix flour, baking powder and salt and set aside. Cream together sugar and butter using a mixer.
- Add eggs and vanilla and mix well. Stir in flour mixture. Slowly stir in



milk until combined.

- Grease a 12-muffin pan. Divide dough, diced apples and cinnamon/brown sugar mixture in half. Place one half of the dough among the 12 muffin cups. Follow with one half of the apples and then the cinnamon/brown sugar mixture. Repeat.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes. These can be frozen up to three months or enjoy warm.

NEIGHBOR

BUNTING honored as football official of the year

Brad Bunting of Indianola was named the NFHS Officials Association's Football Official of the Year for 2025. Bunting has been officiating for more than 30 years, currently officiating high school and college games.

"We are so proud of our dad for being named official of the year from playing, to coaching, to giving back, he dedicated his life to the sport he loves," his children, Alex, Cam and Trey conveyed.

"People have no idea how much time Brad has put in, being a head referee on his high school and college crews," says his father, Keith Bunting. "He really knows the rules and how to handle different situations. He is appreciated for his service to football by coaches, schools and players."

He has "such a dedication to the sport of football," Guylaine Edgerton says. "Over 31 years as a referee and working very long hours behind the scene to make this all possible. I admire (his) dedication and passion and love of the game." ■



Brad Bunting, center, is honored for his accomplishments as a football official.

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LEGAL By Ken Winjum

OPEN meetings and records law

Our nation and state were founded on the principle that it is the government that serves and reports to its citizens. In keeping with that principle, Iowa has laws mandating that governmental meetings and records be open to the public. The Open Meetings Act is found at Iowa Code Chapter 21, and the Open Records Act is found at Iowa Code Chapter 22.



Open Meetings Act

The intent of this act is to ensure that the basis and rationale of governmental decisions are easily accessible to the people.

The act applies to governmental bodies, which are generally defined as a board, council, commission or other governing body of the state or political subdivisions. A meeting is defined as a gathering of a majority of the members of a governmental body where there is deliberation or action upon any matter within the scope of the body's policy-making duties.

The act requires public notice of each meeting and that it be held in open session. There are some exceptions which allow a body to go into closed session upon an affirmative public vote of two thirds of the members.

It is notable that the public may use cameras or recording devices at any open session.

Open Records Act

The Iowa Supreme Court has observed that the act is designed to open the doors of government to public scrutiny and to prevent government from secreting its decision-making activities from the public, on whose behalf it is its duty to act.

The act applies to governmental bodies, defined as the state as well as any county, city, township, school corporation, political subdivision, tax supported district and some others. The act provides that every person shall have the right to examine and copy a public record and to publish or otherwise disseminate its contents. The cost of copying records can be recovered by the governmental body.

Also, a government body shall not prevent the examination or copying of a public record by contracting with a nongovernment body to perform any of its duties or functions.

Of course, there are many exceptions to this. The act details a list of at least 75 types of "confidential records" (with subparts) which are not to be released absent a court order.

Iowa Public Information Board

Iowa Code Chapter 23 created a board to decide cases involving the Open Meetings Act and Open Records Act. As an agency, its decisions can be reviewed by the district court.

Transparent government is reflected by Iowa's open meetings and records laws. As is often the case, there are numerous exceptions to these laws, and a careful reading may be necessary in any given situation. ■

Information provided by Ken Winjum, The Winjum Law Firm, P.L.C., 1220 Sunset Drive., Suite 103, Norwalk, 515-981-5220, www.winjumlaw.com.

ROOSE likes to reuse and repurpose

Puts learned skills to work



Doug Roose refurbished a smoker with a few easy fixes.

Doug and Kristal Roose have only lived in their home since June 2025. During the few months in the house, Doug has made a lot of changes using skills he has learned through the years, and he spends a great deal of time in his garage and shop.

"I'm currently laid off, and, starting with my grandpa, then my dad, and now me, we're just guys who like to keep our hands busy," he says.

Kristal shares that Doug is beyond excited to now have a garage, a shop and a basement to work in.

Doug says, besides getting on Facebook Marketplace occasionally, he is not a social media user, so Kristal scours online and finds many free things that others are disposing of for Doug to reuse and repurpose, keeping it out of the landfill. Not only is he making treasures out of disposed items, but he is also updating his shop and garage from free materials.

"My garage is a work in progress," he shares. "My shop is at the back of the garage, and it is being reconstructed on the inside with reclaimed pallet boards."

The upper back wall is planed pallet wood and the ceiling is being refinished with reclaimed boards as well.

Other projects Doug has spent his time working on include refurbishing three smokers.

"The first one I redid, I kept," he says.

"The electric one he redid, he dubbed the 'Pit Boss,'" Kristal adds.



One of Doug Roose's favorite projects is a glider with "IOWA" burned into it.

The firebox on the first smoker was rusted and burnt, and it had to be completely removed. Someone gave Doug a small firebox they had used for a grill. Despite needing major cleaning, it served as a great replacement for the smoker. He rewired the smoker and added temp probes on it. Then, he heated it and sealed it with canola oil. For the changes, he used an angle grinder and a wire wheel as well as a drill to add the temp probes and to attach the fire box. He also put a bead of food grade high-heat silicone around the lid, next putting Saran wrap on it. Once the silicone had cured for 24 hours, he pulled off the Saran wrap and had a nice clean seal on it that retains the heat well, even in the coldest winter months.

