

*Living*

# Handmade FOR THE holidays

Residents share the joy  
of gifts from the heart.

**Meet Taylor Andrews**

EDUCATION

**Apple cinnamon muffins**

RECIPE

**More games for mental health**

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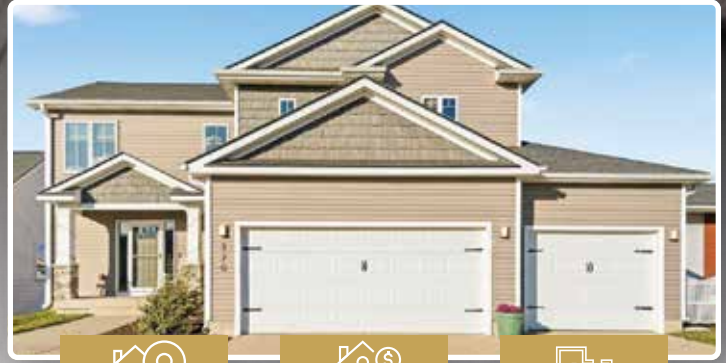
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WELCOME

# 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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Scott Rose's daughter and son-in-law were gifted one of the bottle lamps that Scott made.

# 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.



## Handmade memories tell a story

When Kelli Olson's daughter, Lily, was young, she attended daycare. Her caregiver, Alissa Fastenau, decided to do something extra special for the children in her care and their families for Christmas in 2016 when Lily was 2 years old. Fastenau's husband, Jason, cut out boards the same height as each child. Once the boards were cut and labeled, she crafted them into snowmen, using the children's fingerprints for the mouth and eyes, and sent each child home with own with a small decorative notecard and message attached to it.

The gift was a hit, and Fastenau decided to do it again two years later. They decided not to make the projects every year because sometimes children don't grow much in one year, and they wanted the children and their families to be able to see the change in each child over the years. More boards were cut in the Christmas 2018 season to match each child's height. This time, Fastenau made the boards into Christmas trees, and the children got to participate a bit more by using their fingerprints to make the ornaments on their trees. The third gifted board the Olsons received from Fastenau was in the 2020 Christmas season. The 2020 boards were cut to match the children's heights and crafted into reindeer, and each child's hand made the reindeer antlers.

Olson says that, though Lily has outgrown attending daycare, their family enjoys pulling out the daycare Christmas boards each year when decorating their home for the holidays.

"We get to pull them out every year and see how big Lily is compared to the previous years and how much she has grown," Olson remarks. "We don't do measuring on a doorway to mark how much she has grown, so it is nice to see her stand beside them and compare. Lily thinks it is so cool to look at them and wonder how she was ever that small — even though she was always a 'peanut' and pretty tiny."

Olson says that Fastenau did such a great job decorating the boards that even if they did not represent her daughter's height, they would still be cute decorations for their home.

"We live in a world of so much consumerism that we don't stop to appreciate the time and effort people put into handmade gifts, instead putting more value on store-bought things. I will never understand it," Olson states. "When I think of things I need to purge around my home, handmade gifts are never in that pile."

For Olson, handmade gifts tell a story and generate memories. The decorative boards remind them of their daughter's youngest years, her small stature and tiny hands, and how precious that time in their life was to them. For their family, these simple handmade boards have become a treasured holiday decoration.



Kelly Olson cherishes the holiday-decorated boards that her children's caretaker, Alissa Fastenau, made over the years. Each board was cut to the child's height that year.

## Gifts of unique light

It is not just anywhere that you can find a lamp custom-made from a bottle. Scott Rose and his family recently relocated to Bondurant from Georgia. While living in Georgia, they started visiting distilleries such as Four Roses and Buffalo Trace. His daughter attended school in Georgetown, Kentucky, so they would visit craft stores while in town and began to notice lamps made from bourbon bottles. The lamps were approximately \$150 to \$200, and Rose told himself that he could probably make lamps like those. For the past three years, Rose has proven himself right.

After his first lamps were made, Rose had several friends in a bourbon club outside of Atlanta who saw his creations and asked him to make similar lamps for them.

"They started giving me bottles to use for the lamps," he says.

Every time he would visit Ohio, he would have friends there asking for his bourbon or



"Lean this snowman against a wall, to remind you when I was this small. Fingerprints made the mouth and eyes. This snowman is just my size! So take him out each Christmas and see — I'm not as little as I used to be! Merry Christmas!"

whiskey bottle lamps. He even had friends who owned a retail store in Cartersville, Georgia, who asked for one to put in their store. When his friends asked him for the lamps, he happily made and gifted them.

"My friends were sad to see me leave because I was making them a couple of lamps a month."

Rose has learned several skills since his journey in bottle-lamp-making began.

"I cracked bottles learning to drill into them. It can take 30 to 45 minutes to drill the hole. It takes a lot of work to get one made, and I have





Scott Rose takes unique liquor bottles and turns them into lamps that are functional but also a work of art.

to use certain fixtures to bolt the bottles to the bases,” he explains. “The bottle lamps I’d see in the store had all the wires inside the bottles. I didn’t like the wires being seen through the bottles, so I made wood bases and stored the wires in that. I filled the bottles with corn or rye, which makes them unique. Once, I made one lamp with a cigar box and loved the result. Now I make the lamps with those instead of the wood bases.”

Each lamp takes approximately two hours to make from start to finish, but it cannot be done in one day.

“After I drill the hole and clean the bottle, I must let it dry. I can’t have moisture in it when I put the rye or corn in it. Otherwise, it will mold,” Rose explains.

The lamps are made with each recipient in mind. Some bottles he uses are commonplace, but he enjoys using specialty ones. Rose’s son works at Barstool Sports and has access to Blanton’s bottles — high-end bottles that are uniquely shaped and more difficult to get. The first one Rose made for himself, but the subsequent ones were for others. He made lamps from Four Roses, his favorite bourbon, for his family members. He has made a lamp from a bottle of bourbon autographed by Ray “Boom Boom” Mancini and a valuable Pappy Van Winkle one.

“Jack Daniels Black No. 7 bottles make a cool lamp, as do ceramic tequila bottles,” he shares. “I made a special label for the one I gave my daughter on her wedding day.”

Rose has given lamps to his son, daughter,



Becca Lamb makes many gifts for others, including pot holders, oven mitts, clothing items and more.

son-in-law and friends across the country. He works out of his garage. Rose has recently made a lamp for The Foundry Distilling Company in Valley Junction, and it is his first locally gifted lamp.

## Gifts with meaning

Since she was 12 years old, Becca Lamb has been crafting things by sewing. When COVID hit in 2020, she found a purpose for the skills she had learned as a young girl.

