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NORTH POLK

FEBRUARY 2026

Living

MAGAZINE

'I Do'

Residents share
their marriage
proposal stories.

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Kiwanis Seniors of the Month
EDUCATION

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GETTING AHEAD OF THE SPRING MARKET

WHY FEBRUARY IS SO IMPORTANT



Hey homeowners

If selling is even remotely on your radar this spring... February is the month that can quietly make or break your results. The spring market doesn't "start" when the flowers show up, it starts when sellers get prepared early, photos are scheduled, and the best homes hit the market here in Central Iowa before the crowd.

Here are 4 simple ways to get ahead now (and set yourself up to win later).

Why February is so important:

Get a pricing plan before you list

A quick market analysis now helps you avoid the "last-minute pricing scramble." You'll know what price range makes sense, what buyers are paying attention to, and how to position your home from day one.

Tackle what buyers always notice

Small repairs have a big impact on how buyers feel in the home. Knocking out touch-up paint, squeaks, loose hardware, and lighting now can prevent those items from turning into negotiation points later.

Start your listing timeline (so you're not scrambling)

The best listings look effortless because the prep is planned. February is a great time to pick a photo date, map out showing logistics (pets/kids/work schedules), and choose a launch window that gives your home maximum visibility.

Make your home "photo-ready" in stages

You don't need to declutter your whole life in one weekend. Do it in simple layers (closets and counters first, then storage/garage, then bedrooms and bathrooms) so you're ready for photos without the chaos.

Things to do around Des Moines in February

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| FEB
18-21 | Boys State Wrestling IHSA
Casey's Center
General admission. |
| FEB
22 | Botanical Blues
Botanical Gardens
1 p.m. - 4 p.m. |
| FEB
27 | Snowshoe Hike
MacRae Park
Registration is required. |
| MAR
13-15 | Spring Arts & Crafts Show
Iowa State Fairgrounds
Times vary. |
| MAR
21 | Iowa Wild Hockey
Casey's Center
5 p.m. |



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Featured Listing

805 SE 14TH STREET
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This one-of-a-kind home features 4-beds, 3-baths, and an impressive list of upgrades! A new roof (2020), new water heater (2024), backup sump pump, updated flooring and appliances. The fully fenced yard features a nine-person hot tub and sauna, both included with the home.

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. ■

SHANE GOODMAN
President and Publisher
Big Green Umbrella Media
shane@dmcityview.com
515-953-4822, ext. 305



Tammy Pearson
Editor
515-953-4822 ext. 302
tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com

Dan Juffer
Senior Advertising
Account Executive
515-953-4822 ext. 303
dan.juffer@dmcityview.com



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Let's Walk Together in Christ Scan here!

'I Do'

Residents share their marriage proposal stories.

By Lindsey Giardino

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.

On a trip to Beijing, China, in November of 2018, Megan Marti and her now-husband, Ethan, visited The Great Wall of China, where Ethan proposed.

Hook, line and forever

Since the early 1990s, Amanda Drinnin's family has taken annual vacations to Leech Lake in Minnesota. Years later, when she began dating her future husband, Joel, he joined the tradition as well.

Because several families attended the trips, many people spent their days fishing, Joel included. As a result, during one trip in 2011, Drinnin hadn't had much time alone with him.

But that changed on a Monday afternoon, when Joel asked if she wanted to go for a boat ride. She agreed. Then, later at dinner, he asked if she would like to visit Lake Benedict — her favorite offshoot of the larger lake.

"I told him I didn't think that was a very good idea because the weather was a little iffy that day," Drinnin recalls. "We got on the boat and took off, and, after a while, I realized he was taking me there. I got a little annoyed because he didn't listen to me."

When they arrived, only one other boat was on the lake. Joel shut off both the engine and the radio. Drinnin was confused, assuming they were about to fish, though she had never seen anyone fish there before.

"Then he got in his tackle box, got down on one knee, and I started laughing and crying," she recalls.

While she doesn't remember every word he said, she knows she was both shocked and overjoyed. Even the storm they encountered on the ride back couldn't dampen the moment.

"To this day, Joel says I just made beeps and squeak sounds and then finally said yes," Drinnin says. "And then I told him I needed to tell my parents, and he said they already knew. Then I said I had to call my grandparents and that's what I did — crying tears of happiness on Lake Benedict, Minnesota."

Drinnin admits she had absolutely no idea a proposal was coming that night.

"Looking back now, I understand why my mom so badly wanted to take a picture of us before we left," she says. "It's the only picture we have of the night, and I am OK with it. We had just attended one of my cousin's weddings nine days earlier, and I happened to catch the bouquet after falling on the floor for it and proceeded to go on and on about how I was probably never going to get married because Joel would never ask. Little did I know."

Everyone at the lake joined in celebrating the couple, making the moment even sweeter.

"When I saw my sister, there was lots of screaming," Drinnin says. "Some family friends



Amanda Drinnin's husband, Joel, proposed to her on a boat on Lake Benedict in Minnesota.

had rented a pontoon for the week, and they took us on a celebratory sunset pontoon ride. It was very special, and I was still in shock."

For Drinnin, having her parents present at her favorite place in the world made the experience priceless. Even more meaningful was the one-of-a-kind ring Joel had designed — a Möbius strip, a surface with only one side and one edge that represents continuity and unity.