"It's crazy when people throw things out when a few simple steps can fix it," Kristal remarks.

Doug's favorite projects thus far include a glider that he burned "IOWA" onto and a raised garden bed he made for Kristal with cinder blocks.

"The garden bed isn't quite complete yet," she says. "We plan to put fairy silhouettes on it and solar lights around it."

Doug says that he learned many of his skills from his grandad and his dad, but he also picked up a lot from the jobs he has held through the years.

"I didn't find work I truly loved when I was younger, but I've learned from each of those jobs, and now I feel like I'm a jack-of-all-trades," he explains. ■

THE SUPPORT you need

How adult day services make caregiving sustainable.

Caregiving sits at the intersection of devotion and endurance. The work is meaningful, yet the constant coordination — appointments, safety concerns, daily routines — can leave even the most organized families



stretched thin. During the colder months, when days feel shorter and schedules feel fuller, many caregivers turn to adult day services to help their loved ones stay engaged while preserving their own energy and balance.

• **How adult day services work.** Adult day services offer daytime support for people who benefit from supervised activity, structured engagement, or the chance to spend time with others. Participation can follow a once-a-week routine or a full weekday schedule, based on what fits each family's needs. Many participants live with dementia, but a diagnosis isn't required; the emphasis is on safety, connection, and consistency.

• **A reliable source of stability.** Adult day settings are designed to feel warm, dependable, and secure. Participants follow a familiar rhythm of conversation, activities, and meals. Families know their loved ones are in good hands. As one caregiver, Joni J. of Waukeg, explained, "Before my dad started attending, our days could swing in any direction. The consistency he has now gives me room to be a better daughter."

That reassurance is common. Karen T. of Ankeny, whose mother visits an adult day program, said, "Mom comes home more relaxed — and that makes me feel relaxed as well. I didn't realize how thinly I was stretched until I saw how much calmer she was at the end of the day."

• **What a strong program offers.** Well-designed adult day services support whole-person well-being through:

- Social interaction that encourages meaningful connection
- Nutritious meals and snacks
- Activities that promote cognitive and physical health

• A safe, familiar environment supported by caring professionals

• **Why families turn to these services.**

Many people explore adult day services only after they're overwhelmed, yet engaging earlier can prevent fatigue and strengthen family relationships. Participants enjoy routine and companionship. Caregivers regain time, steadiness, and the reassurance that their loved one is thriving.

• **If you're considering next steps.** Adult day services can become a dependable part of your caregiving plan, offering structure, safety, and engagement for your loved one while helping you maintain balance. Why not take a few minutes to browse services in your area? You'll be glad you did. ■

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.

NEWS BRIEF

BROUILLET named chamber president and CEO

The Indianola Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors has announced the appointment of Kristy Brouillet as its next president and chief executive officer.

For the past three years, Brouillet has been employed by the chamber as an accounting lead and project manager, a behind-the-scenes role that has been essential to helping the organization run smoothly through the significant growth and change that the chamber has seen. From helping manage finances and supporting membership systems to strengthening internal processes, she's been quietly helping shape the chamber's foundation from within.

"We are very excited to hit the ground running with Kristy," said Gretchen Schrock, of Gretchen Schrock Country Financial and chair of the chamber board of directors. "She has a good foundation of what we have been building at the chamber and will continue to build on that while also refocusing on the roots."

Brouillet has a long history in business management and real estate, bringing a strong

grasp of financial systems and client relations to her leadership style. Before joining the chamber team, she worked in accounting and operational management roles that honed her ability to connect numbers with people — skills that translate directly into community building.

Ryan Williams, of City State Bank and current board member, said Brouillet stood out from a strong field of applicants. "We had an exceptional pool of talented candidates, but Kristy truly stood out for her vision, leadership and deep commitment to community growth," he said.

Andrei Murphy, owner of Retirement Solutions of Iowa and current board member, agreed with Williams. "I'm confident she has the tools and the expertise to build lasting relationships and to promote prosperous growth."

Amanda Ripperger, owner of Sports Page Bar & Grill and Brickhouse Tavern and the past chair of the chamber board, echoed their sentiments. "Kristy definitely rose to the top," she said. "I'm very excited for the opportunity

to have her as our president and CEO. I also believe it speaks volumes about the stability of the Indianola Chamber of Commerce that we are able to promote from within."

Having been a part of the chamber team, Brouillet is known for her strategic approach, being a team player, and having a steady hand.

"Our team at the Chamber was excited to learn that the board of directors had selected Kristy as the new president and CEO," said Amanda Zwanziger, outgoing president and CEO. "She has been an important part of our team and has made such a difference over the past three years. We feel confident that she will continue to build on the momentum the chamber has built and carry forward the incredible team culture that has been built over the last few years." ■





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When it comes to dining, you can still enjoy cooking at home — or choose from multiple restaurants offering chef-prepared meals that residents rave about.

And with a full range of supportive services on-site, you'll have peace of mind knowing that if your needs change after an illness, surgery, or injury, you won't need to relocate or rely on family for care.