“During COVID Christmas season, I was thinking about things that would be more meaningful than swiping a card at a store or online and that would show people that I care about them,” Lamb recalls. “The most meaningful thing you can give someone is your time, so that is what prompted me to make a big change to handmade gifts.”

Lamb brainstormed about things that would be practical and that people would use every day.

“The first thing I did was a lot of potholders,” she says. “I was at JoAnn Fabrics a lot getting new fabric. I made about 25-30 potholders the first year. The next items I made were oven mitts. I made about the same number of them. I was giving them to everyone. My gift recipients begin with my family, my husband, and my kids (ages 5 and 1). Then I make gifts for my friends.”

Each potholder and oven mitt was made with a particular recipient in mind, and fabrics were chosen with each recipient’s favorite things in mind. For example, Lamb’s mother likes cats, so she chose to make her gifts with cat-print fabric.

“I put a lot of thought into them,” she shares.



Now, five years later, Lamb feels like she has grown in her crafting skills and advanced in the gifts she makes for others.

“Sometimes I’ve made garments, but that can get tricky with sizing, so I mostly make things for around the house,” Lamb says. “I’ve gotten into knitting. It is an interesting skill to have, and it can be time consuming, but I like the finish of high-end products. I get supplies of better quality, and I feel like people notice and appreciate it.”

Lamb’s current favorite gift to make and give is a Sophie scarf. She explains that it takes about eight to 10 hours to complete, but she loves the finished look of the scarf.

Lamb likes getting started on her gift projects in October, but life sometimes gets in the way and delays her efforts until November.

“Then, I’m constantly working on projects,” she says. “I currently have four knitting projects going on. I work on each one during different parts of the day and in between other tasks.”

After JoAnn Fabrics closed, Lamb started getting some fabrics from Off the Rails until they closed their storefront. Now, she most often finds her supplies and fabrics online, not having located another business she feels is a great place to purchase what she needs.

When it comes to making handmade gifts, Lamb enjoys the process of making something with her hands and the chance to be creative.

“I love seeing people’s reactions to receiving something handmade, knowing it was tailored for them, and being excited about it.” ■



## GAMES for mental health

The Bondurant Community Library has long been a third space for all ages in our community. Third spaces (like cafes, parks, libraries) are vital for community, belonging and well-being, acting as neutral grounds beyond home (first space) and work or school (second space) where people connect, build relationships and find respite, fostering a healthier public life, through emphasizing their role in the social fabric and individual identity.

As a public library with limited funds, collaborating with other groups, such as The Bondurant Men's Club, allows us to continue to bring quality, all-ages programming free at the library. After the huge success at our Family Game and Pizza Night in June of 2025, we knew offering regularly scheduled events similar to that in the future was a must.

Studies show playing board games significantly benefits mental health by boosting cognitive skills (memory, problem-solving), reducing anxiety and depression (especially for older adults and those with ADHD), fostering social connection and offering stress relief through structured, engaging gameplay.

We have increased our in-house board and card game selection, thanks in part to a generous donation of new board games from Meeples for Peeples. We have also created a bi-monthly Family Game Night, alternating every other month with our Family BINGO Night.

The Bondurant Men's Club is generously sponsoring all Family Game Nights during the the current school year. This allows us to provide refreshments as well as periodically hiring other board game experts and suppliers, such as The Dealt Hand, to offer fresh, expertly selected game choices. We are so grateful to The Bondurant Men's Club and all the amazing things they make possible for the library and our community.

Family Game Nights are open to all ages, families or groups of friends. So, increase your brainpower, reduce your anxiety, and have some fun at Bondurant's favorite third space — the library.

### January events

- Fit for Life, Monday and Thursday at 8:30 a.m.
- Story Time, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 10:30 a.m.
- Baby Story Time, Thursday at 9:30 a.m.
- Jan. 1, Library Closed for New Year's Day
- Jan. 5, After School Perler Beads at 2:30 p.m.
- Jan. 6-20, Shredding Service during library open hours
- Jan. 6, Finals Week R&R (grades 9-12) at 3:30 p.m.
- Jan. 6, Reading Dragons & Friends (grades 3-5) at 6 p.m.
- Jan. 7, Finals Week R&R (grades 9-12) at 3:30 p.m.
- Jan. 7, Pokémon Club at 4:15 p.m.
- Jan. 8, Finals Week R&R (grades 9-12) at 3:30 p.m.
- Jan. 8, Adult Craft Night at 6 p.m.
- Jan. 10, Messy Munchkins at 10:30 a.m.
- Jan. 10, E-Waste Drive at 2 p.m.
- Jan. 12-23, Winter Animal Scavenger Hunt
- Jan. 12, After School BINGO at 2:30 p.m.
- Jan. 13, Book Discussion for Adults, "The Frozen River" at 6 p.m.
- Jan. 14, Curious & Creative Kids Club at 4:15 p.m.
- Jan. 15, Anime Club (grades 6-12) at 4 p.m.
- Jan. 16, Coffee Social at 1 p.m.
- Jan. 17, Saturday Stories at 10:30 a.m.
- Jan. 19, Library Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day ■

### Bondurant Community Library

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# USEFUL and heartfelt gifts

Finding the perfect Christmas gift for your older loved ones can feel challenging, but it is also an opportunity to show love, appreciation and thoughtfulness. Seniors often value comfort, practicality and meaningful connections over trendy gadgets or flashy items. Here are some ideas that combine usefulness with heartfelt sentiment.

**Cozy comfort items:** Winter can be harsh, and warmth is always welcome. Soft blankets and plush, rubber-soled slippers make excellent gifts that provide comfort. Weighted blankets are another great option; they promote relaxation and better sleep. Pair these with a cozy robe for the ultimate comfort package.

**Personalized keepsakes:** Personalized gifts never go out of style. Photo albums, custom calendars featuring family pictures or engraved jewelry can bring to mind cherished memories. Digital photo frames preloaded with family photos are perfect for older adults who may not be tech-savvy but love seeing familiar faces.

**Health and wellness essentials:** Health-conscious gifts such as ergonomic pillows, foot massagers or subscription boxes for healthy snacks are great options. For active seniors, wearable fitness trackers can encourage gentle exercise and monitor vital signs. Even simple items like a pill organizer or a stylish water bottle can make daily routines easier.

**Experiences over things:** Sometimes, the best gift isn't something



you can wrap. Experiences create lasting memories. Gift certificates for favorite restaurants, tickets to local concerts, or a planned family outing can bring joy and connection. Even a simple "day together" coupon, where you spend time doing what they love, can mean more than any physical gift.