"He had secretly worked on it for months, telling me he was going fishing when in reality he was going to make me this incredibly special ring," Drinnin says.

When love went right

Although Kaya Turbes knew her now-husband, Zach, was going to propose, she had no idea when.

It helped that the two already had a plan — at least in theory. Zach graduated from basic training in December 2016 and was stationed in Hawaii. He told Turbes he would have to head straight to the island and wouldn't be home until his three years were complete.

"I was devastated because I hadn't seen him since May and just wanted to have my best friend back," she shares. "One day, while moping on the couch, my front door opened, and in walked Zachary."

He explained that he would be home for about a week before heading to Hawaii. One night while out with friends, a pact they had made early in their relationship came up.



"The pact was one of those 'If we're both single at this age, then we'll get married' pacts," Turbes says. "At that moment, we decided that we didn't feel like waiting that long. We came up with the plan that I would come visit him for a week in April, we'd get engaged and he'd come home for the wedding in December. Fool proof."

The next morning, Turbes told her mom she planned to marry Zach and move to Hawaii. Her mom laughed it off, not realizing how serious she was. The only other person in on the plan was her close friend, Taylor.

Months later, Turbes casually brought up wedding venues while out to eat with her mom and Taylor.

"My mother's face dropped as she heard the seriousness in my voice, and it finally hit her that I wasn't joking around when I told her my plans to get married," Turbes says. "Sorry, mom!"

Soon after, Turbes boarded a flight to Hawaii fully expecting to return with a ring.

"The entire week that I was there visiting, everything that could have gone wrong, did," Turbes says. "Zach's car caught on fire, our hotel lost our reservation, Zach got food poisoning, his car got stolen, my ring got left behind at a sketchy place called ToeJamz — the universe was out to get us."

With setback after setback, the proposal kept being delayed.

"I was honestly starting to think that Zach

changed his mind about the entire plan, but, on my second to last day there, he took me to Waimea Bay, and we had the absolute best time,” Turbes says. “We were getting ready to leave and started walking toward the car, but I told him I needed to go to the restroom before we left. That’s when I heard, ‘Wait, before you do that...’ ”

She turned to see him down on one knee, trying not to laugh.

“I couldn’t help but roll my eyes and start laughing with him,” she says. “I honestly can’t remember a single word he said, but we both couldn’t stop smiling no matter how hard we tried. To celebrate our engagement, we went out to the world’s fanciest dinner — Taco Bell.”

The Turbeses recently celebrated their nine-year anniversary on Dec. 9, the day before their second son was born. All these years later, their unique love story continues.

“I fall in love with Zach more and more every single day,” she says. “I love doing life with him, and I can’t wait to see what the future holds for us. There’s not a single part of our crazy love story that I would change, even if I could.”



Zach Turbes proposed to Kaya at Waimea Bay in Hawaii.



Engagement at one of the world’s wonders

In November 2018, Megan Marti and her now-husband, Ethan, were in Beijing visiting her roommate. One day, the two women visited one of the Wonders of the World: The Great Wall of China. They traveled to a secluded area of the landmark, where there was a big surprise — Ethan, who dropped down on one knee.

“My friends had been tipped off the day before while visiting Shanghai Tower where Ethan had told them in secret on the 118th floor,” Marti recalls. “I did not expect a

proposal at that time, certainly not in China, though Ethan and I had discussed our future and getting engaged in the next year.”

That being said, Marti remembers feeling overwhelmingly shocked at the proposal. Because of it, she doesn’t know exactly what he said during his speech — but she knows it was special.

“My husband remembers being so nervous about carrying a ring that far with him without losing it,” she adds. “Reminiscing about the proposal Ethan now says, ‘Time stopped, the world stood still, and the stars aligned.’ The kids

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The Great Wall of China was the backdrop for the engagement of Megan and Ethan Marti.

and I now laugh. He is a very thoughtful and devoted husband, yet sometimes a cheesy dad.”

The couple will always have the memory, since a friend of Marti’s filmed the proposal from around the corner, while the other bought drinks afterward from a lone vendor with a drink cart in the remote part of The Great Wall.

“It was meant to be,” she says.

Afterward, they celebrated with a Beijing duck dinner in a hidden restaurant.

“It was such a surreal and exciting experience,” Marti says. “It was the best dinner of our two-week trip.”

The couple has now been married for more than five years and has welcomed three children — Mia, Easton and Ella — along with two sister kitty cats, Peanut and Jelly. ■



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IT'S BACK!

Who will be voted favorite in Ankeny and Northern Polk County?

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.

SCAN HERE TO
VOTE TODAY!



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
- Lawn Care Business
- 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

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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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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KIWANIS Seniors of the Month

Each month the Kiwanis Club of Polk City names its seniors of the month. Following are recent honorees.

Olivia Nefzger

"I'm Olivia Nefzger, and I live in Alleman with my parents, Jeremy and Teresa, and my two sisters, Claire and Evelyn. Throughout high school, I have participated in football cheer, basketball cheer, tennis, marching band, concert band, show choir, concert choir, key club and student council. I am part of National Honor Society and the Gold Honor Roll. I am also captain for both the football cheer and basketball cheer teams. Outside of school, I have been involved in church youth group. After high school, I plan on going to Iowa State University for kinesiology."



