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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.

The Andersons got engaged while playing one of their favorite board games.

Love at the campanile

Josh Johnson and his wife, Gabrielle, met over Instagram and were states apart for a while — him in Texas and her in Iowa. But, they eventually ended up together in the Hawkeye state.

“My wife and her family are big Iowa State fans, and they all went to Iowa State,” Josh says. “So, at Iowa State, there is this tradition called campaniling. If you kiss at midnight under the campanile, then you will be together forever. So, in my mind, I thought it was the perfect time and place to propose.”

The couple walked to the tower close to midnight, talking along the way, while Josh was thinking, “Hurry up midnight, so I can propose.” While they were waiting for midnight, they noticed a group of girls near the tower, but they didn’t think anything of it.

At 11:59 p.m., Josh got down on one knee and asked Gabrielle if she would marry him. However, there is another tradition at Iowa State called “The Curtiss to Beardshear Streak” where students run naked between Curtiss Hall and Beardshear Hall, often aiming to complete it while the Campanile strikes midnight.

“So, that group of girls we saw earlier? That’s exactly what they did,” Josh says. “Needless to say, the proposal was heartfelt, but it’s also a hilarious memory now.”



Josh Johnson proposed to his wife, Gabrielle, under the campanile at ISU.

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A park proposal

Justin Scarborough and Christina Myers met in December 2024 via Facebook Messenger.

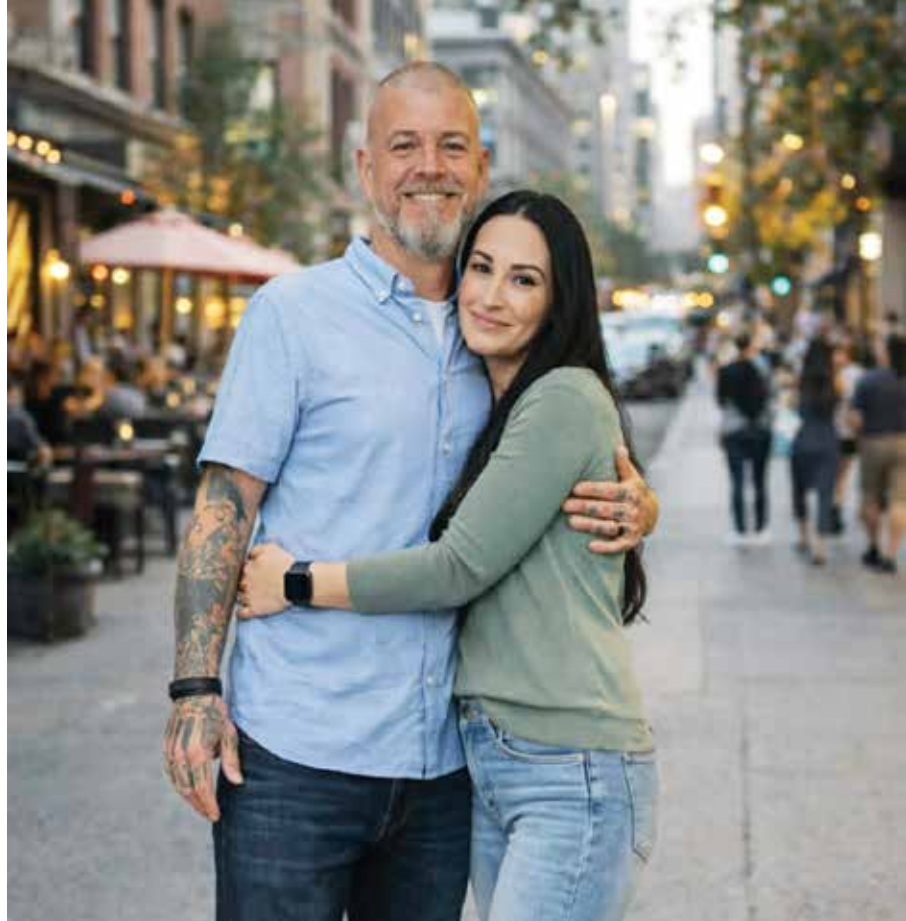
“He sent me a random message,” she says. “I was very skeptical but thought, ‘What do I have to lose?’”

On May 26, 2025, the couple enjoyed the day together at Jester Park. They spent time walking along the pond and trails, enjoying the scenery and the quiet comfort of simply being together. The day felt relaxed and normal in the best way — until Justin turned it into something very special.

During their walk, Christina noticed one of the elk displays in the distance at the park. The elk looked so real to her that she genuinely believed it was a live animal nearby. Excited and amazed, she pointed it out and commented, “Wow, look how close that guy is to that elk,” completely unaware that Justin had something planned.

Justin laughed, then gently tapped her on the shoulder to get her to turn around. When Christina did, she was stunned to see Justin down on one knee. She was shocked, as they’d only been dating for seven months.

“But, in that instant, everything else faded away. Only love, surprise and emotion remained. The proposal was simple, sincere and perfectly us: a beautiful blend of laughter, love and a once-in-a-lifetime surprise surrounded by nature.”



Justin Scarborough and Christina Myers got engaged at Jester Park.

Thank you for voting us your favorite!



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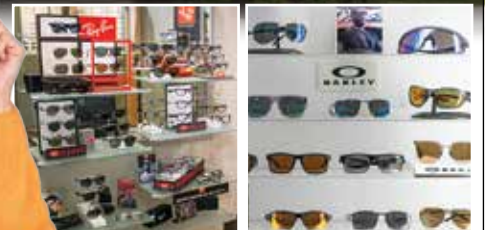
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Nick and Heather Anderson enjoy The Game of Life, literally and figuratively.

The game of life

Heather Anderson and her husband, Nick, are avid gamers — board and card games, not video games. At the time they got engaged, they were especially fond of the show “Family Guy” and had purchased a “Family Guy”-themed version of The Game of Life.

