

CLIVE

DECEMBER 2025

# Living

## Handmade FOR THE holidays

Residents share the joy  
of gifts from the heart.

**Meet Melissa Stone**

EDUCATION

**Apple cinnamon muffins**

RECIPE

**Elks Lodge helps veterans  
and many others**

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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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# Handmade FOR THE holidays

Residents share the joy  
of gifts from the heart.

By Darren Tromblay

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.

Marcy Davis enjoys receiving handmade gifts during the Christmas season.



## A memory engraved

Sometimes it's the simplest of things that are the best — even in this gift-giving Christmas season.

Jane Foreman knows that firsthand, thanks to a special item of wood given to her by her brother a few years ago. On this piece of wood — more concisely, a cutting board — is gold. A recipe from Grandma.

"She had written a recipe, dated it, and wrote 'Love, Gram' at the bottom," Foreman says. "My brother had all of that laser-printed onto a wooden cutting board."

Grandma Goldie Hawkins was a treasure, as grandparents are. Her recipe, in her own writing, has been memorialized now. Foreman treats it with kids' gloves. Grandma may have wanted her to use the cutting board, but not this time. This one stays as is.

It was made in Marshalltown by a small mom-and-pop-style business that specializes in helping create these types of memories for people.

The handmade gift is a one-of-a-kind snapshot in time, and Foreman treasures it like no other gift she's received. Maybe ever.

"I just love it; it's so special," Foreman says. "I don't keep it out or even cut on it."

Foreman has a giving streak of her own, one that grew from simply wanting to give a meaningful gift to her relatives to a hobby that actually puts bread on her table and helps pay the bills.

About 15 years ago, Foreman had an idea while in search of some handmade gifts to give to her two young nieces. Youngsters can be tough to buy for at times, especially at that stage when they are turning a corner, exploring and growing out of things as quickly as they grew into them.

Foreman was looking for that gift that would not only stir the creative juices within them, but something they would actually want. Something to keep.

"I started out making these things to do — some hand lettering on little tiles — but found they washed off," she says. "Two weeks later, I woke up in the middle of the night and figured out something even better. This was not only a gift, but it could be something kids could actually play with over and over again."

And Express Yourself was born.

Years down the line now, that once simple gift idea has brought Foreman to shows across the Midwest where she offers Express Yourself to others. And, they've loved it. Dozens and



Jane Foreman has given away her Express Yourself invention as Christmas gifts.

dozens and dozens of them. The gift, which started out so simply, is way more than that now. It's a living.

Her market, she says, is grandmothers and mothers who want to give something other than a piece of plastic from a big box store.

"They're tired of it," she says.

Another nice thing about it is that it spurs creativity, allowing the child to play with it over and over again.

"It's kind of like a dry erase board, but it's not. You use a permanent marker on it, which stays on to the touch until you wash it off," she says. "The thing that parents love is that it's something their kids will play with over and over again, not just a few times."

## Her best friend

Over the years, Marcy Davis of Clive has been on the receiving end of a number of handmade Christmas gifts, ranging from crocheted blankets to ornaments to hang on the tree. Baked goods have been aplenty as well, of course.

"And who doesn't like that?" she says with a smile. "We enjoy Christmas. We try to get together with as many family and friends as possible, maybe have a nice big breakfast, eat lots of good food and exchange gifts."

But, that's not all she has unwrapped. Among the more special gifts that have come her way through the years was a dog collar given to her by her best friend, a friendship that has been going strong since Davis was 6 years old.

It's a great reminder of not only of the talent of others but the simple joy of long-term friendships.



One of Jane Foreman's favorite handmade gifts was this cutting board with one of her grandmother's recipes etched into it.

"She's very crafty and creative and is always doing that for Christmas and birthdays," Davis says. "The collars are Iowa or Iowa State or something fun. It's really nice. And, I know she made it, so that makes it even more special."

Her friend's generosity has even spurred Davis to spread some of the Christmas giving cheer herself, as she has baked Christmas cookies and other goodies that she has distributed among family and friends over the years.

Henry, Davis' dog, has been the "other" recipient of the collars. He wears them well and

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## FEATURE



Marcy Davis' dog, Henry, has been the recipient of collars made by his owner's best friend.

has for more than eight years now after being brought into the family following a trip to the Carroll Animal Rescue League.

"He's like the Eugene Levy of dogs," she quips. "He doesn't like anything hot, he doesn't like anything cold; he has his own personality. He's pretty neat."