Savannah Tighe

"I am involved in cheer, tennis and Key Club. I currently work at Rising Sun Cafe in Polk City. My favorite subjects are English and psychology. After high school, I plan on going to DMACC to study elementary education."

Savannah's parents are Scott and Andrea Tighe of Polk City. She has one sibling, Mason.



Jack Spieker

"My name is Jack Spieker, and I am a senior at North Polk High School. I am the son of Dan and Marcy Spieker and I have a brother, Tommy, and a sister, Emily. I am involved in baseball and basketball, and I'm in NHS and Spanish NHS. I enjoy playing sports, fishing and hanging out with friends and family. My favorite high school memory has been winning state baseball, as well as winning the conference three years in a row. I plan to attend Iowa State University next fall and major in engineering."

In addition, Jack is a member of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church and lists the following additional honors: Gold Honor Roll, second team all-conference in baseball, honorable mention all-conference in basketball, student of the month and RRC Leadership Conference.



Drew Charles Fausch

Drew and his parents, Jim and Lisa Fausch, and siblings, Mason and Ryan, live in Alleman.

"My name is Drew Fausch, and I am a senior at North Polk. I am involved in baseball, tennis, FFA and National Honor Society. In my free

time, I enjoy working on the farm, restoring a tractor and spending time with my family and friends."

Drew plans to major in Agronomy next fall at Iowa State University.

"One of my favorite high school memories was going to Indianapolis with my friends for the FFA National Convention."

Drew's favorite classes are science, agriculture and history. He has earned the Iowa FFA Degree, is this year's FFA president, has been on Gold Honor Roll all four years and on the DMACC President's List and was homecoming king.



Ella Hill

Ella is the daughter of Melanie Hill of Polk City and has one sibling, Isaac Hill.

"I love reading, writing, music and theatre, and I am passionate about serving others. I am very excited to attend Eastern Illinois University as an honors student next year," she says.

Ella's favorite classes are literature classes. She has been involved in concert band, marching band, pep band, tennis, musical, play, speech, show choir and chamber choir. Honors include All State Speech, DMACC President's List, Spanish Honor Society, National Honor Society and Gold Honor Roll, as well as being admitted with honors to Eastern Illinois University. She volunteers at her church and works for Polk City Parks and Recreation.

After graduation, she plans to study human services and to pursue a career in addiction counseling.



Aidan Schumann

"Hello, I'm Aidan Schumann and my parents are Jeff and Amy Schumann. My brother is a sophomore at Northwestern College, and my sister is in her first year of dental school at the University of Iowa. I participate in track and field, Principal's Council and Comets For Christ at North Polk. I have been on the Gold Honor Roll for three years in a row and have recently submitted 140 hours of community service for Silver Cord. I also have recently been accepted into National Honor Society and Spanish Honor Society. I attend Lakeside Fellowship youth group and have been on multiple missions trips to the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. As of now, I am undecided and have not committed to any colleges."

Aidan says his favorite subjects are AP Chemistry and DMACC Environmental Science. ■



SPRING BREAK special kids programming

Spring Break Bingo

Challenge. Complete activities anytime during Spring Break. Pick up your BINGO card starting the week of March 9. Complete activities on your own to earn a BINGO. Cards with a completed BINGO may be entered into a prize drawing.

Drop-In Craft. Tuesday, March 17, 2-4 p.m. Drop in and work on a craft with your family. We will set up the craft and the supplies, and you just need to bring your creativity. All ages are welcome. Parents and guardians are required to stay with their children.

Family Bingo. Wednesday, March 18 from 2-3 p.m. Who doesn't love BINGO or winning prizes. Registration is required.

Teen D.I.Y. Thursday, March 20, 2-3 p.m. Pop in to create a beaded plant that brings a touch of nature indoors — no watering required. Registration is required. Ages 10 and older.

OTHER EVENTS

See additional special events on the Events page.

Adult Crafternoon: Paper Quilling, Monday, March 2, 2 p.m. We'll have plenty of new paper quilling project ideas for you to choose from. Or, if you were at the last session, feel free to bring your snowflake in and continue adding to it. All supplies will be provided. Registration required. Ages 17 and older.

Adult Coloring, Wednesday, March 4, 1-3 p.m.; Tuesday, March 17, 5-7 p.m. Ages 17 and older.

Wednesday Book Club. Wednesday, March 4, 7 p.m. "A Well-Trained Wife: my escape from Christian patriarchy" by Tia Levings. "Today it hit me when he hit me, blood shaking in my brain. Maybe there wasn't a savior coming. Maybe it was up to me to save me." Told in a beautiful, honest and sometimes harrowing voice, "A Well-Trained Wife" is an unforgettable and timely memoir about a woman's race to save herself and her family and details the ways that extreme views can manifest in a marriage.

The Lit Bag. A free monthly subscription for PCCL teens in grades 7-12. Each themed bag includes two handpicked YA library books plus fun treats, crafts or swag — personalized to your reading interests. Register online each month and complete the form to secure your spot. Bags are ready the first Thursday of the month. Keep the goodies, return the rest! Registration: Feb. 19. Pick-up: March 5.

The Lit Bag: JF. Same concept, but now open to grades 3-6. Registration: Feb. 19. Pick-up: March 5.