One evening, Heather went to see a movie with a friend and returned to their apartment to find that Nick had prepared dinner, which was not unusual. Afterward, he suggested they play The Game of Life, and she happily agreed, as it has been one of her favorites.

“As the game progressed, and I reached the ‘get married’ space, he handed me a small Staples box that previously held paperclips,” Heather says. “He thought it would be a great decoy in which (to place) the miniature husband and wife game pieces. When I opened it, I found a ring inside. He had completely surprised me. I had no idea what was coming. He had even gotten down on one knee without me noticing.”

Nick later admitted the most stressful part was waiting for the moment to arrive, as she kept spinning ones and moving only a single space at a time, while he was spinning higher numbers and racing far ahead.

“By the time I finally reached the ‘get married’ space, he was both nervous and frustrated but hid it well — a detail I still find hilarious,” Heather says.



Eric Johansen asked his wife, Tara, to marry him while they were in college at Buena Vista University.



Playground proposal

Tara and Eric Johansen grew up together in Eagle Grove and started dating their junior year of high school. The couple tried not to influence each other’s college decisions, but, ultimately, both decided to go to Buena Vista University.

Tara was working at the after-school program, so Eric saw an opportunity for a fun proposal. Tara thinks he got the idea from the movie “Meet the Parents.”

“He proposed to me on a school playground,” she says. “The kids held up letters that spelled out, ‘Will you marry me?’ He was going to do a scavenger hunt, but he decided this would be more fitting because I was going to school to be a teacher. Our story made the local paper.” ■

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IOWA
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A LOOK back at 2025

2025 was a year full of economic change, market uncertainty, shifting policies and periods of volatility. Some major headlines included new tariffs, slowing job growth, higher inflation and a prolonged federal government shutdown. Regardless of these headlines and challenges, the year highlighted the importance of maintaining a long-term perspective.



Despite concerns of a possible recession, the U.S. economy continued to grow. Consumer spending remained strong, helping support economic activity. Inflation stayed elevated for most of the year, while the labor market gradually declined.

In response, the Federal Reserve eased monetary policy, cutting the federal funds rate three times for a total reduction of 75 basis points.

Job growth slowed throughout 2025, with the unemployment rate rising to its highest level in four years. Average monthly job gains fell to 124,000, down from 168,000 in 2024.

Markets experienced sharp swings during the year. In April, the largest U.S. tariff increase since the 1930s triggered a sharp global market sell-off, followed by a recovery in May. Additionally, President Trump signed a major tax-cut and spending bill called the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

Despite periods of volatility and uncertainty, 2025 was a strong year for the markets overall.

For the full year, all major stock market indexes delivered double-digit returns, led by the Global Dow (26.9%), followed by the Nasdaq (20.4%), the S&P 500 (16.4%), the Dow (13%), and the Russell 2000 (11.3%).

After years of historic volatility, 2025 was also a solid year for bonds. Fixed income did not match the double-digit rallies like we saw in equities, however, bonds fulfilled their traditional role of providing income and stability with most of the core indices finishing in the green.

As we enter 2026, many questions around the market naturally arise. While short-term performance in 2025 included periods of volatility, the broader picture reinforces the values of staying invested during an eventful year. ■

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MEET Debra Cale

Principal and preschool director announces retirement.

Debra Cale, Dallas Center Elementary principal and DCG preschool director, has announced her retirement at the end of the school year. She reflects on her time at DCG after a busy and rewarding career in education.

Cale earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Iowa in secondary special education, and she later completed her master's degree at Iowa State University in curriculum and instructional technology. She began her teaching career in Austin, Texas, in 1988 where she taught middle and high school students for nine years. She spent time as a central office administrator in the Johnston Community School District before coming to DCG nine years ago.

She began her role at Dallas Center-Grimes as the Dallas Center Elementary principal and district's Title I coordinator. Three years into her tenure, the role expanded to include preschool director. Over the last nine years at DCG, these evolving roles have allowed Cale to lead across multiple programs and age levels, align early learning with elementary systems, and ensure strong instructional and support structures for students and staff.

"As soon as I started in the Dallas Center-Grimes School District, I felt at home. The people were genuinely kind, welcoming and deeply committed to students, which made it easy to build trust and strong working relationships."

She has enjoyed working at Dallas Center Elementary because of the meaningful connections with staff, students and families. She says those relationships are truly the heart of the school. The role of principal has its challenges, like trying to fit everything she wants to accomplish into a day or trying to balance competing priorities.

Those challenges are outweighed by the rewards of seeing students grow socially, emotionally and academically.

"I love walking through the building and seeing smiles, hearing laughter and knowing students feel safe, supported and excited to be at school. Creating an environment where students genuinely love coming to school has always been important to me. Another major reward is watching teachers grow in their practice and create the best possible learning environments for all students."

Some of the funniest memories at Dallas Center Elementary have come from the "Lunch with the Principal" time. She would often play "Would You Rather" with students, and their responses had her giggling again and again.

"Their answers were so pure, honest and creative, and it gave me the chance to laugh right alongside them. Some of the questions — especially the ones involving nose-picking — were pretty gross, which made it even funnier. People walking by would sometimes do a double take when they overheard our conversations. The students are just so much fun to interact with."

In retirement, Cale is most looking forward to spending more time traveling with her family, reading for pleasure, and maybe even sleeping in a little more than she is used to.

"That said, I will truly miss my DCG family. The relationships I've built here mean so much to me, and this district will always hold a special place in my heart. I know I'll stay connected by coming back to visit and volunteering when I can. I absolutely cherish the relationships I've built across the district, and they are a big reason why DCG feels like more than a workplace — it feels like a community." ■



Debra Cale says the challenges of being a principal are outweighed by the rewards of seeing students grow.