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HOLIDAY visits can reveal concerns

Is it time for more support for your aging loved one?

The holiday season brings joy, tradition and togetherness. For many families in the Des Moines area, it's the one time of year when everyone gathers under one roof. Along with the laughs and warm meals, these visits offer a valuable — and often eye-opening — opportunity to check in on aging relatives.



What makes the holidays special also makes them the ideal moment for a quiet, caring assessment: Is your loved one still safe and thriving living alone?

Signs that suggest a decline in independent living. During your holiday visit, pay close attention to your loved one's living environment, physical appearance and daily routines. The following indicators may signal they need additional support:

- Poor hygiene (unwashed clothing, strong

body odor, unkempt hair)

- Noticeable weight loss or gain
- Visible bruises or injuries that could

suggest falls

- Messy or unclean home (dishes piled up, spoiled food, excessive clutter)
- Unpaid bills or unopened mail
- Empty or misused medication bottles or confusion about dosages
- Mobility issues, like trouble getting up from a chair or holding onto furniture to walk
- Frequent forgetfulness, including missed appointments or repeating the same stories

If you notice one or more of these signs, it doesn't mean immediate action is required — but it is a clear signal to explore options.

Winter makes these risks even more serious. Iowa winters are beautiful — but harsh. Snow and ice increase the risk of falls, cold snaps can lead to frozen pipes or power outages, and poor road conditions can make daily errands impossible.

Assisted living communities in the Des

Moines area offer a safer, more connected alternative. Residents benefit from warm meals, daily wellness checks, social opportunities and on-site support.

A compassionate next step. The idea of change can be hard, but it does not have to be rushed. Start by talking with your loved one about what you have observed and how you want the best for their health and happiness. Tour local assisted living communities, ask questions, and explore care options that match your loved one's needs.

Your holiday visit is a chance not just to reconnect, but to protect. If you notice signs of struggle, you're not alone. Supportive solutions are available in the area, helping your loved one stay safe, healthy and surrounded by care this winter and beyond. ■

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



Warm Up To CAREFREE LIVING Before WINTER SETS IN

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When winter weather hits, shoveling snow, navigating icy roads, and dealing with freezing temperatures can make daily life challenging and isolating. At **Addington Place of Des Moines**, residents enjoy warmth, friendship, and peace of mind all season long. Maintenance-free living, chef-prepared meals, and on-site support make every day safer and more enjoyable than living alone in your home.

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IMPORT auto myths

Don't let misinformation cost you.

Owners of imported vehicles — from reliable Japanese models to high-performance German cars — often hear exaggerated and costly advice. Separating fact from fiction is key to smart, efficient ownership.

The top three import auto myths busted

- **Import parts are always impossible to find and expensive.** False. Most major brands (Toyota, Honda, BMW, VW, Audi) have established and excellent parts networks. Only genuinely rare or exotic models pose a significant parts challenge.

- **Only a dealership can service your specific import.** False. Specialized, independent shops offer dealership-level expertise, often at a lower cost and with more personalized service. Seek out shops with proven, brand-specific training.

- **European cars need less frequent (7,000-10,000 mile) oil changes.** This depends. Modern European engines utilize high-quality synthetic oil designed for long intervals, but this is often



based on light-duty driving and manufacturers' desire to market low cost of maintenance. States with harsher weather conditions or stop-and-go traffic, like Iowa, may be considered heavy-duty environments where oil service intervals should not exceed 5,000 miles to properly protect your engine.

Smart ownership starts here

While your owner's manual is a good guide, it's not the final word. Never rely on folklore. Visiting a qualified brand specialist with the intent to protect your investment and schedule a proactive maintenance plan is in your best interest. When faced with a repair, always ask your specialist to show you the data via a Digital Vehicle Inspection and full technical details like specific diagnostic code (DTC) for your check engine light. Staying informed ensures your import runs optimally without unnecessary expense. ■

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



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GARDENING

By Barry Laws

GIFTS for the gardener



The holidays are upon us, and we have our lists of gifts for family and friends, but what to get that gardener on the list? Here are a few ideas that will make you the star gift giver this season.

Christmas cactus and amaryllis bulbs are popular gifts that will remind the recipient of you every time they bloom in years to come. There are Christmas cacti that have passed through three or more generations within families — and the stories they tell (Great-Grandma kept it in a washtub? All my cousins and second cousins have a piece of this one). Amaryllis bulbs can be planted in the garden next summer, where they will bloom again before being brought back in to bloom again next Christmas. If getting a poinsettia as a gift (or for yourself), be sure to let the recipient know to keep it in bright indirect light, not allow it to sit in water (draining it after watering) and keep it out of drafts or where temps will get below 50 degrees.

Consider a membership to a local botanical center, arboretum or garden society for your gardener. These memberships often come with discounts for the member on programs and merchandise they can use locally and even nationally. Some garden societies have member-only plant sales, giving the gardener a chance to have plants no one else has in their garden. You are also helping these organizations so they can continue to provide services and programs for everyone to enjoy.

Similarly, consider a subscription to a gardening magazine. Many now have internet options for delivery of the magazine content so a physical magazine doesn't come in the mail. There are many good resources out there for the gardener through these publications.

