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Living

MAGAZINE

Big game,

BIG PARTY

Capping off the football season with a watch party to remember

Loaded Philly cheesesteak baked potato RECIPE

Snow and cold don't deter placement of wreaths

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An advertisement for preschool preregistration. The top half features the text "Get ready for PRESCHOOL!" in large, bold, white letters on a blue background. Below this, a circular photo shows a young girl smiling while sitting at a table. To the left, text reads "Preschool Preregistration for the 2026-27 school year begins online at 6 p.m. 1/22/26." A red button at the bottom left says "January 22". The bottom right contains a QR code. The bottom left features the Urban Dale Schools logo, a stylized 'U', and the website "urbandaleschools.com/learn".

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WELCOME

A SUPER Sunday

What will you be doing on Sunday, Feb. 8? If you are like 127.7 million other people, you will be watching the Super Bowl on TV. That's a lot of people, many of whom don't know the difference between a touchdown and a home run. And, they don't care. Why? Because the Super Bowl is about much more than football. In fact, for many, it has become an entire Sunday tradition.



Some viewers don't catch a single football play, as they are watching only to be entertained by the advertisements. In most any other TV viewing situation, those watching TV will turn channels, lower the volume or run to the bathroom or to the refrigerator during breaks. But not during the Super Bowl. This viewing audience tunes in to the ads, and companies ante up \$8 million or more for just 30 seconds of promotion to reach them.

Yes, the Super Bowl is one of the most-watched television events in the United States. The record was set last year with the aforementioned 127.7 million, but the highest-rated Super Bowl remains Super Bowl XVI in 1982 with a 49.1 household rating. That means 49.1% of TV-owning households were tuned into the Super Bowl during its broadcast. Viewership of the Super Bowl has remained stable over the years, even as ratings for other events have declined.

My parents were in the half who didn't tune in to the Super Bowl. Football simply wasn't their thing. When I was in college, I began watching the games more seriously. And, when I made my way into the working world as a young man, I got into the Super Bowl scene even more. The food. The festivities. The fun. Oh, and the football, too.

The Super Bowl parties were aplenty, and my friends and I did our best to attend many, making Mondays a challenge. The problem continues today. "Super Sick Monday" is a real thing, as an estimated 22.6 million U.S. employees are expected to miss work due to post-game fatigue, hangovers, and the cultural significance of the event. Some have even suggested that the Monday following the Super Bowl should become a national holiday, possibly even moving Election Day to that date to help encourage more people to get to the polls. It is an interesting idea, although I am not sure it would help with voter turnout, especially for those mourning after their team lost.

I am now more comfortable lounging in my living room and watching the game with family or a few friends. But don't let me drag you down. Check out this month's cover story to see how others are celebrating Super Bowl Sunday — and be sure to get to work on Monday. ■

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Big game, **BIG PARTY**

Capping off the football season
with a watch party to remember

By Joe Baumgarten

It's time for the big game, and that's the perfect reason to gather with your fellow fans around the big screen to see which team finishes the year with a championship ring. And you won't be alone. Record-breaking viewership has been reported the last two years, with 127.7 million U.S. viewers last year, according to ESPN.

Bryce and Zach Carlton tailgating
at a Cy-Hawk football game.

Football, family and friendly rivalries

The long-standing rule says that one should never talk politics or religion in polite company. When it comes to football, however, all bets are off. It is not uncommon to have a group of people gathered who have vastly different opinions on which team is the best.

Such was the case one Saturday afternoon when a group of friends gathered at their favorite local dive bar. Margaret DeSio claims the Chicago Bears. Bryce Carlton and her husband, Zach, are the classic house divided: one went to Iowa, the other to Iowa State. Barb and Mark Pessolano are die-hard Eagles fans. They even have matching his and hers pickleball paddles proudly sporting the Eagles logo. Kathy Hanika is much more agnostic.

"I just root for the teams with the cute quarterbacks," she says with a grin.

Growing up in Philadelphia, it is no surprise that the Pessolanos are Eagles fans. When Mark first met Barb, he was disappointed that she wasn't a beer drinker.

"But then I found out she was a huge Eagles fan, and that's all I needed to know," he said.

"I had 10 older brothers and sisters," Barb says. "I learned from a very young age that I could either help Mom with the dishes or go watch the game with Dad. I went the football route. It's never ended."

While Mark and Barb have never watched an Eagles Super Bowl game in person, they try to see them play at least once each year.

"We've gone to Kansas City, Minnesota, Tennessee, New Jersey and Arizona," Barb says. "I don't want to go to Dallas because that would be a very long ride home if we lost."

Mark and Barb have hosted several Super Bowl parties for their large extended family. They have had as many as 26 family members crowding their house. They serve wings, beef balls, sandwiches, hot roast beef and, of course, Philly cheesesteaks. Their oldest daughter handles the desserts.

"It's bigger than Thanksgiving," Mark says.

To keep the littles entertained, Barb creates a craft of some type. They might color footballs, make helmets or string beads (blue and green are the only colors allowed).

Everyone has a great time — until the game starts. That is when Mark kicks them all out.

"It's part superstition and part that I want to watch the game in peace," he says.

And what would the Super Bowl be without a little friendly wagering? Barb likes to keep it simple but fun.

"We do squares," she says.

You divide a large sheet of paper with 10 horizontal lines and 10 vertical lines to get 100 squares. Label the first column "0" and count up to "9." Do the same with each row. Then you sell the squares. You charge the kids a quarter per square, and the adults typically pony up a buck a

SUPER BOWL LX

Teams: TBD

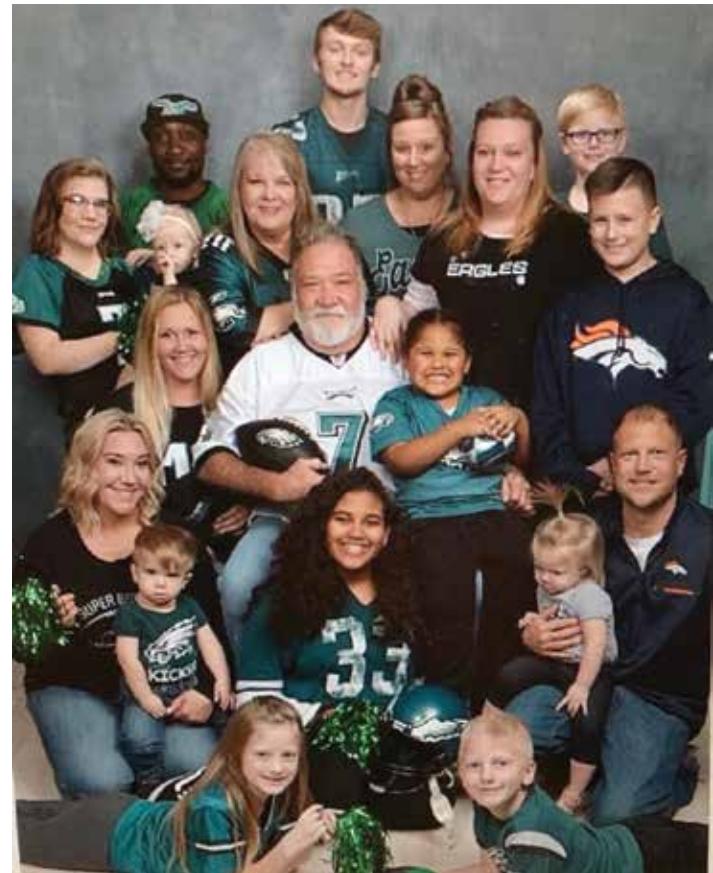
When: Sunday, Feb. 8

Where: Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California, the home of the San Francisco 49ers