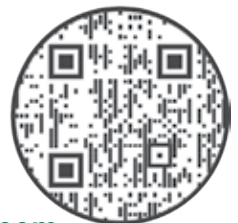
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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations.

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.

Upcoming in Grimes/Dallas Center Living magazine

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.

Celebrating heritage: What have you learned about your family or community's heritage? How do you celebrate or honor your heritage? Let us know by emailing tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.

Leaf It to Grimes

Leaf It to Grimes is back. This community tree purchasing program provides trees to Grimes residents at a reduced cost. Orders are being taken, limit two trees per household. \$30 per tree, available while supplies last.

The city of Grimes will deliver the tree to your home the week of April 20. Residents are responsible for planting and caring for the trees.

Visit grimesiowa.gov/leaf-it-to-grimes to see what trees are available and make a purchase. Once you are on the ordering page, you will need to make an account and sign in to make a purchase. If you are not signed in, you will receive an error message when you try to make a purchase. Contact park@grimesiowa.gov if you need assistance.

Fishing in Grimes

Fishing is allowed at the public ponds in Grimes. The DNR frequently restocks the public ponds with largemouth bass, bluegills and channel catfish. Before you grab your pole and head out, make sure you brush up on these rules.

Anyone over the age of 16 needs a fishing license. These are available at iowa.dnr.gov. These ponds follow the statewide harvest regulations. That means you can keep up to three largemouth bass (must be 15 inches), 25 bluegills, and eight channel catfish. To find a public pond, including the type of fish stocked, visit iowa.dnr.gov.

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

Battery and Electronics Recycling

Did you know that it only takes one battery to spark a fire? Batteries are dangerous in your garbage or recycling. That's why the city has partnered with Metro Waste Authority to introduce a free and convenient battery drop-off in the Grimes community. These drop-offs accept alkaline batteries, button batteries, electronics with rechargeable batteries, other electronics and cords. The drop-off box is at Grimes City Hall, 101 N.E. Harvey St., and is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



Elks Annual St. Patrick's Day Celebration

Saturday, March 14, 5:30 p.m.
West Des Moines Elks #2752,
2060 N.W. 94th St., Clive

The Elks St. Patrick's Day Celebration will begin with the Foy School of Irish Dancers performing at 5:30 p.m. They will perform for about 20 minutes, followed by the Elks' famous St. Paddy's Day corn beef and cabbage with Irish potatoes, \$12 per serving.

Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Pre-Party and Parade

March 14 and March 17

The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick is back with its St. Patrick's Day celebrations. Join them on Saturday, March 14, from 2-6 p.m. at The Shop DSM, 901 Cherry St., Des Moines, for a Pre-Paddy Party, featuring live music from Fat Tuesday, a live auction, food trucks and cash bar for an at-will donation. The parade is on Tuesday, March 17, and begins at noon. Participants will proceed from E. First Street, west on Grand Avenue to Eighth Street, with the parade officially ending at Eighth and Grand Avenue. The after party will be in the Des Moines Marriott Downtown Hotel. Visit www.friendlysonsiowa.com for more information.

Rhythms of Grace volunteer orientation

First Monday of each month, 5:30 p.m.
Rhythms of Grace, 23625 River Heights Drive, Dallas Center

As a reminder, Rhythms of Grace offers a one-hour orientation each month for all who would like to learn more about the organization before committing to a volunteer application, background check and training. Become barn buddies or side-walkers and gain new horsemanship skills as horse leaders and help change the lives of those with special needs.



CITYVIEW's Chocolate Walk

Friday, Feb. 27, 5-9 p.m.

The Breakfast Club, 5525 Mills Civic Parkway, Suite 100, West Des Moines

Like chocolate? Like chocolate drinks? Then you'll love this event. CITYVIEW and West Glen Town Center again bring the Chocolate Walk to West Glen Town Center. For a ticket price of \$25 (\$35 at the door), attendees will receive 10 drink tickets that can be redeemed for sample cocktails at participating venues and will receive chocolate treat samples. Make it a date night or a night out with friends. Look for more details at chocolatetalkwalk.dmcityview.com.

Ports of Call, Music of The Mediterranean

Sunday, Feb. 22, 2 p.m.

Valley High School
Staplin Auditorium, 3650 Woodland Ave., West Des Moines

The Des Moines Community Orchestra presents the 2026 50th Anniversary Season Winter Concert, Ports of Call, Music of The Mediterranean. With Guest Conductor Joshua Barlage, and cello soloist Curtis Barr. Admission is free but donations are always welcome.

Be sure to check for cancellations.

Wine, Food, and Beer Showcase

Friday, March 6, 6-9 p.m.

Des Moines Marriott Downtown, 700 Grand Ave., Des Moines

Sample the night away. The Wine, Food & Beer Showcase is one of the oldest food and beverage events in the area and has become a yearly favorite for foodies, wine lovers and beer enthusiasts alike. Featuring 30-40 of the finest restaurants, caterers, wineries, breweries and distilleries in the area, the event is the Des Moines Metro Opera's signature fundraiser. All proceeds raised throughout the evening support Des Moines Metro Opera's award-winning education and community engagement programs. Learn more at <https://desmoinesmetroopera.org/showcase/>.

The Iowa Files: A History Series

Various dates, 3 p.m.

Online and in-person at the Community Room of the West Des Moines Public Library, 4000 Mills Civic Parkway

This joint West Des Moines Historical Society and West Des Moines Public Library program is free and open to the public, thanks to the generosity of West Des Moines Historical Society members, Bravo Greater Des Moines and the Friends Foundation of the West Des Moines Library. All programs are streamed on the WDMHS Facebook page and YouTube channel.