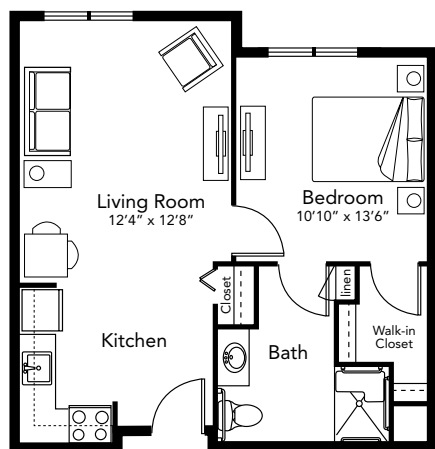
**Technology and connection:** Isolation can be a daily challenge for seniors, especially during the holidays. Simple to use tablets or video calling devices help them stay connected with family and friends. Digital assistants, such as Alexa, can also make life easier by setting reminders or playing music with voice commands.

**Practical everyday helpers:** Think about items that make daily life easier: kitchen gadgets, reach tools or easy-grip utensils. These practical gifts show thoughtfulness and help maintain independence. Even something as simple as a stylish tote bag for errands can be useful and appreciated.

When choosing a gift for a senior, consider their lifestyle, health needs and personal interests. The most meaningful presents combine practicality with emotional significance. Whether it's a cozy blanket, a personalized photo frame or a shared experience, the goal is to make them feel valued, comfortable and connected during the holiday season. ■

Information provided by Stephanie Proper, executive director, Valley View Village, 2571 Guthrie Ave., Des Moines, 515-265-2571.

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# FRIEND'S apples create a perfect cozy 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.

## NEWS BRIEF

# CITY honored by National ICMA

Assistant city administrator earns professional credential.

The city of Bondurant has earned national recognition from the International City/County Management Association for its outstanding work in public health, safety and inclusion. Bondurant received both the 2025 ICMA Community Health & Safety Award and the 2025 ICMA Community Equity & Inclusion Award, highlighting the city's leadership in creating safe, accessible and welcoming spaces for residents.

The Community Health & Safety Award honors Bondurant's proactive approach to community well-being: strengthening emergency response coordination, enhancing neighborhood design, and promoting resident engagement in safety initiatives.

The Community Equity & Inclusion Award recognizes the city's dedication to accessible and inclusive public spaces, including Bondurant's new City Park and The Station, a new hub designed to foster recreation and connection for residents of all abilities.

Alongside these honors, Jene Jess, assistant city administrator/administrative services director, has been recognized as an ICMA Credentialed Manager. This designation represents a high standard of professional achievement and ethical leadership in local government management.

"These awards are a reflection of the people who make Bondurant special — our residents, partners, and staff," said Mayor Doug Elrod. "We are proud to see Bondurant recognized for innovation, inclusion and

a shared commitment to improving the quality of life for everyone in our community."

The ICMA awards program recognizes excellence in local government leadership and celebrates communities that deliver impactful, equitable public service.

For more information about Bondurant's recent recognitions, visit [www.cityofbondurant.com](http://www.cityofbondurant.com). ■



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**REAL ESTATE**

By Austin Sullivan

## WILL 2026 be a good year to buy or sell?

Looking into the new year, many people start asking themselves whether this should be the year they buy or sell a home. For some, that decision is driven by major life events. For others, it is the market conditions that encourage them to make a move. We saw a clear example of this in 2021 when incredibly low interest rates inspired many buyers and sellers to speed up their plans. So, what should buyers expect in 2026?



Buyers might find the market a little easier to navigate than it has been in the past five years. Even though interest rates are not expected to be significantly lower in 2026, many buyers are simply tired of waiting for the perfect moment. The major shift is that we are no longer in a strong seller market. Most would agree the market is now more balanced, which gives buyers more negotiating power. There are also more homes for sale than we have seen in recent years, which means buyers have a wider selection and do not have to rush into decisions as quickly. These changes create a more relaxed and flexible buying environment that many people may want to take advantage of in 2026.

Sellers will also find themselves in a different position than before. It is no longer a seller dominated market for most properties, and it is normal for homes to stay on the market a little longer. Some sellers may need to consider a price adjustment if they want to attract the right buyer. Negotiations during inspections may also look different, since buyers now have more choices and are less willing to accept homes that need significant work. This makes pricing more important than it has been in the last several years. Overpricing can cause a listing to sit and lose momentum. Preparing the home is equally important. Making small repairs, improving curb appeal, and presenting a well-cared for home can make a major difference in how quickly it sells.

Inventory will play a major role for both buyers and sellers. We are already seeing inventory at levels we have not seen since 2019, and that trend is expected to continue. More inventory means more options for buyers and a more realistic picture of value for sellers.

Overall, we are expecting steady and positive growth in 2026, with pricing continuing to rise at a modest pace, more inventory creating healthy movement, and interest rates that remain stable and hopefully even lower. ■

Information provided by Austin Sullivan, Re/Max Concepts,  
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[austin@soldwithsullivan.com](mailto:austin@soldwithsullivan.com).

# START the new year strong with tutoring support

A new year brings a fresh start, renewed motivation and the perfect opportunity for students to build strong academic habits. Whether your child is catching up, keeping up, or looking to get ahead, personalized tutoring programs can help set the tone for a confident and successful year. With expert teachers, proven methods and a supportive environment, a tutoring center gives students the boost they need right from the start.



January often reveals the areas where students need extra support. The excitement of a new school year has worn off, and mid-year skills become more challenging. This is where a tutoring center shines. Their tutors take time to understand each student's strengths, challenges and learning style before building a customized learning plan. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, the center meets students exactly

where they are and guides them forward step by step.

One of the keys to starting the year strong is rebuilding academic confidence. When students feel overwhelmed or stuck, it can affect all their classes. Small-group and one-on-one instruction creates a comfortable space for students to ask questions, make mistakes, and learn without pressure. As they begin to understand concepts more clearly, their confidence grows — and that confidence often sparks renewed excitement about school.

Another advantage of tutoring in the new year is consistent structure. After winter break, many students struggle to regain steady routines. Regular tutoring sessions help re-establish good study habits, organization and time-management skills that will carry students through the rest of the school year. From homework help to test prep, students stay engaged and on track.

For families looking ahead, there are enrichment opportunities that help students stretch beyond the classroom. Advanced reading

and college readiness courses empower motivated learners to challenge themselves and explore new interests. The new year is an ideal moment to set goals — not just for improvement, but for growth and curiosity.

Most importantly is to make progress measurable and meaningful. Parents receive updates on exactly how their child is improving, and tutors continuously adjust instruction to match progress. This commitment to results ensures students don't just start the year strong — they stay strong.

With the right support, every student can step into the new year with confidence, clarity and momentum. Proven tutoring programs offer the guidance and encouragement needed to make that happen. Start the year with personalized tutoring and give your child the tools to thrive academically all year long. ■

Information provided by Angela Jones, Owner and Center Director of Sylvan Learning of Altoona, 301 Center Place, Suite C-1, Altoona, 515-957-2923, [Angela.Jones@sylvanlearning.com](mailto:Angela.Jones@sylvanlearning.com).