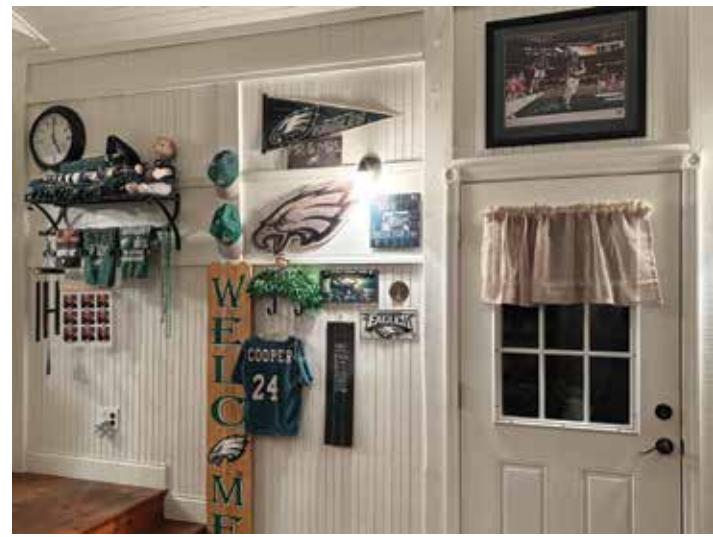
Ways to watch: NBC will broadcast the Super Bowl with Spanish-language coverage on Telemundo and streaming on Peacock

Halftime show: Bad Bunny

Super Bowl commercials: 30-second spots cost about \$8 million



Mark and Barb Passolano with children and grandchildren decked out in the shirts of their favorite teams.



Mark and Barb Passolano have an Eagle "Wall of Fame" complete with a signed photo of Cooper DeJean's pick-six against the Chiefs above the door.

square. In that case, the pot becomes \$100. At the end of each quarter, you take the last digit of the two scores, and whoever has that square gets a quarter of the pot.

All this talk of Eagles and football gets Barb and Mark fired up. They break out in the Eagles fight song. "Fly, Eagles, Fly!" they sing with true

Eagles spirit. Their granddaughter, Emma, just rolls her eyes. She isn't a football fan. Yet.

Everyone at the table agrees that the game is fun to watch even if your team isn't playing. Some like the famous halftime show. Some watch just for the commercials.

"The commercials have been rather disappointing over the last few years," Kathy comments.

Bryce agrees. "That, plus you have to watch in opposite mode — you ignore the game and come back for the commercials."

Soon, Kathy and Margaret are talking cute QBs.

"I did like Joe Montana," Kathy says. "And Dan Fouts was the most handsome." Margaret is a big fan of Tom Brady.

"Isn't he for the Eagles?" she asks.

This is as close to a fight as the group gets.

"Don't ever associate Tom Brady with the Eagles!" Barb says with ice in her voice.

"Fighting words," Mark adds.

It's all good-natured ribbing, but Kathy breaks the tension with a few more hot QBs: "Kenny Stabler, Joe Namath, Fran Tarkenton," she declares.



Author Joe Baumgarten and his brother-in-law celebrating their first pro football game with a few Minnesota Vikings Cheerleaders.

This group is not solely devoted to the NFL. Bryce's husband, Zach, is an ISU alumni and huge fan.

"I'm sorry to hear that," Kathy says.

Kathy goes all in for the Hawkeyes. She's been to a few games at Kinnick Stadium.

"When they do 'The Wave' to the kids in the Children's Hospital, it tears me up every time. What a great tradition," she says.

The entire table wholeheartedly agrees

it is fantastic to see some of our hometown boys make the big time: Brock Purdy, Cooper DeJean, Jayden Higgins, Darien Porter, Jaylin Noel, Breece Hall, David Montgomery, T.J. Hockenson, George Kittle, Tyler Linderbaum, Sam LaPorta, Lukas Van Ness and Amani Hooker are some of the current players.

For some reason, Matt Campbell's name does not come up; there are some things you just don't talk about in polite company.

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Simple Salami Sliders

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"
Servings: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 package slider buns
- 8 slices Swiss cheese
- 8 slices salami
- 8 slices ham or other deli meat
- 1 stick butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- everything bagel seasoning (optional)



DIRECTIONS

- Heat oven to 350 F.
- Halve slider buns, creating top and bottom portions. Set top portion aside, leaving bottom portion in original container. Place bottom portion and container in baking dish to prevent sticking.
- Layer Swiss cheese, salami and ham then cover with top buns.
- Mix melted butter, Worcestershire sauce, brown sugar, Parmesan cheese, onion powder and garlic powder. Pour over sliders.
- Cover with foil and bake 15 minutes then remove foil, sprinkle with everything bagel seasoning, if desired, and bake, uncovered, 10 minutes.

Tips for a great watch party

(Family Features) Get ready to host this season's most memorable watch party with these tips:

• **Show your colors:** Get your house game ready and show your team spirit by decorating in the colors of the team you'll be cheering to victory. You don't need to go all out; just grab some simple decorations like streamers, balloons and disposable tablecloths to add some energy. If you'll have guests cheering on both sides, mix and match your decor and let guests pick their plate and cup color to root for their favorite team.

• **Take a seat:** When the game is underway, gathering everyone around the screen can get crowded. Make sure everyone is comfortable by offering additional seating. You can use stools, chairs from other rooms and even folding chairs or camping chairs if you need to create more space. If you need to resort to floor space for seating, make it extra comfy with some pillows or blankets for padding.

• **Multiply the screen time:** Chances are high your guests will scatter throughout your home, spilling out of the living room into your kitchen and dining spaces. Set up extra screens to show the game in multiple rooms, whether that's extra TVs, monitors or laptops. That way, even if someone steps away from the main screen, he or she won't miss any of the excitement.

• **Make snacks that score with the crowd:** Every party needs a menu, but you can keep it simple for a watch party. Guests typically want quick bites they can grab during timeouts and commercial breaks, so stick to finger foods and apps guests can self-serve quickly. Wings are a party staple, and chips and dip are always a hit. Be sure to offer some indulgent options, as well as foods for those who have special dietary needs. You can also make your food game easier by asking everyone to bring a dish to share instead of taking it all on yourself.

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A LIFELONG connection

Bonnicksen enjoys privacy of Urbandale home.



Susan Bonnicksen says she appreciates the secluded nature of her home and its scenic views.

Susan Bonnicksen has a long history with Urbandale.

Her parents moved to town in 1959, and she grew up in the community. After attending Iowa State University, she and her husband, Monte, lived in Ames for two years before returning to her roots in 1989 to purchase a home in Urbandale.

"Urbandale has always been home to me," Bonnicksen says.

