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MAGAZINE

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WELCOME

A PROPOSAL in letters

It was 32 years ago when I asked Jolene to marry me. We had been dating for a few years, and we both seemed ready to tie the knot. We were not ones to travel the world or take on outlandish activities, so a simple proposal seemed fitting, at least to me. What we did do was play a lot of board games, especially during the cold winter months. That gave me an idea.

One evening, I carefully placed the engagement ring I purchased for her in the bag of letters in a Scrabble game. I asked her if she wanted to play. She didn't react positively, but I eventually talked her into it. I nervously unfolded the board and set up the racks. Then I drew my letters. She did the same.

As the game proceeded, Jolene kept drawing her replacement letters, and I kept looking at her face, awaiting her reaction when she would pull out the ring.

More rounds of play. More letters drawn. We were getting down to the end, and she still had not found the ring. Was it not there? Did I lose it? Or did she know my plan and was messing with me the entire time?

With her last draw, she felt something different in the bag and remarked, "What is in here?" Then she turned the bag upside down and shook it, bouncing the ring off the table and onto the floor. I, of course, quickly picked it up, dropped to one knee, and asked her to marry me. Fortunately, she said yes. And, fortunately, the ring was still intact.

Considering what we do in our jobs today with publishing and printing and journalism and words, maybe using the Scrabble game was a good fit. I would like to tell you I had that connection planned out, but I didn't. We simply liked playing Scrabble. And we like being married.

In this month's cover story, we share the engagement stories of local residents, telling how they gained the courage to ask for their partner's hand in marriage.

Have a great month and thanks for reading. ■

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'I Do'

Residents share their marriage proposal stories.

By Ashley Rullestad

Couples often celebrate the milestones of their relationships: the day they met, their wedding, anniversaries ... And the date of their engagement is often a highlight: an event often given much thought and planning. An occasion of romance, joy and anticipation of the journey ahead.

Ryan and MacKenzie Rutter were engaged after a few failed attempts at a surprise proposal.

Child's play

Travis and Jen Samplers met after they were set up by friends and family. They met at the Iowa State Fair over a pork chop on a stick, a cup of cookies and seeing the Nadas live.

"Fast forward through food talks, approval by friends, meeting families, prayers and advice," Travis says. "Yep, love snuck in there somewhere, too."

Then, he says, it was time to shop for a ring, adding he found the perfect one at Anglo.

"Once in my possession, I asked her father for permission," Travis says.

His initial thought was to recreate their first date at the Iowa State Fair. The fair was five months away, though, and that was too long to wait. Jen works for the Waukeet school district in the childcare services department, so Travis thought maybe her preschool kids could help ask. After a quick call to Andrea, the boss, the wheels were in motion.

Travis arrived at Jen's office with a Dairy Queen dessert and a ring box hidden in his pocket. Andrea and Jen went to the office for a scheduled meeting that wasn't really a meeting at all.



Jen's preschoolers helped Travis Samplers propose.

"Instructions were given to the kids," Travis says. "Jen exits the office, and kids rush to meet her at the door. 'Miss Jen, Miss Jen, Travis has something to ask you.'"

Jen was stunned, he says, as he approached and got on one knee with the open ring box in his hand.

"'Yes' is how this part of the story ends," he says.

The couple married on June 20, 2009. Of course, the proposal will always be a memorable moment for the couple, but summer vacation 2025 is a close second. They spent 10 days in Hawaii with their son, Noah.

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Fourth time's the charm

Ryan and MacKenzie Rutter met at their mutual friend Katy's birthday party in Winterset. It was one of those casual, no-pressure gatherings that turned out to be life-changing for both of them. The couple got engaged in 2018, but it took some persistence on Ryan's part.

"There were, in fact, three well-intended and sweet failed attempts before he finally got it right," MacKenzie says.

They had already been talking about marriage, and, after a friend wisely suggested that MacKenzie choose her own ring, Ryan happily agreed. Once the ring was picked out and her parents had given their blessing, MacKenzie knew a proposal was coming, but she still asked Ryan to try to surprise her with something romantic.

His first attempt was in the parking lot of his apartment complex, where he had first said "I love you." Unfortunately, she came home that night on the phone with her parents and ruined the opportunity — strike one.

The next night, he planned to propose on one of the beautifully lit pedestrian bridges downtown during Oktoberfest, but MacKenzie wasn't feeling well and the couple stayed home — strike two.

The following morning, Ryan intended to surprise her with breakfast in bed, but she wandered into the kitchen for cold medicine and ended up helping him cook — strike three.

Finally, Ryan got creative. They had a couple's journal called "A Question a Day for You and Me," and he secretly printed the question "Will you marry me?" and taped it over that day's prompt. He carried the ring in his pocket all day, waiting. That evening at supper, MacKenzie



Ryan and MacKenzie Rutter know that perfect timing doesn't happen often. Such was the case with their engagement and wedding.

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opened the journal, read the question, and looked up to find him on one knee, holding the ring. After three missed moments, the timing was finally perfect.

They got married on April 25, 2020. Although they had to postpone the full celebration until September due to the COVID pandemic, their pastor allowed them to have a quiet, private vows ceremony at their church, St. Paul Lutheran.

“While it wasn’t what we had planned, it became something unexpectedly special: a day just for the two of us, reminding us that love doesn’t need perfect timing to be perfect.”

Love overseas

Rev. David and Viviane Kottlowski have a unique marriage proposal story that goes back more than half a century. Viviane, who was born in England and grew up in Brussels, Belgium, was working at the personnel office at the Brussels Belgium Embassy in 1968 when she met David, who was stationed as a marine security guard at the embassy.

“This sounds bragging, but, prior to his, I had four marriage proposals, serious ones,”



The Kottlowskis met while living in Brussels, Belgium.

Viviane says. “But, there were so many little things that made my marine shine above everyone else. We dated for three months when he proposed. His marriage proposal, which he did when he was days away from returning to the States, was so unique and so amazing.”

Kept an ocean apart, the couple wrote letters

for a year. It was difficult, as David was in school and working. They got married on June 14, 1969, in South Bend, Indiana.