## START THE YEAR STRONG!

**Reset the school year with Sylvan. Reduce stress and frustration for both you and your child. Add Sylvan to your after-school routine. We'll ensure your child is on track and where they need to be to start 2026 strong and confident!**

**Mention Code**

**2026**

**and get 1/2 price assessment!**

**Sylvan Learning of Altoona**

**Call or Text 515-304-5280**

Offer Valid at this location only. Good through January 31, 2025.



# MEET Taylor Andrews

Teacher shapes young learners at Morris Elementary.

Taylor Andrews lives up to the stereotype of being the oldest sibling. She grew up with two younger sisters, and the three of them were often playing house or school together.

“Naturally, being the oldest sibling, I was always the teacher,” Andrews says.

That early instinct helped inspire her to become a teacher herself. When she was 5, Andrews entered early kindergarten with Mrs. Astarita — a formative experience that shaped her future.

“Her love and passion for teaching gave me my love for learning,” she says. “I always told my parents that I wanted to be like her when I grew up. Little did I know that I would really follow in her footsteps.”

Andrews went on to attend the University of Northern Iowa, earning her bachelor’s degree in 2018. She student-taught at Bondurant-Farrar Middle School that fall and stepped into her first full-time role as a special education teacher at Morris Elementary in January 2019.

“When I was wrapping up my student teaching, I had heard that Morris was going to be adding a special education position mid-year,” Andrews explains. “I knew I loved my time in Bondurant, and I could see myself becoming an educator there.”

She decided to take a chance and apply.

“I was lucky enough to get the job and started right away in January,” Andrews says. “I loved the atmosphere of Morris. I could genuinely see that kids loved being there.”

In 2023, Andrews transitioned from special education to the developmental kindergarten position at Morris.

“I adore teaching my group of kiddos because, for many of them, it is their first year of education at Morris,” she says. “I get to give them their first experience of schooling, and what an honor that is. I get to show them how much fun school can be and instill that love for learning.”

One of the most challenging — but also the most rewarding — parts of developmental kindergarten is the final week of school in May.

“The bond my class and I build with each other is so special,” she shares. “It is hard for me and for them to say goodbye. However, they are leaving me behind with the necessary skills to be successful in kindergarten. It’s not goodbye, it’s see you next year since they will all get the chance to see me while they are in kindergarten.”

Outside the classroom, Andrews stays busy with her own three boys and her husband, Bryce.

For her, teaching is everything she dreamed it would be back when she played school with her sisters and everything she hoped it could become. ■



Taylor Andrews was inspired by her kindergarten teacher to go into teaching.

# Happy Holidays



the **Bird's Nest**  
Out of School Time Program

Felicia Collison/Jill Sullivan, owners & Lindsay Bailey, director.

Our discovery center program offers a series of activities devoted to the physical, emotional and social development of children!

500 Grant Street S • Bondurant • 515-957-1386

www.thebondurantbirdsnest.com



## Open Enrollment & Our Plans for Next School Year

After 20 years of steady growth, Bondurant-Farrar's student enrollment has slowed in recent years, especially in the lower grades. Many metro districts are experiencing similar patterns, which may be attributed to a number of factors. With this in mind, we are taking a thoughtful look at class sizes, staffing needs, and long-term planning.

### ► Our Strategy for 2026-27

Bondurant-Farrar will accept a limited number of open enrolled students. We anticipate accepting approximately 20 to 40 students districtwide, depending on space and staffing.

#### **This approach will help:**

- Balance grade-level numbers
- Maintain consistent staffing
- Use district resources effectively

#### **Open seats will be offered when:**

- Space is available at a grade level
- Programs can support additional students
- Class sizes can remain reasonable

Availability will be reviewed continuously and adjusted as needed throughout the school year.

### ► Who Can Apply?

Open enrollment is available to all students who live outside Bondurant-Farrar district boundaries. The district will offer a limited number of openings based on space at each grade level.

### ► Key Dates & Deadlines

Families are encouraged to apply early. Applications for grades 1-12 are due March 2, 2026. September 1, 2026 is the deadline to apply for kindergarten.

### ► For Assistance

With questions or for assistance with the open enrollment process, please contact our district registrar:

- Phone: 515-967-7819
- Email: [registrar@bfschools.org](mailto:registrar@bfschools.org)



## Let's Chat, Bluejays!

Let's Chat, Bluejays! is a new opportunity for families and community members to sit down with district leaders, ask questions, and talk through a variety of school-related topics.

*January's discussions will center around enrollment trends and open enrollment. We hope you'll join us!*

- **Wed, January 7 at 4:00 p.m.**
- **Thurs, January 8 at 8:30 a.m.**

Sessions last 45 minutes and are held in person, with a virtual option for those who cannot attend on-site.

Bondurant-Farrar District Office  
300 Garfield Street SW, Bondurant  
Enter on east side of Intermediate School

To join virtually, please RSVP for link:  
[communications@bfschools.org](mailto:communications@bfschools.org)

*\*Unable to attend? Additional dates/times are available upon request.*

## Contact Us:

Bondurant-Farrar District Office  
300 Garfield Street SW, Bondurant  
Phone: 515-967-7819  
Online: [www.bfschools.org/contactus](http://www.bfschools.org/contactus)

## Stay Connected:

Facebook: @BFDistrict  
X: @BF\_District  
YouTube: @Bondurant-FarrarCSD  
Flickr: [www.flickr.com/photos/bfcsd/albums](http://www.flickr.com/photos/bfcsd/albums)





POLK COUNTY, IOWA

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Conversation**



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opportunities to participate**

For questions, please call 515-286-3120

WWW.POLKCOUNTYIOWA.GOV





# POLK COUNTY'S HUMAN SERVICES OUTREACH & INVESTMENTS



## CENTRAL IOWA SHELTER & SERVICES

Polk County approved more than **\$817K** in funding to support critical infrastructure repairs including HVAC, plumbing, electrical, kitchen repairs, and security upgrades. In addition, the county approved an enhanced annual financial agreement. The County's annual support increased from **\$149k to \$319k** to specifically help cover first-night shelter and meal expenses, costs related to increased staffing, higher costs of materials, and other essentials during weather amnesty.



## IOWA HOMELESS YOUTH CENTER (YSS)

The Iowa Homeless Youth Center (IHYC) is the only emergency shelter bed program in Polk County exclusively serving homeless young adults between the ages of **18 and 24** years. In August, Polk County approved a 3-year agreement to provide **\$150K** annually in funding to ensure the program remains viable and the beds available at the youth emergency shelter in downtown DSM.