The decision to buy their house was influenced by her husband's upbringing on a farm.

"When we found this house with a pond on just shy of 2 acres for sale by owner, it didn't take us long to make an offer," Bonnicksen says. "Plus, my parents lived only 2 miles away."

The couple enjoys their home's open concept, spacious deck, large family room, scenic views and, of course, its privacy.

"We have a very unique property," Bonnicksen notes.

But even with that sense of seclusion, they've still built meaningful relationships with their neighbors.

"Though we are set back and away from our neighbors, we are still very connected to most of them," Bonnicksen shares. "We've had some turnover in our neighborhood over the years, but, a few, like us, have been long-term homeowners here for 35-plus years. We love the natural setting and privacy."

For Bonnicksen, calling Urbandale her hometown is a point of pride. She appreciates how the city has maintained its small-town charm while offering modern conveniences.

"Living in the middle of Urbandale, we are literally five to 10 minutes away from anything we need," she says. "The city offers many great amenities and services — from spring cleanup

to speedy snow removal — and always responds quickly to storm damage and picking up limbs."

Bonnicksen currently serves on the board of the Urbandale Historical Society and volunteers with her husband at Aldersgate United Methodist Church, her family's church since 1962. She has also served on the Capital Improvement Program for seven years, the Fourth of July Committee for nine years, and was once president of the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

Today, Bonnicksen enjoys spending time at the Urbandale Senior Center and likes being just five minutes away from golfing and socializing at the Urbandale Golf and Country Club.

"Urbandale continues to improve and is open to listening to its residents," she shares. "It's a place I love to call home, and I'm confident that, if we need anything, we know help is close at hand." ■

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URBANDALE COUNCIL RECAP

January 6, 2026 - City Council Meeting

The Urbandale City Council met on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, for its regular meeting at City Hall, opening the year with a mix of reflection, facility investments, and long-term planning decisions.

The meeting began with a proclamation recognizing Martin Luther King Jr. Day, officially designating Monday, January 19, 2026, as a day of remembrance and service in Urbandale.

Council then approved two major projects focused on improving City facilities that serve residents every day. The first addressed the Public Library Interior Renovations Project, designed to modernize interior spaces and furnishings with a cost of about \$310,000. A similar process followed for the Fire Station #42 Interior Renovations Project, which focuses on updating and improving office and working space for a total cost of about \$215,000.

One of the most significant items of the evening was the public hearing and approval of the 2026–2031+ Capital Improvements Program (CIP). This multi-year plan lays out how the City will prioritize and fund major infrastructure and facility projects over the next several years, including streets, utilities, parks, and public buildings. The CIP serves as a financial and planning roadmap, aligning future investments with the City's long-term goals for growth, maintenance, and service delivery.

The meeting concluded with additional agenda items and administrative updates before adjourning. The next regular Urbandale City Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. Meetings are held at City Hall and are also livestreamed for residents who wish to watch online.

December 16, 2025 - City Council Meeting

The Urbandale City Council met on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at City Hall, with the meeting also livestreamed for public viewing. The evening opened with a BRAVO Grant Presentation, highlighting regional investments in arts, culture, and heritage.

As part of long-range planning efforts, the Council established a public hearing for the 2026–2031+ Capital Improvements Program (CIP), setting the hearing date for January 6, 2026. The CIP outlines anticipated investments in infrastructure, facilities, and major equipment over the coming years and serves as a key tool for aligning spending with the City's long-term strategic priorities.

The City Council also approved a purchase agreement for the property at 4020 121st Street, authorizing staff to proceed with acquiring the site. The purchase positions the City for future public use or redevelopment opportunities consistent with long-term planning and infrastructure needs.

December 2, 2025 - Council Meeting

At the December 2 meeting, Mayor Andeweg began by proclaiming December 10 as Human Rights Day, and reaffirming the city's commitment to fairness, inclusion, and opportunity for all residents. The proclamation recognized the importance of protecting and advancing human rights at the local level, and celebrated the individuals and organizations in Urbandale who work to uphold these values. Later in the meeting, the Council approved an agreement for design plans of a new Urbandale Police Department Headquarters. The new facility, tentatively planned for the southwest corner of Douglas Avenue and 100th Street, is expected to be approximately 70,000 square feet and is anticipated to be completed in late 2028, pending a bond referendum in 2026.

This is a custom publication from the City of Urbandale. The Council Recap is not the official minutes of the Council meeting, it's an easy-to-read and easy-to-understand digest of the Council Meetings specifically designed for residents. You can watch all the City Council meetings on YouTube and download Council agendas on the City's website.

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INVESTMENT

By Daniel Rundahl

A SMART start to 2026



The start of a new year is one of the best times to reset, refresh and make intentional decisions about your money and finances. Rather than setting unrealistic "resolutions," the most successful financial strategies are built on clear goals, consistent habits and thoughtful planning.

Begin with reflection: Before you look ahead, look behind. Assess how 2025 finished. Examine your income, expenses, savings and investments. Identify where your money went, what worked well and what didn't. Were there unexpected expenses or missed saving opportunities? This provides valuable insight and helps you avoid repeating the same mistakes.

Set clear, purpose-driven goals: Financial goals should be specific and meaningful. Define concrete objectives such as building a six-month emergency fund, paying off a credit card balance, or increasing retirement contributions by a certain percentage. Clear goals give your money direction and make progress measurable. Keep your goals in front of you. For years, I have kept three goals of varying importance taped to the corner of our bathroom mirror.

Pay yourself first through automation: Automation is one of the most effective tools in saving and planning. Set up automatic transfers to savings and investment accounts as soon as you receive your paycheck. This approach removes emotion from saving decisions and builds consistency. Over time, small, automated contributions can lead to significant results.

Strengthen your emergency fund: An emergency fund is the foundation of financial security. Aim to save three to six months of essential living expenses in a liquid, low-risk account. This cushion protects you from job changes, medical expenses or unexpected repairs and helps prevent reliance on high-interest debt.

Review investments and manage risk: The new year is an ideal time to review your investment portfolio. Ensure your asset allocation still aligns with your goals, time horizon and risk tolerance. Life changes — like marriage, children or career shifts — often require adjustments. Rebalancing keeps your strategy aligned rather than reactive to market noise.

Create a thoughtful debt strategy: Not all debts are built equal. High-interest consumer debt, like credit cards, should be addressed aggressively, while lower-interest debt may be managed more strategically. List balances, interest rates and payoff targets to create a clear and realistic plan.

Plan for known expenses: Planning for upcoming costs such as vacations, education expenses, insurance renewals, or major purchases in advance reduces financial stress and helps you stay within budget.

Keep it simple and sustainable: The most effective financial plans are simple and repeatable. Focus on habits you can maintain throughout the year. Review your progress periodically, adjust as needed, and celebrate milestones along the way.

A strong financial start to the new year is built on intention and consistency. With steady effort and a clear plan, you can create a financial foundation that supports both your short-term needs and long-term goals. ■

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MEET Teresa Canine

A position of connection and support

Teresa Canine is the principal secretary at Olmsted Elementary School. Her journey to working at the school started in 2018. She and her husband have lived in Urbandale behind the high school since 2005, and she ran an in-home daycare. As she welcomed her children into her family, she also welcomed more daycare children. Once all three of her children were school age, she decided to make a change so they could all be on the same schedule.