“We are still crazy about each other. He changed careers and is now an assistant pastor at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church. We are blessed. We have two children and eight grandchildren. Love was forever.”

Love online

Tim Schultz and Joel Brewer met through Craigslist. Tim responded to a post Joel put in the personals, and they emailed back and forth several times before meeting up for coffee at Caribou in Clive the Sunday before Christmas 2009.

“We both pulled into the parking lot at the same time, so there was no pep talk in the car before meeting in person,” Tim says. “I think both of our hearts were beating a thousand times a minute. I quickly broke the ice when I spilled my chai latte after sitting down.”

They ended up chatting for hours and started officially dating in January 2010. They realized quickly they were like two puzzle pieces that fit together perfectly. They share a

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FEATURE

lot of the same interests: a good TV series, musicals, cooking and baking, exploring the Des Moines metro, dancing, interior design and technology.

About nine months into dating, they decided to buy a downtown townhome together. They discussed marriage here and there, and Joel assured Tim he had a plan.

November 2012 rolled around quickly, and they went to visit Tim's family for Thanksgiving. Joel seemed anxious to get on the road and head back home that Sunday, reminding Tim they had promised to start decorating their townhouse for Christmas.

"We had finished decorating and Joel said, 'The tree is almost perfect, but there is one thing missing,'" Tim shares. "To which I said 'This tree is perfect! What could possibly be missing?' Then Joel got down on one knee, and I immediately started crying and saying, 'It's happening! It's really happening! It's happening right now! Oh, wow, it's happening!' with tears streaming down my face. Joel said 'I want to spend this Christmas and every Christmas for the rest of my life celebrating it with you. Will you marry me?' to which I responded in the happiest of voices, 'Of course I will marry you and spend every Christmas for the rest of my life with you.'"

By this time, it was a bit late in the evening to call people, but they didn't care. The couple started calling their parents, family and close friends to share the good news. They had to start the phone call with "Everything is OK. We have great news to share." ■



Joel Brewer popped the question after he and Tim Schultz finished decorating their Christmas tree.



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STRIKING a chord

Mother and son create opportunities for others to make music.

Like father, like daughter, like son.

Although Renee Rausch and her son, Tristan Berg, are relative newcomers to business ownership, their paths have been decades in the making.

It began back in 1991 when Renee's father was in a motorcycle accident which left him with the use of just one hand. A devastating event for the family, Renee says.

But her father recovered, thanks to rehabilitation, and, with the assistance of Easterseals of Iowa, he became skilled in leatherwork. Once again, he found purpose, this time through his craft.

The apple didn't fall far from the tree. After her retirement from the United States Air Force, Renee experienced some significant health issues of her own and began traveling to Mayo Clinic in Rochester every other week. One day, on the way to the clinic, she and Tristan began discussing their dreams, purposes and life goals.

Tristan shared that his dream would be to make and sell guitars. Renee shared the story of how her father was given the opportunity to find purpose through his craft. Tristan was inspired.

"After brainstorming, we wanted to build a company that stands for embracing uniqueness and individuality and encourages others to follow their passion," she says.

And NVision Guitar was born. — not only to build guitars, but to adapt them and get them in the hands of those with physical limitations.

The co-owners of the Ankeny-based business have one year and seven guitar builds under their collective belts now. It's been a labor of love thus far, a journey they feel destined to be on.

Young Tristan has had a passion for music since his early youth, his mother says, and initially wanted to start a career around it. However, without the knowledge on how to do so, he stuck with the usual college-to-corporate-job script. That wasn't Tristan, though. After entering the workforce, he soon found that, while his job met his monetary needs, it just wasn't satisfying. There was no clearly defined purpose to, well, existing.

So Tristan made a decision. His life wasn't going to be like that. Ever.

Tristan had already been a hobbyist luthier beginning in his teen years, and loved creating different models of guitars to use as his own, or for his friends. With his talent and experience, the two easily transitioned into creating professional quality guitars.

A portion of each sale goes toward providing guitars for disabled musicians seeking custom adaptations, and they also offer a 10% discount for nonprofit organizations that provide services for such individuals, she adds. ■



Renee Rausch, co-owner of NVision Guitars in Ankeny, displays some of her handmade guitar picks.



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EVENTS IN THE AREA

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Note about calendar events:

This magazine is delivered the third Thursday of each month. Calendar items included are events happening after the delivery date and extend into the following month. If you receive and read your magazine upon delivery, you will not miss out on any calendar items.

A Slice of Pi Day Open House

Saturday, March 14, 1-3 p.m.
Edencrest at Siena Hills, 455 S.W. Ankeny Road, Ankeny

It's as easy as 3.14. Stop by the Slice of Pi Day Open House and enjoy a guided tour through this lively senior community. After exploring all they have to offer, you'll leave with the perfect takeaway — a tasty slice of pie to celebrate Pi Day.

Ankeny Community Chorus 25th Year Celebration "Let Us Sing"

April 24, 7:30 p.m.
Lutheran Church of Hope, 520 N.W. 36th St., Ankeny

The Ankeny Community Chorus invites the public to their 25th Year Celebration.

Two Free Intro Sessions at Passion Studios

Friday, Feb. 20, 6:30 p.m.
Passion Studios, 114 N.W. Fifth St., Suite 203, Ankeny

"I've always wanted to play that instrument..." Does this sound like you? Students at Passion Studios learn in two to three months what takes traditional lessons two or more years to learn. Attend a free 45-minute session to learn more about what sets them apart from other methods, see a sample lesson in action and get answers for any questions you may have. You'll also tour the studio, meet the staff, and hear their personal story. Attend a free session: <https://passionstudios.opus1.io/w/register>



St. Patrick's Day Happy Hour

Tuesday, March 17, 2-4 p.m.
Edencrest at Siena Hills, 455 S.W. Ankeny Road, Ankeny

Celebrate the luck o' the Irish with Edencrest. Join their St. Patrick's Day Happy Hour for an afternoon filled with lively music, tasty appetizers and refreshing beverages. Enjoy great company, festive vibes and a warm, welcoming look at life in the community.