Tools are also a great gift, whether it be a stainless-steel trowel, pruners or shovel. Consider going to a local nursery, greenhouse or garden center for these items. Talk with the owner or staff and find out what they use personally. This will give you an idea what the best products are. While you are there, check out seed packets for stocking stuffers or to slip into a card for someone special on your Christmas card list. Garden markers, unique copper watering cans, unusual ceramic pots and garden gloves make great gifts that will remind the recipient of you when they use them throughout the year.

Can't decide what to get? Consider a gift card or certificate from a local nursery or garden center. Your gardener will be able to then choose that tool, perennial or tree they want in the garden. You are supporting a local business with your purchase and strengthening your community. This is also great for friends and family living elsewhere. Locate a local garden center or nursery and contact them (internet searches help here) for the gift card or certificate.

Have a great holiday with family and friends, and we will see you next year with more gardening tips, and thank you for supporting your local nurseries and garden centers. ■

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



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EVENTS IN THE AREA

To submit calendar items for consideration, send to tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com

Check for cancellations

Upcoming in Indianola Living magazine:

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!

"I do!" Stories about marriage proposals: Share the story of how your courtship culminated in a proposal to remember. Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com to share your story!

Indianola Public Library Events

207 N. B St., Indianola

KIDS

- After School Bingo: Monday, Dec. 15, 3:30-4:30 p.m., grades 3-5
- Kids Create: Saturday, Dec. 20, 2-3 p.m., grades K-5
- Winter Break Chess Club Tournament: Friday, Dec. 26, 1-3:30 p.m. Registration open for grades K-12.

STORYTIME

- Storytime with Janis: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30-11 a.m. until Dec. 30
- Saturday Storytime: Saturdays, 10:30-11:15 a.m. until Dec. 27
- Pajama Storytime: Monday, Dec 15, 6-6:30 p.m.

TEENS

- Teen Hangout: Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2:30-4:30 p.m.
- Teen Art Cart: Saturdays, all day
- Winter Break Chess Club Tournament: Friday, Dec. 26, 1-3:30 p.m. Registration open for grades K-12.

FAMILIES

- Library Playdate: Saturdays until Dec. 27, all day.
- Family Lego Club: Monday, Dec 22, 6-7 p.m.

ADULTS

- Morning Book Club: Friday, Dec. 12, 10-11 a.m.
- Bingo: Tuesday, Jan. 6, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Legacy Presents: Tunes and Treats with the Jeff Arrandale Band

Jan. 22, 1 p.m.

Indianola Parks and Recreation Center, 2204 W. Second Ave., Indianola

Legacy is proud to sponsor an afternoon of music, community and joy at the Tunes & Treats Concert Series. Enjoy a performance by the Jeff Arrandale Band.

Scuba Skill Practice

Sunday, Dec. 21, 1-3 p.m.
Indianola Wellness Campus,
306 E. Scenic Valley Ave.,
Indianola

Keep your scuba skills fresh during the cooler months with Scuba Skill Practice sessions at the Indianola Wellness Campus heated competition pool. These two-hour open pool sessions are designed for certified divers looking to maintain proficiency in a controlled environment. Open to members and nonmembers. More information and registration available at <https://tinyurl.com/IWCSubaPractice>.



Rain Barrel Workshop

Wednesday, Jan. 14, 6:30-8 p.m.
Norwalk Easter Public Library,
1051 North Ave., Norwalk

Join the Rain Barrel Workshop to learn all about the benefits of installing a rain barrel on your property. You will leave the workshop with your own assembled 55-gallon rain barrel. Instruction for this workshop is provided by ISU Extension and Outreach Warren County Master Conservationist program. Class size will be limited to the first 12 registrants. You will learn about: benefits of rain catchment systems for conservation and local programs for homeowners; best management practices homeowners can implement around the landscape to lessen the negative impacts stormwater has on water quality; and parts and functions of the rain barrel.

This event is being offered at \$50 per barrel to cover the cost of all supplies. Norwalk residents may receive a rebate for the cost of the program once their barrel is constructed and installed. Registration is required. Scan the QR code.



Free Community Meal

Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m.
Lighthouse Community Center,
109 W. Boston Ave., Indianola

Free home-cooked meal every Tuesday. Everyone is welcome. Come and enjoy food and fellowship with individuals and organizations in our community.



Trivia at The Groggy Dog

Tuesdays, 7-9 p.m.
116 W. Ashland Ave., Indianola

Grab some friends, bring an appetite and your love for knowledge and beer. Five dollar draws, prizes, fun and good competition. The place to be on a Tuesday night.

Soup-er Bowl January

Fridays in January, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Indianola Public Library, 207 N. B St., Indianola

Enjoy soup at the library every Friday in January. Soups are provided by local community members and groups for everyone to taste test and vote on their favorite. Anyone is welcome to taste or to bring soup to share. To bring soup, sign up with the QR code.



Parks and Recreation and Hy-Vee special needs events

Indianola Activity Center, 2204 W. Second Ave., Indianola

Individuals with disabilities of all ages and their families, chaperones, respite providers and SCL workers are invited to attend these free drop-in events with dancing, fun and pizza provided by Indianola Hy-Vee.