"I started at Jensen Elementary as a general education associate when my youngest kiddo was in pre-K," Canine says. "I was in that position for a few years, then when Jensen and Olmsted merged, I did general education for a little while but switched to working as the clerk receptionist. Last March, I moved into the principal secretary role here at Olmsted."

Canine says that any given day is a busy day in her role at the school.

"I'm always helping families and students with needs they have," she explains. "I handle the principal's schedule, and I help connect with families to make sure they have what they need. I really just live in the moment each day with the principal, students and their families, and the staff. It is kind of like being on call."

One of the most challenging aspects of her job is when Canine cannot provide everything someone needs.

"It makes me sad, and I wish that I could help with everything," she shares. "That goes for even the staff. With budgets, there are a lot of things that we just cannot do."

On a more positive note, though, Canine says her job offers her a lot of joy. She enjoys all the opportunities to interact with the staff, families and, especially, each student.

"Every day is different," she says. "I love all the little things the students share with me, especially all the funny things and stories the littler students share. Even outside of school, when I see students out and about, they think it is amazing that I'm not at the school. I love watching the kids get excited to see me and want to come talk to me and give me hugs. It is such a great feeling."

A particularly fun activity Canine gets to participate in at the school is Mystery Monday. Each week, the staff joins together to do something the students have to guess throughout the day.

"One week, all the staff dressed in denim," Canine recalls. "Recently, we did 'Anything But Walking in the Hallways.' Staff members were using items like scooters or chairs to get around in the hallways. Our principal, Dr. Bordenaro, does a great job of making it fun for everyone."

Canine says that, most importantly, she is there to help support the principal. She is the main point of contact and can assist with questions or direct students, families or staff to where they need to go. She encourages anyone interested in working or volunteering for the district to reach out with questions.

"The district is constantly needing help with special and general education associates, and job postings are on the district website," Canine shares. "Additionally, we love volunteers. All that's needed is a background check to get started." ■



Teresa Canine enjoys working with students, families and staff members in her role as secretary for the principal.



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FRESH year, fresh approach

Staying independent at home as you age

Michael, 69, has lived in his Clive home for more than four decades and intends to stay put for the long haul, but his daughter and son-in-law are uneasy. Michael is doing well today, yet, if he ever needs support, his family will not be nearby, as they live several states away.

Their worry makes sense. Aging at home with independence is a goal many of us share, but it is not guaranteed. Ongoing health conditions can make living alone risky, and around-the-clock help at home can come with a steep price tag.

That reality can trigger an important question for you or for someone close to you: If moving into a community for older adults is not the preferred path and future health changes are a concern, what options exist now?

One approach to explore is a Continuing Care at Home (CC@H) membership model. Often offered through an organization that serves older adults, a CC@H program helps people stay focused on their health and well-being while remaining at home, and it can support financial planning for potential services and care later.

If you are considering a CC@H program, ask for clear details about what is included. A strong program should do more than promote healthy



habits so you can remain independent longer; it also should provide a practical way to help cover future long-term care needs, should they arise.

Before enrolling, consider asking questions such as these:

- **Does the program provide personalized support, such as wellness coaching?** Research shows people are more likely to follow through with meaningful changes when they have encouragement from a trusted guide or advocate.

- **Are care options and costs addressed?** A well-designed program can help support care if it becomes necessary — whether that is in-home services or care in a senior living community later.

- **What is the track record of the organization behind the program, and how is it regarded in the senior living field?** Even with strong benefits on paper, you should feel confident in the provider's stability, experience, and results.

CC@H programs vary widely. If one seems like a fit, take the time to confirm it aligns with your needs today and the possibilities tomorrow, and that it delivers real peace of mind. ■

Aaron Wheeler is Vice President of Home and Community-Based Services for WesleyLife, which provides health and well-being services, including WellAhead — A WesleyLife Well-Being Experience, a CC@H offering. To learn more, visit wesleylife.org/wellahead.

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SNOW and cold don't deter placement of wreaths

Wreaths Across America honor those who served.



Fifty volunteers placed wreaths on 114 veterans' graves at the McDivitt Cemetery in Urbandale as part of the Wreaths Across American program.

Dec. 13 was a bitterly cold day. The wind whipped the falling snow around, making it feel even colder. It was a great Saturday to snuggle up with a cozy blanket, a book and your favorite hot beverage. None of this, however, deterred 50 intrepid volunteers from laying wreaths on 114 graves at the McDivitt Cemetery in Urbandale. The graves were those of brave military men and women who served our country.

As bad as the weather was this year, it was even worse last year. An ice storm hit that day, so the ceremony was cut short. However, those who showed up still managed to get the wreaths placed.

The program, Wreaths Across America, is a nationwide organization that buys real pine Christmas wreaths from a company in Maine and places them at the gravesites of veterans across the United States. (See www.wreathsacrossamerica.org.)

Most of the people attending this particular ceremony were from American Legion Post 663 and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9668, both in Urbandale. Also attending were Boy Scouts from Troop 43. The VFW Commander, Dennis Appelhons, was emcee for the ceremony.

"Welcome everybody," Dennis announced to get things started. "We'll start off with a pledge allegiance to the flag. Then I'm going to call for each of the wreaths to be placed on the easel in the order: Army, Marine, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Space Force, on down the line. We will also lay a wreath for the 83,000 Prisoners of War and Missing in Action soldiers."

The placing of those wreaths was followed by Taps. Then volunteers started laying wreaths on graves identified by a veteran medallion.

"Some are sticking way up, but some are low so you'll have to look carefully so we don't miss any," Appelhons advised the group.

The three inches of powdery snow that had already fallen that morning made finding the ground-level head-stones difficult, not to mention finding a veteran's medallion next to it. The veterans could be seen wiping off each headstone, searching for hidden markers. Once



VFW Commander Dennis Appelhons led a ceremony prior to volunteers placing wreaths for Wreaths Across America.



placed, however, the wreaths looked even more stunning against the snowy white background.

Rob Stark, the commander of the American Legion Post, laid the wreath for the United States Army. Stark served four tours of duty for the Army: Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Now retired from active duty, Stark is the commander of the Urbandale American Legion Post 663.

Despite the weather, Stark was all smiles at the great turnout.

"These veterans gave their time to this country. We want to make sure that those of us who are living honor their service by placing a wreath on their grave," he said.

The wreaths were purchased for \$17 each with donations made earlier in the year. "

These are not artificial decorations," Stark explained. "They're real wreaths, handcrafted in Maine and adorned with red ribbons."

Elizabeth Simpson bundled up her two children, Elsie, 8, and Leo, 6, to attend the ceremony and help lay some wreaths.

"I wanted to show my kids some kind of Christmas spirit, volunteering our time, and being part of the community," Simpson said. ■

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FAITH

By Erica Schieffer

MARKING the threshold

As the calendar turns, and a new year begins, many feel the quiet pull to start again. We sense it in small ways — taking down the Christmas tree, cracking the windows to let in crisp winter air, stacking boots by the entryway — and in deeper ones, as we name our future hopes.