## JOPPA

Polk County invested more than **\$1.28 million** in federal funding designated for affordable housing towards JOPPA's tiny village project. In October, JOPPA received approval by the City of Des Moines for their site at 2501 Maury Street in Des Moines. The tiny village will provide permanent homes to 50 men and women who would otherwise be chronically homeless. The Village will offer supportive services, work opportunities, and access to public transportation for off-site employment opportunities.



## ANAWIM HOUSING

Polk County utilized **\$1 million** in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars in support of Anawim Housing's Monarch Apartments located at 4845 Merle Hay Road in Des Moines. This 40 unit project converted a former Days Inn Hotel into permanent supportive housing. Monarch Apartments opened it's doors in Spring 2025



## FOOD PANTRY ASSISTANCE

When the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits were temporarily suspended on November 1, 2025, due to the federal government shutdown, the Polk County Board of Supervisors held a special meeting to provide **\$1 million** to the Food Bank of Iowa, Des Moines Religious Council, and Caring Hands to help fill their pantries. Shortly after SNAP benefits were suspended, pantries saw more than a 50% increase in demand and Polk County's special investment allowed for immediate distribution to organizations at the forefront of the food crisis during this time.



Be sure to check for cancellations.

## Coming up in Bondurant Living magazine:

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

## Live music at Prairie Meadows

Prairie Meadows, 1 Prairie Meadows Drive, Altoona

- Friday, Dec. 26, 8 p.m.: Jordan Beem featuring the John Griffiths Band
- Saturday, Dec. 27, 8 p.m.: Night Like This Band
- Saturday, Dec. 27, noon: 80 Grit Band
- Sunday, Dec. 28, 8 p.m.: Recoil Band
- Monday, Dec. 29, 8 p.m.: Get Off My Lawn Band
- Tuesday, Dec. 30, 11 a.m.: Richie Lee and the Fabulous 50s Band
- Tuesday, Dec. 30, 8 p.m.: Decoy Band
- Wednesday, Dec. 31, 8:30 p.m.: Grand Marshall Band
- Wednesday, Dec. 31, 11 a.m.: Tommy Browder and the Country River Band
- Saturday, Jan. 17, 7 p.m.: Young Elvis Tribute Band



## Bondurant Library Events

104 Second St. N.E., Bondurant

- Saturday, Jan. 10, 2 p.m.: E-Waste Drive
- Jan. 6-20: Shredding Event
- Thursday, Jan. 22, 5:30 p.m.: Family Game Night



## Uptown Ankeny Wonderlights

Through Dec. 31

Ankeny Market and Pavilion park, 715 W. First St.

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

## City of Bondurant - City Hall Holiday Closures

- New Years Eve (half-day): Wednesday, Dec. 31
- New Years Day: Thursday, Jan. 1
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: Monday, Jan. 19

## Ankeny Gingerbread Lane

Through Dec. 31 • S.E. Richland Court, Ankeny

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

## Des Moines Community Orchestra Concerts

- **Winter Concert: Sunday, Feb. 22, 2 p.m.**, Staplin Performing Arts Center, 3650 Woodland Ave., West Des Moines. Guest Conductor: Joshua Barlage, Featured Soloist: Curtis Barr, Cello
- **Spring Concert: Sunday, May 10, 2 p.m.**, Drake University Sheslow Auditorium, 2507 University Ave., Des Moines. Guest Conductor: Kara Mather Des Moines Community Orchestra, Featured Soloist: Dr. Kevin Allemagne, Clarinet

## Programs at Edencrest at The Tuscany

1600 Eighth St. S.E., Altoona

- **Central States Mobility Showcase, Thursday, Jan. 15, 1-2 p.m.**

Discover innovative mobility solutions designed to enhance comfort, safety and independence. Representatives from Central States Mobility will showcase their latest products and services, answer questions and provide expert insights on maintaining mobility and quality of life. Enjoy light refreshments as you learn more about how these solutions can support active, independent living.

- **Home Instead, Thursday, Feb. 12, 1-2 p.m.** Join Home Instead for an informative, hour-long presentation about in-home care services at Edencrest at The Tuscany! Topics include personalized support options, caregiver assistance and resources available to help seniors maintain independence and quality of life.

- **Telecommunications Access Iowa, Thursday, March 12, 1-2 p.m.** TAI officials will share details about their statewide program that helps individuals access specialized telecommunications equipment, including amplified phones, captioned phones, and other adaptive devices that support easier communication.

- **Everystep, Thursday, April 16, 1-2 p.m.** EveryStep and Dr. Mouser will present an informative, one-hour overview of their compassionate care and support services, including hospice, home care, grief support and community health programs designed to help individuals and families navigate life's transitions. Light snacks and refreshments will be provided.

For more information on programs, call Mallory Wentland, 515-850-6119.



## CITYVIEW's Fire and Ice

Saturday, Jan. 24, 1-4 p.m.

Valley Junction

CITYVIEW brings back its legendary Valley Junction area pub crawl. Fire and Ice is a hockey-themed liquor sampling event that will be sure to warm up your winter blues. With your event ticket, you will receive 10 individual drink tickets to sample some of the best winter cocktails from establishments in the Valley Junction area. Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$35 at the door. Follow the QR code for tickets.



## EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancelations.

### Winter Arts Exhibits

#### Olson-Larsen Galleries

542 Fifth St., West Des Moines

• **Through Jan. 31: The Animal Show 2025**

#### Polk County Heritage Gallery

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

[www.polkcountyheritagegallery.org](http://www.polkcountyheritagegallery.org)

• **Through Dec. 31: The Invitational: Curated Show**

#### Ankeny Art Center

1520 S.W. Ordinance Road, Ankeny

[www.ankenyardcenter.org](http://www.ankenyardcenter.org)

• **Through Jan. 14: Members Show**

#### The Des Moines Art Center

4700 Grand Ave., Des Moines

• **Through April 19: Bill Owens: Work and Leisure:** Bill Owens documented the suburbs in the 1970s, capturing the lives of prosperous, predominantly white Americans at a moment after the cultural shifts of the 1960s but before the dawn of the digital age of computers and video games in the 1980s. His photographs were compiled in the best-selling coffee table books “Leisure” (1972), “Our Kind of People” (1975), and “Working: I Do It For the Money” (1977).

### Des Moines Art Center Museum Highlights Tour

Saturdays, 1-2 p.m.

Des Moines Art Center,  
4700 Grand Ave,  
Des Moines

Discover the vast variety of the Des Moines Art Center’s permanent collections during the Museum Highlights Tour. This tour offers a unique journey through the galleries, featuring a selection of timeless paintings, sculptures and more. Join knowledgeable guides to uncover the stories, techniques and inspirations behind the art on view, and experience the highlights of the Art Center in a fresh and engaging way. This guided tour is perfect for art enthusiasts of all ages. Free to all, no registration required.