- Hy-Vee Special Friends Winter Formal: Friday, Feb. 20, 6-7:30 p.m.
- Hy-Vee Special Friends Let's Glow Crazy Dance: Friday, April 17, 6-7:30 p.m.
- Hy-Vee Special Friends Luau Dance: Friday, June 5, 6-7:30 p.m. ■

STRABALA enjoys her bird companions

Avian friends require a lot of work.

Walking into Brooke Strabala's house, visitors are greeted with a gruff "hello." Looking around, you find that it comes from Hank, a scarlet macaw.

Brooke's parents had birds, and, about three years ago, Brooke decided she wanted to adopt a baby bird, so she drove to Missouri to meet Hank. Soon after, she adopted Oscar, an African gray, and Baby, a green Quaker parrot.

Adopting a bird is not for the faint-of-heart and is a lifetime commitment. Birds can live 50 to 70 years in captivity, and a baby macaw can cost between \$6,000 and \$7,000, according to Brooke.

Adopting an older bird may cost about \$2,500, but it is a lot more work because, like adopting an older dog or cat, you need to learn their likes, dislikes, routines and behaviors. A scarlet macaw usually only bonds with one or two people, so moving to a new home has challenges.

An African gray or green Quaker parrot can cost \$400 to \$500. They are smart and learn quickly. Training consists of repeating phrases over and over until the bird catches on. Oscar learns quickly and talks more than Hank or Baby. Baby enjoys getting out of her cage but is smart enough to avoid being caught when play time is over. Oscar spreads his wings and announces he is a pretty bird, or if he needs his water changed, tells Brooke, "Mamma gonna change your water."

Hank, Baby and Oscar dominate the Strabala house. Like puppies, they love attention from Brooke, especially Hank, who can be demanding and will climb up Brooke's leg to sit on her arm. At 3 years old, Hank doesn't fly and loves to sit on the door of his cage. His cage has multiple hanging toys, which Brooke said he can destroy in about a week.

Should one of the birds get sick and need care, an exotic animal vet is required. Brooke has been lucky that her birds have been healthy, and, other than needing nail trims, vet care hasn't been needed.

Air quality inside the home is essential for the bird's health. Brooke runs air purifiers because they are sensitive to smells, especially Baby, the African gray. Candles are toxic to birds, so care is taken to minimize scents.

Keeping the cages clean is a daily chore. Birds are messy, so cleaning the sides and doors of the cages and changing the pads both in and around them is necessary. Hank, especially, sheds tiny white feathers when he flaps his wings, and they fly everywhere.

Despite the challenges of having birds in one's home, they offer companionship and affection and are social and entertaining. Just like having a dog or cat, each bird has a unique personality and needs. Plus, you can teach them to talk. ■



Brooke Strabala with her scarlet macaw, Hank.

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TRAVEL tips for hearing aid users

Going on vacation soon? Before you head out, keep these tips in mind to make traveling with your hearing aids a breeze.

Book the right accommodations

When reserving a hotel, request a hearing-accessible room for a more comfortable stay. By law, hotels must provide rooms with visual notification devices, TDDs and telephone amplifiers for individuals with hearing loss.

Pack smart

Add your daily hearing aid essentials to your suitcase, including your hearing aid case and dryer, a charger for rechargeable devices (with an adapter for international travel), domes and wax guards, extra batteries for non-rechargeable devices and a cleaning kit.



Consider your mode of transportation

• **Air travel:** Unless the airport staff tells you otherwise, you can keep your hearing aids on when you go through security. It's also smart to connect to the airport's loop system to hear announcements more clearly and sign up for airline text message alerts to stay informed about gate changes or delays. Wearing your hearing aids on the plane will allow you to communicate more easily with the flight attendants.

• **Public transportation:** Take advantage of loop systems in subway and bus stations. Preplanning will also help. Purchase tickets online and map your route in advance for greater peace of mind.

• **Car travel:** Keep your hearing devices on while driving. To stay focused on the road, reduce distractions by keeping windows up to minimize wind noise and avoid playing loud music. All these steps will help ensure you arrive at your destination safely.

• **Navigate cruises easily:** Did you know that most cruise ships offer assistive listening devices for live shows and public announcements? Inquire about these when booking or with guest services once onboard.

Enjoy outdoor adventures more

If your plans include hiking or beach days, consider using a hearing aid sweatband to keep your hearing aids secure and protect them from moisture. Also, bring a waterproof case with you — you can pop your hearing aids in it during a rainstorm or if you want to go swimming.

Getting a clean-and-check for your devices before you leave is another way to ensure a hassle-free vacation. Call your local audiologist today to schedule one. ■

Information provided by Dr. Kelly Cook, Audiologist, Iowa Hearing Center, 1228 Sunset Drive, Suite B, Norwalk, 515-416-5990, www.IowaHearingCenter.com.



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Movement is central to health, yet musculoskeletal pain and stiffness often can limit mobility.

Acupuncture and chiropractic are being increasingly recognized for their ability to restore functional movement by addressing both pain and biomechanical restrictions.

Traditional foundations. In acupuncture, movement depends on the smooth flow of Qi through meridians which restore health and balance to the organs and musculoskeletal system. Blockages caused by injury, stress or imbalance manifest as pain and restricted mobility. Acupuncture needles stimulate specific points to restore flow, reduce stagnation and harmonize the body's internal organs. This traditional medicine aligns with modern understandings of circulation, regulation of the nervous system and connective tissue dynamics.