Babble and Brew. Thursday, March 6, 10 a.m. Playtime for them, coffee and conversation for you.

Lego Club, Monday, March 9, 4 p.m. Registration is required, Register online at polkcitylibrary.org. Grades K-7.

Monday Book Club. Monday, March 16, 2 p.m. "The Women" by Kristen Hannah. In 1965, nursing student Frankie McGrath, after hearing the words: "Women can be heroes, too," impulsively joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows her brother to Vietnam where she is overwhelmed by the destruction of war, as well as the unexpected trauma of coming home to a

changed and politically divided America.

Messy Munchkins. Thursday, March 20, 10 a.m.

Mah Jongg. Thursday, March 26, 5-8 p.m. Calling all tile titans and newbies alike. Join us for our inaugural Mah Jongg extravaganza at the library. The Dealt Hand will bring their Mah Jongg magic, teaching us the ropes. Registration is a must and is open to ages 17 and older.

Pre-K Playday. Friday, March 27, 9-11 a.m. at City Hall. For children up to age 5. Full of sensory toys, fun structures and musical instruments. Parent/caregiver attendance is required.

RECURRING EVENTS

• Geri-Fit® Strength Training Workouts, Mondays 9 a.m. Ages 50 and over. Stretch bands and a Zoom link are available upon request.

• STEAM Storytime, Mondays 10:15 a.m. Designed for ages 3-5.

• Chair Yoga, Tuesdays, 9 a.m., cancelled for March 10. Join the zoom meeting on our website at polkcitylibrary.org.

• Tiny Tots Storytime, Tuesdays at 10:15 a.m. Designed for ages 3 and younger.

• Qigong/Tai Chi, Wednesdays at 9 a.m. Tailored to ages 50 and older.

• Ladies' Wednesday Coffee, Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to noon.

• Sit N' Stitch, Thursdays, 6-8 p.m.

• Zumba/Low-Impact Dance, Fridays, 9 a.m. Workouts tailored to 50 and older.

• Men's Friday Coffee, 10 a.m. to noon ■

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REAL ESTATE

By Jacquelyn Duke

DEBUNKING real estate myths

The Central Iowa housing market — from Des Moines to suburbs like Ankeny and Polk City — is evolving in 2026. However, outdated “wisdom” often prevents Iowans from pursuing homeownership. Let’s look at the facts.



Myth 1: You need a 20% down payment: This is a persistent hurdle, but the 20% standard is a relic. Most Iowa buyers qualify for FHA loans with as little as 3.5% down, while VA or USDA loans often require 0%. Locally, the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) offers grants and second mortgages that can cover up to 5% of the price, making the upfront cost manageable.

Myth 2: You need “perfect” credit: While high scores secure the best rates, you don’t need an 800 to buy. In 2026, many local lenders accept conventional scores as low as 620, and FHA programs may go to 580. Your debt-to-income (DTI) ratio often carries as much weight as the score.

Myth 3: Closing is one simple meeting: Closing is actually a 30- to 45-day process involving inspections, appraisals and title searches. In Iowa, buyers should budget 2% to 3% of the home’s price for closing costs — like title insurance, prepaid taxes, homeowners insurance and recording fees — in addition to their down payment.

Don’t let myths dictate your future. With stabilizing rates and rising inventory, 2026 is a strategic time to consult a local expert. ■

Information provided by Jacquelyn Duke REALTOR®, CRS, e-PRO, Realty One Group Impact, 617 S.W. Third St., Ankeny, IA 50023, 515-240-7483, jacquelyn@sellingcentraliowa.com, www.SellingCentralIowa.com.

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INVESTMENT

By Kyle Matzen

WHY Social Security matters more for women

Social Security is often the foundation of financial security in retirement, especially for women.

The unique challenges that women face, such as fewer years in the workforce and longer life spans, mean benefits matter even more. The amount of your monthly payment depends on your 35 highest-earning years, so gaps in employment can reduce what you receive.

You can claim benefits as early as age 62, but every year you wait increases your monthly benefits, maxing out at age 70.