### Like a rock

Eric Klein is so very proud of his wife, Kennetha.

She is his rock. The foundation of a wonderful marriage in the heart of Clive.

The Clive city councilman speaks highly of his bride. As he should. She's loving. She's giving. And, she is talented.

One of the things Kennetha enjoys doing most is art. Specifically, rock art. She takes an otherwise dull-looking flat rock and turns it into a true work of art as only she can, bringing it to life with lush colors and inspiring words of positivity.

Kennetha's attention to detail begins well before the brushes dip in paint.

"She custom shops for just the right rock at various lawn and garden home centers, brings them home, and then paints them for individuals, for our church, or the VA garden," Eric says. "Sometimes they're of



Clive City Councilman Eric Klein adores the artistic abilities of his wife, Kennetha.



flowers, sometimes of different patterns, or other times she paints bricks and makes them look like books. She has one of 'The Giving Tree,' and one of 'The Great Gatsby' that she's given away."

Her artistry has been on full display for the last 10 years, Eric says. A bedroom in their home has been converted into a studio. Her safe place. One of them. When art calls, she heeds, no matter the locale.

"She likes to sit out on our deck on nice days and paint, or sometimes she likes to sit in bed and paint," he says.

Her rock tapestries vary in size, from small to about the size of a dinner plate, Eric says. But, no matter the dimensions, one thing always stays consistent: her attention to detail.

Her husband is on the other side of the artistic fence. His wife's art is just that: her art. He refuses to paint himself into her process.

"My involvement is staying out of the way," he jokes. "My wife is the artist of the family. It's her pastime, her passion, and she really loves giving them away."

The Christmas season is an important one for her.



Kennetha Klein enjoys spending her free time doing what she loves: painting rocks.

"She enjoys giving them to family and friends during Christmastime as gifts to put in their gardens or in their houses," he says. "People love them."

Eric admires his wife in many ways, artistic and otherwise.

"I'm very proud of not only her talent but



her ability to connect these great art designs with what people's interests are," he says. "She amazes me. Always."

Eric looks at her and her talents with adoration. She's a good one, he says. He knows it. She's solid.

As a rock. ■

## RECIPE

By Jolene Goodman

# 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.

## CLIVE wins national award for trust in government

Clive has been named the National Champion for Excellence in Trust in Government by Polco's Best in Governance Awards — an honor reserved for communities that earn the highest scores in the National Community Survey. The city stood out among hundreds of communities surveyed over the past 18 months, achieving top-tier national benchmark ratings in nearly every trust-related measure. Clive ranked No. 1 for residents' overall confidence in municipal government out of 330 peer communities across the U.S. The city ranked No. 5 for the value of services in taxes paid out of 397 peer communities across the U.S.

"Clive received exceptionally high marks for transparency, responsiveness and ethical leadership from its residents. We are honored by our residents' high level of trust in the city, and we look forward to their feedback again when the 2026 Resident Satisfaction Survey starts this spring," said Mayor John Edwards.

Clive completed the 2024 Clive Resident Survey in partnership with the National Research Center (NRC) and Polco. This survey tool helps city staff and elected officials identify trends in resident opinions, benchmark Clive's performance against hundreds of communities, and prioritize projects and future opportunities. Visit [cityofclive.com](http://cityofclive.com) to view the 2024 Clive Resident Survey.

Every year Polco holds the Best in Governance Awards, which highlight jurisdictions that receive the highest resident ratings for local government performance. Learn more about the Best in Governance Awards at [blog.polco.us](http://blog.polco.us). ■

## OUT with 2025... in with 2026

As the year ends, many of us are reminded of how quickly time passes. Wrapping up 2025 offers a welcome chance to reset, refocus and prepare for a productive year ahead. Before officially welcoming 2026, it's important to pause and assess your financial picture. Addressing a few key planning items now can set the stage for a strong start to the new year.



### Maximize your retirement contributions:

Year-end is an ideal time to evaluate your retirement savings strategy. If you participate in an employer-sponsored plan, confirm you are contributing enough to receive the full employer match. If you have already captured the match or don't have one available, consider increasing contributions to an IRA. Thanks to the SECURE Act, individuals may continue contributing to a traditional IRA beyond age 70½ if they have earned income, and contributions may be tax-deductible depending on income.

If you're required to take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), be sure it's completed before year-end. RMDs were waived in 2020 and 2021, but they are fully reinstated. Missing one can result in a substantial 25% penalty, making timely planning essential.