Pride @ Prejudice

Feb. 19-22. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 7:30 p.m., Sunday at 2 p.m.
Ankeny Community Theatre, 1932 S.W. Third St., Ankeny

Watch Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy fall in love all over again — this time filtered through the world of the internet. Modern voices interject and build on this classic love story in the form of blog posts, chat room discussions, quotes from film adaptations, and even letters from Ms. Austen herself, to create a delightfully postmodern view of 19th century England. *Pride @ Prejudice* is a hilarious and moving homage to Jane Austen's most beloved novel, as well our love affair with reading. Order tickets: <https://tickets.midwestix.com/events/22086/tag/website>



Rotary Clubs of Ankeny Roaring 20s Charity Event

Saturday, April 18, 5 p.m.
FFA Enrichment Center, DMACC Campus, 2006 S. Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny

The annual Rotary Fundraiser includes catered dinner, complimentary wine and beer, silent and live auction. For tickets, visit bidpartner.net/rotary. For additional information on and sponsorships, contact Todd Eipperle, todd.eipperle@gmail.com.

Ankeny Art Center Arts Festival

Saturday, May 16, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
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- ☐ Just a card
- ☐ Other gifts
- ☐ Nothing



MORE than 'just a cleaning'

Your veterinarian has just said the words many pet owners secretly hope they won't hear: "Your pet needs a dental cleaning." Suddenly, you're talking about anesthesia, reviewing a price estimate, and wondering why it's so costly — or even necessary.



Dental care is one of the most important investments we can make in our pets' comfort and long-term health and one of the few aspects of their well-being we can actively control as pet parents.

The truth is, dental care is about far more than clean teeth or fresh breath. Periodontal disease causes infection, inflammation and pain in the mouth, and bacteria can enter the bloodstream and affect the heart, kidneys and liver over time. Because this discomfort is often subtle, pets may simply play less, eat more slowly, or seem quieter — changes we often chalk up to as "just getting older."

While often referred to as "cleanings," dental procedures are actually medical treatments

performed under general anesthesia. This allows veterinarians to safely and thoroughly evaluate and treat disease below the gumline, where most dental problems hide. Even mouths that look healthy on the surface can be concealing infection or damage underneath. One of the most rewarding moments in practice is seeing a pet after dental treatment who suddenly seems brighter, more comfortable and more like their younger selves again.

When comparing dental pricing across clinics, it is important to understand what is included, as not all dental procedures are the same. A high-quality, safe dental procedure should involve:

- General anesthesia (non-anesthetic cleanings do not treat disease and can be unsafe)
- Pre-anesthetic bloodwork to assess organ function
- Full-mouth dental radiographs to identify hidden disease
- Professional scaling and polishing
- Pain management when needed
- IV catheter placement and fluids to support blood pressure and organ function

Just like people, no two pets' mouths are

the same. What begins as preventive care may uncover disease that, once treated, relieves pain, reduces chronic inflammation, and may even add years to a pet's life.

Dental care does not stop at the clinic. Regular home care — brushing, dental diets, chews and rinses (look for the VOHC seal) — helps control plaque and bacteria and keeps mouths healthier between procedures. When started early, these small habits can help prevent advanced disease, lowering the risk of painful extractions and more extensive (and costly) treatment later.

Dental procedures aren't optional, cosmetic or "just cleanings." They're an investment in comfort, health and longevity. If cost is a concern, talk with your veterinary team — many clinics offer wellness plans or payment options to help make preventive care more manageable, so you can focus on enjoying more healthy, comfortable years with your pet. ■

Information provided by Dr. Amanda Gigler, Ankeny Animal & Avian Clinic, 742 S. Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny, 515-964-7387, amandagigler@ankenyanimal.com



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WATCH out for tax scams

It's tax season again, which unfortunately means it's time for the annual array of scams aimed at taxpayers. By being alert, you can protect yourself from these attempts to defraud you. Your first line of defense is to recognize the warning signs of potential tax scams. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) cites these common red flags:



• **Promises of big payments** — If you've filed taxes for many years, either by yourself or with the help of a tax professional, you probably have a good idea if you're getting a refund and how much it will be. But scammers, often using social media, may promise huge refunds by encouraging you to claim tax credits to which you're not entitled and then charging large, upfront fees or a fee based on your refund amount.

• **Suspicious websites** — Watch out for strange-sounding or misspelled web links. These can take you to harmful sites, rather than the official site of the IRS (IRS.gov).

• **Solicitations from charity imposters** — The many natural disasters we've experienced in recent years have brought out scammers who solicit contributions to bogus charitable support groups. To determine whether an organization is a qualified charity that can receive tax-deductible contributions, visit the Tax Exempt Organization Search tool on IRS.gov.

• **Threats or demands** — IRS impersonators may threaten you with large fines, or even arrest, if you don't make immediate payments of what they claim you owe.

You can protect yourself from many tax-related scams by knowing how the IRS will or won't communicate with you. Typically, the IRS will initiate contact with you through regular mail delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. You can verify the legitimacy of any letter by visiting your secure IRS online account, under the "Notices and Letters" section.

Other ways the IRS will contact you:

• **Email** — Only with your permission, with a few exceptions, such as criminal investigations

• **Text** — Only with your permission

• **Phone** — Only to discuss your case, verify information or set up a meeting

• **Fax** — Only to verify or request employment information

• **In-person visit** — Rarely done, and typically only following a letter

The IRS will not:

• Contact you or take payment on social media.

• Accept gift cards or prepaid debit cards as payment. APEX: 11722

• Threaten to call law enforcement or immigration officials.

• Take your citizenship status, driver's license or business license.

• Leave pre-recorded voicemails (robocalls).

• Mail tax debt resolution advertisements.

When in doubt about any offers or communications, whether supposedly from the IRS or not, you may want to contact a trusted, qualified tax professional.

Also, be on guard for your elderly family members, as seniors are scammers' frequent targets. If you talk to these family members, ask about any unusual offers or solicitations they may have received.

Finally, if you believe you are a victim of monetary or identity theft, report these issues using the IRS website at IdentityTheft.gov. You can also refer to IRS Publication 5027 — Identity Theft Information for Taxpayers.