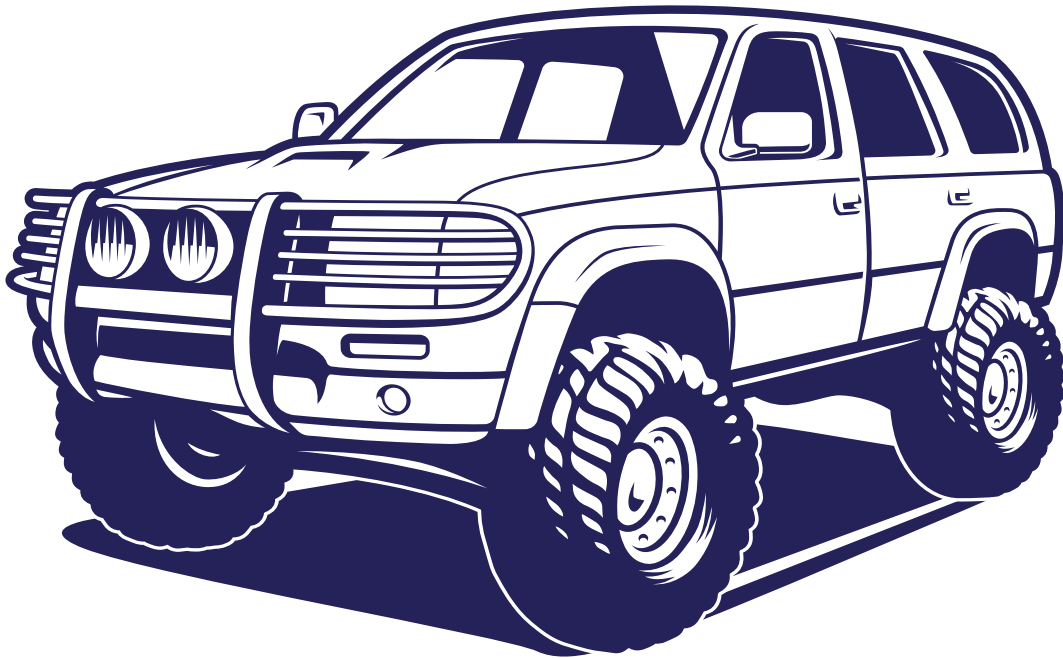
Marriage, widowhood and divorce also affect your options. For example, a spouse may qualify for up to half of a partner’s benefit, and survivor benefits can provide up to 100% of a late spouse’s amount. There are many more rules surrounding timing and amount of benefits — many of which you can control.

Social Security rules are complex, but the decisions you make today can shape decades of retirement. Talk with a financial advisor to make the most of your benefit. ■



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A LEGACY of volunteering

Hodges carries on family tradition of service.

Austin Hodges is a longtime Polk City resident with deep roots in the community. He graduated from North Polk High School in 2009, and his mom grew up in town as well. His grandmother, Mary Burton, dedicated 20 years to serving on the city council, including 12 years as mayor.

"This town has always been home, and public service has been a meaningful part of my family's history," Hodges says.

In his own way of giving back, he currently serves as commander of the Sons of the American Legion Post 232 in Polk City, a role he has held for the past two years. Hodges has been a member since 2004, first getting involved at just 14 years old after being inspired by his grandparents, Jim and Mary Burton, who were both active in the American Legion.

The Sons of the American Legion is a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving others. Throughout the year, the group raises funds to give back to the community, support local veterans and assist families in need.



Natalie St. John presents Austin Hodges with the Good Neighbor certificate.

"Being part of this organization allows me to continue a tradition of service that has been passed down through my family and to make a meaningful difference," Hodges says.

In addition, he volunteers with HEROES Guiding Heroes Foundation, an organization dedicated to supporting emergency responders. The foundation provides critical resources, educational support and financial assistance to help first responders navigate the daily stresses that come with serving others.

"Supporting those who put themselves on the line for the community is a cause I strongly believe in and am proud to be a part of," Hodges says.

Hodges says it is important to make time to volunteer because giving back to the community you live in matters.

"This town has given so much to my family over generations, and volunteering is my way of honoring that legacy," he says.

What he enjoys most about being involved with veteran-focused organizations in particular is seeing the direct impact — knowing his efforts help a veteran, ease the burden of a family going through a difficult time or give a graduating senior the financial support they need to take their next step.

"Those moments make the time worthwhile and reinforce why service, in all forms, truly matters," Hodges says.

He encourages others to get involved with organizations and to volunteer in some way.

"It creates a sense of purpose and connection," Hodges says. "Volunteering allows you to see firsthand how even small efforts make a real difference in someone's life. The community strengthens as a whole, reminding us that, when we show up for one another, everyone benefits." ■



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FINDING purpose in the classroom

Third grade is right where Sheldahl wants to be.

Molly Sheldahl, a third-grade teacher at Central Elementary, went back to school to become a teacher after her daughter, Marley, was born.

"It was something I always thought I wanted to do, but it wasn't until 2008 that I got serious about making it happen," she shares. "What really inspired me to pursue teaching is the belief that all students deserve a quality education, and it felt like the time to start pursuing my dream."

Sheldahl graduated from Iowa State University in 2014 with a bachelor's degree and from Morningside College in 2019 with her master's degree.

For the past nine years, she has taught at Central Elementary — moving from fifth grade to third grade, serving as an instructional coach and eventually landing back in third grade, which she says is the perfect place for her. The school first stood out to her because she had been involved as a parent and served as Central's PTA president.

"I'd gotten to know a lot of the teachers and families, and it was clear to me this was a place that I wanted to be," Sheldahl says. "When a job opened up, I applied without hesitation. I can't imagine being anywhere else."

Sheldahl likes that every day is different in an elementary building.

"We get to experience so much throughout the year, whether it's all that we learn or special celebrations throughout the year," she says. "I love supporting kids in their learning, especially in third grade. The amount of content we cover from the beginning of the year to the end is really amazing when you think about it."

She also enjoys looking back at the year and seeing the growth each student makes.

"I also consider myself someone who is in a continuous cycle of learning, so I am always trying to learn things that benefit my students and improve my teaching," she says.

While Sheldahl acknowledges that it takes a lot of preparation to be successful as a teacher, she is grateful to have strong support on her grade-level teams and throughout the building to help her meet that challenge.

"I know so many of us that teach at North Polk feel that we are so lucky to teach where we do," she says. "We have amazing teachers, administrators and staff that support all that we do. We've got supportive and involved families, and that makes a world of difference in the work we do every day."