**Consider a Roth conversion:** A Roth IRA offers tax-free growth and flexibility in retirement. For those who don't qualify for direct Roth contributions, a "backdoor" Roth conversion — contributing to a traditional IRA and converting it — may be worth exploring. However, conversions increase taxable income for the year and aren't suitable for everyone. A financial advisor can help determine whether this strategy fits your overall goals and tax plan.

**Review your FSA and HSA balances:** Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) often follow a "use-it-or-lose-it" rule, so check your balance and use remaining funds on eligible expenses before year-end. Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) roll over annually and offer triple-tax advantages, making them strong long-term savings tools. This is a good time to review 2026 contribution plans and anticipate upcoming medical needs such as orthodontics, vision care, or scheduled procedures.

**Update key estate planning documents:** Recent years have encouraged many people to revisit their estate plans. Make sure your medical and financial powers of attorney are up to date and that those named still reflect your wishes. Review your Last Will and Testament as well. Beneficiary designations are important, but a will helps prevent gaps and ensures your intentions are carried out.

**Reassess your financial goals:** Revisit the goals you set at the start of 2025 and evaluate your progress. If adjustments are needed, your advisor can help refine your plan to reflect new priorities or changing circumstances.

**Prepare for 2026:** Lastly, review insurance coverage, benefits elections and any expected life events in 2026. Whether related to employment, family, housing or education, proactive planning brings clarity and confidence as you enter the new year.

From my family to yours, I wish you a blessed Christmas season and a prosperous New Year. ■

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# ELKS Lodge helps veterans and many others

Donations benefit Easterseals, food pantries and more.

Those who have never visited or heard about a local Elks Lodge may think it is simply a social club. But the Elks Lodge in Clive (West Des Moines Lodge No. 2752),

like all Elks Lodges, does much for the community. Lodge Secretary Toby Charloe and Trustee and Chair of the Board of Directors Greg Weinschenk provide insight into what their lodge does.

The Elks is a fraternal order promoting the four cardinal virtues of charity, justice, brotherly love and fidelity,” Weinschenk says.

Those virtues are easily seen in the actions of the local lodge.

“Our big focus is on veterans,” Weinschenk says. “We collect deer hides during the hunting season. We send them to a place that tans them, and then part of the leather goes to a company that makes gloves for veterans that use wheelchairs. And then some of the leather goes to Marshalltown to the veterans home there for crafts and projects.”

The lodge has many partnerships in the community.

“Another thing we’ve been doing for the past five or six years is working with the CRRC (Community Resource and Referral Center). They help homeless veterans find apartments, and we help supply them with beds, kitchen utensils and household items,” Weinschenk says.

Besides veterans’ issues, the lodge does much for others, as well.

“We’re a big contributor to the food pantry and Crestview Elementary School, so the teachers don’t have to go out and buy school supplies for kids that don’t have them. And we sponsored an infrared drone that the fire department can use to see hotspots in a fire,” Weinschenk says. “They also use that to help find a person who may be lost. We’re very focused on our community.”

Throughout the year, the lodge has fundraisers to help fund their giving. This year’s golf tournament raised more than \$17,000. Charloe notes that, in the past year, the lodge gave \$6,000 in local scholarships, \$6,000 to special needs, \$43,000 in non-cash donations to veterans issues and \$6,000 in actual cash for veterans.

Although the lodge building is in Clive (2060 N.W. 94th St.) the lodge serves a much larger area.

“There are 29 Elks lodges around Iowa,” Weinschenk says. “Our building is in Clive, but Urbandale falls under our jurisdiction, and Johnston, West Des Moines, Waukee, Windsor Heights and Grimes. Lodge 2752 has been in existence since 1990, and we’ve been in our building in Clive for the past 12 years.”

Weinschenk and Charloe note that, because the lodge encompasses many suburbs, membership has grown steadily and currently sits at 557. Anyone, male or female, is welcome to apply for membership. There is no membership requirement to be a military member or veteran.

The lodge aims to be responsive to needs in the area. Charloe points to a few recent donations to help those struggling with hunger or other needs.

“We give to local food banks in Urbandale, Grimes and Clive,” Charloe says. “And we just took a \$5,000 check out to Easterseals for their respite care and Camp Sunnyside.” ■



Daniel Timmons of Edward Jones presents a Neighbor Spotlight certificate to Chrissy Ellis with the Elks Lodge.