Across centuries and cultures, people of faith have found meaning in marking thresholds. Doorways, in particular, hold quiet symbolism. They are places of coming and going, of welcome and farewell, of protection and promise. To cross a threshold is to trust that what comes next is worth stepping into.

One simple tradition invites families to pause at their front door at the beginning of the year and speak a blessing over their home. Sometimes the blessing is written above the doorway with chalk; sometimes it is spoken softly, known only to those within. The act itself is small, but its intention is lasting: a hope for peace within these walls, for kindness to all who enter, and for guidance and protection for those who leave.

In a world that moves quickly and, often, loudly, taking a moment to bless a home feels countercultural. It slows us down long enough to remember that our homes are more than structures — they are places where life unfolds, where joys are shared, and where burdens are carried.

As this new year begins, perhaps the invitation is simple: pause at the threshold, name your hopes, and step forward with trust. ■

Information provided by Erica Schieffer, Director of Youth Ministry, Saint Mary of Nazareth Catholic Church, 4600 Meredith Drive, Des Moines, 515-251-7568, ericas@stmarysdsm.org.

NEWS BRIEF

BLAIR graduates from ILEA

Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird congratulated Officer Caleb Blair on his graduation from the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy in a ceremony held at Rising Sun Church of Christ in Pleasant Hill on Friday, Dec. 19.



ILEA Director Brady Carney and Iowa Attorney General Brenna congratulate Officer Caleb Blair.

Officer Blair was part of the 324th graduating class and completed the academy's rigorous 16-week training program that consisted of coursework in policing communications, criminal law, physical fitness and emergency response. He also received training in patrol procedures, investigations and tactical and administrative skills. Attorney General Bird welcomed the graduates on stage as they were presented with their diplomas by ILEA Director Brady Carney.

"I am proud of our Iowa Law Enforcement Academy graduates for answering the call to serve," said Attorney General Bird. "It is a challenging and demanding job, but it's essential for the safety of our communities. Our state is grateful to them and their families for their selfless sacrifice. As Attorney General, I look forward to working with them in the line of duty and my office will always be here to offer unwavering support."

Officer Blair will serve with the Urbandale Police Department. ■

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URBANDALE athlete inducted into Special Olympics Hall of Fame



Inducted into the Special Olympics Hall of Fame were, from left: Chris McCormick, Micki Bryant-Holterhaus, Britt Sandahl, John MacDonald, Jeanne MacDonald, Laura Lea Smith, Brad Benge, Julie Benge, John "Spider" Christiansen and Corey Leonhard. Not pictured: Rob Beard and Ann Vandehaar.

Special Olympics Iowa inducted the 2025 class, 12 individuals, into the Special Olympics Iowa Hall of Fame on Dec. 11.

The Hall of Fame class includes four Special Olympics Iowa athletes: Rob Beard (Marshalltown), Corey Leonhard (Muscatine), Laura Lea Smith (Eldridge) and Britt Sandahl (Urbandale); and eight volunteers: Brad and Julie Benge (Fort Madison), John "Spider" Christiansen (Clinton), John and Jeanne MacDonald (Johnston), Ann Vandehaar (Spencer), Scott Bryant (Donnellson), and Chris McCormick (Montrose). The induction ceremony took place at West48 Conference Center in West Des Moines.

The mission of Special Olympics is to help persons with intellectual disabilities to participate as productive and respected members of the community, using sports as a catalyst. Hall of Fame inductees are individuals who have been involved with Special Olympics Iowa for more than 10 years and continually strive to reach this goal by being leaders and innovators in the Special Olympics movement.

John and Jeanne MacDonald have been involved with Special Olympics Iowa since the organization was only a couple years old, first volunteering at a SOIA event in 1971. They have served the organization as volunteers, event organizers, medical staff, fundraisers and parents. John has also been a board member and past president of the SOIA board of directors. Due in part to their involvement, SOIA has grown from approximately 50 athletes in 1971 to more than 10,000 today.

More information about the Special Olympics Iowa Hall of Fame can be found here: www.soiowa.org/about-us/hall-of-fame/. ■

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. 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.

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.

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." ■

PLAN ahead in 2026

Will 2026 be the year? It might be cleaning out the basement. Perhaps it is getting a will in place...or updated. Or maybe it is finally getting your funeral prearrangements addressed. We hear it all the time: "I am so glad to have this taken care of."



Planning your final arrangements begins with a simple conversation and can be a pleasant process. Planning ahead also allows you time to give thoughtful consideration to these important decisions. There are many options to think about when addressing your final arrangements, and there are even prepayment options available to those who wish to have their final financial obligations handled in advance.

An advanced planning consultant can walk you through these choices and options.

Start the year by crossing something off your "to-do" list. Reach out to your funeral home of choice and schedule a meeting to get your prearrangements in place.

You will be glad you did...and so will your family. ■

Information provided by Scott Eriksen, Director of Hamilton's Advanced Planning, Hamilton's Funeral Home, 605 Lyon St., Des Moines, 515-697-3670, www.HamiltonsFuneralHome.com.

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URBANDALE Public Library news

Explore the Urbandale

Historical Newspaper

Digital Archive

Advantage Archives offers free, open access to digitized local histories, photographs, newspaper clippings, maps and other archival materials — serving as an educational resource for genealogists, local researchers and community members interested in exploring the collective heritage of Urbandale. In partnership with the Urbandale Public Library, Urbandale Public Library Foundation and city of Urbandale, the Urbandale Historical Society supports the shared responsibility of preserving firsthand perspectives and making "history as it happened" discoverable and accessible. You can find this resource on the library's list of databases under the "Discover" tab.

Urbandale Public Library

3520 86th St., Urbandale

515-278-3945

www.urbandalelibrary.org

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

Friday – Saturday: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Sunday: noon to 6 p.m.

Winter Reading Challenge

Our 2026 Winter Reading Challenge for all ages kicked off Monday, Jan. 12, and runs through the month of February. Keep track of your reading on a paper log or through the Beanstack app to earn prizes. Youth can earn cozy critter badges and book prizes for each milestone. Adults earn a voucher to redeem for any item from our book sale and will be entered in a prize drawing. For this shorter challenge, participants need only complete 15 days of reading to earn a prize. Visit our website for more information: www.urbandalelibrary.org/winter-reading-challenge.

AARP Tax-Aide

The library has partnered with AARP to be a host location for the upcoming 2026 tax season from Feb. 2 to April 9. Assistance is by appointment only and can be scheduled online or via phone, beginning Jan. 15. Tax-Aide will be available Monday through Thursday between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. For more information and to schedule an appointment, visit www.urbandalelibrary.org/community-resources-0.

Pollinator Lawns with ISU Extension

Join Natural Resource Program Coordinator Stephanie Harrington with ISU Polk County Extension and Outreach on Tuesday, Feb. 3 at 6 p.m. Stephanie will cover the basics on planning, planting and maintenance of a pollinator lawn to reduce lawn maintenance and increase the diversity in your home landscape. Learn about types of alternative lawns, pollinator lawn installation, ecological benefits, alternative ground cover species, and companion host plants for various pollinators. Registration is required and includes a seed sample starter.