Outside of work, Sheldahl spends time with her family — her husband, Erik, who grew up in Polk City and is a North Polk graduate, and her three daughters, Marley (a senior), Brin (a fifth grader at Central) and Lydia (a second grader at Central) — and enjoys baking, making sourdough, gardening and reading. ■



Molly Sheldahl first developed ties to Central Elementary as Central's PTA president. Now, she is glad to be teaching third grade there.

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Happenings

WELCOME NEW MARKET PRESIDENT!

We're excited to welcome our new Market President for Polk City, Jason Kerndt. Jason joins Home State Bank with 23 years of banking experience and extensive knowledge in relationship banking and community engagement.



SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

Staff recently made a donation from their "Jean Friday" fund to the American Legion Post 232.



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FINANCE

By Jason Kerndt

FINANCIAL resolutions you can keep

The new year is an iconic time to set new resolutions. Unfortunately, many people will abandon these goals within the first month or two. When setting goals, it is important that they are realistic, measurable, timely and specific.

For many people, financial goals are a priority (especially after the holidays). If you have financial goals on your 2026 list, we want to help you reach them. Below are some ideas of financial goals that you can follow through on this year.



Budgeting: Budgeting is an essential financial habit and should be on your list. Most Americans overspend, and the only way to control it is to track their spending and adjust accordingly. Tracking your spending by reviewing your current and past bank statements can help you establish a healthier budget and identify where you are overspending.

Savings: Another common financial frustration is a lack of savings. You can be sure you will have some unexpected expenses this year. Emergency savings accounts are another great habit to establish to ensure those unexpected expenses don't take you out or cause more debt. Want to know how much you should save or what to use these funds for? Talking with your financial institution can help you identify these numbers and uses, and they can get you set up with this specific account.

Contribute to a retirement plan: Did you know that four out of 10 employees don't contribute to a 401(k)? The earlier you begin, the better the payoff. This long-term goal can significantly increase your financial health in the future. If you're unsure of how much to contribute, talk with your employer's HR representative and/or a personal banker to set you up for success.

If you are already contributing to a retirement plan, consider setting a goal to increase your contribution. This could be as little as 1% or even a bonus or salary increase.

Pay off debt: No one wants to carry debt. Paying off credit card balances each month can help you avoid interest payments. Have a bigger loan? Determine how soon you want to pay it off and create a monthly plan. Lowering your debt load is key to long-term financial success.

Like any other goal, it's about creating good habits and holding yourself accountable. Share these goals with others and work with your banker to set achievable, realistic goals you can accomplish this year. ■

Call or stop by to learn more, Jason Kerndt, Market President, 515-329-8812, HomeState Bank, 101 E. Bridge Road, Polk City.

CHANGES to the Iowa ABLÉ account program

Exciting new changes to the Iowa ABLÉ account program help individuals with a disability make self-directed investments and purchases.

The Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE) is a way to save money for expenses related to a disability. It is similar to (and is part of the federal statute for) 529 college-savings plans. An ABLÉ account allows individuals with disabilities to fund accounts with their own resources. Others, such as family members, can also contribute to the account. The minimum contribution limit to an ABLÉ account was recently reduced to \$1, effective immediately, making it easier for eligible individuals to start saving.

The account can be used to supplement, but not supplant, benefits received through



other government programs like Medicaid and SSI. Money from an ABLÉ account can be used to pay for education, transportation, health services and employment-related expenses. Additionally, unlike some Medicaid trusts, funds from an ABLÉ account can be used for housing and basic living expenses. The beneficiary is allowed to have direct access to the money.

Other Medicaid trusts, such as a Special Needs Trust, do not allow funds to pay for funeral or burial expenses after an individual dies. Money in an ABLÉ account can be used to pay for funeral and burial expenses.

Account owners and members of their support system now have the opportunity to transfer funds from a Medicaid SNT into an ABLÉ account. This allows more flexibility when it comes to how assets are used.

Another advantage of an ABLÉ account is that most Medicaid trusts contain mandatory provisions subjecting any money

remaining in an the account after death to Medicaid recapture by the State. In Iowa, the Department of Health and Human Services is not permitted to recover money in an ABLÉ account, and remaining funds can pass to a named beneficiary.

Currently, to be eligible for an ABLÉ account, an individual must be disabled, and the disability occurred before the age of 26. However, recent changes to the law will raise the age limit to individuals found disabled up to 46 years old. The new law went into effect Jan. 1, 2026.

If you have questions about how an ABLÉ account can complement your estate planning, contact an attorney who specializes in estate planning for individuals with disabilities. ■

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

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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 North Polk 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.

Polk County Conservation events

Visit www.polkcountyiowa.gov/conservation/events for information about upcoming programs offered by Polk County Conservation and for registration links.

• **Out in Nature at Easter Lake.** Friday, Feb. 20, 10-11 a.m., Easter Lake Event Center, Easter Lake Park, 2830, Easter Lake Drive, Des Moines. Come on out to Easter Lake with a sense of adventure. We'll learn how to observe and study changes in nature as we explore, play and investigate. The program will meet at the Event Center, but will be mostly outdoors. Come prepared for the weather. Adults are expected to stay and actively participate with their children/students. Free, no registration required.