In chiropractic medicine, the movement of



the joints, including the spine and extremities, is increased through adjustments that release tension on the nervous system and reposition and free the movement of the joint using manual techniques or stimulators that gently move the joint.

Modern research insights. Recent studies provide physiological explanations for acupuncture and chiropractic's impact:

- **Pain modulation:** Acupuncture stimulates endogenous (made in the body) opioids and neurotransmitters, which reduces the perception of pain.
- **Circulatory benefits:** Improved blood flow reduces inflammation and accelerates tissue repair.
- **Myofascial release:** Needling relaxes connective tissue tension, which enhances flexibility. Chiropractic adjustments help relieve tendon and connective tissue tension, in turn relaxing the muscles.
- **Neuromuscular coordination:** Acupuncture improves proprioception, supporting balance

and controlled movement. Chiropractic adjustments relieve tension on the nerves that may be impinged by misalignments.

Clinical applications. Rehabilitation after injury: Acupuncture reduces pain, swelling, and bruising enabling patients to recover movement and flexibility. Chiropractic care helps reduce pain and increase motion by restoring alignment.

- **Chronic pain management:** By easing stiffness, acupuncture and chiropractic prevent further degeneration.
- **Sports medicine:** Athletes use acupuncture and chiropractic to recover from strains, improve flexibility, and shorten recovery times.

Acupuncture and chiropractic care offers a dual benefit: alleviating pain while facilitating movement. Acupuncture and chiropractic care can be utilized separately, or they can enhance the effectiveness of each other. ■

Information provided by Dr. Renee Dalrymple, LAc, SEED Meditation Instructor, Soaring Crane Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, 14849 130th Ave., Indianola, 515-962-9093, call or text.

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

FAITH

By Tom Vanderbilt

THE FULLNESS of time

“When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” — Galatians 4:4-5

It’s time!

This shout can ring out in homes across our community at so many occasions during December. It might be time to put up the Christmas tree and hang ornaments. Maybe it is time to go to the airport to pick up Grandma and Grandpa. Or maybe it is time to sit down for the Christmas feast with the whole family — cousins, too. Of course, the best time to hear these words is when it is time to open presents. There is so much anticipation and waiting during this month that we can’t help but proclaim, “It’s time!” when the time finally comes.

Christmas is also when God declares, “It’s time!” St. Paul writes, “When the time had fully come...” in His sovereign determination, God decided it was time to send His Son into the world for the purpose of redeeming it. That time was two millennia ago in a small town called Bethlehem. And, that time was for us — to redeem us and bring us into His family forever.

Celebrate your redemption again this year. ■



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

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WELLNESS

By Chelsea Taggart

SLAY the season: Treat yourself

The holidays are a beautiful mix of joy, celebration and, let us be honest, a fair amount of stress. Between shopping, traveling and squeezing in every festive event, it is easy to forget to pause and take care of yourself. This year, we are encouraging a different kind of holiday tradition: putting your well-being at the top of your list.

Self-care does not have to be complicated. Sometimes it is as simple as taking 10 quiet minutes with a cup of tea, saying “no” to an extra obligation, or treating yourself to something that makes you feel genuinely refreshed.

If you are ready for a little extra rejuvenation, there are treatments designed to help you look and feel your best through every holiday photo and gathering. Hydrating facials are perfect for combating dry winter skin and restoring a dewy glow. A gentle chemical peel can brighten dullness and give your complexion a smooth, radiant finish just in time for festivities. For those wanting a quick confidence boost, wrinkle relaxing injections or subtle fillers can soften fine lines and enhance your natural features without downtime. And, if you are hoping to feel more toned and sculpted, ultrasonic cavitation can help reduce stubborn areas, while Emsculpt offers a powerful way to strengthen and define muscles for a firmer look.

This season, remember that caring for yourself isn’t an indulgence. It is a gift that keeps you feeling centered, confident and ready to enjoy everything the holidays bring. Here’s to a calmer, brighter, more radiant you. ■



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

A WELCOME change

McMains find home with plenty of room to entertain and relax.

Tammy and Kurt McMain moved to Indianola from Des Moines just a year ago, but they were more than familiar with the town.

“My family has been spectators with the balloons since the 1970s,” Tammy McMain says. “We crewed in the 1980s, and my dad got his pilot license in 1989. I have loved the town for a long time. Then, my husband started working for Downing Construction in 2022.”

The minute Tammy and Kurt walked into their home for the first showing, they fell in love with it, she says.

“I loved the big open kitchen with all the cabinet space. It also had three fireplaces,” she says. “My husband and Realtor were in the lower level checking on things and talking. Meanwhile, I had been through the whole house, and I came and found them, saying that I was ready to make an offer. They hadn’t been to anywhere else in the house yet.”

As you enter the house, the kitchen is the first room entered, boasting a wood burning fireplace and a big island.

“I came from a house that had a galley kitchen in Des Moines,” McMain explains. “The kitchen is what sold it for me.”

The other two fireplaces in the home are gas fireplaces. One is in the family room, and the other is downstairs in the lower level.

“The previous owners used the basement as a theater room, but I am a quilter, so the lower level has become my sewing room. It is big enough that I can keep my long arm quilting machine in there.”