Tax scams and identity theft are serious threats — so do whatever you can to defend yourself. ■

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YOURS Truly

Matthew 5:43-48, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor’ and ‘hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be like your Father in heaven, since he causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors do the same, don’t they? And if you only greet your brothers, what more do you do? Even the Gentiles do the same, don’t they? So then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”



I remember making Valentine’s Day “mailboxes” as an elementary school student. We would bring them to school on Valentine’s Day to collect the cards and candy that we would bring for our classmates. I remember writing the names of each classmate on small cards. When I was writing the card to someone I “secretly admired,” I would write their name very carefully and maybe even write them a short note.

“You’re really good at kickball. Yours Truly – John.” (Clearly I was a hopeless romantic.)

If memory serves, when the I got to the card for the “class bully” I would write my name with what would now be affectionately known as a “doctor’s handwriting.” I wasn’t concerned if they knew it was from me or not! But, I knew I was required to give everyone a valentine. So, after scribbling my name, I begrudgingly tossed a card in my bag for the “bully,” too.

(I invite you to jump back to the top of this article and re-read the scripture one more time.)

Had I known what I know now... I would probably still struggle writing a Valentine’s Day note to someone who had harmed me or harmed someone I care about. I would probably still have to think hard about how to share love or kindness with someone who stands for things I do not. I would still need to pray that God would soften my heart and help me see the humanity in ALL people, especially when it’s hard to agree or see eye to eye.

I know Valentine’s Day has already passed, but, in the midst of all the hurt and harm we seem to be sharing with one another, I wonder if my Valentine’s Day card this year SHOULD read something more like this:

“God. Happy Valentine’s Day. Thank you for the love you have offered to me. I’m sorry that I’ve fallen short of how you’ve asked me to love others. It’s hard to admit that, even though I’ve tried not to, I’ve labeled people as ‘enemy’ in my mind and withheld kindness and love from them. I’m asking this Valentine’s Day for eyes to see the world as you see it. My desire is to love and pray for all people — even those who have hurt me or people I love — so that they might know Your love, too. Yours Truly – John.” ■

Information provided by John Wagner, campus pastor, Christian Life Center, Ankeny First United Methodist Church, john.wagner@ankenyfirst.org.

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LIBRARY

By Library Staff

BOOK for winter and ready for spring at the Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library

The groundhog has predicted six more weeks of winter, but do not fret. The Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library has a variety of activities to get you through the winter. Check out what we have planned for you below.

Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library

1250 S.W. District Drive

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Monday - Thursday: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Friday and Saturday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday: 1-5 p.m.

For our youngest library users, don't miss our Mini & Me Dance Class with Motivation Dance on Friday, Feb. 20 at 10 a.m. Stop by the Children's Program Room for a free dance class led by Motivation Dance. This class is planned for ages 1-3 and their caregivers, but older children are welcome as well. Stop by and dance away the winter blues. No registration required.

We are working with the After School Arts Program (ASAP) to provide fun and educational programs for children grades K-5 at the library this winter. Join us for programs on Thursdays, Feb. 19, March 5 and March 12 at 4 p.m. Are your weekday afternoons packed? Don't worry; we will have a percussion party with ASAP on Saturday, March 14 at 10 a.m. No registration required.

Calling all younger teens! Do you like to read and talk about books? Join our book club for tweens. This month's book is "The Chocolate Touch" by Patrick Skene Catling. On Thursday, March 5 at 5 p.m., stop in for fun activities, try delicious chocolate, and talk about the book. Copies of the book are available at the circulation desk while supplies last. This book is also available on the Libby App in e-book and e-audio format. This program is for tweens and teens, grades 5-9. Registration required at <https://ankeny.librarycalendar.com>.

Are you an adult who loves to read but aren't up for the pressure to participate in a traditional book club? Join us each month on the second Thursday at 6:30 p.m. for the Introverts' Book Club. Come to the library with the book you are currently loving, or pick out a new book at the library before we meet. Sit with fellow book lovers and enjoy an hour of silent sustained reading. Afterwards, you can mingle with your fellow readers and share book recommendations — or not! We would love to see you at this no-pressure book club on Thursday, March 12, at 6:30 p.m. No registration required.

Get your tickets now. Start reading up on your pop culture facts and get a team ready for the Friends of the Ankeny Library's Pop Culture Team Trivia Fundraiser. On March 28 at 7:30 p.m., gather your team and put your knowledge to the test. Whether you are a trivia master or just looking for a good time, this event is perfect for everyone. Feel free to bring your own snacks and drinks — and don't forget to come up with a team name. Tickets are on sale now and can be purchased at <https://friendsoftheankenylibrary.org>. ■

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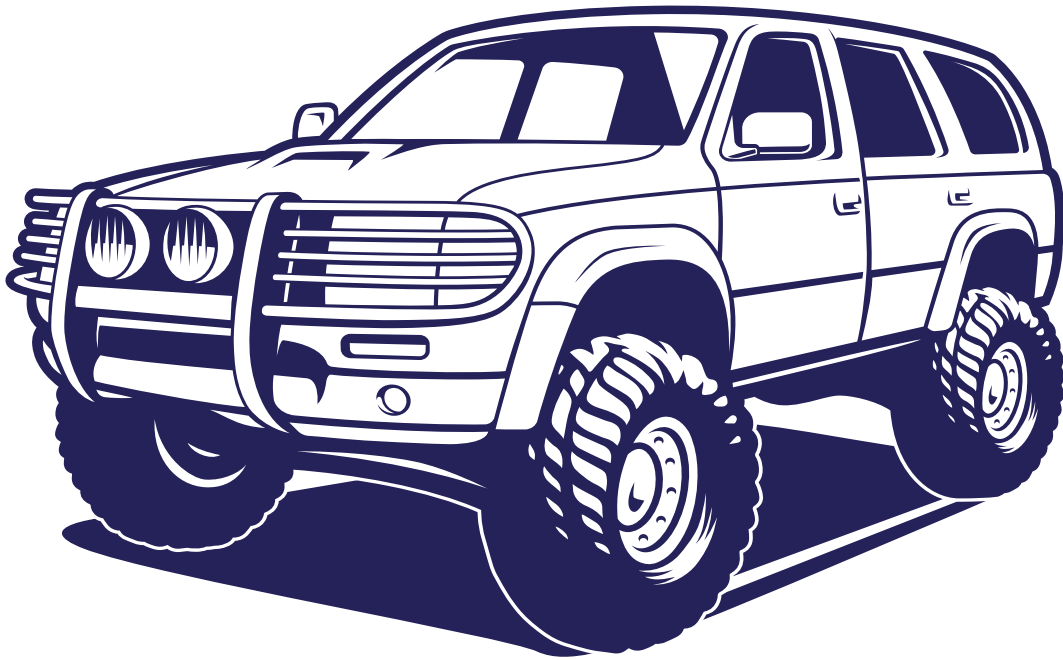
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AGING at home