### Stage and Theater

Des Moines Performing Arts

Des Moines Civic Center, Cowles

Commons, Stoner Theater,

Temple Theatre, 221 Walnut St.,

Des Moines

[www.dmpa.org](http://www.dmpa.org)

• Jan. 13-18: “SIX”

• Feb. 3-8: “Kimberly Akimbo.”

• Feb. 24 to March 1: “The Outsiders.”

• March 20-22: Meredith Willson’s “The Music Man.”

• March 28: “The Wizard of Oz in Concert” with the Des Moines Symphony.

• April 28 to May 3: “Suffs.”

### Holiday Horse-Drawn Rides

Dec. 26-31, every half hour, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Jester Park Equestrian Center,  
11171 N.W. 103rd Court, Granger

Staff will hitch up their draft horse team to take your group for a 30-minute horse-drawn ride through Jester Park. If there’s no snow, plan for a wagon on wheels instead of a sleigh! Sleigh Rides require a minimum of 6 inches of packed snow as a proper base for the sleigh. A wagon will be used when there is no snow or not enough snow to pull a sleigh. Registration is required. Private holiday rides, which cost \$200, can hold a maximum of 12 guests. Small children who can sit on an adult’s lap for the duration of the ride do not need to be included in the count. To register, follow the QR code.



### Square Dance Lessons

Sunday nights starting

Jan. 18, 6:30 p.m.

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

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



## NEWS BRIEF

### CITY awarded grant for silo mural

The city of Bondurant announced it has been awarded a \$50,000 Public Art Grant from Bravo Greater Des Moines, supporting the creation of a large-scale mural on the historic agricultural silo structures in the Grain District Redevelopment Site at Silo Commons. This funding, announced as part of Bravo’s fall 2026 grant cycle totaling \$6.1 million across the Greater Des Moines region, represents a significant investment in Bondurant’s growing arts, culture and placemaking initiatives.

The Silo Commons Mural Project — a signature recommendation of the City’s Arts, Culture, and Wayfinding Master Plan — aims to transform a prominent local landmark into a visually striking, community-centered art destination. Once complete, the silo mural will serve as a signature landmark in Bondurant, celebrating local identity while enhancing the vibrancy of parks, trail networks and public gathering spaces.

The Silo Commons mural installation is a key component of Bondurant’s broader effort to expand public art throughout the community. As the 2025 Governor’s Arts Champion Award recipient, Bondurant continues to advance its commitment to celebrating creativity and cultural vitality. Alongside projects such as ARTocka at Lake Petocka and the City Park mural, the silo mural contributes to a long-term vision of creating engaging public spaces that support economic activity, outdoor recreation and cultural expression.

Bravo Greater Des Moines’ investment underscores the regional value of the arts sector, which continues to demonstrate substantial economic and social impact. City officials are grateful for BRAVO’s partnership and for the collaborative support of the local government partners who contribute hotel/motel tax revenue to sustain the grant-making program.

Project planning is currently underway, including artist involvement and community input opportunities. The city will share updates on timelines, design concepts and engagement opportunities as the project progresses.

For more information about Bondurant’s public art initiatives and ongoing park and community development projects, visit [cityofbondurant.com](http://cityofbondurant.com). ■



  
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# A PLACE TO CONNECT

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 DWELLING AMONG US. WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY,  
 THE GLORY OF THE ONE AND ONLY SON, WHO CAME  
 FROM THE FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.  
 PSALM 95:2

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace.

Connecting with God's Word through community, worship and learning.



**FIRST FAMILY  
CHURCH** BONDURANT

SUNDAY WORSHIP, 10 A.M.  
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 315 2ND ST N.W. BONDURANT  
 FFCBLIFE.COM  
 515-587-5930

**FAITH** By Mark Spencer

## CHRISTMAS and the great rescue

In June of 2018, the world watched a gripping story unfold underneath the mountains of northern Thailand. A boys soccer team had explored a cave during the dry season. But when heavy rains hit unexpectedly, water flooded the passages and trapped them more than two miles underground. For days, no one even knew if they were alive.



Did those boys matter? Absolutely.

They mattered so much that hundreds of people mobilized instantly. Engineers set up command centers. Volunteers camped outside the cave entrance. Crews brought in excavators to attempt to bore a path through solid rock. A specialized dive team flew in from England — men trained for some of the most dangerous underwater missions in the world. Reporters from every corner of the globe came to cover the story. Half a world away, many of us sat in our living rooms watching the news and holding our breath.

Think of the cost. The manpower, the sleepless nights, the international cooperation. Think of the millions of dollars poured into rescuing 12 boys and their coach.

Two points stand out. First, the boys were in deep trouble. Second, they were so valuable that extraordinary resources were poured out to rescue them.

If you are honest, maybe a small part of you wonders: Would anyone ever come looking for me like that? Would anyone go to such lengths to rescue me if I were trapped and helpless?

According to the Bible, the answer is a resounding yes, but the rescue looks far different than the one in Thailand.

God sees us trapped in a cave that is far deeper and darker than any mountainside tunnel: the cave of sin and death. It is a place we cannot escape no matter how hard we try. And God, seeing us there, lost and drowning, refused to leave us.

But here is the part that takes my breath away: God did not send a team. He did not send angels with ropes and lights. He did not bring in spiritual excavators. Instead, He sent one person.

He sent His Son.

And this is where Christmas comes in. The birth of Jesus is not just a sweet story for children or a sentimental holiday moment. Christmas is the beginning of God's rescue mission. The manger is where the Rescuer stepped into the cave. God Himself entered our darkness, wrapped in human flesh, because only Jesus was qualified to save us.

So, this Christmas, as you look at the lights, the nativity scenes, and the quiet moments of reflection, remember this: God sent His most valuable Rescuer because you were in the most serious trouble — and because you were worth saving. ■

Information provided by Mark Spencer, lead pastor, First Family Church Bondurant, mspencer@ffclife.com, 515-587-5930.



# Bondurant

December 2025

News

## CRIBBAGE TOURNAMENT

JANUARY 11, 2026  
12:30PM CHECK-IN

\$8/person  
Reclaimed Rails Brewing Co  
Register at

[www.tinyurl.com/WinterCribbageTourney](http://www.tinyurl.com/WinterCribbageTourney)



Save the Date  
**CHOWDER RIDE**  
FEB. 21, 2026



CITY HALL WILL BE  
**CLOSED**

*For the Holidays*

November 27th & 28th, 2025 (Thanksgiving)  
Dec. 23rd, 2025 -closing at 12pm (Christmas)  
December 24th, 2025 (Christmas)  
December 25th, 2025 (Christmas)



## Snow Ordinance Reminders

The City's Snow Ordinance goes into effect whenever snowfall reaches two inches or more or when a snow emergency is declared.