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.

Polk City Library events

1500 W. Broadway

515-984-6119

polkcitylibrary.org

AI & the Human Future Lunch & Learn, Tuesday, March 10, 6 p.m. What exactly is AI? Can it make our lives and our communities better, or is it going to take all our jobs and kill us off? Can AI respect privacy, or is privacy a thing of the past? Who is responsible when AI screws up? Can AI be moral? What does the future of humanity hold as we move through this technological revolution? Neither pro-AI nor anti-AI, this presentation is intended to get people thinking more deeply about the central issues raised by the new technology and how they might relate to it in their own lives. Presentation by Scott Samuelson, an award-winning philosopher and writer known for bringing philosophy to the public. Sign-up required if you plan to join us for the light meal prior to the presentation. Serving begins at 5:30 p.m.

Adult DIY: Galvanized Metal Art, Thursday, March 19, 6 p.m. Come spend an evening crafting. Registration required. Ages 17 and older.

Adult DIY Card Crafting, Monday, March 30, 6 p.m. Join Jane and Kim in making handmade cards that are fun to create and are treasured by the recipients. There will be a \$5 material fee payable that night. Beginners are welcome. Feel free to bring scissors and adhesive if you have them, and prepare to have a good time. Ages 17 and older. Register online at polkcitylibrary.org one month in advance.

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 www.desmoinesmetroopera.org/showcase/.

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 evenings Saturdays, Feb. 14 and 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.

• **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.

• **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.

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.

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.



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 chocolatwalk.com. dmcityview.com.

Dine & Dance with CultureALL

Come savor authentic ethnic cuisine and music presented by local talent. Join us for one, two, or ALL three unique, curated dining experiences at locally owned Des Moines area restaurants listed below.

• **Rhythm and Roots: an Afro-Caribbean Dinner.** Hosted by Chef Amara Sama: Tuesday, March 3, Palms DSM (Ingersoll), 1905 Ingersoll Ave., Des Moines. Experience the harmony of African and Caribbean flavors as you sit down to dinner, then get back up again to join Afro-Caribbean dancing.

Each \$60 ticket includes dinner, music, dancing, story sharing, and discovery. Learn more about CultureALL and our community partners by visiting us at CultureALL.org/events. We look forward to seeing you there. ■

RECIPE

By Jolene Goodman

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.



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.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY BINGO AT COPPERWOOD

MARCH 5 | 5:30PM-7PM

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**March Entertainment
David Watson**



SHOP local

Polk City has a way of surprising people. You pull into town for a quick bite or to run an errand, and, before you know it, you've spent the afternoon here, eating well, shopping local and feeling that small-town energy that's hard to find anywhere else.

Start your day the way locals do: with a warm welcome and a good meal. Rising Sun Cafe is the kind of place where the coffee keeps coming and the conversations feel easy. Later, grab lunch at Papa's Pizzeria, or meet friends at the Polk City Pub for a laid-back evening. And when you're craving a night out, The Waters Edge is a favorite stop.

If you're visiting between Feb. 20 and April 3, keep your Friday nights open. The American Legion is kicking off Fish Fry and Bingo Fridays, and they're also known for community breakfasts that bring generations together. It's one of those "only in Polk City" experiences that makes visitors feel like regulars.

Be sure to venture off the square. We have really great finds all over town. Make plans for the Tournament Club of Iowa for a beautiful setting and a memorable meal. Arcadia is another must, amazing food and an atmosphere that makes date night feel special. And, if you need something quick in between stops, Subway is always an easy win.

Polk City is also a great place to shop and take care of life's to-dos. Browse Oak & Berk for fun apparel and gifts. Get moving at Anytime Fitness, then treat yourself afterward at Nova Med Spa or Lush Wellness. For health and wellness, North Polk Family Medicine and Rock Valley Physical Therapy help keep our community strong.

Grilling at home? Fareway will hook you up with everything you need. Need insurance coverage you can trust? Reach out to Cupp Insurance, Cullen Insurance or Corey Hoodjer, Farm Bureau agent. Looking for office space with a professional feel? Check out The Point on Broadway or the Suites at Home State Bank.

And don't forget the simple joys: visit our library. Pick up a book, join a program and slow down awhile. Then get outside and walk Polk City's trails. Even your pets are covered, with Polk City Veterinary Care and All Seasons Veterinary Care ready to help.

In Polk City, supporting small businesses isn't a slogan — it's the heartbeat of the town. Come visit, and you'll feel it. ■

Information provided by Staci Allen, Executive Director, Polk City Area Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 226, Polk City IA 50226, 515-984-3098, admin@polkcitychamber.com.



POLK CITY AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Networking Events Schedule

2nd Wednesday of each month
Luncheons - TCI

Last Thursday of each month
Coffee and Connections - Rising Sun Cafe

Subscribe to our calendar:





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education column!**

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tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com



FEBRUARY'S Iowa Living Magazines Poll of the Month

Vote now at www.facebook.com/iowalivingmagazines
or by scanning this QR code

What do you buy most often for Valentine's Day?