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## Merry Christmas

May you have a happy, prosperous and healthy new year!



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# 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 the Clive 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](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com) to share your story!

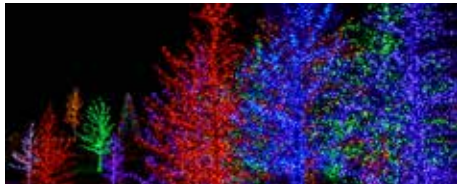
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## Saturday Specials at the Harbach Center

Saturdays, Jan. 17 and Feb. 14, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

8505 Harbach Blvd., Clive

Bring the family to the Harbach Center for fun activities during the colder winter months. Free bounce houses will be set up in the Recreation Bay and arts and crafts with the Clive Public Library will be in the Community Room. Entry fee is one non-perishable food item or a new personal care item per person attending the event. Contact Jeff at [jlucas@cityofclive.com](mailto:jlucas@cityofclive.com) for more information.



## 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.

## 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.

## Clive Community Services hours

2190 N.W. 82nd St., Suite A, Clive

Donations of seasonal clothing, food and personal care items are gratefully accepted. Your support helps provide essential

resources to those in need. Learn more about how you can help by visiting [clivecommunityservices.com](http://clivecommunityservices.com).

**Donations can be dropped off:** Monday, 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Wednesday, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to noon

**The Food Pantry and Clothes Closet are open:** Monday, 4-7 p.m., and Friday, 9 a.m. to noon.

**The Medical Clinic hours are:** Monday, patient registration 5-6:30 p.m.; patients seen 5-7:30 p.m.



## CITYVIEW's Fire and Ice pub crawl

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.



## Clive Public Library Events

1900 N.W. 114th St., Clive

• **Let's Play Mah Jongg (Adults): Mondays, 10 a.m., Thursdays, 1:30 p.m.** Are you a beginning or intermediate Mah Jongg enthusiast looking for a chance to play? Join us on Monday mornings from 10 a.m. to noon and/or Thursday afternoons from 1:30-3:30 p.m. at the Clive Public Library. This is a group for people who know how to play the game. They don't offer instruction at this time. Please bring your copy of the 2025 Official Standard Hands and Rules form from the National Mah Jongg League: [www.nationalmahjonggleague.org](http://www.nationalmahjonggleague.org).

• **Bucket List Book Club (Adults): Wednesday, Jan 14, 6:30-8 p.m.** Here's your chance to read and discuss some of the "100 books to read before you die." Sadie is excited to host this book club offering great conversation about some of the books you've always meant to read. The group meets the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Check the website to see what the group is currently reading: [www.cityofclive.com/library/adult/bucket\\_list\\_book\\_club.php](http://www.cityofclive.com/library/adult/bucket_list_book_club.php). To participate and for more information, contact [staff@cityofclive.com](mailto:staff@cityofclive.com) or via phone at 515-453-2221.

• **Puzzle Palooza (All Ages): Dec. 27-31 during library open hours.** Think you've got what it takes to piece it all together? Adults, gather your puzzle-loving friends and form a team up to four people. Families with kids, come as you are. Clever team names are encouraged. Ask at the front desk for the 500-piece adult puzzle OR the 300-piece family puzzle, and we'll start the timer. Best time in each category over the five days wins a prize. Puzzles must be started at least two hours prior to close, and it's a good idea to call ahead to make sure one is available. For more information, contact [staff@cityofclive.com](mailto:staff@cityofclive.com).

• **Clive Art Gallery - Gary and Kathleen Hoard: Thursday, Jan. 1, all day.** The library presents the gorgeous photography of Gary and Kathleen Hoard. "At Home in Iowa's Parks" is a collection of photographs capturing ordinary and unusual moments in our state, county and city parks. The focus is on birds, animals and plants calling these parks home. Many Iowa park landscape and waterscape images will be included.

• **Pokemon BINGO (All Ages): Friday, Jan. 2, 2:30-3:30 p.m.** Enjoy Pokémon Bingo this winter break. Catch them all in a row to win Pokémon-themed prizes.

• **"Dog Man" Day Mania (All Ages): Friday, Jan. 16, 3-4 p.m.** Enjoy an action-packed afternoon celebrating your favorite crime-fighting dog. Fans of Dav Pilkey's "Dog Man" series will enjoy activities, crafts and games inspired by the books. Test your detective skills with a scavenger hunt, create your own comic strip and have a doggone good time.