• **March 15: The Monuments Men and the Saving of Culture.** The Monuments Men (and Women) had a seemingly impossible job: save some of the world's most precious cultural artifacts and art from the Nazis, who treated Europe as their private looting grounds. Presenter Ruth Ehler's grandfather, Ralph Hammett, was one of the men. Ruth will recount stories of the amazing and frantic work that saved and returned treasures to their rightful owners and institutions.

Bright Nights and Green Sights

Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden,

909 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines

Explore ways to "find your true nature" at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden. For tickets visit <https://dmbotanicalgarden.com>.

• **Dome After Dark:** Friday evenings through March 27, 6-10 p.m. Extra evening March 14, and Tuesday through Thursday, March 17-19. Experience the Botanical Garden in a whole new light. Explore the warm tropical conservatory and renovated Gardeners Show House, illuminated for a magical after-hours escape.

• **NEW to Dome After Dark: Igloo Experience:** Cozy up with up to five guests for an enchanting igloo experience, complete with admission to the event and Flora concessions. Perfect for friends, family or date night. Visit <https://dmbotanicalgarden.com> to reserve an igloo.

• **Friday Dinner at Flora:** Fridays, 6-7:30 p.m. Reserve your spot now for a delicious three-course dinner at Flora, including admission to Dome After Dark. Each week a new, enticing menu showcases a variety of cuisines. Reserve a table online, <https://dmbotanicalgarden.com>.

• **Botanical Blues:** Sundays through March 29, noon to 4 p.m. Performances begin at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Your favorite Sunday Blues in Des Moines is here to keep away your winter blues every week. Each set lasts one hour, with a one-hour intermission in between. Settle in, grab a drink, and soak up the sound in Iowa's only tropical music venue. Flora serves Sunday brunch beginning at 10 a.m. — perfect before the music starts. Concerts are held live in the conservatory, and guests are welcome to wander the indoor gardens during the show. Ticket info and lineups available at <https://dmbotanicalgarden.com>.

Grimes Public Library events

200 N.E. Beaverbrooke Blvd.

Registration is required only when noted. Register at grimeslibrary.org/calendar or by calling the library at 515-986-3551.

SCHOOL-AGE

- No Sew Heart Pillows: Friday, Feb. 27, 1-2 p.m.
- Spring Break Kit: Thursday, March 12, all day.
- Junior Librarians Mini Camp: Monday, March 16, Tuesday, March 17, and Wednesday, March 19, 1-2 p.m.

TEENS

- Hooks and Needles: Saturday, Feb. 28, 10-11 a.m.

ADULTS

- Hooks and Needles: Saturday, Feb. 28, 10-11 a.m.
- Adult Book Club is held the first Tuesday of the month, 5:30-6:30 p.m. This book club reads and discusses a variety of genres. The scheduled books are listed with their respective dates but are subject to change. Tuesday, March 3: "My Name is Emilia Del Valle" by Isabel Allende.
- What's Cooking at the Library: Tuesday, March 10, 6-7 p.m. March: Fermentation. April: Mushrooms.
- Read and Reflect Book Club: Wednesday, March 11, 6-7 p.m.
- Growing the Good Life: Saturday, March 14, 11 a.m. to noon.

ALL AGES

- Craft and Play All About Balance: Saturday, Feb. 21, 9 a.m. to noon.
- Family Night Yarn Art: Monday, March 2, 6-6:30 p.m.
- Craft and Play Shapes and Colors: Saturday, March 7, 9 a.m. to noon.
- Family Night Eat The Rainbow: Monday, March 9, 6-6:30 p.m.
- Cardboard Kingdom: Saturday, March 14 to Thursday, March 19, all day.
- Family Night Cardboard Creations: Monday, March 16, 6-6:30 p.m.

SPECIAL EVENTS

- In celebration of Women's History Month, the library will host a viewing of the Ruth Bader Ginsberg biopic "On the Basis of Sex" followed by a discussion. Registration required. March 14, 1-4 p.m.
- Rain Barrel Workshop, Thursday, March 6, 5 p.m. Back by popular demand, this workshop is available for Grimes citizens to build and take home a rain barrel. All supplies are provided by the city of Grimes Stormwater Grant. Because of the popularity of this program, organizers ask for no repeat attendees from the last workshop to allow other residents the chance to build one. One rain barrel per household. Grimes residents 18 and older only.
- Women and Money, March 28, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Gain confidence in your finances through education and personalized guidance, empowering you to make informed decisions and achieve your goals with clarity and purpose. Presented by Shalini Babu, a licensed financial planner with Prudential Advisors. ■

TEACHING civic pride

American Legion youth programs and essay contest make impact.



The 2025 Post 49 Flag Essay winner was Claire Heston, pictured with Commander Mike Buckalew.



Commander Mike Buckalew and Principal Jason Snow with essay writers Cora Temple, Claire Overton, Claire Heston (winner) and Jo Isqi.

What some people might not know is that the American Legion — the oldest veterans and active-duty organization in the nation — offers numerous youth programs and activities.

Mike Buckalew, commander of the American Legion Post 49 in Dallas Center, believes the oldest is the Boys State program, where boys currently in the 11th grade have an opportunity to attend a weeklong adventure at Camp Dodge learning how state government works.

Other youth programs include baseball, junior shooting sports, the oratorical program and more.

"These youth programs are great for our communities and excellent opportunities for kids to participate in," Buckalew says.

There's also the Fifth Grade Flag Essay, a contest for elementary students designed to help them develop knowledge and appreciation of the United States flag, as well as learn flag etiquette and respect. Any fifth-grade student may participate. In the Dallas Center-Grimes

school district, the American Legion posts in both communities have teamed up with the schools to give fifth graders this opportunity.

"We couldn't make this happen without their help and cooperation," Buckalew says. "The contestants are divided up between Post 49 and Post 577. This year was our best year yet for participants, with eight."