Why a broad care network matters.

Ellen, 72, has every intention of staying in her Des Moines-area home for as long as she can. She is active, social and generally healthy. Still, she is realistic. Aging well at home is not just about what you need today; it's about having the right support if change occurs.



For many older adults and families, home-based services begin with a single need: help after a hospital stay, assistance with medications, or support with daily tasks. What often gets overlooked is what comes next. Needs can evolve and health conditions can change. Care can become more complex, sometimes quickly.

That reality raises an important question: When you choose a home health provider, are you choosing a service ... or a network?

Home-based care works best when it is connected. A provider that operates within a broad network of services can help ensure continuity, coordination and confidence over

time. Rather than start over each time a new need arises, a network allows care to adjust and expand.

A comprehensive home health network typically includes a range of services that address physical health, personal support and overall well-being. Skilled clinical care, such as nursing or therapy, may be needed for a season. Wellness-focused services can play a role in prevention, safety and long-term planning.

The advantage of a connected network is not just convenience; it's communication. When providers share information, align goals and understand one another's roles, care tends to be more responsive and less fragmented. That can mean fewer gaps, clearer expectations, and better outcomes for the person receiving care.

It also offers peace of mind for families. Adult children and caregivers often are balancing work, family responsibilities and concern for a loved one's well-being. Knowing that services are coordinated (and that additional support is available if needed) can reduce stress.

When evaluating home health options, it

helps to look beyond the immediate need and ask a few key questions:

- Does this provider offer access to multiple types of services, or will I need to find new support if I need it later?
- How are services coordinated if needs change?
- Is there a focus on long-term independence, not just short-term care?
- Does the provider have experience supporting people across different stages of aging?

Aging at home is rarely a straight line; it's a series of adjustments, decisions and transitions. Choosing a home health provider that is part of a broad, well-integrated network can make those transitions smoother and more manageable. ■

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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We all have our favorite local people, places and things. And now it's time to share your choices and honor those who deserve the recognition.

Make your voice be heard and cast your votes in the 2026 Ankeny and Northern Polk County Residents' Choice Poll. This contest is being hosted by Iowa Living magazines, and the results will publish in the May issues of Ankeny and North Polk magazines. You can vote in one or every category, or anywhere in between.

HURRY! POLL CLOSES APRIL 10, 2026.

See rules and vote at www.iowalivingmagazines.com/residentspoll. One vote per resident, please.

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FOOD AND DRINK

- Restaurant
- Restaurant for Breakfast
- Restaurant for Lunch
- Restaurant for Dinner
- Restaurant for Dessert
- Place for Ice Cream
- Pizza Establishment
- Bar
- Coffee Shop
- Server/Bartender

AUTOMOTIVE

- Auto Service
- Auto Body Shop
- Car Dealership

COMMUNITY

- Preschool/Daycare
- Nonprofit
- School (name of building)
- Park
- Community Festival or Event
- Church
- Pastor
- Chamber of Commerce
- Library
- Camping Spot
- Coach
- Teacher

SHOPPING

- Grocery Store
- Boutique
- Retail Store
- Thrift Store
- Home Improvement Retail Store
- Nursery or Garden Center
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Man
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Woman
- Florist

ENTERTAINMENT

- Dad/Child Date Spot
- Mom/Child Date Spot
- Place to Take Your Mom and Dad
- Place to Take Your Kids or Grandkids
- Place for Child's Birthday Party
- Golf Course

HEALTH/BEAUTY

- Hair Salon
- Physicians Clinic
- Dental Office
- Orthodontist Office
- Chiropractic Office
- Vision Care
- Health Club or Gym
- Pharmacy
- Cosmetic Service
- Physical Therapy

HEALTH/BEAUTY

- Alternative Health Care
- Weight Loss Clinic
- Medical Spa
- Dance Studio
- Gymnastics and/or Tumbling Studio
- CBD Store

OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- Financial Planner
- Law Firm
- Veterinarian
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- Landscaping Company
- Heating and Cooling Business
- Plumbing Company
- Senior Living Establishment
- Insurance Agency
- Realtor
- Bank/Credit Union
- Place for Guests to Stay
- Contractor/Construction Services/Remodeling
- Cleaning Company
- Painting Company
- Home Builder

IS CHIROPRACTIC covered by insurance?

Medicare covers chiropractic under Part B. If a patient has Medicare and no secondary/supplemental insurance, the patient is initially responsible for paying the annual Part B deductible. (This deductible applies to the combined charges for all Part B medical providers, not solely for chiropractic visits.) After the deductible is met, Medicare pays 80%. The patient pays the remaining 20%.

If a patient has Medicare plus a secondary/supplemental insurance, the secondary/supplemental insurance may pay the annual deductible. Once the deductible is met, Medicare again pays 80%, and the secondary/supplemental insurance pays the remaining 20%.

It is very important to note that Medicare **ONLY** pays for the actual spinal adjustment. Medicare does **NOT** pay for examinations, acupuncture, ultrasound, massage, x-rays or other common chiropractic services. Medicare does not have a visit limit but does require that treatments be deemed medically necessary. Medicare does not pay for routine maintenance treatments; however, patients can continue care on a self-pay basis.