With three bedrooms and two bathrooms upstairs and one bathroom in the lower level, as well as a large deck in the front of the house and one in the back, where they enjoy grilling, the home offers ample space for the McMains to spend time with family and friends and room to just relax. Though it was built in 1975, the home has been updated with modern changes.

“Matt and Jenny Spaulding had the house before us, and they did a lot to it,” McMain shares. “My husband and I are in our mid-50s, and there is a lot of tech in the house that we don’t quite understand. We have to ask our grandkids to help us with it. On the first weekday we were in it, at around 5:30 a.m., the lights automatically came on. It was kind of a shock. Thankfully, Jenny stopped by with a



Tammy and Kurt McMain like many of the features in their home, including the three fireplaces, space for quilting and two decks.

letter to help us understand how some things in the house work and how we can change them. It was super sweet.”

The McMains enjoy their new neighborhood and think their neighbors are wonderful people, stating that everyone they have met over the last year is amazing. They feel their house is just right the way it is — another reason they chose

it. It is built and furnished in such a way that they can grow old in it.

“I’ve always thought you should be able to live in a house for 30 days, and if you don’t like things about it be able to get out. However, I’ve never felt that way about this house. We’ve loved it since day one. It’s just so much nicer than where we were before.” ■

2025 financial review list

As the year comes to a close, now is a great time to meet with your financial advisor and make sure you are taking advantage of year-end strategies.



IRAs and retirement plans

If you are participating in an employer-sponsored 401(k) or 403(b) plan, think about contributing the full pre-tax amount allowed to your retirement accounts by the end of the year. For 2025, the annual limit is \$23,500 (\$31,000 if you are age 50 to 59 or 64 and older; \$34,750 if you turn age 60, 61, 62 or 63 during the year). If you have a traditional or Roth IRA, you can contribute up to \$7,000 for 2025, \$8,000 if you're age 50 or older.¹ Traditional IRA contributions may be deductible, but Roth contributions are not.

RMDs

Individuals 73 or older generally must take their 2025 RMDs by Dec. 31, 2025. An excise tax of 25% is taxed on the missed RMD amount. Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs)

from IRAs may count toward RMDs for eligible individuals.

Roth conversions

Year-end is a good time to evaluate whether it makes sense to convert a tax-deferred savings vehicle like a traditional IRA or a 401(k) account to a Roth account. When you convert a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA, the converted funds are generally subject to federal income tax in the year that you make the conversion.

HSA accounts

Increasing or maximizing your contribution can help reduce your tax bill. For 2025, the contribution limits are \$4,300 for individual coverage and \$8,550 for family coverage.

Tax harvesting

If you experience capital losses on securities and no longer want to hold the securities in your portfolio, consider selling these underperformers to offset gains from other investments. Losses above the amount of your gains can offset up to \$3,000 of ordinary income (\$1,500 if your filing status is married filing separately). Unused losses can be carried forward to future years. Watch out

for the wash-sale rule, which precludes taking a capital loss deduction if you repurchase the same investment within 30 days before or after selling.

Charitable giving

For 2025, you must itemize deductions to deduct charitable contributions, but starting in 2026, you'll be able to deduct up to \$1,000 in cash donations (\$2,000 for married joint filers) to qualified charities.

In 2026, taxpayers who itemize, qualified charitable donations will only be deductible to the extent they exceed 0.5% of AGI. For example, a taxpayer with AGI of \$100,000 can deduct the amount of their qualified contributions minus \$500. ■

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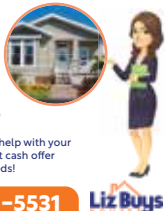
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NETWORKING event

A networking event was held at West Hill Brewing Company on Nov. 25.



Matt Kelley



Kasie Muhlbauer



Amanda Zwanziger and Staci Scheurenbrand



Cheyanne Russell and Brooke Prior



Ellie Blosser and Tayler Keitzer



Elyse Morris and Chelsea Grenier



Kelly Webster and Brette Puhl



Kristy Brouillet and Matt Van Wyk



Brittany O'Connor and Juanita Ott



Keegan Eastman



Jodi Hildreth and Emily Feeney

OUT & ABOUT



Sarah Smith and Nicole Brummer at the ribbon cutting for Jaybird ABA, 202 S. Ninth St., Indianola, on Nov. 18. Photo courtesy of Indianola Chamber



Deb Miller and Zach Brummer at the ribbon cutting for Jaybird ABA, 202 S. Ninth St., Indianola, on Nov. 18. Photo courtesy of Indianola Chamber



Elizabeth Winjum and Kathy Komiskey at the ribbon cutting for Jaybird ABA, 202 S. Ninth St., Indianola, on Nov. 18. Photo courtesy of Indianola Chamber



Nicola Brummer and Zach Brummer at the ribbon cutting for Jaybird ABA, 202 S. Ninth St., Indianola, on Nov. 18. Photo courtesy of Indianola Chamber



Jamie Henderson, Sarah Brown and Amy Feser at the ribbon cutting for Jaybird ABA, 202 S. Ninth St., Indianola, on Nov. 18. Photo courtesy of Indianola Chamber