The posts and schools begin promoting the contest in mid-September. Essays must be one page, 300 words or fewer, double-spaced, in 12-point font, and written entirely in the students' own words and effort.

The posts collect the essays in early December. Post 49 sends them via email to members and reads them at a monthly meeting before voting. Once a winner is selected, the posts host a small but enthusiastic ceremony to recognize the students.

At the local level, each post determines its own awards. Post 49 gives its winner a \$100 gift card, while Post 577 awards a \$100 Amazon card. All participants receive a small

desk flag set.

This year, Dallas Center Post 49 members were especially impressed with Claire Heston's essay, saying she put her heart into it. She focused her essay on how the flag represents freedom, bravery, pride, respect and happiness.

"She was practically a unanimous choice," Buckalew says.

The next step in the contest sends the local post-winning essays on to District 6 — one of nine districts in Iowa — which includes Dallas, Madison, Marion, Polk, Story and Warren counties. Each district selects three place winners, and the first-place essay advances to the American Legion Department of Iowa in Des Moines.

There, a Children and Youth Committee makes the final decisions, and department finalists are invited to read their essays at the state convention. Department-level winners can receive \$500, \$300 and \$200 for first, second and third place — not bad for a fifth grader. ■

THIRD Jump START vehicle giveaway

In January, Shade Tree Auto's Ankeny location hosted its third Jump START vehicle giveaway to Dalton and Kelsey Bright. Dalton is a local veteran currently serving his country on deployment. Kelsey and their son, Dean, were able to receive the Nissan Pathfinder on his behalf.

The inspiration behind the giveaway came from Shade Tree Auto's belief that reliable transportation is essential to stability and success in Central Iowa. "It can be difficult for veterans to ask for help. We employ a number of veterans here and see it every day," Dan Kline, COO of Shade Tree Auto and veteran himself, says. "Jump START exists to help veterans get back on their feet when transportation is the missing piece."

The giveaway was made possible through the donation of the vehicle from a customer of the local shop and the collective effort of Shade Tree Auto's technicians, advisors and leadership team, who inspected, repaired and prepared the vehicle to ensure it was dependable and ready for daily use. Local vendors such as Arnold's Motor Supply and Factory Motor Parts also played a role by supporting the Jump START mission



Staff of Shade Tree Auto present a vehicle to the Dalton and Kelsey Bright family as part of the business' Jump Start program to benefit veterans in need of transportation.

through donations and helping spread awareness of the program. Non-profit partnerships with 1-800-Charity Cars and 214Life.org helped with the taxable donation and title transfer.

Ultimately, the Ankeny Jump START giveaway reflects a larger commitment to community involvement and service. By providing the vehicle at no cost, Shade Tree Auto aimed to remove financial barriers and

offer genuine support during a critical moment.

"Everyone goes through times where they need a little help," Clint Dudley, owner of Shade Tree Auto, says. "We're fortunate to have these talents and resources to provide a reliable vehicle that can improve someone's situation."

For more information on the Jump START program, to donate or nominate a veteran, visit www.shadetreeauto.biz/jump-start. ■

2025 City of Grimes highlights

From opening a new Public Safety Center to breaking records on program attendance, a lot of great things happened in Grimes. City officials say these are the Top 5 of 2025.

1. The Grimes Public Safety Center opened in the winter of 2025. The 16,500-square-foot facility serves as a new fire station and has space for the Polk County Sheriff's Office to meet with the public.

2. Program participation is breaking records, with some programs seeing participation up 80%. Plus, thousands of people attended the city's summer and fall events.

3. The city is continuing to update its aging infrastructure with the widening of S. James Street, the S.E. 11th Street improvement project, and the S.E. Fourth/Fifth/Sixth Street and Little Beaver water main replacement. More is coming in 2026.

4. The need for more public art is something city officials say they frequently hear

from residents. In 2025, the Library Arboretum welcomed new sculptures, including seed pods and a butterfly. The Liberty Amphitheater also opened with sculptures to represent the branches of the military. The city also has the design for a mural that will be painted on a building on Main Street.

5. In 2025, the city took important steps to involve residents in planning for the future of the community and completed the 2050 Comprehensive Plan, which outlines the vision for Grimes over the next 25 years. The Downtown Assessment was also completed. This report identified opportunities for revitalization, economic growth and infrastructure improvements in downtown Grimes. Hundreds of residents, ranging in age from 15 to 98, offered their suggestions online and in person for both the Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Assessment.

The City of Grimes is planning a new

Public Administration building to bring city staff together and ensure services can operate safely and reliably. This is happening due to deteriorating conditions in the Grimes Community Complex that have disrupted city services, as well as the eventual widening of Highway 44, which will demolish the current City Hall building.

The building will be located at Waterworks Park. While portions of the park will change, Waterworks Park will remain 75–80% open space with room for recreation. Some updates include additional Splash Pad parking, preservation of mature trees, new landscaping and trees, and trail enhancements. Construction on the \$8.5 million building will start in spring 2026, and the building will open in 2027. This location was selected after years of city council discussion as the most cost-effective and centrally located option to meet the city's long-term needs while balancing community impacts. ■

A HEART for others

Mackey volunteers with organizations that help people.

Jan Mackey cares deeply about Many Hands — an organization focused on “transforming together, to be love in action, in a broken world.”

An extension of Many Hands is its thrift markets, one of which is in Grimes. This is where Mackey has volunteered since 2017.

“I volunteer primarily at Many Hands because I believe in their mission, and, as I have learned more about the amazing work they do, it has impacted my desire to do more — so much so that I am doing an impact trip in February,” she explains.

Many Hands currently takes groups of volunteers to Abaco to lend a helping hand and make an impact on the lives of those living in the country.

Mackey also volunteers with the organization’s Clothing Closet, which receives unsold items from Many Hands to distribute to those in need.