In partnership with Des Moines Performing Arts, we will be giving away four tickets to "Dog Man: The Musical" performance. Register today to receive an additional entry into the ticket drawing. Email the library at [staff@cityofclive.com](mailto:staff@cityofclive.com) with questions. Register at <https://cityofclive.activityreg.com/selectActivity?nLeaguesId=2787> or scan the QR code. ■





# MEET Melissa Stone

## Guiding students to success

Ever since Melissa Stone was little, she has had a knack for working with children, and she used those skills as a Sunday School teacher, a youth group leader, a babysitter, a daycare teacher and a nanny. After working as a middle school math teacher for sixth graders, she moved to an elementary setting, teaching for a total of nine years as a classroom teacher.

Stone noticed that she already taught many concepts in her classroom that are taught by a school counselor. Additionally, she saw a need to teach social and emotional skills to her students which included: soft skills, life skills and how to make friends, work with others and be successful in school. She also saw an increase in mental health needs among students, which inspired her to move into the counseling realm of education. Now, Stone is in her ninth year of school counseling and sixth year of counseling at Maple Grove Elementary School.

"I love the people I work with," Stone states. "Maple Grove is a unique education community because everyone loves their job and everyone is out to help kids."

She particularly enjoys the connections she makes with students. Stone says a school counselor should be the friendliest person in the school building because his or her job is to help kids be successful and feel connected at the school.

"My favorite part is that I get to be their connection and happy place at school," Stone shares. "The space I have I try to create as a friendly and warm environment, an inviting place that they would want to come into, in hopes that they feel comfortable. This is especially important because, often, the conversation subject that students come into my office because of isn't necessarily warm and comfortable. I try to be the person they see smiling all the time and giving hugs."

The most challenging part of being a counselor for Stone is not being able to fulfill all the needs that students and families may have.

"Sometimes, as a counselor, I hear things about families that need support," she says. "I try to make sure that those families get the support and resources they need, but we can

only do so much. I often collaborate with other school counselors and our school social worker to ensure families are receiving the help they require."

Stone's fondest memories thus far at Maple Grove include teaching different social and emotional units to students in guidance.

Stone would like the community to know that her job as school counselor is to help students be successful in social and emotional health, school skills and college and career readiness.

"This role looks different now that it did 30 years ago," she states.

She encourages families to reach out if they or their students need help. ■



Melissa Stone prioritizes making children feel comfortable in coming to her.

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# PLAN for the future



The year 2025 is coming to a close. The end of the year is a good time to take stock of your personal situation and proactively plan for the future.

## Update your estate plan

Putting your legal affairs in order is important. It reduces the burden on loved ones in the event of poor health or death. It can save time and expense. And it allows you to have control over how your assets pass. Every person should have three basic estate planning documents: a Last Will and Testament, a Durable Financial Power of Attorney, and a Living Will / Health

## Care Power of Attorney.

A will directs the distribution of your assets upon your death. Through the power of attorney, you give another person the ability to make financial decisions for you should you become incapacitated. If you're too ill to speak for yourself, you can express your wishes and have your voice heard through a living will. This advance directive lets you detail your preferences for your medical care.

## Make a list of key contacts

When you update your estate planning documents, you should also make a master list of important information. If you die or become incapacitated, your family will spend time figuring out what you own and whom they should contact. List your investment advisor, insurance agent, tax professional, banker and attorney. Make sure you have the correct contact information for each professional listed.

## Review the title to your home

You should review how you hold title to your home. When you purchased your house, the seller executed a deed. The deed contained important vesting information — the names on the title and the legal relationship between those titleholders.

If you are married, you probably want to ensure that both spouses are on title to the house. This may not be the case if the parties were married after one bought the house or if it is a second marriage. You also probably want to ensure that, if one titleholder were to die, the house would pass to the survivor. A simple review of who holds title and how title is held can prevent expensive problems later.

These are three simple yet very effective steps that can save time and expense in the future. Contact an experienced attorney to help you get 2026 off to a good start. ■

Information provided Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm, 2560 73rd St., Urbandale, 515-278-0623, [www.ARPCLaw.com](http://www.ARPCLaw.com).

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## 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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## HEALTH

By Annette Smith

### PROACTIVE strengthening lowers risk of falls

Icy sidewalks, snow-covered driveways and unpredictable winter conditions make the colder months one of the riskiest times of year for slips and falls. Even simple daily activities — walking to the mailbox, carrying groceries, getting in and out of the car — can become dangerous when surfaces are slick or visibility is low. Cold temperatures also naturally stiffen muscles and joints, reducing reaction time and making it harder for your body to catch itself when you lose balance.