No street parking is permitted until plowing is complete and the emergency has been lifted.

Vehicles left on the street during a snow ordinance may be subject to ticketing or towing.

The Snow Ordinance requires residents to remove snow and ice from sidewalks within 24 hours following the end of the snowfall.

Scan the QR Code for full ordinance details



## Connect with Us



The City of Bondurant offers a variety of ways to keep you connected-from social media pages and email newsletters to texts right to your phone! Follow along, subscribe, or check in when you can-we're here to keep you in the loop and connected to your community.

## Engage with Us



You can find upcoming City Council meeting dates, agendas, and past meeting minutes by scanning the QR code. We're making it easier than ever to stay informed and engaged.





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& experience  
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[www.kimballandbeecher.com](http://www.kimballandbeecher.com)

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200 2nd St SE, Ste 1 Altoona Iowa 50009

## HEALTH

By Dr. Colton Maharry

### WHY cavity-free baby teeth matter — and the role of fluoride

Baby teeth, also called primary teeth, play a much bigger role in a child's health than many people realize. Although they eventually fall out, keeping them cavity-free is essential for a child's overall development, comfort and long-term oral health.

Healthy baby teeth help children chew food properly, which supports good nutrition and growth. They also play a key role in speech development, helping children pronounce sounds clearly as they learn to talk. In addition, baby teeth hold space for permanent teeth. When a baby tooth is lost too early due to decay, nearby teeth can shift, leading to crowding or alignment problems when adult teeth come in.

Cavities in baby teeth can cause pain, infection and difficulty eating or sleeping. Dental infections can affect a child's general health and may require extensive treatment that can be stressful for both children and parents. Preventing cavities early helps children build positive dental experiences and healthy habits that last a lifetime.

Fluoride is one of the most effective tools for preventing tooth decay. It works by strengthening tooth enamel, making it more resistant to acid attacks from bacteria and sugary foods. Children can benefit from fluoride through fluoridated drinking water, fluoride toothpaste, and professional fluoride treatments provided by dental professionals. ■

Information provided by Dr. Colton Maharry, Kimball & Beecher Family Dentistry, 108 Main St. N.E., Bondurant, 515-967-4002.



## WELLNESS

By Nikki Morgan

### THE TRUTH about aging

We've all seen it: creams that promise miracles, trends that come and go, and conflicting advice about how to “stop” aging. The truth? Aging is natural, but how your skin shows it is something you can influence. Healthy skin is the ultimate goal, and there are science-backed solutions that protect and restore your skin — not just quick fixes that lead to disappointment.

The biggest factor in visible aging isn't genetics; it is lifestyle and environment. Sun exposure alone accounts for nearly 80% of fine lines, dark spots and skin laxity. That means the most effective anti-aging product is still the simplest: daily sunscreen. Add in consistent skincare with ingredients like retinol, peptides, antioxidants and growth factors, and you've already built a powerful foundation.

But sometimes skincare can't do the whole job. That is where modern aesthetic treatments come in. Neuromodulators soften expression lines, DiamondGlow boosts radiance and skin health, and collagen-stimulating treatments, such as laser skin rejuvenation and SkinPen microneedling, help firm and rejuvenate from within. These are not shortcuts; they are tools that work with your biology to keep your skin healthy and strong.

The biggest myth? That aging must be “fixed.” Aging skin should be supported. Beautiful and healthy skin at any age comes from understanding what truly works and choosing personalized care that honors your unique features.

Curious what your skin really needs? Visit your trusted medical aesthetic provider to guide you with honest, expert recommendations you can trust. ■

Information provided by Nikki Morgan, DNP, ARNP, SkinFusion, 200 Second St. S.E., Altoona, 515-967-0587, [www.skinfusionfx.com](http://www.skinfusionfx.com), [nikki.skinfusionfx@gmail.com](mailto:nikki.skinfusionfx@gmail.com)



## HEALTH

By Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich

### CHIROPRACTIC care essential for kids

Parents often have questions about why their child should see a chiropractor. Regular chiropractic care by a board-certified pediatric chiropractor provides essential benefits for children's overall wellness, development and lifelong health.

Chiropractic adjustments reduce nervous system stress, allowing the body to function in a greater state of health. When the nervous system is healthy, communication between the brain and the body flows more efficiently. Specific adjustments significantly affect how children think and behave, leading to improved attention span, decreased behavioral issues, better sleep patterns and balanced emotional processing.

Children have a high activity level and experience falls, bumps and accidents frequently while playing. Children are resilient and don't appear to be injured, but these small falls and bumps can turn into minor spinal injuries that go unnoticed until adulthood, making corrections more difficult later.

All children should have their nervous system evaluated as symptoms are not always present. However, many symptoms such as recurrent ear infections, colds and sickness, asthma and breathing issues, allergies, sleep difficulties, emotional processing issues, mood swings, behavioral and attention issues, clumsiness or lack of coordination, constipation or elimination issues, frequent accidents or bed wetting can indicate the need to address nervous system issues with chiropractic care.

Board certified pediatric chiropractors perform thorough examinations and are trained to provide specific adjustments from infants to young adults. By incorporating chiropractic care as part of a healthy lifestyle, parents give their children the foundation for self-healing and lifelong wellness. ■

Information provided by Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich, Swain Chiropractic, 410 Center Place S.W., Altoona, 515-967-9300.

## PLAN AHEAD

By Buffy Peters

### GRIEF and the holidays

When grief comes along for the holidays, the absence of someone special can feel even more amplified. Holiday traditions can bring up memories from the past, which perhaps now feel painful and in direct opposition to the holiday cheer that seems inescapable this time of year.

What about the proverbial "elephant in the room"? Someone is missing this year, but, if we talk about it, that might make people sad, or worse, cry, reminding them of the loss. It might feel like it is better to not say anything and pretend it isn't there.

What I have learned from grief is that, when you acknowledge the elephant, it allows us to walk alongside one another together instead of being left alone in our grief. Yes, tears may come, and that's OK. But you know what else might come? When the elephant has a seat at the table, it is no longer fighting for our attention, using all of our energy to pretend we aren't grieving. That acknowledgement makes room for grief, love and joy to coexist. It's not an either/or; it certainly can be a both/and.

You can be grieving and find glimmers of joy this season. Allow yourself to feel however you are feeling (with no judgement) and make room for the things that bring you joy. It is not dishonoring your loved one, and it won't make your grief disappear, but it might just make this time of year a bit more bearable. ■



Information provided by Buffy Peters, Director of Hamilton's Academy of Grief & Loss, 3601 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-697-3666, [www.HamiltonsFuneralHome.com/academy-of-grief-and-loss](http://www.HamiltonsFuneralHome.com/academy-of-grief-and-loss).