Iowa Medicaid/Title 19/MCO Medicaid covers chiropractic adjustments and x-rays. The number of treatments allowed is determined by the diagnosis or condition being treated.

Commercial insurance policies usually cover chiropractic services. Some require patients to pay a co-pay ranging from \$10 to \$90 per visit. Others require patients to pay a co-insurance or percentage of the total cost ranging from 10-50%. Some have a combination of the two. On occasion, commercial insurance requires a patient to pay a deductible prior to paying its portion. Health Savings Accounts can be used to pay for care regardless of whether or not the provider participates with your insurance plan.

Automobile Insurance usually covers chiropractic services under the MedPay portion of your policy. Healthcare related bills are sent to your own auto insurance company despite which driver was at fault. Your auto insurance company will be reimbursed from the other party's auto insurance company if the accident was not your fault. MedPay is also designed to ensure your healthcare-related treatments are covered, even if the other driver does not have insurance.

Veteran's Administration (V.A.) covers chiropractic services. The V.A. only pays for spinal adjustments. Because the Central Iowa V.A. has a chiropractor on staff, the patient has to ask the V.A. for a referral if the staff chiropractor cannot meet their needs.

Iowa Worker's Compensation, unfortunately for the many patients who could be helped with chiropractic services, does **NOT** cover them at this time. On occasion, a patient can receive covered chiropractic care if the worker's compensation case manager approves it.

No Insurance. Most chiropractic care is very affordable and, in some cases, less costly than the co-pays required by some insurance companies. ■

Information provided by Christopher M. Renze, D.C., D.I.B.C.N., of Renze Chiropractic Clinic, P.C. For more information, visit www.renzechiro.com or call the office at 965-3844.

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FOR the love of music

Community Chorus celebrates 25 years.



In 2001, Ankeny resident Bill Konnath collaborated with Steve Carstenson, the high school choral music director, to create a community choir. Their desire was to organize a credible group of singers that Carstenson would direct. Anita Campbell, current president of Ankeny Community Chorus, read a blurb in a her church bulletin announcing that anyone interested in a community chorus should remain after the baccalaureate service program that year.

"Bill Konnath passed around a clipboard for interest, and over 100 names were collected," Campbell recalls. "We had our first meeting in the spring, and about 80 people showed up. On June 14, 2001, the Ankeny Community Chorus was officially formed."

Carol Torrents, current vice president of the choral group, joined soon after it was formed.

"Music has always been a part of my life," she says. "When I heard there was a new community chorus, I decided to check it out. I was impressed with the quality of music, so I joined it right away. Once most people are out of high school, there aren't many avenues to express themselves through music unless you are part of something like a church choir. I think the community chorus is a wonderful thing we offer. We meet at 7 p.m. and sing for about an hour and a half. It is very 'down to business.' If members want to socialize, they either come early or stay late."

The Ankeny Community chorus is celebrating its 25th year in 2026. It is a 501(c)3 nonprofit group composed of about 75 members of diverse ages and occupational backgrounds. They sing a variety of music including sacred music, pop and show tunes.

"It stretches the members to sing music they might not otherwise get involved in," Torrents shares.

The group performs two major concerts a year. They also present a concert at the Iowa State Fair, as well as a joint concert with the Ankeny Community Band during the city's Summer Sounds series. They also enjoy caroling at local retirement communities. Typically, a venue with sophisticated audio-visual equipment is rented for optimal results.

Campbell says they are always open to new members, and they invite anyone in high school or beyond to come join the group, highly recommending that newcomers have some background in organized music. Current members range in age from 16 to 84.

"Our goal is to add younger voices to our group since many of us are senior citizens," Torrents states.

Ankeny Community Chorus will present "Let Us Sing" on Friday, April 24 at 7:30 p.m. at Lutheran Church of Hope in Ankeny, directed by Everett Reed. Chorus members invite the community to come out for the concert and ask all who may be interested in joining to visit ankenychorus.com for more information. ■

WHY would I prepay funeral expenses?

Preplanning one's final arrangements is something everyone should do. While it is not necessarily an easy topic to address, having arrangements in place can provide a great deal of peace of mind, both for the person making the arrangements and for those loved ones who will be left behind.



No one comes through the doors of the funeral home on the day that their loved one has died and regrets that the plans have already been made. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Families experience great relief knowing that plans are in place, decisions have been made and, perhaps, the expenses have already been handled.

While prepaying funeral expenses is never a requirement for someone to place their arrangements on file with a funeral home, it is an option available and one that you should know about. There are many benefits to prepaying funeral expenses. Most importantly, it allows a person the opportunity to purchase funeral arrangements at current prices, with the guarantee that those services and merchandise selections will be provided, at no additional expense to the family, at the time the funeral home's services are needed.

Keep in mind, funeral arrangements will never be less expensive than they are today. Whatever your funeral home of choice is, make sure you understand your options, and then make the decision that is right for you. ■

Information provided by Sarah Masteller, Advanced Planning Counselor, Hamilton's Southtown Funeral Home, 5400 S.W. Ninth St., Des Moines, 515-697-3679.

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THE QUIET power of presence

We live in a world that likes to measure value by how busy we are. What we get done. How full our calendars look. How quickly we move from one thing to the next. Most of us learned early on that being useful meant being productive.

Then life changes.

As we get older, or as seasons shift, there comes a moment when we realize we cannot move at the same pace we once did. Strength changes. Roles change. And it can quietly raise a hard question: If I'm not doing what I used to do, what do I still offer?

Scripture speaks into this more clearly than we sometimes realize. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus visits the home of two sisters. One is busy, distracted by everything that needs to be done. The other sits at His feet and listens. When the busy sister asks Jesus to correct her, He gently responds that Mary has chosen what is better. He is not condemning work. He is reminding us that presence matters more than performance.

That truth feels especially important in later seasons of life.

Presence is not flashy. It does not draw attention. It often goes unnoticed. And yet, presence shapes people in ways productivity never can. It looks like sitting with someone without needing to fix anything. Listening without rushing. Remembering names. Noticing when someone is missing and caring enough to ask why.