Because of this, preparing your body before winter fully arrives is one of the most important steps you can take to stay safe. Building strength, improving balance and practicing stability now can significantly lower your risk of injury later. Targeted exercises help train your muscles to react quickly, support your joints and keep you steady on uneven surfaces.

If you've noticed that your balance feels off, or if you are unsure of your stability during day-to-day activities, this is the ideal time to address it — well before the ice and snow set in. Proactive strengthening not only helps prevent falls but can also improve confidence in your movements, reduce stiffness and keep you more active all season long. ■

Information provided by Annette Smith, Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy, 10888 Hickman Road, Suite 2B, Clive, Iowa, 50325, 515-520-8037, [www.mountainlaurelpt.com](http://www.mountainlaurelpt.com).



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# THE VALUE of banking in a branch

From paying bills to making deposits, online banking helps make managing your money convenient. While the advantages of online banking are undeniable, the value of banking in person at a branch is often overlooked. There are certain aspects of in-branch banking that make a trip to your bank worth your time.



## Personalized guidance

It is helpful to have someone you can trust to guide you through important financial decisions. One of the best parts of in-person banking is the direct ability to discuss your financial needs with an expert. When your banker has a better understanding of where you are and where you want to be, it is easier for them to offer financial solutions tailored specifically to your unique situation.

Personal connection combined with face-to-face communication can make all the difference, and they can play a key role in reaching your financial goals.

## Access to full products and services

When you visit your bank in person, you gain access to their full suite of products and services, not just what is included online. It is easier to be aware of all the resources available to you. You may even learn about a product or service you did not know was available before your visit.

There are also certain banking tasks that are best to do in person at a branch. Depositing large amounts of money is one of them. Additionally, most banks offer safe deposit boxes, which are an in-branch service meant to serve as a private and secure place for you to store your most valuable items. Many branches also provide notary services, making it convenient to handle legal documents while you are there. Give yourself peace of mind knowing

your money, documents and belongings are safe.

## Real-time solutions

Another important advantage of in-person banking is the ability to receive real-time solutions when urgent issues arise. If you notice anything suspicious on your account, a banker can review the activity and identify a plan of action for you all in one visit. If you lose your debit card or it is compromised, you can get a new one in minutes. Urgent matters do not have to be as stressful when you have an expert to address and fix problems on the spot.

Finding the balance between using in-person and digital banking services will help you make the most of your financial experience. The next time you need financial advice or just want to meet your banker, consider stopping by your local bank for support. ■

Information provided by Chris Beener, VP, Clive branch manager, CBeener@BankersTrust.com, 515-222-5888, 11111 University Ave., Clive.



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# LIGHTING of the Christmas Tree

The Clive Mayor's Lighting of the Christmas Tree was held Dec. 5.



Mayor John Edwards lit the Christmas tree at the Clive Public Library on Dec. 5



Scott Nelson and Kyle Faulkner



Winnie Junkman, Krista Junkman and Tallulah Junkman



Joslin Lovan and Dee Shalon-Deur



Patty Napier and Suchitra Sinha



Eric Klein and Shane Goodman



Evert Satren, Micah Satren and Margaret Satren



Sofia Gilbert, Elsie Clutts and Terra Hamilton



Aaron Vincent and Audrey Vincent



Bodhi Hatten



Breanne Jacobs, Liam Jacobs and Josh Jacobs



Tamara Satren and Wyatt Satren





The Valley High School Choir sang during the Mayor's Annual Tree Lighting on Dec. 5.



A string quartet performed during the Mayor's Annual Tree Lighting on Dec. 5.



Wagon rides entertained kids both young and old at the Clive Mayor's Lighting of the Christmas Tree Dec. 5.



Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy held a ribbon cutting for its new location at 974 73rd St., Suite 33, West Des Moines, from Clive on Dec. 10.



Bethany Shepard, Kora Shepard, Lael Shepard and Mark Shepard at the ribbon cutting for Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy.



Shari Bush and Dan Bush at the ribbon cutting for Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy.



Karna Bosman and Suzie Paulson at the ribbon cutting for Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy.



Dustin Lambert and Nate Yencer at the ribbon cutting for Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy.



Aly Burdine and Nick Burdine at the ribbon cutting for Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy.



Jori Feauto and Margaret Wolfe at the ribbon cutting for Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy.





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