Sharon Brummer and Nicola Brummer at the ribbon cutting for Jaybird ABA, 202 S. Ninth St., Indianola, on Nov. 18. Photo courtesy of Indianola Chamber



Macaulay Ahrens and Justice Bowen at the volleyball game in Winterset on Oct. 2



Kendra Latham, Gia Pringle and Lauren Latham at the volleyball game in Winterset on Oct. 2



Ashley and Deedra O'Neill at the volleyball game in Winterset on Oct. 2



Emerie Hudnutt and Kaci Ledlie at the volleyball game in Winterset on Oct. 2



Kari Hudnutt and Jolene Ledlie at the volleyball game in Winterset on Oct. 2



Reese Oberender and Aubri Betzold at the volleyball game in Winterset on Oct. 2

MEET Katie Courtney

Investing in, and teaching, our youngest students

Since 2014, Katie Courtney has invested in the lives of some of Indianola's youngest students at Victory Christian Academy. She graduated from Central College with a degree in early elementary education.

"I have very fond memories of one of my elementary teachers, Linda Brice, and my grandma, Kathy Mahlstadt, was a teacher in Indianola Community School District," Courtney says. "Teaching just felt right."

Currently, Courtney is the lead teacher at VCA and teaches both the five-day preschool program and the kindergarten. Courtney shares that teaching preschool is where her heart is, but that she has thoroughly enjoyed taking on the role of kindergarten teacher as well. She sees herself in this role for the long haul.

Courtney says that each day is unique when working with students in this age group. A few years ago, VCA adopted a new curriculum from Bob Jones University Press (BJU Press), which Courtney has grown to appreciate.

"The students are in and out of their seats roughly every 20 minutes — age appropriate expectations in learning," she explains. "They play in the morning when they come in. Play time is followed by songs and Bible time. Then we work on pre-K academics and learning time. The preschoolers go home around lunch time, and the afternoon is just the kindergarteners."

Courtney shares that, about the same time that the curriculum changed, VCA opened up a new hands-on learning room whose theme is switched out regularly, sometimes displaying seasonal themes.

"During this time, the students get to learn through free play," Courtney says. "Because it is fun, they may not even realize they are learning."

"The biggest challenge of my job is trying to meet each child's needs where they are and giving each one the love, attention and teaching time he or she needs while keeping everyone engaged."

Despite the challenges, Courtney finds each day full of new joys.

"The greatest joy is seeing the 'lightbulb' moments when something clicks with a student, and they take off with it. For instance, our preschoolers are learning to read. I love seeing them grow in their reading skills throughout the year."

Her favorite aspect of her job is that she gets to pray with and for her students.

"I get to share about God and His son, Jesus, with them. No matter the lesson or discussion, there is always room for a talk about God," she says. "I also enjoy that every day is different."

She says that nothing can really be expected, and that as students come in each day, one student will share a story that takes them in one direction, and the next student's story will take their discussion in a completely different direction.

"This age group is fun," she says. "They love to come to school. They are learning to be more independent of their parents, and it is fun to watch their personalities develop."

Courtney's advice to prospective early education teachers is to pray about teaching and be certain this is God's call on your life.

"You're going to have good days and bad days when teaching, and each day is a day to learn something new, for students and for teachers," she says. "Be open to being a lifelong learner and be sure that you have a passion for teaching students and learning about yourself along the way." ■



Katie Courtney enjoys teaching young learners at Victory Christian Academy.

CHRIST Child

A dream that isn't just a dream. A name that is more talked about than actually used as a name. And a baby that isn't at all like any other baby, ever. It's a story full of paradoxes, and it introduces the greatest story of all.

It is too bad that the stories in Scripture surrounding the birth of Jesus are typically only encountered around Christmas. Don't get me wrong. It's good that they are. The disappointing part is there are quite a number of passages that in some way relate to the Savior's birth, so many that trying to give them all attention at this time of year will only make them feel rushed — and shallow even.

The story from Matthew 1:18-25 is so rich and deep. A man named Joseph is engaged to be married but, following the custom of the day, he is only in the "betrothal" period. It is a legally binding promise to wed, but the couple have not yet begun their lives together. But now Joseph has learned that his fiancé, Mary, is pregnant, and he knows for sure the baby isn't his because he hasn't physically been with Mary yet.

An angel appears to him — but in a dream. Seems odd as they usually show up in person, but it will happen several more times to Joseph in the gospel of Matthew. Joseph had decided, understandably, that he wasn't going to raise someone else's child and was instead going to quietly end the engagement. But now the angel tells him to go through with the marriage because the baby that Mary carries isn't just any baby. Mary hasn't been with another man; this baby has been conceived by God.

But even more, the angel tells Joseph what he is to name the baby — and the reason why. To us, we can hear "Jesus Christ" and think "first name, last name." Yet that's not the case. It's really "meaningful name, purpose." The name Jesus can be described as meaning "the Lord saves." Anyone hearing that name at the time would automatically connect that thought with that person.

And Christ? Christ means Messiah, or Anointed One, or Chosen One. The angel telegraphs this in the end of the sentence when he says, "because he will save his people from their sins." In other words, Jesus is the Christ. And that's who Mary is carrying. Joseph, in a display of obedience and humility, marries her and raises the Christ child. ■



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

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