I have seen this kind of presence change the atmosphere of a room. An older adult who greets others by name. Someone who brings calm simply by being steady. A quiet conversation over coffee that reminds another person they still matter. These moments do not make headlines, but they leave a mark.

The Bible tells us that God Himself chose presence. John writes that Christ came and "dwelt among us." He did not arrive in a hurry. He lived among people. He listened. He noticed. He stayed. That tells us something about how we were created to live as well.

This message is not only for older adults. It matters just as much for younger generations who fill their days to the brim and promise themselves, they will slow down later. Presence is not something we age into. It is something we choose, right where we are.

There is a quiet wisdom in learning when to stop striving and simply remain. Presence does not require strength or speed. It only asks for attention and care.

In every season of life, the most meaningful influence often comes not from what we accomplish, but from how we show up. And sometimes, the greatest gift we offer is not something we do at all, but the steady, faithful presence we bring into the lives around us. ■



Information provided by Erik Ofloy, Sales and Marketing Director at CopperWood at Prairie Trail, 2855 S.W. Vintage Parkway, Ankeny, IA 50023, 515-425-3262, eofloy@copperwoodsl.com.

WHAT IS a trust?

Creating an estate plan is the way to ensure that your assets pass to your loved ones following your death. There are several different estate planning options, but a common one is to create a trust.

A trust is comprised of three separate parties: a grantor, a trustee, and the beneficiaries. The grantor (or settlor) creates the trust. The trustee manages the assets held within the trust. The beneficiaries are the individuals or groups who receive the benefits provided by the trust.

There are two main types of trusts that a person can create as part of an estate plan: a living trust and a testamentary trust.

A living trust — also called a revocable trust — is created during the grantor's lifetime, and the grantor funds the trust while still alive. The trust contains provisions as to how you choose for your assets to be distributed after you die. You can name a trustee to manage the assets in the trust, or you can act as the initial trustee.

The grantor has the authority to decide when and to whom trust distributions are made. The grantor can also change the trust, appoint a new trustee, or revoke the trust entirely.



Living trusts are good options for planning for potential incapacity. They are a good way to manage assets during your lifetime as well as have an orderly plan for disposition after you die. Further, living trusts allow those settling the estate to avoid probate and get the assets distributed to the beneficiaries more quickly and efficiently.

The second type of trust is a testamentary trust. Testamentary trusts are trusts which are created within a person's will. Because they are not created until the death of the grantor, testamentary trusts do not hold any assets or have any power until the grantor has died. After the grantor's death, assets are transferred into a trust for the benefit of the beneficiaries. Testamentary trusts are most commonly created in a will for the benefit of minor children, a spouse, or a disabled adult child.

When created properly, trusts are a very efficient and effective way to ensure that loved ones receive your assets. Be sure to consult with an experienced attorney when choosing a trust for your estate planning. ■

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

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TAX season FAQ for high-net-worth households

During tax season, it's natural to have questions about your filing requirements. There may be greater complexity and questions if you are part of a high-net-worth household.



To read more detailed responses and additional FAQs prepared by our Private Wealth team, visit: bankerstrust.com/education-center/categories/wealth-retirement/.

1. What federal tax forms will I receive and what do I need to file?

Depending on the titling of your accounts and the types of assets you have, the tax forms you will receive and the forms you'll need to file can differ.

Estates and Trusts. Estates and non-grantor trusts are generally required to file a Form 1041 (U.S. Income Tax Return for Estates and Trusts) if the gross income is \$600 or more for

the tax year.

If you are a beneficiary of a trust and/or estate filing a Form 1041, you can expect to receive a Schedule K-1 if you received distributions from the trust and/or estate during the previous tax year.

IRA Owners. Individual Retirement Account (IRA) owners will receive a Form 1099-R, which details distributions made during the prior year. IRA owners will also receive a Form 5498.

Investment Agency Clients (Taxable Non-Qualified/Non-Retirement Accounts). Holders of these accounts will receive a 1099 tax form outlining dividends, interest and capital gains or losses for the prior year.

2. When is the right time to meet with my tax preparer?

Generally, you want to wait to meet with your tax preparer until you've acquired all the tax documentation you expect to receive for the prior year. This ensures your tax preparer will

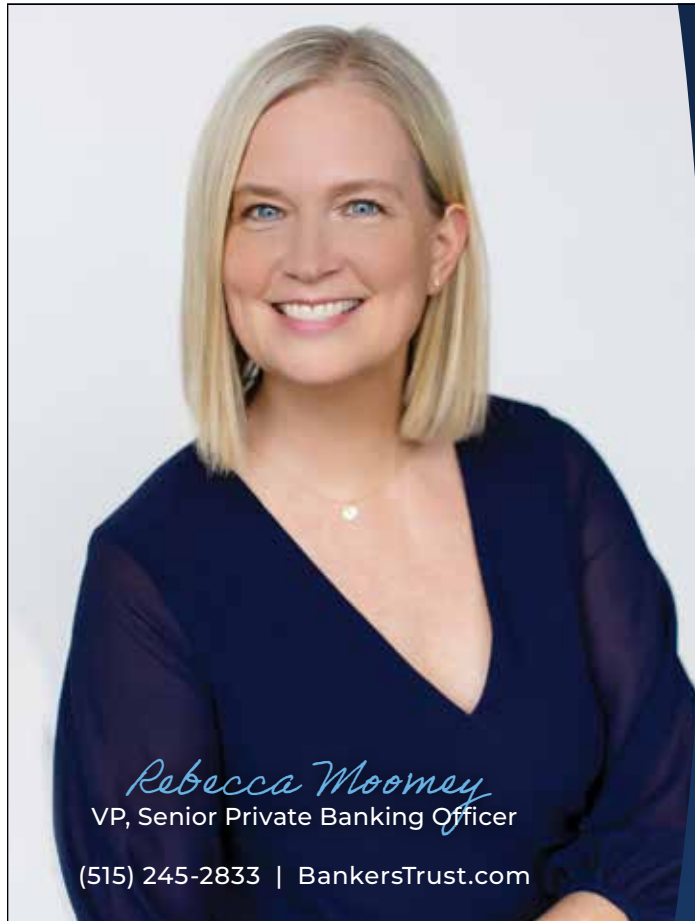
be working from exact figures and reduces the likelihood you'll need to file an amended return to make a change or adjustment to a return already filed.