Library redesign

Following recommendations from a recent space needs assessment, the library is excited to announce a space redesign in 2026 that will include new furniture as well as the addition of study rooms and an enclosed reading room. Work is tentatively scheduled to begin in early February and be completed by the end of June. For more information, visit our website: www.urbandalelibrary.org/about-us. ■

PLANNING for long-term care costs

Many of our clients are worried that long-term care costs will take all of their savings. Nursing home care can be incredibly expensive. Social Security payments and other retirement savings can help pay these bills, but Medicaid can cover nursing home costs for those who meet eligibility rules.

Medicaid is a federally-funded insurance program administered at the state level. In Iowa, a Medicaid applicant must have low income and few resources (less than \$2,000 in countable assets) to qualify. If the applicant has too many countable assets to qualify for Medicaid, there is a requirement to spend that money to pay for care.

It may be tempting to transfer title of your house to a child or give away your savings to a loved one. However, Medicaid imposes a five-year lookback when assessing eligibility. That means any asset transfer made in the five years before applying is scrutinized and often flagged as improper. The asset given away is deemed available to the Medicaid applicant, which results in a period of ineligibility.

Still, with proper planning, there are ways to shelter assets from Medicaid spend-down rules.

One method is to place assets in a special irrevocable trust at least five years before needing Medicaid coverage. Unlike a revocable trust



for estate planning and probate avoidance, irrevocable trusts require forfeiting control of the assets permanently. While that is a significant downside, assets transferred to an irrevocable trust before the five-year lookback period will not count toward Medicaid eligibility.

A Medicaid-compliant single-premium annuity is another option. The lump-sum purchase price is considered an exempt transfer if certain rules are met. The annuity can then generate non-countable income through monthly payouts.

While shelters like trusts and annuities can help protect savings, they come with major limitations. Once you transfer assets, they are permanently inaccessible. And most of these options aren't useful in a crisis situation where somebody needs nursing home care immediately.

Advanced planning with special trusts, annuities and other options can help shield assets from Medicaid spend-down requirements for nursing home care. But these tools require foresight and deliberate actions. Some tools won't be helpful for some people, and all of them have varying combinations of limitations and risks.

Be sure to get personalized guidance from a knowledgeable attorney when planning for potential long-term care costs. ■

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

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URBANDALE Chick-fil-A gives back

Addressing hunger in the community

For many Urbandale residents, the University Avenue Chick-fil-A is a familiar stop — quick, friendly and efficient. But behind the counter, there's a deeper commitment at work: a focus on caring for the community as intentionally as serving a great meal. Jeff Yanda and Katherine Bayens organize the store's charitable programs.

"Our focus is really simple," Yanda, the Urbandale store's chief marketing officer, says. "We center our giving around three categories: hunger, homelessness and education."

Each year, the Urbandale Chick-fil-A donates more than \$100,000 worth of food to organizations serving people in need across the metro. Rather than one-time contributions, the team builds long-term partnerships with shelters, schools and neighborhood programs, working directly with families and individuals facing food insecurity.

"We realized it was better to be intentional," Yanda explains. "Instead of trying to help everyone a little bit, we focus on ongoing partnerships where we can make a real impact."



Ryan Mehalovich of Edward Jones presents Neighbor Spotlight certificates to Katherine Bayens and Jeff Yanda.

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 An advertisement for Edward Jones featuring a man and a woman smiling. The man is holding a glass of orange juice. The background is a bright, outdoor setting with greenery.

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That impact shows up every month, as hundreds of meals are delivered to local shelters and community organizations. For Bayens, the restaurant's director of culture, those moments are the most meaningful.

"We're not just dropping off food," she says. "We're building relationships and actually seeing the people we're helping."

Bayens and Yanda are quick to give the ultimate credit to David Grimms, the store's owner/operator.

"To me, it feels very meaningful to work for a boss who cares so much about the community," Bayens says.

"David invests in the community," Yanda says. "He takes care of the community, not only by giving, but also providing jobs and partnering with people."

"I have a strong faith, and this is what God calls us to do," Bayens says. "So, that's very meaningful to me. It's not just about serving food, it's about serving people."

For Bayens and Yanda, that purpose creates something more than a job.

"We're taking care of our team, our guests and our community," Yanda says. "It goes way beyond selling chicken." ■

Do you know a neighbor who deserves recognition?

Nominate by emailing tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.

Urbandale Public Library Events

3520 86th St., Urbandale

• **Weekday Storytime:** The storytime break will be the week of Jan. 26-30; however, you can check out Block Party instead on Wednesday morning and Tuesday evening of the break. Weekday storytimes resume on Monday, Feb. 2.

• **Storytime Explorers:** Friday, Jan. 16, 10-11 a.m.

• **Cool Hobbies Scavenger Hunt:** Jan. 17-31. Look for pictures of "Cool Hobbies," and you might find some ideas for something fun to do. Drop into the library and hunt down nine images hidden throughout the youth area. Don't forget to sign the champion's log after you've found them all.

• **Baby Bounce:** Saturday, Jan. 17, 9:30-10:15 a.m., and Thursday Jan. 22, 9-9:45 a.m.

• **Family Storytime:** Saturday, Jan. 17, 10:30-11 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 22, 11-11:30 a.m.

• **Adult Recreational Chess:** Saturdays, Jan. 17 and 24, 1-4 p.m.

• **Evening Family Storytime:** Tuesday, Jan. 20, 6:30-7 p.m.

• **Music and Movement:** Wednesday, Jan. 21, 9:30-10:15 a.m. and 10:30-11:15 a.m.

• **Toddler Time:** Thursday, Jan. 22, 10-10:45 a.m.

• **Afterschool Fun Board Games:** Tuesday, Jan. 27, 4:15-5:15 p.m.

• **Block Party:** Tuesday, Jan. 27, 6-7:15 p.m., and Wednesday, Jan. 28, 9:30-11 a.m.

• **Afterschool Fun STEM: Symmetrical Snowflakes:** Tuesday, Jan. 20, 4:15-5:15 p.m. This month, we're going to make our own special snowflakes out of cardboard craft tubes. Challenge yourself to make a snowflake with six-fold symmetry, like in nature.

• **Family Paint Night: Starry Night Snowman:** Wednesday, Jan. 21, 5:30-7 p.m. Create your own custom winter landscape starring a snowman and featuring a moon and stars that evoke Van Gogh's masterpiece. It's cold outside, so cozy up with your family and have fun painting together. Registration required for each member of the family. This program is for families with children ages 6-17 (younger siblings are welcome to come free paint or color alongside their family).

• **Movie Night: "Small Things Like These":** Wednesday, Jan. 21, 6-7:45 p.m. "Small Things Like These" (2024, Drama/Historical, 1h 38m, Rated PG-13 for thematic material). In 1985, coal merchant Bill Furlong uncovers disturbing secrets in a small Irish town that's controlled by the Roman Catholic Church. Adapted from the 2021 novel by Claire Keegan.

• **Classic Cinema: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels":** Friday, Jan. 23, 1-3 p.m. "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (1988, Comedy/Crime, 1h 50m, Rated PG). Two con men try to settle their rivalry by betting on who can swindle a young American heiress out of \$50,000 first.