Aside from her work with Many Hands, Mackey is active at Gigi’s Playhouse — a community center where families gather to attend programs, lectures and events that promote the self-esteem and self-



Tim Short of Edward Jones presents the Good Neighbor certificate to Jan Mackey.

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advocacy of families touched by Down syndrome.

“I have a daughter with Down syndrome, and I enjoy giving back to them,” Mackey shares.

Overall, Mackey makes time to volunteer for many reasons.

“You meet the most amazing people who become friends and give you great joy,” she says. “The staff and volunteers at Many Hands are exceptional. They make you feel you are an important part of their community and thus an important part of the work they do in Haiti and Abaco.”

Mackey feels volunteering is good for the soul as well.

“It’s important we all give back in some way,” she says. “I love meeting the customers and those who donate to Many Hands. They are appreciative of the work Many Hands does and they give generously.”

When a customer finds something they need or something that evokes a fond memory, that’s fun for Mackey to experience.

“The Many Hands community has become very important to me, and it’s an amazing organization that makes a difference in many lives,” she says. “My grandson once saw the Many Hands sign as we drove by the store and said, ‘Look Grandma, so many hands to help people.’ Bingo, he got it.” ■

Do you know a Good Neighbor who deserves recognition?

Nominate at tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.



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INVESTMENT By Daniel Rundahl

A FEBRUARY message to our loved ones



February is often associated with love — cards, flowers and gestures meant to remind the people in our lives that they matter. For many of us, love is expressed more in preparation. As a financial advisor, I see every day that one of the ways we care for others is by planning well on their behalf.

As January transitions into February, most households are focused on financial housekeeping. W-2s and 1099s begin to arrive, tax documents are organized and attention turns to what the past year looked like on paper. While this process is necessary, February also presents a valuable opportunity to look forward. It's a time to evaluate how our financial decisions reflect what — and who — we love.

One area to review is giving. Many churches and charitable organizations send annual contribution summaries early in the year. Changes to tax law have reduced the number of people who benefit from charitable deductions, but generosity was never meant to be transactional. February is a good time to reassess the causes you support and consider whether there are new organizations you would like to include in your giving plan.

Next is saving, which often feels overwhelming because it touches so many parts of life. Short-term goals might include upcoming travel, celebrations or home projects. Long-term goals could involve retirement, education funding or future care for loved ones. The key is clarity. When you understand what you are saving for — and when you'll need it — you can build a plan that balances today's needs with tomorrow's priorities. February is an ideal time to review current savings habits and make adjustments before the year gets away from you.

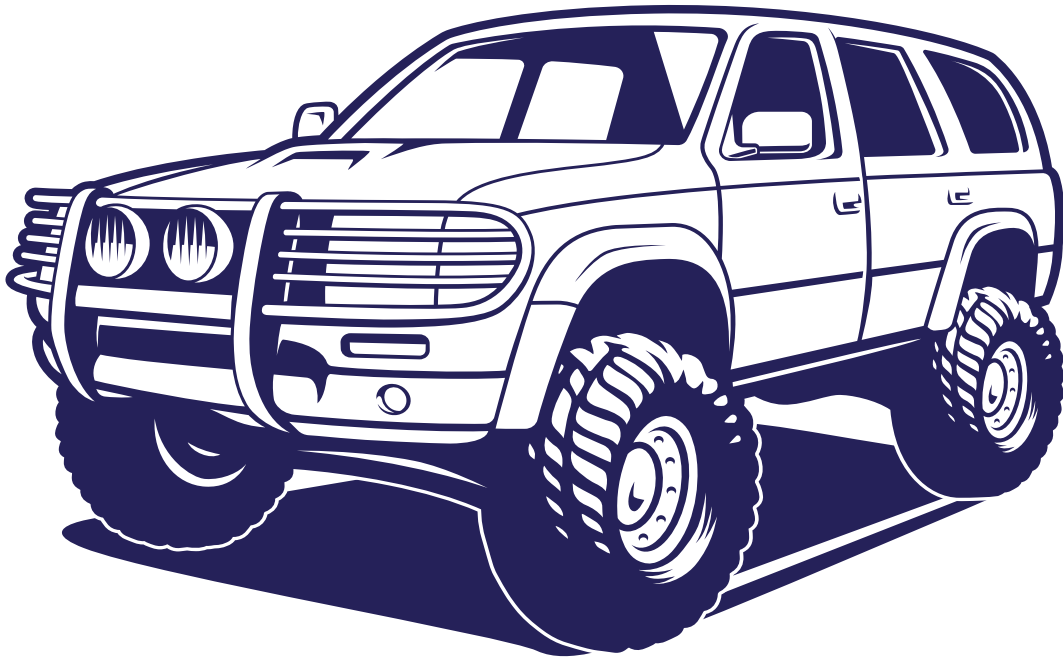
Then comes planning, where structure turns intention into progress. Think through your goals by answering a few simple questions: Who is this for? What does success look like? When does it need to happen? Where does it take place? And, most importantly, why does it matter now? That "why" is the emotional driver. It is what keeps a plan moving when discipline is required or tradeoffs need to be made.

Finally, there is the how — and this is where working with a financial advisor can make a meaningful difference. A good advisor doesn't just manage numbers and boast gains when the stock market is up; they help connect financial strategies to real life. They walk alongside you through decisions, help identify risks and adjust plans as life changes. They advise about potential roadblocks and assist with variables that may deter your long-term course.

As Valentine's Day approaches, I encourage you to ask one question: Are you in love with your financial plan? If not, February is a perfect time to revisit it, refine it and ensure it reflects the people and priorities you care about most. ■

Information provided by Daniel Rundahl, Financial Advisor, Rundahl Financial Consultants, 8230 Hickman Road, Suite 300, Clive, 515-727-1701, drundahl@rundahlfinancial.com, www.rundahlfinancialconsultants.com.