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# THE HOUSE her father built

Necessary feels right at home.

Amanda Necessary reminisces about the good old days of Bondurant — like the Bondurant Grain Express train that once moved cars around town and hauled grain.

She also misses her parents, who lived in Bondurant beginning in the early 1990s. Necessary herself moved to town in the fall of 1995 and now lives in her parents' home — designed by her dad — on the northeast side of town.

After losing a previous home to a flood, her dad wanted to build something sturdy — a place that could withstand bad weather and give their family room to grow. Necessary lived in that home throughout her childhood and well into her 20s.

"Whenever I had an issue, I got to go home," she says. "Dad would help tow my car home. Mom would mend a broken heart. It was where we had holidays and felt safe."

Still today, Necessary is grateful for the neighbors who have wrapped her in care, especially during moments of loss. Not long after her mother died, a neighbor brought her and her children a warm meal.

"She said, 'I hope this helps feed your dad and kids for a while,'" Necessary recalls. "When I told her that dad had passed 11 months prior, the look on her face. She had no idea. She embraced me in a tight hug, crying. She said that my dad was one of her favorite people."

For Necessary, living in Bondurant is extra special because it feels safe. It feels like home.

"It's a community where you could leave your door unlocked at night," she says. "Everyone looks out for everyone else. Parents would look out for everyone's kids."

To her, Bondurant is small-town living at its best and the kind of place she's proud to raise her own children.

When Necessary later learned that her father had lived in Bondurant back in the early 1970s — in the Lincoln Apartments, a time he always spoke of fondly — the town became even more deeply rooted in her heart.

"I have the same drive and desire that my dad had — to live in such a wholesome, tight-knit community," Necessary says. "Dad always said that he loved how well the community looked out for each other. To quote Field of Dreams, 'Is this heaven?' No it's Bondurant." ■



Amanda Necessary is deeply fond of her home and the community.





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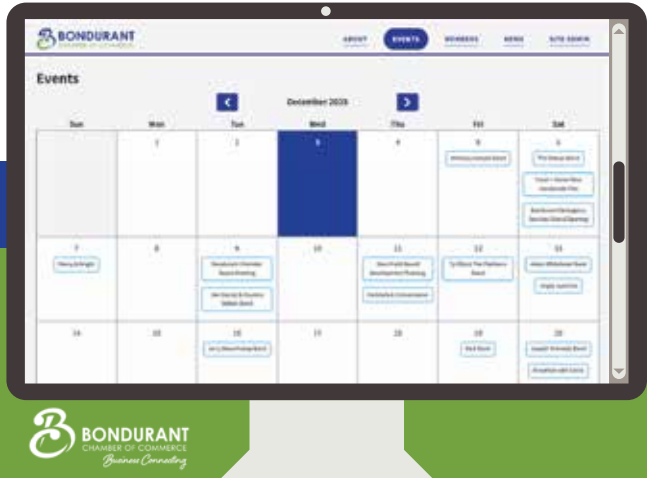
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## Events Page



Your go-to guide for what's happening in Bondurant!



## A FRONT-ROW seat to Bondurant's growth

Looking back on a fun and impactful year is something I can do easily. I had the privilege of joining the Bondurant Chamber of Commerce in July of 2025 as executive director, and I feel blessed to have a front-row seat to witness the growth happening in Bondurant. The Bondurant community is truly something special. There are moments when it seems almost too good to be true that we have this little slice of perfection right here in Iowa.



One of my very first events was the "PieIowa" premiere, and it could not have been a more fitting introduction to Bondurant. Sitting under the stars with this incredible community, watching a documentary made and filmed in Iowa, was a powerful reminder of the pride, creativity and connection that define this town. Since then, we have hosted a wide variety of events, including ribbon cuttings celebrating local businesses, Bike Nights, East Polk County Regional Events, Coffee & Conversations, Cocktails & Conversations, the Developers Conference, Business Safe Trick-or-Treat, and so much more. Each event brings people into Bondurant, increases visibility and engagement, and gives others the opportunity to see firsthand what a wonderful place Bondurant truly is.

The events and community spirit found in Bondurant are unmatched, and we look forward to that energy continuing to grow and blossom in the year ahead. At the chamber, we strongly believe in the power of connection and collaboration. Every event we plan has purpose and intention behind it. In 2026, we are expanding our calendar and invite you to join us — whether you are learning more about this incredible community, supporting the businesses that keep it thriving, or connecting with the people who work tirelessly to make Bondurant such a special place to belong.

The Bondurant Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to fostering a thriving business environment by connecting businesses, supporting economic growth, and enhancing the community's quality of life. Our mission is to provide the resources, connections and opportunities that empower businesses to succeed and contribute to Bondurant's continued prosperity.

There has never been a more important time to be part of the Chamber — participating in community events, building relationships and growing both personally and professionally. Bondurant is in a season of growth, and the chamber is focused on harnessing that momentum in a way that supports businesses, strengthens connections and preserves the strong sense of community that makes Bondurant so incredibly special.

Be sure to check out our social media pages, explore our new website, view our community calendar, and sign up for our newsletter to stay informed and involved. And, if we earn your membership along the way, we would be truly grateful.

So much progress has been made, but there is still so much building, connecting and collaborating to do. We hope to see you at an event (or several) in 2026. From all of us at the Bondurant Chamber of Commerce, we wish you a healthy, successful and peaceful 2026. We'll see you soon. ■

Information provided by Katie Hentges, Executive Director, Bondurant Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 146, Bondurant, IA, 50035, 515-329-0773, [www.bondurantchamber.com](http://www.bondurantchamber.com), [director@bondurantchamber.com](mailto:director@bondurantchamber.com).



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# MERRY & Bright

Bondurant's Merry & Bright Celebration was held at the Bondurant-Farrar Junior High School on Dec. 7.



Perry Ross and Copelyn Ross



Tracey Tyndall and Jason Tyndall



Josie Smith



Rachel Olson



Amy Matzen



Jennifer Knox



Carol Davis and Chad Swager



Diane Crossett and Camille Crossett



Liz Bryant and Henry Bryant



Parker Grimes



Memory Turner



Steve Vincent



Nicole Lokenvitz



# MERRY & Bright

Bondurant's Merry & Bright Celebration was held at the Bondurant-Farrar Junior High School on Dec. 7.

Photos courtesy of Photos by Ben



Stephanie and Dan Petrich



Jim and Chris Crandell



Jody Bean



Scott Werrbach



Megan Wiedmann



Brent Dalton



Mike Reid



Shawna Meyer



Tammy Smith and Pam Doocy



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