• **Sensory Spaces:** Sunday, Jan. 25, noon to 1 p.m. Sensory Spaces are Metro area libraries offering special hours for members of the public who appreciate a sensory-friendly environment. The library will have ear plugs, ear coverings and more available for those who experience sensory defensiveness. The lighting will be reduced throughout the library and there will be areas for noise and quiet. In Meeting Room B, we will have a sensory activity. Drop in at your leisure. A therapy animal will be available for attendees to take a moment to socialize with in the Magazine/Reading Room. In Meeting Room A, organizations serving as critical supports in our community have been invited to share information regarding their services. As always our friendly staff will be on hand to answer questions



and help you utilize any of the regular resources that we offer including using a computer and checking out material. Watch our social story for a visual aid of what to expect at the library.

• **Adult DIY: Houseplant Propagation:** **Tuesday, Jan. 27, 6-7:30 p.m.** Grow your plant collection and deepen your horticultural skills in this hands-on workshop focused on houseplant propagation. Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned plant lover, this program offers practical guidance and real-time experience to help you successfully propagate your favorite houseplants. Each participant will leave with a hooded 12-cell propagation tray filled with new plant starts, plus resources for continued care and propagation success at home.

• **Double Booked Afternoon Book Club:** **Wednesday, Jan. 28, 1-2 p.m.**, Double Booked Afternoon meets every fourth Wednesday at 1 p.m. This month's title is "Martyr!" by Kaveh Akbar.

• **Book Sale: Thursday, Jan. 29 to Sunday, Feb. 1.** Get ready for a flash book sale in the ICN Room. You will find books, movies, puzzles, cake pans, magazines, audiobooks and more. This flash sale will also feature unique items, like DVD sets and special edition titles, all for reasonable prices. No holds and no returns on sale items.

• **Tween & Teen Perler (Bead) Party:** **Thursday, Jan. 29, 4:30-5:30 p.m. and 6-7 p.m.** Make a winter animal wreath, a necklace with Perler Beads plus letter beads, or a DIY design of your choice. We'll provide instructions, patterns and supplies; you provide the creativity. We have age recommendations, but anyone 10-17 may choose the session that works best for you (both are the same crafts): Ages 10-14 are encouraged to register for the 4:30 p.m. session. Ages 13-17 are encouraged to register for the 6 p.m. session.

• **Special Storytime Explorers: A Snowy Day on Sesame Street:** **Friday, Jan. 30, 10-11 a.m.** Explore healthy digital habits together through creativity, movement and a storytime featuring Sesame Street characters. Each child in attendance will also receive a copy of the story, Sesame Street stickers, and a handout with great information and strategies for raising kids in a digital world. Target audience is ages 3-5. Sign-up is strongly encouraged so we can make sure we have enough take-home packets and ensure proper set-up of the space. Please sign up each child who will attend (all children under 10 must be supervised by an adult).

• **Art Gallery Reception: Rebecca Giesecking and Suzanne LaTour Stevens:** **Sunday, Feb. 1, 1-2 p.m.** Drop in for light refreshments and meet origami artist Rebecca Giesecking and oil and acrylic artist Suzanne LaTour Stevens and view their joint exhibit in the Art Gallery, open until Feb. 21. ■

Be sure to check for cancellations

Upcoming in Urbandale 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 to share your story!

Rescue animals: Do you have a beloved rescue animal in your family? Share your story of how you came to find your pet — or it came to find you! Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.

Bill Owens: Work and Leisure

Dec. 20 to April 19

Des Moines Art Center, 4700 Grand Ave., Des Moines

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). The images in this exhibition, taken from all three of these series and shot mainly in California and the Midwest, reveal Owens' unique comedic eye as he seems to lightly poke fun at his subjects while clearly enjoying their company, finding both the genuine and the absurd in everyday life.

Now 50 years old, these scenes will look charmingly familiar to many viewers and blasted from the distant past to others. Owens titled his images with quotes from his subjects, allowing their voices to reach us decades later. Through Owens' lens, they invite us into their homes, share a day at the office, and take us along to several kinds of parties. These photos allow us all to take a moment and join the fun.



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.



Urbandale Historical Society Programs at the Library

3520 86th St., Urbandale

- Feb. 8, 2 p.m. History of the Urbandale Golf and Country Club by Todd Carberry
- March 8, 2 p.m. Fraud and Courage with Urbandale's Terry Rich
- April 12, 2 p.m. The Story of Merle Hay Mall with Liz Holland



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

Botanical Blues is Back

Every Sunday now through March 29, brunch at 10 a.m., concerts at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, 909 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines

Winter doesn't stand a chance when there's live music at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden. Botanical Blues has long been the go-to Sunday afternoon escape for warm vibes, local talent and a laid-back atmosphere. Each set lasts one hour, with a one-hour intermission in between. Concerts are held live in the conservatory, and guests are welcome to wander the indoor gardens during the show. This year's lineup blends favorite performers from the past two decades with exciting new voices. Follow the QR code for the full lineup.



Des Moines Art Center Museum Highlights Tour

Saturdays, 1-2 p.m.

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.

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations

Winter Arts Exhibits

Olson-Larsen Galleries

542 Fifth St., West Des Moines

- Through Jan. 31: The Animal Show 2025

The Des Moines Art Center

4700 Grand Ave., Des Moines

www.desmoinesartcenter.org

- Through Jan. 18: Manuel Álvarez Bravo – “Collaborations”
- Through March 29: Camille Henrot – “Tuesday”
- Through April 19: Bill Owens – “Work and Leisure”
- Jan. 17 to June 17: Iowa Artists 2026: Henry Payer - Aagakinak Haciwi: “We Live Opposite Each Other”
- Feb. 14 to May 17: “Honey, You’re a Wonderful Model” - Maria Lassnig’s Animated Films

Anderson Gallery

Harmon Fine Arts Center, 1310 25th St., Des Moines

www.andersongallery.wp.drake.edu

- Feb. 5 to March 13: “Transformative Expressions: Richard Black International Juried Print Exhibition”

Mainframe Studios

900 Keosauqua Way, Des Moines

www.mainframestudios.org

Mainframe Studios hosts “First Fridays” every first Friday of the month, featuring a changing theme, with the artist’s works on display alongside live music and food.

- Feb. 6: Embodied
- March 6: Des Moines Public Schools

Moberg Gallery

2411 Grand Ave., Des Moines

www.moberggallery.com

- Feb. 6: Edgard Camacho curated by Steven Vail
- March 6: Chris Vance

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

- 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.”