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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. ■

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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ICE

Having grown up in the Midwest, I warn you to look out for ICE. Be careful. It is dangerous. We have watched with shock and horror as ICE has killed two people in Minnesota. This ICE is demonstrably more dangerous than the frozen kind. And the fact that this is happening within four hours of our quiet little town is terrifying to some and maddening to many. Will they come here when they leave Minneapolis?

Large group protests can be effective in sending a message to your lawmakers. However, we have seen how dangerous that can be when protesting against the actions of this specific agency. If you decide to lend your physical presence, be respectful of persons and property, stay very aware of your surroundings, and do not take a gun (or any other item that can be interpreted as a weapon), even if you are legally allowed to carry one.

Assaults on ICE agents and their vehicles have exploded. Is this effective protest? No. It is criminal. President Trump has just issued a warning that any attack or threat on federal property or agents will be responded to with even greater force.

The most effective way to make a difference is to direct your voice to your federal lawmakers. Go to Washington, D.C., call, write, email, GO to your lawmaker's and the President's office... oh, I said that. If your lawmaker and their staff have no time for anything but fielding calls and dealing with visitor requests on the same topic, THAT will get their attention. (Incidentally, emails are easily dragged to the trash. I'm not saying do not email. I am just saying there are more effective methods of making sure your lawmaker is hearing YOUR voice.) If your lawmaker holds a town hall, go. Find out the rules for participation and ask to participate.

Regardless of your stance on immigration policies, many feel that the current method of enforcement is an egregious abuse of power and a direct threat to our constitutional form of government. As citizens, you do have rights. And, as the saying goes, "If you don't protect them, you are in danger of losing them."

I know this is a controversial topic. However, I was motivated by Martha Stewart's 14-year-old granddaughter, who recently encouraged her to speak out with the admonition, "I'm not sure it's excusable to not be speaking up right now." ■

Information provided by Cynthia P. Letsch, JD, CMP, Letsch Law Firm, 112 N.E. Ewing St., Suite D, Grimes, 515-986-2810, www.LetschLawFirm.com.



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NEW art to beautify Grimes



A mural will be painted this spring at 210 S.E. Main St.

The downtown mural design has been announced. The brightly colored mural celebrates the community's identity, growth and creativity. Local artist and DCG graduate Courtney Garcia worked with DCG High School students on concepts this past fall. The idea for a mural downtown came from input during the city's Downtown Assessment process. The mural will be at 210 S.E. Main St. and is funded by a grant from BRAVO and donations. The project will begin in the spring.

There is also new art in the arboretum at the Grimes Public Library. These brightly colored alphabet blocks have fun facts about trees and are located in the southwest corner. If you are out checking out the art, be mindful of several stakes in the ground. These are markers for where a walking path will be installed as soon as the weather gets a little warmer. ■



Additional art has been installed at the arboretum by the library. A walking path will be installed near the art pieces.

NEWS BRIEF

NuVu Builders celebrates A+ rating

NuVu Builders, Inc., a trusted name in home exterior remodeling, announced it has earned an A+ rating from the Better Business Bureau® (BBB) as it celebrates its 24th consecutive year as a BBB-accredited business. This milestone reflects more than two decades of dedication to quality craftsmanship, ethical business practices and exceptional customer service throughout Central Iowa.

NuVu Builders is Iowa's exclusive Infinity® by Marvin® dealer, offering premium fiberglass window replacement solutions known for durability, energy efficiency and timeless design.

In addition to windows, NuVu Builders provides expert roof replacement services and professional installation of James Hardie® fiber cement siding, helping homeowners protect and enhance their homes with industry-leading products.

While the company is known for the quality of its materials and workmanship, owners Anthony and Katherine Hewitt say their greatest point of pride is NuVu Builders' reputation for honesty, integrity and outstanding service.

"Our A+ BBB rating isn't just a score — it's a reflection of the relationships we've built with our customers over the past 24 years,"

said Anthony Hewitt. "We believe in doing the right thing, standing behind our work, and treating every homeowner with respect. That commitment has always guided our business."

The Better Business Bureau evaluates companies based on factors such as transparency, responsiveness, and customer trust. Maintaining an A+ rating for more than two decades highlights NuVu Builders' consistent dedication to these values.

NuVu Builders serves homeowners throughout the region from its headquarters in Grimes. ■

'Honeyeater'

This is not an easy book to read. Just throwing that out there if you're not the kind of person who likes a challenging read. This is a slow-burn, convoluted, stream of consciousness style story that performs literary acrobatics while it breaks your heart.

If you are up for a complicated, foggy whirl of beautiful prose and haunted characters, then get ready; this is a doozy.

Charlie wants out of the flooded mess of Bellworth, a town full of childhood ghosts and regret. However, before he can break free, a woman with roses piercing her skin turns his world inside out. Grace drags Charlie into the depths of the secrets and mysteries of this creepy town, and terrifying choices await the pair when the muck comes loose.

Dizzy, unsettling, twisted and experimental, this is a whirlwind of a book I read twice, just to catch the things I missed the first time. I may tackle it a third time, to revel in the beauty of the writing. Be prepared for this one to seep into your bones in the best way.

— Review by Julie Goodrich



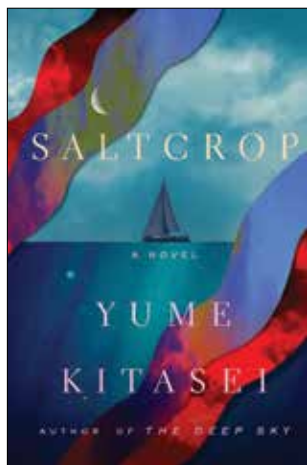
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'Saltcrop'

Sisterhood is one of those things that is endlessly fascinating to me. I didn't grow up with a sister, and like many people who are always seeking the unfamiliar, stories about the complexities of sisters draw me in. "Saltcrop" delivers a powerful jolt of a story about sisters searching a crumbling world for answers, for themselves and, ultimately, for hope.