3. What can I do to ensure a smooth tax season process?

If you are feeling overwhelmed by the complexity of your taxes, consider consolidating your accounts so they are held with fewer financial institutions. Consolidating financial institutions can help alleviate some of the stress that can come at this time of year.

Understanding tax preparation timelines and expectations can help to ensure a smooth process. Be sure to consult your CPA or tax preparer for questions or concerns. ■

This article is for informational purposes only and is not intended as legal, tax or investment advice. You should consult with qualified professional advisors regarding your own situation. Information provided by Rebecca Moomey, VP, Senior Private Banker, Bankers Trust, 1925 N. Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny.



Rebecca Moomey

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PAIR simplicity and flavor with seafood pasta

(Family Features) Some recipes come from a well-worn family card, and others are born on a busy weeknight when you need dinner to feel special without being complicated. Shrimp spaghetti falls squarely into that second category for me. It's the kind of meal that looks impressive on the plate but comes together quickly — perfect for those evenings when you want something comforting, a little indulgent, and absolutely reliable.



I love shrimp because it cooks fast and pairs beautifully with simple ingredients. Toss it with garlic, olive oil, a hint of heat, and a squeeze of lemon, and suddenly an ordinary box of spaghetti feels elevated. This is the dish I reach for when I want a break from heavy sauces but still crave big flavor. It's light enough for warmer months, yet cozy enough to enjoy year-round.

Simple, satisfying, and full of flavor. This shrimp spaghetti is proof that a good meal doesn't have to be complicated to feel special. Find more quick dinner solutions by visiting [Culinary.net](https://www.culinary.net). ■

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

Shrimp Spaghetti

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

- 1 pound spaghetti noodles
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/4 cup avocado oil
- 1 package (12 ounces) raw shrimp
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder, divided
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 cup frozen or fresh spinach
- bread, for serving



- Cook spaghetti noodles according to package instructions. In skillet over medium heat, add butter, avocado oil and shrimp. Mix in 1 tablespoon garlic powder and paprika. Remove shrimp after they begin to turn pink; set aside.
- Add chicken broth, Parmesan cheese, heavy cream, remaining garlic powder, onion powder and spinach to skillet; mix well. Add shrimp back to skillet to finish cooking. Mix in noodles and serve with bread.

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I have often wondered how successful organizations withstand the test of time. I have witnessed many businesses flourish and then perish within three years. Although the Ankeny Area Chamber is a nonprofit, it still operates as a business. With customers, employees, board of directors and service as its product, the chamber is susceptible to all the pitfalls of any business.



This year, we celebrate the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce's 75th year of supporting our community and the businesses that drive our economy. Whether you realize it or not, everyone reading this has played a part in this success story. We thank you for your direct support of the chamber and your ongoing support of our businesses and community.

While many have played a part in the chamber's story over the last 75 years, for eight months, I had the opportunity to volunteer as interim CEO — an opportunity to play a part in the Ankeny Area Chamber's story and set the stage for another 75 years of success. Over the years, I have seen the chamber from many different perspectives. While there were ups and downs, one constant always held true: While the mission of the organization was solid, it was the people that made the difference.

If you get an opportunity, look back at the people who participated in the success and those who led us to where we are today. Business owners, board members, employees and many others created the climate and culture that is the chamber. When I walk into the office, I see pictures, names on plaques and awards, and I am grateful to say that I have met a few and call many friends and colleagues. I would guess that many reading this would say the same, and, if not, I encourage you to join us for the next 75 years and make those connections.

I am grateful to the chamber board for giving me the opportunity to lead the team, and thankful to my wife, Laura, for the sacrifice of her time and talent while we worked through some stressful days. Without her support and expertise, the story would have looked a lot different.

I have always maintained that success is about perspective. I have not experienced 75 years, and the only perspective I have is this. Halley's Comet last appeared in 1986, the year I graduated from high school, and will come around again after 75 years (2061). I was young and didn't realize I could witness something that might be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I intend to see it next time. I encourage you to participate in the next 75 years of the Ankeny Area Chamber and not miss out on the opportunity. ■

Information provided by Trent Murphy, former Interim Chamber CEO of the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce. Currently Murphy Enterprises - Owner/CEO since 2016.

OUT & ABOUT



Amanda Kruse and Robyn Tystahl at Lattes and Leads hosted by CopperWood at Prairie Trail on Jan. 27.



Uptown Ankeny Association held a ribbon cutting for its new office at 601 S.W. Third St. Suite B on Jan. 22.



Dylan Dyer and Erik Ofloy at Lattes and Leads hosted by CopperWood at Prairie Trail on Jan. 27.



Kathy Uthe and Mazen Arawi at Lattes and Leads hosted by CopperWood at Prairie Trail on Jan. 27.



Ken Payne and Brett Haun at Lattes and Leads hosted by CopperWood at Prairie Trail on Jan. 27.



Sue Hudson and Jordan Niewoehner at Lattes and Leads hosted by CopperWood at Prairie Trail on Jan. 27.



Matt and Sue Hudson at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner, which was a celebration of the chamber's 75 years.



Juli and Curt Accola at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner, which was a celebration of the chamber's 75 years.



Dez Varnes and Chad Beier at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner.



Crystal Wright, Lindsey Foss and Amy Wisel at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner.



Dawn and Andrew Martin at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner.

OUT & ABOUT

RIBBON Cutting

The city of Ankeny hosted a ribbon cutting and open house for Fire Station No. 4, 2320 N.W. Weigel Drive on Jan. 7.



Mayor Bobbi Bentz and Fire Chief Vance Swisher



Justin and Merlyn Hollinrake



Heather Matson and Jeff Perry



Krista Swisher and Derek Lord



Cameron Brose, Hunter Udelhoven and Corey Marsh



Troy Cory and Adam Vander Leest



Jennifer Sease and Matt Davis



Mike Schrock and Mark Holm



John Williams and Casey White



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