Des Moines Community Playhouse

831 42nd St., Des Moines, www.dmplayhouse.com

- Jan 9-25: “Red Riding Hood, Both Sides of the Story”
- Feb. 6 to March 1: “The Mousetrap”
- March 6-22: “The Lightning Thief” ■



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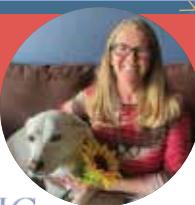
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WELLNESS

By Dr. Jody England

FLU season and nutritional wellness



Did you know there are alternative options for battling flu season? If you find yourself unable to handle vaccination shots or understand the concerns about getting one, we have good news for you. Nutritional biofeedback creates an individualized wellness plan that strengthens your immune system so when "flu season" arrives, your body can handle the exposure of pathogens, etc., and you are less likely to get sick. Specific whole foods, herbs and homeopathic remedies are used to build up your vitamin and mineral supply so your body does not have to deplete your bones, muscles and teeth to get the minerals it needs to fight off the pathogens on its own. One patient was sick three times per year for six years in a row prior to discovering a nutritional wellness method. Now illness is rare for her. Another patient, who got sick yearly, discovered he had not been sick for three years straight while on a program and that duration was throughout the COVID pandemic. What good is life without your health? Make this year's resolution to get well. ■

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

HEALTH

By Annette Smith

NEW year, new neck

Simple habits that reduce headache triggers

Headaches often feel mysterious, but everyday habits can quietly load the system that supports your head and neck. Long periods of looking down at a phone, working on a laptop or driving can increase tension in the upper neck and shoulders. That tension may irritate sensitive tissues, amplify migraine pathways, or contribute to "tight band" tension headaches.

A good starting point is movement variety. Every 30–45 minutes, reset your posture. Let your shoulders drop, take two slow breaths and gently turn your head right and left. Add a 20–30 second chest stretch in a doorway to counter slumped positions.

Sleep and hydration matter, too. Inconsistent sleep times can raise migraine risk and mild dehydration may lower your threshold for headache. Aim for a steady sleep schedule, regular water intake and balanced meals so you're not running on fumes by mid-morning. If you drink caffeine, try to keep it moderate and earlier in the day — late-day caffeine can disrupt sleep, which can set you up for more headaches.

If you track triggers, include stress, skipped meals, jaw clenching and prolonged screen time. A brief walk, heat to the neck or gentle stretching can often reduce tension.

Red flags include a sudden "worst headache," headache with weakness, slurred speech, fever or a new headache pattern after age 50 — these deserve urgent medical evaluation. ■



Information provided by Annette Smith, Mountain Laurel Physical Therapy, 974 73rd St., Suite 33, West Des Moines, IA 50265, 515-520-8037, www.mountainlaurelpt.com.

WHERE I find inspiration — and a new comfort-food favorite

Today's home cooks have no shortage of inspiration. With a quick search online, we can access thousands of recipes from trusted test kitchens, community-driven platforms and individual food bloggers. While I appreciate that convenience, I still find myself reaching for cookbooks, browsing new releases at the bookstore and checking out titles from the library — a perfect way to "test drive" a recipe before committing to it.

Another favorite source of inspiration is Family Features, a free recipe site filled with reliable dishes and beautiful photography that never fails to spark my creativity in the kitchen. This month's recipe, loaded Philly cheesesteak baked potatoes, brings together two of my favorite comfort foods: steak and potatoes — both of which also happen to be Shane's favorites. It takes the familiar flavors of a classic Philly cheesesteak sandwich and transforms them into a warm, satisfying baked potato meal. It's hearty, comforting and perfect to enjoy for dinner, with plenty left over for lunches throughout the week. ■

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



Loaded Philly cheesesteak baked potato

Recipe courtesy of Real California Milk

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 1 hour, 11 minutes

Servings: 4

Ingredients

- 4 large russet potatoes, washed
- 1 cup Real California sour cream
- 1-2 tablespoons Real California whole milk
- 1/4 cup Real California unsalted butter, divided
- 1 small green bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 1/2 small yellow onion, thinly sliced
- kosher salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 pound fresh shaved sirloin steak
- 2 cups shredded Real California provolone cheese

Directions

- Preheat oven to 425 degrees F and line baking sheet with aluminum foil.
- Prick potatoes all over with fork. Bake until potatoes are tender and fork

inserted easily comes out, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Split tops of potatoes open with knife and fluff potato flesh with fork. Set aside.

- In small bowl, combine sour cream and milk, adding more milk as needed, until sour cream is pourable. Set aside.
- In large skillet or on griddle over medium-high heat, heat 1 tablespoon butter. Add peppers and onions; cook until tender, 3-4 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Transfer to plate and set aside.
- Clean skillet then melt remaining butter. Add steak and cook until fully cooked and lightly browned, 3-4 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Return vegetables to skillet and toss to combine.
- Evenly top each potato with 1 tablespoon butter, steak mixture and cheese. Transfer to oven and bake until cheese is melted, 2-3 minutes. Drizzle with sour cream and serve.

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OUT & ABOUT



Andrea Kang and Adina Sims at Baby Bounce & Toddler Time at the Urbandale Public Library Jan. 5.



Owen Wessels and Morgan Wessels at Baby Bounce & Toddler Time at the Urbandale Public Library Jan. 5.



Kristin Tack and Cooper Greenfield at Baby Bounce & Toddler Time at the Urbandale Public Library Jan. 5.



Vernesa Seymour and Cleo Seymour at Baby Bounce & Toddler Time at the Urbandale Public Library Jan. 5.



Emmi Goetz and Ernest Goetz at Baby Bounce & Toddler Time at the Urbandale Public Library Jan. 5.



Carly Sibert and Hazel Sibert at Baby Bounce & Toddler Time at the Urbandale Public Library Jan. 5.



Aria Signs and Aracely Signs at Baby Bounce & Toddler Time at the Urbandale Public Library Jan. 5.



Bridget Carberry Montgomery and Fletcher Barry at the ribbon cutting to celebrate Friedrich's Coffee's expanded warehouse and office on Dec. 17.



Jake Rusch and Daycen Douglass at the ribbon cutting to celebrate Friedrich's Coffee's expanded warehouse and office on Dec. 17.



Allison Michl and Rowan Michl at Baby Bounce & Toddler Time at the Urbandale Public Library Jan. 5.



David Russell and Colleen Meyer at the ribbon cutting to celebrate Friedrich's Coffee's expanded warehouse and office on Dec. 17.



Dee Mable and Gina Wright at the ribbon cutting to celebrate Friedrich's Coffee's expanded warehouse and office on Dec. 17.

OUT & ABOUT



The Urbandale Chamber celebrated a ribbon cutting for Edward Jones - Cody Smith at 14111 Douglas Parkway on Dec. 15.



Aaron Colyer and Fletcher Barry at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Edward Jones - Cody Smith.



Jay Mathes and Melisha Pals at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Edward Jones - Cody Smith.



Ryan Cooley, Dustin Lambert and Matt Davison at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Edward Jones - Cody Smith.



Meg Kanpper, Allison Smith, Madilinn Smith and Katie Jackson at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Edward Jones - Cody Smith.



Mary and David Russell at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Edward Jones - Cody Smith.



Jake Rusch and Tyson Cooley at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Edward Jones - Cody Smith.



Kelly Troxel, Sara Fuller and Gina Boakye-Danquah at the ribbon cutting to celebrate Friedrich's Coffee's expanded warehouse and office on Dec. 17.



A ribbon cutting was held to celebrate Friedrich's Coffee's expanded warehouse and office on Dec. 17 at 2781 99th St., Urbandale.



Keith Riden and Kelli Close at the ribbon cutting to celebrate Friedrich's Coffee's expanded warehouse and office on Dec. 17.

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