Skipper and Carmen are as unlike as two people can be, but they are sisters, nonetheless. Brought together by a strange plea from their eldest, accomplished sister Nora, they will have to travel through a world in the throes of ecological collapse and a society that may be imploding even faster.

Full of richly realized characters, strange vistas and threaded through with a strange sense of unease, this is a wildly beautiful story told with immense skill and pitch-perfect pacing. Kitasei is a powerful writer, and she absolutely shines in this one. I flew through it and have been recommending it to anyone who likes a good family drama, an ecological horror story or just a good heroine's journey. ■ — Review by Julie Goodrich



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CHAMBER Dinner

Grimes Chamber Dinner was held at Stoney Creek Inn in Johnston on Jan. 15.



Vinni Smith, Tyler Lyon and Nicole Lyon



Adam Bunge, Kanezza Springer and Chrissy Draper



Pete and Stephanie Hamell



Allan Willemssen and Marlene Minshew



Justin and Dani Frampton



Michelle Buethe and Lu Anne Gafford



John Palmer and Blake Campbell



Shaylon and Alex Kobrock



Travis Huiatt and Leann Culver



Brantley and Kim Praska



Krystal Blomgren and Amanda Butler

HIDDEN benefits of shopping local

In an age dominated by big-box retailers, global online marketplaces and chain restaurants, shopping with local companies may seem like a small or even outdated choice. However, supporting local businesses offers a range of hidden benefits that positively affect individuals, communities and the broader economy.

When consumers spend money at locally owned businesses, a larger portion of that money stays within the community. Local owners are more likely to purchase goods and services from nearby suppliers, hire local professionals and reinvest profits back into the area. This circulation of money helps create jobs, stabilize neighborhoods and foster long-term economic resilience.

Shopping locally also encourages stronger social connections. Local business owners tend to know their customers personally, creating a sense of trust that large corporations rarely replicate. These relationships help build community identity and pride, turning shopping into a more meaningful, human-centered experience.

Additionally, local companies contribute to diversity and innovation. Independent businesses are free to offer unique products, services and experiences tailored to local tastes and needs. This variety prevents communities from becoming homogenized and encourages creativity, craftsmanship and entrepreneurial risk-taking. Consumers benefit from higher-quality goods, specialized services and solutions that are not mass-produced.

Local small businesses provide more than goods and services. It is the people in these businesses that make the difference. Local small businesses have owners, managers and employees who live in the community. They own homes, send kids to schools, and pay the taxes that support the services all citizens enjoy.

Local businesses have owners and managers who become leaders in their community. These business leaders become school board members, they run for city council, and, most importantly, they volunteer for nearly anything that is asked. How many of you know a local business person who has coached your kid, served you a drink at Governors Days or driven one of our elderly citizens to a doctor appointment?

Ultimately, shopping with local companies is about more than a single transaction. It is an investment in community well-being. By choosing local businesses, consumers quietly but powerfully not only invest in the business, but also the people who make up those businesses.

Please keep this in mind the next time that you spend a dollar. It does matter to your community. Please support these local providers and Buy Local. ■



NEW 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten finisher

Another youngster has completed the 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten Program at Grimes Public Library. 1,000 Books before Kindergarten is a nationwide program to encourage families to read 1,000 books together before a child reaches kindergarten. It is a fun and free way to start your child on the path to success with prizes at every 100 books. Stop by the library to sign up.

Name: Mackenzie Walck

Parents' names: Kristen and Aaron Walck

Age: 1

Favorite book: "Biscuit" books by Alyssa Capucilli

Favorite animal: Dog ■



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grimes chamber & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Information provided by Chris Watkins, Raccoon Valley Bank, Grimes Chamber & Economic Development Board Chair 2026.

CHAMBER Dinner

Grimes Chamber Dinner was held at Stoney Creek Inn in Johnston on Jan. 15.



Dave Baker and Bobbi Jo Wolfe



Garrett Neel and Hannah Ross



Jennifer and CJ Wade



Andy and Jen Grove



Nicole and Andy Stoecken



Rich Barnes and Zerina Lilic



Walt Jacobsen and Thomas Armstrong



Chris and Vanessa Anderson



Randi Gustason, Dan Boes and Naomi Boes



Mark Shepard, Chloe Fox and Scott Carpenter



Grimes Chamber held a ribbon cutting for European Taste on Jan. 9.



Mark, Mia, Alex and Alina Dvorschii at the Grimes Chamber ribbon cutting for European Taste on Jan. 9.



Chad Allison and Mike Bieskacek at the Grimes Chamber ribbon cutting for European Taste on Jan. 9.



Beth Hansen and Lu Anne Gafford at the Grimes Chamber ribbon cutting for European Taste on Jan. 9.



Julie Quandt and Eric Johansen at the Grimes Chamber ribbon cutting for European Taste on Jan. 9.



Ryleah Cross and Madison Taiber at the Grimes Chamber ribbon cutting for European Taste on Jan. 9.



Sul Ciang and Ashley Martin at the Grimes Chamber ribbon cutting for European Taste on Jan. 9.



Andy Stoecken and Joan Warren at the Grimes Chamber ribbon cutting for European Taste on Jan. 9.



Halsey and Joel Altringer at the Grimes Chamber Dinner at Stoney Creek Inn in Johnston on Jan. 15.



Heidi and Chris Watkins at the Grimes Chamber Dinner at Stoney Creek Inn in Johnston on Jan. 15.



Carl and Nancy Kapfer at the Grimes Chamber Dinner at Stoney Creek Inn in Johnston on Jan. 15.

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