- ☐ Chocolates
- ☐ Flowers
- ☐ Just a card
- ☐ Other gifts
- ☐ Nothing



CLASSIFIEDS

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Donate your car, truck, boat, RV and more to support our veterans! Schedule a FAST, FREE vehicle pickup and receive a top tax deduction! Call Veteran Car Donations at 1-888-429-2331 today! (mcn)

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WATER & FIRE DAMAGE RESTORATION. Our trusted professionals will restore your home to protect your family and your home's value! Call 24/7: 1-833-879-1480. Mold Remediation services are also available! (mcn)

JACUZZI BATH REMODEL can install a new, custom bath or shower in as little as one day. For a limited time, waiving ALL installation costs! (Additional terms apply. Subject to change and vary by dealer. Offer ends 12/27/26.) Call 1-855-414-0768 (mcn)

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options available. Quality materials & professional installation. Senior & Military Discounts Available. Call Today! 1-833-618-1178. (mcn)

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GUN SHOW 54th Year, February 21 & 22, Sat. 9-5 & Sun. 9-3. Fort Dodge Rifle & Pistol Club. Webster Co. Fairgrounds. 22770 Old Highway 169, Fort Dodge, IA 50501. 515-570-0827 (mcn)

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AZ ROC344027 AR 366920925, CA1035795, CT HIC.0671520, DC 420223000087, FL CBC056678, ID RCE-51604, IA C127230, LA 559544, MD MHIC111225, MA 213292, MI 262300331, 262300330, 262300329, 262300328, 262300318, 262300173, MN IRI810524, MT 266192, NE 50145-24, NV 86990, NJ 13VH13285000, NC 408693, ND 47304, OR 218294, PA PA179643, RI GC-41354, TN 10981, UT 10783658-5501, VT 174.0000871, VA 2705169445, WA LEAFELH763PG, WV WV056912. *The leading consumer reporting agency conducted a 16 month outdoor test of gutter guards in 2010 and recognized LeafFilter as the "1st rated professionally installed gutter guard system in America."

OUT & ABOUT



For the third consecutive year, Bravo Greater Des Moines has awarded a generous operating grant to the Big Creek Historical Society. Sally Dix with BCHS President Roxana Currie.



Logan Albaugh, Steve Karsjen and Brandon Converse at the Polk City Chamber Lunch held at Tournament Club Of Iowa on Jan. 14.



Tony Haisman at the Polk City Chamber Lunch held at Tournament Club Of Iowa on Jan. 14.



Shawn Comer, Ringo Kienitz and Matt Wright at the Polk City Chamber Lunch held at Tournament Club Of Iowa on Jan. 14.



Jenifer Friestad and Kathy Debruyn at the Polk City Chamber Lunch held at Tournament Club Of Iowa on Jan. 14.



Jacquelyn Duke and Susie Sheldahl at the Polk City Chamber Lunch held at Tournament Club Of Iowa on Jan. 14.



Rob and Colby Cupp at the Polk City Chamber Lunch held at Tournament Club Of Iowa on Jan. 14.



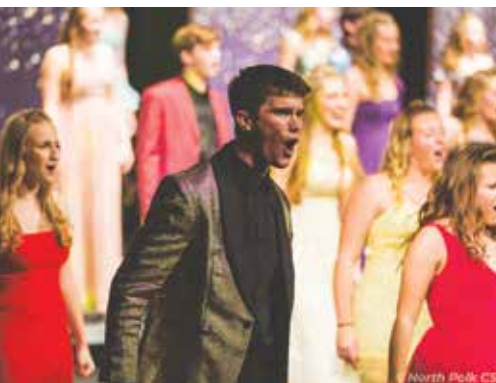
Emily and Carson Rhodes at the Polk City Chamber Lunch held at Tournament Club Of Iowa on Jan. 14.



Nate and Jessica Faeu at the Polk City Chamber Lunch held at Tournament Club Of Iowa on Jan. 14.

NEXUS Choir

The Nexus North Polk High School Show Choir performed for parents on Jan. 8.





THE COMETS CORNER

NEWS FROM NORTH POLK CSD

FEBRUARY 2026



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HALF A CENTURY OF HANDS-ON LEARNING: CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF FFA

Half a century ago, North Polk hired Mr. Tom Cory to build the agriculture and FFA program from the ground up. Within just six years, students were leading one of the Iowa State Fair's most visible exhibits, the Avenue of Breeds, a tradition that continues today. Across generations, students from every corner of the district have gained hands-on learning experiences, leadership skills, and a foundation in agriculture that prepares them for the future.

Today, that same spirit of innovation continues. North Polk recently received the 2026-27 STEM BEST® Program award for expanding drone education, giving students hands-on experience with industry-standard technology. From monitoring crops and mapping fields to aerial photography and surveying, students apply skills across multiple career pathways, connecting classroom learning to Iowa's workforce.

For 50 years, North Polk's FFA program has grown with the community, honoring its roots while preparing students to explore, create, and lead in the world ahead.



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50 YEARS OF FFA MEMORIES

Do you have a favorite FFA story, highlight, or photo from your time at North Polk? Help us celebrate half a century of hands-on learning and leadership by sharing your memories.

Submit your stories and photos at communications@northpolk.org.



FUTURES START HERE:

New Student & Kindergarten Enrollment

Enrollment is now open for Transitional Kindergarten (TK), Kindergarten, and new district students for the 2026-2027 school year! Your child's future begins here—let's get started.

Register online at northpolk.org/enroll.



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